

rights throughout the world, must ensure that the rights and freedoms denied to Afghan women for so long are restored as soon as possible.

In my national address this past weekend on behalf of the Democratic Caucus, I pointed out that we must strongly support the funding for resettlement and humanitarian efforts to aid Afghan women. We are at a crossroads, Mr. Speaker, since we have reached a stage of military advantage that few of us expected to reach so quickly. We must find common ground to push ahead to support reconstruction at the same time that the military actions are being concluded.

The women Members of the House of Representatives are working with the U.N. women ambassadors and women's NGOs toward this purpose. We will continue to hold meetings and briefings to give public exposure to all of the concerns I mentioned above. Several of us, as I did on November 15, have introduced bills to authorize the provision of educational and health care assistance to women and children of Afghanistan. My bill, H.R. 3304, has been referred to the Committee on International Relations and awaits a full hearing.

Let me say emphatically, we cannot afford to exclude more than half of Afghanistan's population in helping to bring about an interim settlement and peaceful resolution to this troubled country. Afghan women must be assured of their basic human rights once more; to gain access to safe drinking water and sufficient food; to receive decent health and maternal care; and foremost, to again move freely in their society without being subjected to harassment and abuse. Above all, they must be allowed to practice their religious beliefs as Islamic women, veiled or unveiled, without retribution.

I urge all of us to help these women in Afghanistan regain the basic freedom and freedoms we so cherish as a people. I urge us as Members of the House to join together to forge a comprehensive package of assistance that can help achieve the important objectives being sought by Afghanis for goodwill everywhere.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, there is an old African saying that women hold up half of the sky. We must do our utmost, therefore, to ensure that the women of Afghanistan resume their part of this equation and help hold up half of the sky. To do less would imperil all of us in the pursuit of democratic governance and the well-being of a global community. Helping Afghan women to regain their rightful place of national life is one of the best ways I know to combat terrorism in Afghanistan, and on behalf of the American women and people of America, let us begin the rebuilding today.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATOURETTE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. LATOURETTE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE PLIGHT OF AFGHANISTAN WOMEN AND CHILDREN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE. Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to say to the gentleman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD) and the co-chair of the Women's Caucus, let me thank her for her leadership and for her outstanding commitment, on behalf of the women, to the women of Afghanistan. I would like to associate myself with her remarks, in particular to acknowledge the Women's Caucus, and to make note of the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS) who I joined just about 2 weeks ago on a briefing on Afghanistan women and children. So I rise today to add to that discussion.

I will need to also assess the status of children of Afghanistan and to be able to lift up the women, so as we lift the women, we lift the children. We are finding that the children of Afghanistan are working at ages 7 and 8, providing for their families, making 50 cents a day building bricks. Those children do not have an opportunity to go to school, and obviously, under the Taliban regime, the girls were particularly discriminated against, but the boys and the girls found themselves building bricks every day to help support their family. The incomes of the families is so far below poverty of any kind that we would ever recognize. The Afghan children are put to work at a very early age, some 4 and 5, 6 and 7 and 8 years old.

I look forward in the future weeks to hold a briefing on the treatment of the children in Afghanistan. It is particularly important as we face a very troubling scenario on the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan; millions of refugees with no place to go; United Nations fighting to provide food and, as well, comfort to those families who are displaced.

It is now time, I believe, for the United States Government in its victory to now begin to establish an exit strategy, an exit strategy out of Afghanistan, but also a response to how we bring back to life this country that is so destroyed. How do we restore the rights of families, of women, of children? How do we restore the economy? How do we find a place for refugees who are now caught between two borders? How do we find relief and harmony between the governments or at least the to-be-established government of Afghanistan and as well Pakistan?

It is extremely important that as we look to rebuild that we look to the children and we look to the families. It is also extremely important that rather than look to Iraq as the next stop of

our efforts, we should look to an exit strategy and peace.

As we relate to unfinished business, let me briefly say, Mr. Speaker, there is work that this Congress still needs to do. I participated, as many did, in the debate on the floor of the House today in the defense appropriations and the emergency supplemental bill, and I just want to again restate that, until we become proactive, we are not truly fighting terrorism at home.

I am very disappointed that the Obey amendment did not pass, and I emphasize two particular aspects of that, that is, our public health system. Shortly after the September 11 attack, I went home to Houston and met with our emergency responders, the first responders, but particularly our hospitals and public clinics and particularly our public hospital system, already, if you will, bending under the pressure. More importantly, a system that already needed funding; without funding, without funding to address any kind of mass attack that requires the health system to rise to the occasion. No funds were given to that system today.

Not enough funds were given to secure our border, the Canadian border, one of the largest borders, and the southern border. No funds were given to provide enough support for customs inspectors, more border patrol agents. An issue that I am particularly concerned about, the ability of individuals to come across the border with infectious diseases like smallpox, no sufficient number of health inspectors to assist us in that effort. Our work is not done.

Tomorrow, it is proposed that we will be dealing with or we were supposed to be dealing with the Anti-Terrorism Risk Act. Here we are looking again to help industry, and yet we still are not helping the unemployed. Unemployed individuals are growing in numbers. We are in a recession, and yet this Congress has refused to pass legislation to help those unemployed individuals.

Again, in my hometown we are fighting a very difficult and very challenging economic time, and that is, the situation occurring with Enron in the 18th Congressional District. There are many issues dealing with Enron I realize, and I hope that we can retain that company in our community, but the most important issue are the numbers of laid-off employees that we may be facing. We have got to address the unemployment and the recession as it impacts the unemployed in this Nation.

This Congress has unfinished business. It is time for us again to act. It is time for us now, if we want to use the terminology, let us bail out the working men and women of America. Let us finish our unfinished work.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DEUTSCH) is recognized for 5 minutes.