

the *Groves* captured 19 surviving pirates, but, unfortunately, by much higher command, was instructed to return them directly to Somalia.

I recently visited the *Groves*, shortly after a previous engagement with the *Jih Chun Tsai* in April. I, personally, commend CDR Matthew Rick and his crew aboard the *Stephen W. Groves* for the work they have done fighting piracy in the Gulf of Aden. Their actions over the weekend eliminated the pirate threat of one mothership, but, unfortunately, there are many more to take out.

Also, on Monday, a helicopter from the USS *Bulkeley* responded to a distress call from the M/V *Artemis Glory*, a German-owned crude carrier. The helicopter crew from the *Bulkeley* saw the pirates firing on the merchant ship and returned fire, sinking the skiff and killing the four pirates aboard.

Also, on Monday, the USS *Bainbridge* responded to a distress call from a cargo carrier, the MSC *Ayala*. After the crew of the *Ayala* repelled a pirate attack, the *Bainbridge* arrived and located the mothership responsible for the attack. The crew made contact with the pirates, who ultimately agreed to abandon the mothership they had hijacked just 4 days before. Ironically, the skiff the pirates tried to flee in sank, and the pirates were rescued by the *Bainbridge*.

I commend the men and women serving on the USS *Stephen W. Groves*, the USS *Bulkeley*, and the USS *Bainbridge* for jobs very well done. My hope in the future is that we can have far more robust rules of engagement, empowering Commander Rick and his fellow commanders to eliminate the threat of piracy.

Of course, this mission would be in the highest traditions of the U.S. Navy and in the tradition of the Jefferson administration, which so ably handled this threat when it emerged in the early part of the 19th century. My only hope is that, in the coming administration review by Secretary of State Clinton, she adopts a more Jeffersonian policy with regard to this threat, so the sealanes, which control 70 percent of the world's supply of oil, and so the ransoms, one-third of which are now being paid to terrorists who operate the largest terror training camps on Earth, can be eliminated.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MANCHIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

STUDENT VOTING

Mr. MANCHIN. Madam President, I rise today to speak about the importance of getting our young people in-

involved in our electoral process and to highlight a West Virginia school with a standout record for going the extra mile to encourage students to register and participate in voting.

I tell young people all the time: You cannot sit on the sidelines and watch life happen. You have to get in the game and start making the calls. The same can be said about our democracy. If you want results, you have to first become an informed and active voter.

Voting is one of the greatest rights the free people of a free nation possess. Over the course of our Nation's history, many have fought tirelessly to gain voting rights. In fact, it was West Virginia's very own Senator Jennings Randolph who relentlessly pushed for the 26th amendment to our Constitution, ensuring those 18 years of age or older had the right to cast a ballot. It took him almost 30 years to get it passed. He started during World War II. It did not pass until 1971.

Each vote matters and the individuals casting those votes matter even more. I know that firsthand because I was honored to serve as West Virginia's highest elections officer, secretary of state. I served from 2000 to 2004.

During my tenure, we established a program called Saving History and Reaching Every Student Program, which was known as the SHARES Program which promoted democracy in West Virginia schools. We registered 42,000 high school students. In my State, so many of the students, if they are 17 years of age but they turn 18 on election day of November 4 or before, can vote in the primary while they are 17. They did not know that. We started promoting it. We had ambassadors. They were all working and trying to get 100 percent of their class eligible to participate—to register and then vote. Then we rewarded them with a school of excellence. My staff and I traveled the State speaking with high school seniors, encouraging them to complete a voter registration form and to participate in our elections.

A decade after that program began, it gives me great pleasure to stand on the Senate floor today and recognize a school—one school—that truly takes it to a whole other level with their students. They took it very seriously as far as democracy and their right and their responsibility to participate.

Every year for the past decade, the staff and the members of Fayette County's Meadow Bridge High School, with their outstanding principal, have registered 100 percent of each senior class. This is truly a remarkable accomplishment. I am unaware of any other school in our great State or across this Nation that has produced voter registration numbers such as those for 10 years in a row. Think of it: Every student in the senior class of this school for 10 years registered to participate.

The school takes important steps such as explaining the registration form, the election process, and the im-

portance of one's vote—all of which go a long way in opening the minds of young adults and showing them that it is easy to become involved, cast a vote, and make a difference.

I have said this to so many young students and the students who come and work with us every day: The most valuable thing you will ever own in your life is your vote. It belongs to you and nobody else. There is only one—your vote. Nobody can take that away from you.

