

will not rely only upon the informal justice sector, or worse, turn in fact to the Taliban for justice.

There has been noteworthy progress in some democratic institution building within the country. First, by way of example, the Ministries of Defense and Interior are often recognized for their positive efforts. And while considerable work remains to be done, each has made significant strides in recent years. I can say from somewhat of a firsthand observation that both Defense Minister Wardal and Interior Minister Akmar, two ministers we met with on our trip in August and sat down with, indicated to me they have a strong sense of where they have to go to develop the Afghan army and police force, the security for the country. But they still have to demonstrate that over time. No matter who ultimately wins the Presidential election, I hope that the Afghan Government will retain these important ministers, who have the institutional knowledge of success and of clear plans for continued development.

Second, the health sector, in particular, has seen impressive gains since the fall of the Taliban government. Today, in Afghanistan, 82 percent of the population lives in districts with access to a government-provided health care package, up from 9 percent in 2003. That is a bit of good news we don't often hear about, but I am sure there is progress yet to be made there as well in terms of health care.

Third, the education sector has seen improvements as well. In 2001, less than 1 million children—probably about 10 percent of the school-aged population—were enrolled in elementary or secondary education, and almost none of them were girls at that time. Today, more than 6 million children are enrolled, 2 million of whom are girls. So there has been measurable and significant progress in Afghanistan despite the recent deteriorating security environment.

Building on these fragile gains will rest in large part on the viability of the Afghan democratic institutions. The United States can help in this effort through the continued provision of development assistance and other forms of diplomatic and political support for Afghanistan's institutions. While the security situation is increasingly grave, between 79 and 91 percent of the population remains opposed to the Taliban and their brand of violent politics and their brand of justice. I hope we can consolidate on the gains made in Afghanistan and seriously begin to address the severe shortcomings that remain in the democratic development of the country.

In conclusion, I would say that despite all the bad news about the security environment, which is news we need to hear, we need to put it in the context of the two other challenges beyond security—governance and development. I have pointed out some real problems with the governance, espe-

cially as it relates to the judiciary, but we have had some progress on health and on education. We need to accelerate and develop that and incentivize it and get it right, but we have seen some good news.

So I think as we debate this strategy going forward, those of us in the Senate who have a role to play here and who feel the obligation to get this right have to focus on more than just security and troops and the military. We have to make sure that we get strategies in place to enhance and increase the governance priority as well as development. We will talk more at another time about development.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SERGEANT JOSHUA KIRK

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, it is with deep sympathy and a heavy heart that I express my condolences to the family of SGT Joshua Kirk who was killed on October 3 in Afghanistan. Joshua was serving his second tour of duty as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. The American people will forever be grateful for his ultimate sacrifice.

Sergeant Kirk enlisted in the Army in the spring of 2005, joining the 4th Infantry Division based out of Fort Carson in Colorado Springs, CO. He was originally from Thomaston, ME and attended Southern Maine Community College, where he met his wife Megan of Exeter, NH, and earned a degree in construction technology.

Joshua believed deeply in his mission and in the cause of freedom for which he and seven of his fellow soldiers sacrificed their lives together. Words will not assuage the anguish each of these soldier's family will feel, nor the sense of loss at Fort Carson when these brave men failed to return home, but we hope that one day these families will take solace in what President Lincoln described as "the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom."

Our Nation can never fully repay the sacrifice Sergeant Kirk and his family have made. Through his service, he helped preserve the safety and security of the American people. It now falls to all of us to take up this responsibility and ensure that the cause Sergeant Kirk gave his life for is won for his wife and young daughter.

I ask my colleagues to join me and all Americans in honoring the life of SGT Joshua Kirk.

STAFF SERGEANT KURT R. CURTISS

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to U.S. Army SSG Kurt R. Curtiss of Utah who made the ultimate sacrifice for his country on August 26, 2009. The staff sergeant died from injuries sustained from enemy small arms fire in Paktika Province, Afghanistan. Staff Sergeant Curtiss was leading his unit into a hospital trying to rescue patients trapped inside when the attack occurred.

Staff Sergeant Curtiss was assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, Fort Richardson, AK, in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

On the day after the September 11 attacks, Kurt Curtiss enlisted in the Army. He wanted to protect his country and make the world a better place. This call to service led to two tours in Iraq and a final tour in Afghanistan. The sense of patriotism exhibited by his actions provides a striking example to us all.

Early in his youth, Staff Sergeant Curtiss learned of selflessness and acceptance as he grew up in a home where his mother cared for over 60 foster children. He will be remembered for his love, devotion, compassion, and humor. Curtiss loved life. He was a caring man who always placed others before himself, a characteristic exemplified by his final moments.

Staff Sergeant Curtiss left behind a wife and two young children who I hope can find solace in the immense gratitude that our Nation owes for his selfless service to his countrymen. We are forever in his and his family's debt.

Therefore I know that I am joined by all of my colleagues in the Senate in mourning the loss of SSG Kurt R. Curtiss, our protector and hero.

REMEMBERING SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY

Mr. KIRK. Mr. President, yesterday evening, President Obama delivered another eloquent tribute to Senator Edward M. Kennedy. I am sure my colleagues will be pleased and touched to see it, and I ask unanimous consent that excerpts from the tribute may be printed at this point in the RECORD. I also ask unanimous consent that a series of tributes to Senator Kennedy from "The Hill" newspaper on August 29, 2009 may be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

EXCERPTS FROM REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT AT AN EVENT CELEBRATING THE EDWARD M. KENNEDY INSTITUTE FOR THE UNITED STATES SENATE (Ritz Carlton Hotel, Washington, DC, Oct. 14, 2009)

The PRESIDENT: Thank you so much. Thank you, Patrick, for that generous introduction, and for ensuring that the Kennedy family spirit of public service lives on as strong as ever. . . .

And to Vicki and all the members of the Kennedy family—to Ted and Kara, obviously Patrick—there are few who are not inspired by the grace and love that all of you have shown throughout a difficult time.

Our friend Ted left us less than two months ago. In the days that followed, we gathered in Boston to celebrate his life—with a joyous Irish wake of sorts at the John F. Kennedy Library, and with heavy hearts on Mission Hill. We watched as mourners lined the streets of Massachusetts and Washington in the rain to say a final thank you; and as decades' worth of his colleagues and staff lined the steps of the Capitol to say a final goodbye. We smiled as the Caucus Room in the