

INTRODUCTION OF THE "AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN SECURITY AND PROSPERITY ENHANCEMENT ACT"

HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 4, 2009

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam Speaker, I rise to introduce the Afghanistan-Pakistan Security and Prosperity Enhancement Act. The legislation is aimed at protecting our national security and that of our allies in the fight against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. I am pleased to be joined by Mr. HOEKSTRA, Mr. LEVIN, Mr. KIRK, Mr. BURTON, Mr. SMITH (WA), Mr. CROWLEY, Mr. MORAN, Mr. ACKERMAN, Mr. WELCH and Ms. JACKSON-LEE. Senator CANTWELL has introduced the companion measure in the Senate.

This bill authorizes the President of the United States to designate Reconstruction Opportunity Zones, ROZs, in Afghanistan and in certain areas of Pakistan. Qualified businesses operating in those zones will gain duty-free access to U.S. markets for designated products, thereby providing significant employment opportunities where few currently exist. A ROZ program could go a long way toward bolstering economic development in this critical region of the world where extremists have tried to exploit the lack of economic opportunities to gain recruits for their radical agenda.

The 9/11 attacks against the United States resulted from Al-Qaeda exploiting a safe haven in Taliban controlled Afghanistan. We cannot allow this to happen again. These extremists pose a threat to the people of Afghanistan, Pakistan and the United States.

I commend President Obama for his focus on the threat that this region poses to our national security. I am pleased that the President and Secretary Clinton have appointed a seasoned negotiator, Ambassador Holbrooke, as the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

U.S. and NATO forces are essential to confronting the threat. However, the President has recognized that the threat cannot be neutralized by military force alone. We need a comprehensive strategy to deal with these countries. Such a plan must include programs to expand the economic opportunities of the people in this region.

Towards that end, hopefully Congress will revisit the foreign assistance bill that was introduced by Senators BIDEN and LUGAR in the last Congress. The Reconstruction and Opportunity Zone bill that we are introducing today is another vital tool to bolster these economies. In my recent trip to Afghanistan and Pakistan, the importance of this ROZ bill was specifically raised by Presidents Zardari and Karzai. I urge the House to pass this bill quickly to assist these countries in achieving economic sustainability.

SENATE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Title IV of Senate Resolution 4, agreed to by the Senate on February 4, 1977, calls for establishment of a system for a computerized schedule of all meetings and hearings of Senate committees, subcommittees, joint commit-

tees, and committees of conference. This title requires all such committees to notify the Office of the Senate Daily Digest—designated by the Rules Committee—of the time, place, and purpose of the meetings, when scheduled, and any cancellations or changes in the meetings as they occur.

As an additional procedure along with the computerization of this information, the Office of the Senate Daily Digest will prepare this information for printing in the Extensions of Remarks section of the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD on Monday and Wednesday of each week.

Meetings scheduled for Thursday, March 5, 2009 may be found in the Daily Digest of today's RECORD.

MEETINGS SCHEDULED

MARCH 6

9:30 a.m.

Joint Economic Committee

To hold hearings to examine the employment situation for February 2009.

SD-106

MARCH 9

2:30 p.m.

Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

To hold hearings to examine preventing worker exploitation, focusing on protecting individuals with disabilities and other vulnerable populations.

SD-430

5 p.m.

Finance

To hold hearings to examine the nomination of Ronald Kirk, of Texas, to be United States Trade Representative, with the rank of Ambassador.

SD-215

MARCH 10

9:30 a.m.

Armed Services

To hold hearings to examine current and future threats to the national security of the United States; with the possibility of a closed session to follow in SH-219.

SH-216

Veterans' Affairs

To hold an oversight hearing to examine budget for veterans programs for fiscal year 2010.

SR-418

10 a.m.

Energy and Natural Resources

To hold hearings to examine proposed legislation to provide for the conduct of an in-depth analysis of the impact of energy development and production on the water resources of the United States.

SD-366

Finance

To hold hearings to examine the President's fiscal year 2010 health care proposals.

SD-215

Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

To hold hearings to examine rebuilding economic security, focusing on empowering workers to restore the middle class.

SD-106

Judiciary

To hold hearings to examine patent reform in the 111th Congress, focusing on legislation and recent court decisions.

SD-226

Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe

To hold hearings to examine the impact of potential climate remediation policies on carbon-intensive United States industries and creating climate-friendly economic and trade policies, focusing on how the financial crisis impacts the implementation of climate-friendly policies within the United States and among trading partners.

SR-428A

10:30 a.m.

Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

To hold hearings to examine enhancing investor protection and the regulation of securities markets.

SD-538

2:30 p.m.

Budget

To hold hearings to examine the President's proposed budget for fiscal year 2010.

SD-608

Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

To hold hearings to examine the next generation of national service.

SD-430

MARCH 11

10 a.m.

Budget

To hold hearings to examine the President's proposed budget request for fiscal year 2009 for the Department of Energy.

SD-608

Judiciary

Constitution Subcommittee

To hold joint hearings with the House Committee on the Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties to examine S.J. Res. 7 and H.J. Res. 21, proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States relative to the election of Senators.

SH-216

Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

To hold hearings to examine violent Islamist extremism, focusing on al-Shabaab recruitment in American.

SD-342

Rules and Administration

To hold hearings to examine voter registration, focusing on assessing current problems.

SR-301

2:30 p.m.

Commerce, Science, and Transportation

Aviation Operations, Safety, and Security Subcommittee

To hold hearings to examine Federal Aviation Administration reauthorization, focusing on NextGen and the benefits of modernization.

SR-253

MARCH 12

9:30 a.m.

Energy and Natural Resources

To hold hearings to examine proposed legislation regarding siting of electricity transmission lines, including increased federal siting authority and regional transmission planning.

SD-366

Veterans' Affairs

To hold joint hearings to examine legislative presentations of veterans' service organizations.

SD-106