I applaud Meadow Bridge High School's students, faculty, and staff for their commitment to our democracy. I challenge other high schools to follow Meadow Bridge's example.

Let us work together to encourage our Nation's young adults, even more when it comes to our democracy and national issues. This is not a partisan issue, as so many things might be in this body. This is not. It is all of us working together to continue to lead this great country. It is all of us being Americans and that we should support, for the future of our great Nation, this democracy of ours and the freedom to vote.

I am so proud that West Virginia's own Meadow Bridge High School is such a good example, not only for the State of West Virginia but for young students all over this Nation.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. KLOBUCHAR). Without objection, it is so ordered.

FREEDOM IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, I rise today to talk about President Obama's speech today on the support of the Arab spring, at least what we are calling the Arab spring. I believe and hope, as many of my colleagues do, that it is in the best interests of the United States to advance freedom in the Middle East.

Supporting free people and democratic governments has always guided American foreign policy. Lending our support to people who yearn for freedom is really part of our national DNA. Doing so in a practical and pragmatic way within the context of regional stability is imperative to our own national security.

In recent weeks I have been very supportive of the President's actions as they related to Osama bin Laden and the decisions that were made there. In recent months I thought the President has been a little unsteady in advancing the principles I mentioned earlier. He demonstrated uncertainty in dealing with President Mubarak before withdrawing his support and, if I can say so,

withdrawing his support suddenly. After hesitating for several weeks and allowing Mr. Qaddafi to regroup, we then authorized U.S. participation in a NATO air operation with a confusing mission that does not have the kind of U.S. leadership that it might have benefited from.

Then in Syria we stood on the sidelines for weeks while terrible things happened to profreedom demonstrators before we finally announced a series of sanctions just this week.

Of course, we all recall that in 2009, the Iranian regime possibly could have been unseated by proponents of freedom. At that time the President and the United States barely lifted a finger to support those elements.

Indeed, the President's entire narrative has been unclear since he took office, from the time of his Cairo speech in 2009. I think that speech has left our friends in the Arab world both disillusioned and confused.

Nobody, from the American people to the Arab street, seems sure of what our policy is in support of freedom. So I was very interested in the President's speech regarding a new American policy in the region targeted toward rapidly changing situations in the Middle East.

The President laid out a plan for an AID program for some Middle Eastern countries whose internal stability is challenged by recent events. The plan would consist of a combination of grants, of loans, of debt forgiveness, and the President's plan, I believe, has merit and there is value to a robust role for the United States to support certain governments at a critical time.

However, it is important that we recognize that any support given to these emerging or existing Arab governments can only be helpful to them if they are helpful to themselves. I believe Congress must be a partner in the development of this package for it to work. Congress will have to ensure that whatever aid is given is both targeted toward an outcome that is in the national security interests of the United States and does not increase the U.S. deficit. It will be a matter of looking at where we can find resources to use them in this new and different way.

My support for the President's idea will also be contingent on several principles being met by the government that receives any U.S. aid. As a member of the Foreign Operations Appropriations Committee I am going to be looking for things where the President would certify that the following conditions are being met to proceed further with this plan he outlined today.

First, I think the government and its leaders must reject all forms of terrorism if they expect to receive this kind of assistance from us.

Second, they must demonstrate a credible plan for economic development and poverty reduction. Lack of access to economic opportunity has been the driving force behind what has happened in these countries. It was not

about us; it was not about Israel; it was about jobs and food and economic opportunity. So that has to be one of the criteria that these governments would be looking at.

Third, they need to demonstrate a record of support for the rule of law, a prerequisite for ensuring that U.S. aid dollars will not be used to subvert the system of justice or to veil opponents or undermine constitutional government.

Fourth, they must respect minority and religious freedoms, including women's rights.

Fifth, they must have a sustained commitment to democratic reform and institution building. Nobody believes that democratic societies spring up overnight, but recent months remind us that failing to demonstrate commitment to more open systems of government can end in upheaval and force change.

Sixth, these governments, if we help them, must respect international norms such as honoring their treaty obligations and respecting universal human rights.

Last, but certainly not least, any government participating in the aid package like the one the President talked about today must be committed to regional peace. In particular, that includes peace with Israel. Israel has both the most to gain and the most to lose as new attitudes toward freedom and democracy spread throughout the Middle East. Leaders who are tempted to bait their populations with anti-semitism and then respond to their passions may be even more dangerous to Israel than the regimes they are replacing. But an adage of international relations is that truly free and democratic societies respect one another's existence, recognize one another's right to peace, and resolve their conflicts through peaceful resolution, not violence, not threats, not terror.

