

easier to create jobs? Will raising taxes on the businesses that Democrats refer to as “millionaires” allow those businesses to expand? Across the board, the answer is no. Instead, these tax increases will kill jobs in every district, State, and industry in the country. Regardless of the rhetoric coming from Washington politicians, these taxes will also have a mathematically insignificant effect on deficit reduction.

I proudly support a “balanced approach” in the context of debt reduction that grows the economy and boosts tax revenues in the process, but when presented with the option of choking our weak economy with yet another tax increase, I will oppose it. Our country needs new taxpayers, not new taxes.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SERGEANT FIRST CLASS TERRY L. PASKER

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, the State of Iowa has lost one of its native sons, and the Nation has lost a true patriot. SFC Terry L. Pasker from Cedar Rapids, IA, was shot and killed in Panjshir Province, Afghanistan, while serving with the Iowa National Guard in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. He was 39 years old and was just completing his second tour in Afghanistan. My thoughts and prayers are with his wife Erica, his parents Mary and David, and those who knew him and cared about him. Terry Pasker is described as an upbeat, religious man. He was known as a hard worker and he owned a contracting business in his civilian life. The loss of someone in their prime, with a bright future and a whole life left to live is a tragic thing. It gives us pause to reflect on the tremendous sacrifice we ask of our servicemembers, and have since the first minutemen rallied at Lexington and Concord. I would like to pay tribute to the life and service of SFC Terry L. Pasker and ask that my colleagues join me in honoring his memory.

VIOLENCE AGAINST ANTIMINING ACTIVISTS IN EL SALVADOR

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I want to speak briefly about some troubling developments in El Salvador, which should concern us all.

On June 14, 2011, the body of Juan Francisco Duran Ayala was found with a gunshot wound to the head in the Soyapango Municipality of San Salvador. He was reportedly last seen alive on June 2 in Ilobasco, Cabanas, posting flyers critical of gold mining in that area, the day before he disappeared. In addition to studying at the Technological University in San Salvador, Mr. Duran had volunteered for the Environmental Committee of Cabañas in Defense of Water and Culture. His death is one of a shocking number of instances of violence against antimining activists in Cabañas.

In 2009, Gustavo Marcelo Rivera went missing for nearly 2 weeks before his body was found on June 30 in a well with signs of torture. Mr. Rivera was the cofounder of the Asociación Amigos de San Isidro Cabañas, and was a vocal leader in the anti-mining campaign in San Isidro, Cabañas. Since Mr. Rivera’s death, at least eight other members of the antimining community in Cabañas have reportedly been killed, including Mr. Duran, and yet it is still unclear who is behind this pattern of deadly violence.

There have also been recurrent threats against the lives of journalists at Radio Victoria, which broadcasts in that area.

Cabañas is located in the north central part of El Salvador and has a long history of gold mining. Pacific Rim Mining, a Canadian company that acquired a large mine named El Dorado, was the subject of Mr. Rivera’s and Mr. Duran’s protests. Now that their voices have been silenced, people in that community are demanding thorough, credible investigations of these crimes, both to obtain justice for their families and in order that future activists can exercise their right to speak out peacefully without losing their lives.

Unfortunately, El Salvador is a country where criminal investigations rarely result in arrests, and those that do almost never result in convictions. Impunity and corruption within the police are common, as in many other countries of the region. Some accuse local police and municipal officials of complicity in the harassment and threats against antimining activists and the radio station, and point to the fact that no one has been punished for these crimes.

To compound the problem, judicial independence, already fragile, is under threat in El Salvador. On June 2 the Salvadoran Legislative Assembly approved a decree which requires the five members of the Constitutional Court to rule unanimously instead of with the previous four person majority. The law was approved with the support of a broad spectrum of political parties.

The vote was reportedly in response to a number of unpopular decisions by the Court over the past 2 years. The passage of the decree threatens judicial independence in a country where the Court has only recently demonstrated a willingness to act as a check on executive and legislative power. That is the role of the judiciary in a democracy, and the outcome of this impasse will have profound implications for the country.

El Salvador has been through a difficult history. The 1980s civil war polarized the country and those who suffered most, the rural poor, are still struggling to recover. The country’s democratic institutions are weak, particularly the judiciary. The country is coping with rampant violent crime, and the infiltration of well financed criminal gangs into all sectors of society.

In the midst of this, the brutal slayings of people like Juan Francisco Duran Ayala and Gustavo Marcelo Rivera might be regarded as little more than a grim statistic, soon to be forgotten. But we have not forgotten them. All indications are that they did nothing more than act as the voices of people in their communities who are concerned that their way of life, and the land they depend on, is being destroyed.

We know the Funes Government is coping with many problems. We are helping, by providing tens of millions of dollars to support programs in health, education, economic development, and to strengthen law enforcement. We provided additional funding to help the country rebuild from the devastating floods in November 2009. But there is no more important responsibility of government than upholding the rule of law. The urgent necessity of the message that would be sent to all the people of El Salvador by bringing the perpetrators of these crimes to justice cannot be overstated.

VA INFECTION CONTROL PRACTICES

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I would like to take a moment today to recognize the success of recent efforts at the Department of Veterans Affairs, VA, to reduce Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus, MRSA, infections by more than 60 percent in intensive care units. This initiative by VA was highlighted in a New England Journal of Medicine article this year.

MRSA is a nationwide problem. It is estimated that it kills 20,000 U.S. residents a year and hospitals remain an important source of this infection. Three years ago, VA launched this initiative to ensure that it leads the way on eradicating MRSA infections from their facilities. The success of this initiative has created a culture that promotes infection prevention by adding patient screening programs for MRSA, precautions for hospitalized patients found to have MRSA, and hand hygiene reminders with readily available hand sanitizer stations throughout VA medical centers.

Every day thousands of veterans visit VA health facilities to receive care. VA provides care for more than 6 million veterans each year. In the first 3 years of this initiative, more than 1.7 million screening tests for MRSA were given to veteran patients at VA medical facilities throughout the United States. Screening tests such as these help our veterans stay safe from deadly antibiotic-resistant infections, a threat no American should face when they visit a hospital.

Since the initiative’s start in 2007, VA has increased the amount of MRSA screenings to 96 percent of all admitted patients. This newly instituted culture that promotes infection prevention has been so successful that infection rates for MRSA have decreased by 62 percent