

help spur our Nation's new energy economy and create jobs. To that end, tomorrow I will introduce the Solar Uniting Neighborhoods Act, or the SUN Act.

Last year, I began traveling across Colorado as part of a workforce tour to listen directly to Coloradans and hear their innovative policy ideas to create jobs. These ongoing efforts not only make me proud to be a Coloradan but they help me identify ways the Federal Government can help—or in some cases get out of the way—in supporting economic development and investing in Colorado. The SUN Act comes from directly visiting with Coloradans. It was one of the several job creation proposals developed after I hosted an energy jobs summit last month in Colorado.

Our summit brought together leading clean energy stakeholders from the worlds of business and public interest and government. Many of our top elected officials were there, including Energy Secretary Steven Chu, Governor Bill Ritter, Senator MICHAEL BENNET, and Congressman ED PERLMUTTER. They were there to discuss ways to sensibly spur job growth in our emerging clean energy economy. In the coming weeks, I will be introducing further legislation developed in part from the creative ideas that flowed from the clean energy summit.

The SUN Act will bring common sense to our Tax Code, get government out of the way of developing solar energy and spur job growth in every community across the United States. Americans currently qualify for a 30-percent Federal tax credit for the cost of installing solar panels on their homes. These solar panels are a great way to convert sunlight to electricity, and over time they save American families money on their utility bills. A few years ago, I installed panels on my own home to take advantage of the Sun, which is very strong in the great State of Colorado. But I have come to understand that this option isn't available for all American families who want to receive their electricity from solar power. Why? Well, there can be difficulties attaching solar panels to your home, which is why more and more neighborhoods and towns are creating so-called "community solar" projects. In those projects, instead of attaching the panels on every roof on the block, an increasing number of families have decided to place those same solar panels together in one open and unobstructed sunny area near their homes. By grouping these solar panels, you can reduce the cost by 30 percent compared to installing a panel or a set of panels on every roof in the neighborhood. Moreover, community solar projects streamline maintenance and optimize energy production by avoiding trees, buildings, and other obstructions. Whether used by neighbors living at the end of a cul-de-sac or developed by a rural energy cooperative, creating these group solar projects to share en-

ergy is a great way to lower the cost of making electricity through the marvelous technology of photovoltaic units.

But there is a problem. Our Tax Code gets in the way. Why? Well, we have seen the Federal Tax Code discourage neighborhood solar projects because it requires the panels to be on your property. To put it simply, Federal law is telling Americans they need to have their solar panels affixed to their roofs instead of being able to partner with their neighbors on a community solar project. So this discourages innovation and slows the growth of solar power as an alternative energy source.

Back to the reason why I am introducing the SUN Act. It makes a small change in the Tax Code so that we no longer will be constrained in this innovative solar energy opportunity. By eliminating the requirement that the solar panel be on one individual's property, it frees Americans to work together on community projects where each individual can claim a tax credit on part of a shared project. This simple turnkey solution makes it easier to adopt and use clean renewable energy.

As more and more Americans are realizing, weaning ourselves off sources of foreign energy is a bipartisan imperative no matter what you think about global warming. Back in 2004, Colorado took a big step forward into the emerging clean energy economy when we approved a renewable electricity standard—a so-called RES. I know the Presiding Officer supports such a concept. It wasn't an easy transition. There were a lot of skeptics who feared setting a goal for renewable energy would result in job losses. I remember it well. I cochaired the campaign for this RES in the State of Colorado with the Republican Speaker of our Statehouse, Lola Spradley, who is a close friend. She and I toured the State during election season in a bipartisan effort. It was a surprise to a lot of people, who thought Republicans and Democrats only fight and disagree. We in fact agreed, and we had a wonderful time campaigning together. We passed the RES.

Colorado has initiated other efforts as well and we have easily created over 20,000 jobs. We have the fourth highest concentration of renewable energy and energy research jobs in our country. Estimates are that the solar energy requirement in the RES—because the RES allows for wind, biomass, and other kinds of renewable energies—created over 1,500 jobs.

So what does this tell us? It tells us what we already know well—that American capitalism can take the seeds of an idea and create positive economic change. So wherever possible, our Federal Government should encourage, not hinder, such entrepreneurial ideas and entrepreneurs.