As nations throughout the Middle East undergo change, we should closely monitor their attitude toward Israel. Only nations that are constructive in their attitudes and policies toward our ally, Israel, should be eligible for the kind of aid the President discussed in his speech.

None of these conditions are meant to suggest these governments must be identical or that their leaders must always agree with the United States. I believe, for example, the Kingdom of Jordan currently meets these standards. I am hopeful Egypt's new leaders will commit to these principles as well. Leaders in the Palestinian Authority should look to them as a model for receiving aid from the United States and other western governments.

The President also addressed the need for a peace settlement between the Israelis and the Palestinians. It would be hard to find anyone in this body who does not agree with that concept. We need peace, the Israelis need peace and the Palestinians need peace. But we need to be very careful that we

do not set expectations so high that we create deep challenges not only for that process but also for the kind of regional acceptance of Israel that must occur in order to achieve peace.

In particular, I am concerned that the President believes that unilateral concessions by Israel, including redefining its borders, are a pathway to peace. I simply do not think that makes sense. There does not even appear to be a Palestinian partner capable of making the hard decisions that must occur in order to get an agreement.

Do we really think that Hamas, which has recently joined the government, is going to be a party to a peace deal with Israel? The Palestinian Authority has made real progress on the West Bank in recent years, while Hamas has brought chaos to Gaza.

A Palestinian Authority that cannot recognize Israel cannot make peace. That is why any financial relationship the United States has with the Palestinian Authority needs to be based on the principles I just described.

In his famous Westminster speech in 1982, President Reagan told the world the following:

While we must be cautious about forcing the pace of change, we must not hesitate to declare our ultimate objectives and to take concrete actions to move toward them. We must be staunch in our conviction that freedom is not the sole prerogative of a lucky few, but the inalienable and universal right of all human beings.

I believe those words are no less true today, 30 years later, than they were then. We are at an extremely important moment as we watch a movement toward freedom unprecedented in the history of the Arab world unfold. It is important to note that those taking to the streets are not burning American flags or shouting anti-Western slogans. It is also probably important to note that they are not waving American flags. It is simply not about us; it is about them.

Their passions are driven by generations of economic stagnation and a lack of political and economic freedom that has left them behind much of the free world's prosperity. These freedoms are exactly what the United States stands for. America's role is to support responsible leaders committed to peace and sustainable democratic change. I am hopeful the President will work with my colleagues in the Congress to extend a helping hand to those leaders who are truly committed to these values. If he does, I hope to be part of that process as well.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FRANKEN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

FOR-PROFIT EDUCATION
COMPANIES

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, over the past 6 months, I have come to the floor several times to discuss the findings of an ongoing investigation by the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee into the for-profit education sector, and the growing role they play in higher education. This investigation has been now ongoing for over a year.

Today, I want to focus my remarks on our men and women in uniform and how the for-profit schools are focusing on recruiting them to their schools, and what this means for the taxpayers of America.

The first GI bill made it possible for many of the servicemembers returning from World War II to go to college and get ahead in life. In the process, that ushered in a new era of American prosperity. That GI bill continued, of course, with Korea, through the Cold War, and through Vietnam. I myself used the GI bill after my service time so I could go to law school.

Over the decades, we have built on that success by extending Federal financial aid to active-duty members of our Armed Forces, and indeed to all Americans who seek to build a better life through higher education. On the whole, this has proved to be one of the Federal Government's smartest investments—an investment in human capital that has produced huge dividends for our Nation. We in Congress have been eager to ensure that this new generation of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan—those who sacrificed so much for our country—are getting the education benefits they earned and the quality of education they deserve.

Led by Senator WEBB and others, we have enacted new laws and expanded existing programs to provide generous new educational benefits to veterans, to active-duty servicemembers, and to their families. This is a historic achievement, and I am sure all of us were proud to support it.

Implemented in August of 2009, the post-9/11 GI bill provides that veterans who serve 90 days or more on active-duty effort, after September 10, 2001, are eligible for up to 36 months of educational benefits; and for the first time ever in history, veterans can transfer these benefits to a spouse or to a child. Over the last decade, the Department of Defense has also expanded aid available to active-duty soldiers, sailors, and airmen through its tuition assistance program. This program will pay up to a maximum of \$4,500 a year toward a servicemember's classes.

