

when they are hurt, when they are devastated by natural disaster, the people of the United States rally and help out.

That is the ethic of my State. When a farmer gets sick and can't harvest his crop, the neighbors pitch in. When a barn burns down, the neighbors pitch in. That is the best of community spirit. That is the best of America. We are going to be relying on that generosity of spirit in the days ahead.

Madam President, I yield the floor and note the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Washington.

MILITARY SUPPORT

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, we are going to hear tonight from President Obama about his plans for changes to troop levels in Afghanistan.

Last week I joined with a bipartisan group of my Senate colleagues on a letter to the President urging him to begin a sizeable and sustained reduction in troop levels, and I hope he takes the opportunity to do that tonight. But with all the talk about troop levels, I want to make sure we remember this isn't just about numbers. It is about real people with real families, men and women who are fighting to defend our country and are depending on us to do the right thing for them now and when they come home.

As chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, I have an inside look into something that too often doesn't make the front pages: the unseen costs of war, the costs that come after our men and women take off that uniform.

We all hear about how expensive war is while we are fighting it. But for so many of our servicemembers what happens on the battlefield is just the beginning.

We are seeing suicide rates that are much higher among Active-Duty servicemembers and veterans than among civilians. We are finding they are having trouble accessing the mental health care so many of them desperately need. We are watching as these men and women are sent out on tour after tour. Too often they are having a tough time finding a job when they come home. We owe it to them and their families to do everything we can to get them the support and services they need.

Far too many of our servicemembers have sacrificed life and limb overseas, and we must honor them and their sacrifices by making sure we take care of them and their caregivers not just today, not just when they come home,

but for a lifetime. This is going to be expensive, and I am going to fight to make sure it happens. I think it ought to be considered as we think now about the war in Afghanistan.

The enemy we face is real. The Taliban and al-Qaida have demonstrated through their actions and their words they mean us great harm. I was sitting in the Capitol on September 11, 2001, when I saw the smoke rising from the Pentagon. It is a moment and a day I will never forget.

As Americans, we know what this enemy is capable of, and we need to do everything we can to make sure something like that never, ever happens again. That is why I believe American forces need to be prepared to fight terror and terrorists wherever they may be.

After September 11, Afghanistan was providing safe haven for them, and we are absolutely right to go in and take them out. But we know terrorism isn't a country; it is a network and a threat that exists around the world. We have seen that our terrorist enemies are not tied to a specific location. They are not bound by lines on a map. They are in Afghanistan, but they are also in Yemen, in Iraq, in Pakistan, and elsewhere. In fact, our top target in the war against terrorism, Osama bin Laden, was just killed in a brave operation in a safe house in Pakistan.

It is absolutely critical we have a military that is prepared to take on our threats wherever they may be. So as we consider the wars we are fighting now in Afghanistan and in Iraq, we need to make sure we aren't overextending the servicemembers we are counting on; that we continue to have the financial resources available to defend ourselves against the very real threat of terrorism that continues to exist; and that the costs and resources of boots on the ground for years on end doesn't inhibit our ability to go after terrorists wherever they are. We need to know our military and intelligence operations are nimble and have the resources they need to keep our Nation safe from all threats.

We have been fighting in Afghanistan for 10 years. I voted for that war. It was the right thing to do. Our brave men and women in uniform have done everything we have asked of them, including finding Osama bin Laden. But we need to make sure today that our strategies are adapted to meet the threats of today. Leaving large levels of troops in Afghanistan is not the best use of our resources, especially in these tough economic times. It is time to re-deploy, rebuild our military, and focus on the broader war on terror.

I am hopeful President Obama will make an announcement tonight that reflects those current realities, and I am going to keep working with this administration, the Pentagon, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and all others so that as we fight to keep America safe and to take care of our servicemembers coming home, we do it right.

I yield the floor. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTMENT EFFICIENCY AND STREAMLINING ACT OF 2011

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the cloture motion with respect to the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 75 be vitiated and the Senate adopt the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 75, S. 679, the Presidential Appointment Efficiency and Streamlining Act.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. Will the clerk report the bill, please.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 679) to reduce the number of executive positions subject to Senate confirmation.

The Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Presidential Appointment Efficiency and Streamlining Act of 2011".

SEC. 2. PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTMENTS NOT SUBJECT TO SENATE APPROVAL.

(a) AGRICULTURE.—

(1) ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE FOR CONGRESSIONAL RELATIONS AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE FOR ADMINISTRATION.—Section 218(b) of the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 6918(b)) is amended—

(A) by striking "subsection (a)" and inserting "subsection (a)(3)";

(B) by striking subsection (c); and

(C) by redesignating subsection (d) as subsection (c).

(2) RURAL UTILITIES SERVICE ADMINISTRATOR.—Section 232(b)(1) of the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 6942(b)(1)) is amended—

(A) by striking "by and with the advice and consent of the Senate";

(B) by striking paragraph (2); and

(C) by redesignating paragraph (3) as paragraph (2).

(3) COMMODITY CREDIT CORPORATION.—Section 9(a) of the Commodity Credit Corporation