Other important issues are at play as well. As we find our way out of the current recession, we are witness to the emergence of powerful economic com-

petitors abroad, and we have an increasingly dangerous alliance on foreign fossil fuels. So with these factors in mind for our own economic and national security, Americans must become the world leader in adopting clean energy and creating homegrown jobs.

The story must be told that clean energy is one of the greatest economic opportunities of the 21st century. Fortunately, that is a promise we can meet as the global demand for clean energy is growing by \$1 trillion every year. Let me say that again—\$1 trillion every year. And what excites me about this bill, like many measures currently being debated here in our Chamber, is that it will create jobs for Americans in every neighborhood where these community solar projects are developed.

This bill reduces many of the barriers which currently prevent Americans from adopting solar energy, opens up new markets and creates a simple structure to allow people to utilize clean energy for their home.

As I close, I can tell you there is nothing more thrilling than making electricity, which I do in my own home. And then, when you need to use it at your home, you use it there. And also, when it is not needed, you send it back on the grid for your neighbors to use. So I urge my colleagues in both parties to join me in supporting this legislation.

I thank the Presiding Officer for his attention.

I yield the floor.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS ERIC D. CURRIER

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I rise today with a heavy heart to pay tribute to the life and service of Marine PFC Eric D. Currier of Londonderry, NH. This young soldier died from wounds inflicted by an enemy sniper in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, on February 17, 2010. Private First Class Currier was just 21 years old at the time of his death. A rifleman, he was a member of the 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force based at Camp Lejeune, NC, and was deployed to Afghanistan in January.

Eric was born in Massachusetts but moved to my home State of New Hampshire when he was in the eighth grade. He continued his schooling in Londonderry and graduated from Londonderry High School in 2007. Like many in northern New England, Eric was an avid outdoorsman. He began fishing with his grandfather at the age of three. He enjoyed camping trips with his brothers and was a skilled hunter. He spent many summer days boating, fishing and swimming while staying with his grandparents on Plum Island in Massachusetts. Eric even met his future wife, Kaila Parkhurst, while canoeing on the Saco River as a teenager. He was a fine young man, friendly and

outgoing, who cared deeply for his family. Army PVT Brent Currier, Eric's brother, describes him as the hero of his seven siblings.

Eric enlisted in the Marine Corps in March 2009 with a desire to serve an important cause and make his family proud. He most certainly accomplished those goals. Private First Class Currier selflessly joined the men and women of our armed services who give of themselves each day so that we, as a nation, might enjoy freedom and security. He has earned our country's enduring gratitude and recognition. While Eric's life may have ended too soon, his legacy lives on through the people who loved him and through all of us, who are forever indebted to him.

No words of mine can diminish the pain of losing such a young soldier, but I hope Eric's family can find solace in knowing that all Americans share a deep appreciation of his service. Daniel Webster's words, first spoken during his eulogy for Presidents Adams and Jefferson in 1826, are fitting: "Although no sculptured marble should rise to their memory, nor engraved stone bear record of their deeds, yet will their remembrance be as lasting as the land they honored." I ask my colleagues and all Americans to join me in honoring Eric's life, service and sacrifice.

Private First Class Currier is survived by his wife Kaila; his father Russell Currier; his mother Helen Boudreau and her husband Kevin; siblings Brent, Dylan, Kevin, Melana, Cassie, Jake and Alyssa; as well as grandparents, in-laws, and others. I offer my deepest sympathies to his entire family for their loss, and my sincere thanks for their loved one's service. This young marine will be dearly missed; his death while deployed far from home is another painful loss for our small State and for this Nation. It is my sad duty to enter the name of PFC Eric Currier in the RECORD of the U.S. Senate in recognition of his sacrifice for this country and his contribution to freedom and lasting peace.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, due to mechanical trouble that delayed my travel to the Senate on March 15, 2010, I regret I was unable to make the vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the motion to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 2847, the legislative vehicle of the HIRE Act. If present I would have voted aye.

TAIWAN SELF-DEFENSE REQUIREMENTS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, Taiwan is a steadfast ally in a very turbulent region of the world. On January 29, the State Department approved a \$6.4 billion arms package to Taiwan that includes 114 Patriot missiles, 60 Black

Hawk helicopters, Harpoon antiship training missiles, and Osprey-class minehunter ships.