Also in 2009, Congress created the military spouse career advancement account, designed to expand employment and career opportunities for active-duty spouses, and that provides for a grant of \$4,000 over a 3-year period of time.

When the Congress acted to give new and better benefits to veterans and active-duty members and their families,

we fully expected that for-profit schools might have an important role to play in providing higher education. Obviously, they are flexible, and some of the primary work done is suited to veterans and active-duty soldiers and students juggling work and family obligations.

During my time in the military, of course, we had the University of Maryland, which still obviously provides a lot of online work. At that time, it was called "distance learning," and you did it by mail. The University of Maryland provided a lot of educational benefits for many years to active-duty personnel serving in far-flung places around the world. Of course, that was not a for-profit school; that was a non-profit school.

Unfortunately, when we enacted this whole new benefits package for servicemembers and veterans and their families, we didn't anticipate what would happen by opening up a new stream of funding to the for-profit schools. We didn't foresee that the for-profit sector, which is eager to please Wall Street investors, would go after student funding aggressively, in ways not in the best interests of veterans and servicemembers. We didn't recognize that by allowing servicemembers to combine, transfer, and borrow against these various Federal benefit packages we were giving for-profit schools an opening to enroll servicemembers, veterans, and family members in very expensive educational programs.

My committee's investigation over the past year has revealed an industry dominated by the very same Wall Street companies and equity investors who brought about the subprime mortgage crisis. These investors are focused on rapid growth and quick profits. In relatively short order, for-profit colleges and universities have succeeded in enrolling 10 percent of the students and claiming fully 25 percent of the Federal financial aid budget, including \$7 billion a year in Pell grants. So the for-profit sector has 10 percent of all of the students in the country and gets 25 percent of all Federal financial aid.

Many of these companies generate big profits, and there is a big problem. The committee has compiled data for 30 companies that own for-profit schools, including the 15 largest publicly traded ones, showing that more than half of the students these institutions enroll drop out within the first year. Two-thirds of the students who are there for a 2-year program drop out in the first year. Some of the worst performing institutions have been the most aggressive to enroll servicemembers and veterans.

Because profitability and the for-profit education industry is driven by enrollment growth, my committee's investigation has focused largely on the extraordinarily aggressive marketing and recruitment practices at these schools. Building on the findings of last year's undercover investigation by the GAO, which found abusive recruitment

practices at each of 15 campuses visited, we have uncovered additional evidence that misleading and deceptive recruiting tactics are not the exception but the norm.

Several months ago, on the floor of the Senate, I spoke about documents uncovered in my investigation. Those documents instruct recruiters in tactics designed to manipulate and emotionally exploit potential students in order to convince them to enroll. As I will demonstrate later in my speech they are going after the military by exploiting fear, uncertainty, and doubt.

We should be concerned that Congress may have unintentionally created an opening for the current generation of veterans and active-duty servicemembers to be victimized by these abuses simply because of their eligibility for expanded Federal aid that we enacted in the Congress.

My committee found evidence that large for-profit schools are aggressively recruiting active-duty servicemembers and veterans expressly because of their generous educational benefits packages. It is not just that these military benefits provide a new revenue stream for the companies. The point is that it is an especially valuable kind of revenue stream for these companies—more valuable than even going after nonveterans and non-GIs. Why is that?

Well, military money helps these for-profit schools to meet a key statutory requirement that no more than 90 percent of their revenue can come from Federal financial programs. That is in the law. No more than 90 percent of the income coming into a for-profit school can be from Federal financial programs. If a school is getting close to that 90 percent, guess what they do. They go after military people. Why is that? Because a military person, active duty or veteran, enrolled in a for-profit school doesn't count towards the 90 percent; it counts towards the 10 percent. So the school could actually have—and there are some—92 or 94 percent of all their money coming from Federal financial programs, even though the law says you can only get 90 percent, because military doesn't count. So you can see why, when close to 90 percent, they would want to go after the military. And that is exactly what is happening.

With their eyes on this 90/10 ratio, the for-profit schools have moved aggressively to exploit this opportunity. They have created marketing plans and a sales force specifically designed to target and enroll as many veterans, servicemembers, and family members as possible. Schools spend billions on sophisticated marketing campaigns and large sales teams to get those students in the door. Documents obtained by the HELP Committee paint a picture of an industry with a laser-like focus on enrolling military students.

For example, I have a 56-page document from Kaplan. This lays out their strategy for recruiting military students. If you go through it, you will see