

Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, we return to Capitol Hill, ending the summer recess with strong conflicting emotions. Today is the 11th anniversary of 9/11, the horrific attacks that rocked the Nation and were especially poignant for us on Capitol Hill.

As representatives of the government we had sworn to uphold and defend, these senseless, despicable acts exposed a real vulnerability. We all remember what we felt as we were watching the Twin Towers collapse, the plane crashing into the Pentagon, and then yet another plane going down in a lonely field in Pennsylvania, destined for us here on Capitol Hill.

People came together in an outpouring of support for one another and for our Nation. There was a sense of resolve, unparalleled at any time since the cowardly attacks on Pearl Harbor.

The response of the government since then, however, has been somewhat mixed. We have protected the United States so far against any repeat attack, but at great cost. We have thrown money at the problem. We have had significant bureaucratic overreach, particularly in terms of personal liberties. We will be paying the costs of the horribly misguided war in Iraq for generations to come.

After an original, terrific response routing the Taliban in Afghanistan, we took our eye off the ball. We allowed Osama bin Laden almost another decade of life and mischief. Later, we were sucked back into Afghanistan on the terms of the Taliban and al Qaeda, not on our terms.

Now, this is not merely a Republican problem, although George Bush and Republicans were in charge and made some of the worst mistakes. There was much bipartisan support for the excesses.

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To this day, there is bipartisan confusion about the best path forward to protect the Nation while protecting civil liberties and the budget for the situation today and not the conditions of September 10, 2001. My wish for Congress and for the candidates span out on the campaign trails, is that we mark this anniversary with a commitment to allow a little common sense and good will to enter into the political discourse.

This can be an emotional job. I was thinking about the emotions that I expressed, having a chance 15 years ago to go through the hectoring and interfering military on Aung San Suu Kyi's compound in Burma, where she was held under house arrest by the dictatorship. My son, daughter, and I spent an amazing afternoon with this extraordinary woman. I could scarcely imagine then, what will happen next week when we will be awarding that courageous woman the Congressional Medal of Honor here in the Capitol and then she will return to Burma as a member of their nation's parliament.

The success of this woman, together with the steely resolve of the American public after 9/11, ought to give us all pause and, hopefully, a renewed commitment to do our job right. Since 9/11, the challenges and circumstances have evolved. We have greater challenges in terms of security, climate instability, natural disaster, and our own economic vulnerability. It's a tall order to deal with them; but, hopefully, we will all be inspired by the example of Aung San Suu Kyi standing up to the Burmese dictatorship and ultimately gaining a measure of success—and, of course, by the American public in their response to horrific attacks of 9/11.

It's time today, for the politicians to do their job: to listen, to speak the truth, and to lead.

SMART SECURITY: LEADING WITH OUR COMPASSION, NOT OUR MILITARY FIREPOWER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, a few minutes from now, Members of the House and the Senate will head to the Capitol steps. We're going to the Capitol steps for a moment of remembrance to honor those who were killed in the attacks on September 11, 2001—September 11, 2001, a day that will forever be seared into the memory of American citizens and the world.

Eleven years later, Mr. Speaker, spouses still grieve; children still feel the void; parents are still devastated by the loss of their children. It was a tragedy for individual families and for the entire Nation. One of the lingering tragedies of that day is that it led to policy decisions with terrible consequences that we're still living with today. Over the last decade-plus, violence and mayhem have just led to more violence and mayhem.

Our continued military occupation of Afghanistan has not brought the stability. It has not brought security. It has not brought a strong democracy to that country. Afghanistan remains one of the poorest and most dangerous places on Earth. The Taliban has not been driven into oblivion. The terrorist threats continue. And according to a New York Times article this past weekend, even U.S. commanders are admitting that the Taliban remains "resilient" while al Qaeda is "evolving" and "adapting."

Mr. Speaker, while we in the House adjourned for the month of August, there was no recess for our troops. In fact, since we were last in session, another 60 U.S. servicemembers died in Afghanistan. Countless more suffered wounds to the body and to the brain. And then there are the Afghan civilians, many of them children, who are being killed every single day. How do we tell the families of these children that this is all for a good and just cause? We can't.

Mr. Speaker, it's time to stop conducting national security policy on the principles of revenge and retaliation and on the false hope that we are making it better. The right way to secure and ensure security is to put America's best foot forward, to lead with our compassion and not our military power.

That's what my SMART Security platform is all about. It puts development and diplomacy front and center, and it makes war a last resort. It is based on a commitment to improving the lives of Afghan people, alleviating power, creating economic opportunity, rebuilding infrastructure, improving education, and attacking public health problems in that area.

We can't do this with the military surge. We can only do it with a civilian surge—a surge of experts, of aid workers, of technical experts, from engineers to midwives. Of course, our development agencies are doing this kind of work, and they're doing the best they can possibly do, but not nearly the scale that's necessary to make this possible. Compared to billions of dollars every month that we spend on the war, we're investing just a tiny fraction of that on humanitarian work that is so badly needed.

Public opinion has turned dramatically against this war, and yet our most visible leaders continue to lag behind the people that elected them. The President of the United States says he will end this war in 2014, which is a good goal, but it is not nearly soon enough. His opponent, on the other hand, in the most important speech of his life a few weeks ago, didn't see fit to even mention Afghanistan—not even once.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we gather on the steps of the Capitol, as I bow my head, it will be in remembrance of those who died 11 years ago today, and it will also be with a fervent prayer of hope that we can honor their memory by finally ending the war in Afghanistan and finally bringing our troops home.

REMEMBERING 9/11

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. YODER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. YODER. Mr. Speaker, 11 years ago today, Americans found themselves under attack. We watched with shock and horror as hijacked passenger airplanes were flown both into the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon. We all remember what we were doing that Tuesday morning when 2,996 innocent Americans were killed in those tragic and unthinkable acts. We also remember the heroic actions of the passengers aboard United Flight 93, who courageously fought the hijackers on their plane and, sacrificing their own lives, ultimately saved countless others. Courage and bravery have long been traits demonstrated by our fellow