I am pleased that the administration is taking this important step toward fulfilling the United States' commitment to Taiwan under the Taiwan Relations Act, TRA, which requires us to make available to Taiwan such defense articles and defense services "as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability." However, despite the billions of dollars worth of weapons involved in this sale, it represents little more than a half step in providing Taiwan the defensive arms that it needs—and that we are obligated by law to provide it—to protect itself against rapidly increasing air- and sea-based threats from China. What Taiwan has repeatedly requested—and what was not in the arms package—are new fighter aircraft.

Since 2006, the Taiwanese have made clear their desire to purchase 66 F-16 C/Ds to augment an air fleet that is bordering on obsolescence. On April 22, 2009, Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou reiterated Taiwan's commitment to request the F-16C/Ds from the Obama Administration. And, in a December 29, 2009, letter to Senate and House leaders, members of Taiwan's Parliament stated, "Though economic and diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China's Communist Party are improving, we face a significant threat from the People's Liberation Army Air Force. Our military must be able to defend our airspace as a further deterioration in the air balance across the Strait will only encourage PRC aggression."

On January 21, the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, DIA, completed a report on the current condition of Taiwan's air force. This formal assessment was required under a provision that I authored in the fiscal year 2010 National Defense Authorization Act, NDAA, which received bipartisan support. The report's findings are grim.

The unclassified version of the report concludes that, although Taiwan has an inventory of almost 400 combat aircraft, "far fewer of these are operationally capable." It states that Taiwan's 60 U.S.-made F-5 fighters have already reached the end of their operational service, that its 126 locally produced Indigenous Defense Fighter aircraft lack "the capability for sustained sorties," and that its 56 French-made Mirage 2000-5 fighter jets "require frequent, expensive maintenance" while lacking required spare parts. Furthermore, the report found that although some of Taiwan's 146 F-16 A/Bs may receive improvements to enhance avionics and combat effectiveness, the "extent of the upgrades, and timing and quantity of aircraft is currently unknown."

In the past, what has kept Taiwan free and allowed its democracy and free enterprise system to flourish has been a qualitative technological advantage in military hardware over Chinese

forces. In simple terms, it would have been too costly for Beijing to contemplate an attack on Taiwan. This in and of itself created a stabilizing effect that promoted dialogue and negotiations. Yet due to the massive, non-transparent increase in China's defense spending, the past 10 years have seen a dramatic erosion in this cornerstone of Taiwan's defense strategy. A gauge of how quickly this tide has turned can be found in the Department of Defense's Annual Report on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China. The 2002 version of this report concluded that Taiwan "has enjoyed dominance of the airspace over the Taiwan Strait for many years." The DOD's 2009 Report now states this conclusion no longer holds true.

Taiwanese defense officials have also recognized this alarming trend, predicting that, in the coming decade, they will completely lose their qualitative edge. Beijing will have an advantage in both troops and arms. This imminent reality holds critical consequences for both our ally Taiwan and the United States. If China becomes emboldened, it might be tempted to try to take Taiwan through outright aggression or cow Taiwan into subservience through intimidation.

How would the U.S. react in the face of Chinese belligerence towards Taiwan? Would we deploy our ships and aircraft to ward off Chinese aggression? Would we decide to counter force with force? These are difficult and tough questions, and the soundest policy option is to ensure they never have to be answered. We know a Taiwan that is properly defended and equipped will raise the stakes for China, and that would serve as the best defense against belligerent acts.

Strategically, assisting Taiwan in maintaining a robust defense capability will help keep the Taiwan Strait stable. We should remember that, in 1996, Beijing rattled its Chinese saber and launched ballistic missiles off Taiwan's coast and initiated amphibious landing training exercises. This prompted President Clinton to dispatch two carrier battle groups as a show of strength. President Ma recently commented on the latest weapons sale by stating, "The more confidence we have and the safer we feel, the more interactions we can have with mainland China. The new weapons will help us develop cross-strait ties and ensure Taiwan maintains a determined defense and effective deterrence." During the Reagan years, we knew this common-sense strategy as "Peace Through Strength."

The benefits of an F-16 sale to Taiwan are not limited to national security—this sale also stands to benefit the American economy during a difficult period. The F-16, one of the world's finest tactical aircraft, is proudly assembled in Fort Worth, TX. The overall production effort involves hundreds of suppliers and thousands of workers across the United States. The