

role European Governments will wish to play in a military and financial capacity. Hot on the heels of this dilemma will be the question of IRAN. How will the new US administration wish to address this issue? Will it be happy to let the Europeans take the lead or will it wish to take a more active approach as some suggest should be done?

Linked to both these questions is the overall pursuit of peace in the MIDDLE EAST. What has become of the initiative to bring European and American involvement together to make progress in the Broader Middle East? Should for example the roadmap be resuscitated?

Last but not least is the question of ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE to both Afghanistan and Africa (a potential priority for the G8 next year). How should this best be coordinated by the two major global donors—the EU and the US—who contribute about 80% of the world's assistance programmes?

This is all enough to cause indigestion. Certainly more questions are posed than answers are available. Even if cooperation is seen to be highly desirable, with the aim of moving from a transatlantic community of values to a community of action, how can it be done?

The best chance available to the incoming administrations is, as they say, not to start from here. These problems have been around for many months and will be around for many more.

A recently released document published by the Transatlantic Policy Network (TPN) lays the groundwork for a potentially successful approach to deepening joint cooperation between the EU and the US.

At the outset, it recommends a strategy which articulates a common purpose, building on strengths and reinforcing linkages while accommodating differences. This is based on the recognition of growing linkage between the partners' economic, defence and security, and political interests.

In short, should strengthened partnership be a shared goal, if so a bold new agenda for economic collaboration needs to be linked with a commitment to enhanced joint action on the highest shared political priorities.

What does this mean? Avoid well known areas of dispute such as a free trade area (FTA) and focus instead on what already exists to a large degree—the transatlantic market. The TPN document recommends deepening and broadening the transatlantic market, with a view to its completion by 2015.

An accelerated 2010 target date should be set for financial services and capital markets; civil aviation; the digital economy; competition policy and regulatory cooperation.

Furthermore, there should also be provision for a broad security partnership between the EU and the US, together with a mutually reinforcing interface between the EU and NATO.

Last, but not least, there should be put in place, by 2007, an enhanced basis for cooperation between the two partners—a transatlantic partnership agreement—building on the 1995 New Transatlantic Agenda and reflecting the strategy proposed.

Is this approach realistic and practical? Maybe surprisingly, the broad outlines of this approach have already been approved by the European Parliament in May 2004.

The economic option has the great advantage that most of the elements are already in place: the administrations are jointly consulting stakeholders as to how to remove the remaining barriers to trade and investment. Given the more than quadrupling of cross investment over the past 10 years, the process of interdependence between the EU and the US is not likely to slacken.

The vital ingredient for the success of this proposal is the factor of political will. Will

transatlantic leaders take a fresh look at how to bring the EU and the US together before getting sucked into the daily grind of politics?

Perhaps the best advice for the incoming Commission President would be to pay a short informal visit in early January to Washington. This should be not just to compare notes but also to put forward a joint plan which will allow Europeans and Americans to work as closely as possible in the interests of their peoples in the years ahead.

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#### H.R. 5365

Mr. GRAHAM of Florida. Mr. President, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 5365, a bill that will ensure the continuation of YMCA pension plan that has provided participants retirement security for more than 80 years. The Senate passed a bill, S. 2589, that Senator BUNNING and I worked to move earlier this year. The House of Representatives has now sent over a bill introduced by Representatives ENGLISH and POMEROY that closely follows the intent of the Senate bill. I am pleased that this effort has been a bipartisan one in both bodies of Congress. I hope this legislation will be enacted promptly.

I also thank Finance Committee Chairman GRASSLEY and Ranking Member BAUCUS for their assistance in bringing this bill to the floor today. The YMCA pension plan is an excellent example of how retirement security can be provided through employer-sponsored plans.

This is a bill about protecting the retirement security for thousands of YMCA employees and retirees. There are 27 YMCA's in Florida, over 977,843 members and over 4,400 plan participants and retirees. The retirement security provided by the YMCA pension plan is critical to these people and their families, as well as over 80,000 plan participants across the country.

This country could learn much from the retirement security provided by the YMCA pension plan. As I have stated, the YMCA pension plan is a very significant part of each YMCA employee's compensation package, most of who are modestly paid. The YMCA pension plan exemplifies how our Nation should think about providing solid, substantial retirement security.

I also want to extend my thanks to the Treasury Department and IRS, for their patience while the Congress worked through finding a solution to ensure the YMCA pension plan could continue to offer the benefits to its participants and retirees.

In closing, I encourage all of my colleagues in the Senate to support this bill, and I am pleased that we are moving forward with this legislation today and look forward to its enactment soon.

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#### REAUTHORIZATION OF THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, much of the Senate's attention this week was

consumed with completing lingering business, be it, appropriations bills or debt extension. In contrast, I rise today to ask my colleagues to cast their eyes forward to a new matter that we must focus on when Congress reconvenes in January—the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act. As most know, I consider the Violence Against Women Act the single most important legislation I've championed during my 30-year tenure in the Senate. I care deeply about this law, and take seriously my responsibility to ensure it is funded and renewed.

After more than 5 years of hearings, and legislative drafts and redrafts, in September 1994, the Congress passed and President Clinton signed into law the Violence Against Women Act. The Violence Against Women Act created new Federal criminal laws addressing domestic violence and rape, and established discretionary grant programs within the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Human Services for State, local, and Indian tribal governments and non-profit service organizations. The Violence Against Women Act of 2000 renewed these programs, made targeted improvements to certain provisions and introduced new initiatives.

Since the bill was enacted, we've witnessed an incredible transformation in State and Federal criminal and civil law enforcement, communities' victim services, and societal attitudes towards domestic violence and sexual assault. In 2004 alone, Congress spent \$520 million for Violence Against Women programs. Over the past decade, nearly \$3.8 billion has been appropriated to make women's homes and communities safer.

We've made extraordinary progress in ending violence against women and its devastating impact on families. With the passage of the Violence Against Women Act we started talking about that dirty little secret that no one wanted to say out loud. A rape victim or battered wife can now turn to a trained police officer, an emergency room nurse, or a 1-800 Hotline operator. We transformed private "family matters" into public crimes with true accountability and meaningful victim services.

The Violence Against Women Act is working. Since its enactment, domestic violence has dropped by almost 50 percent. Incidents of rape are down by 60 percent. The number of women killed by an abusive husband or boyfriend is down by 22 percent. More than half of all rape victims are stepping forward to report the crime. Over a million women have found justice in our courtrooms and obtained domestic violence protective orders. The signs of success abound.

But progress is not enough. Sadly, domestic violence and sexual assault persist. As more and more brave women are stepping forward to report a rape or seek a restraining order against an abusive husband, more demands are