

I have long been impressed with USIP's work in Sudan, where the Institute's training in electoral violence prevention contributed to the relatively peaceful referendum and the low levels of violence in its aftermath. USIP is now actively assisting in the development of a new constitution for Southern Sudan through its Rule of Law Program. Recognizing the volatility of the north/south border areas and the potential for an outbreak of contagious violence, USIP has instituted a cross-border grazing corridor project and designed a popular consultations process in the troubled border states of Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan.

In Pakistan, another area of great concern to me, USIP is developing a network of conflict management facilitators to work at the local level, training Pakistani parliamentarians and women leaders in conflict resolution and developing a curriculum for schools based on principles of gender equality, tolerance, pluralism, and peace.

Under the Senate substitute, USIP's funding would be reduced by almost 20 percent. But any greater reduction would threaten this Federal institute that has proven it saves American lives and money. The drastic action of the House to defund USIP must not stand.

These sorts of severe cuts, which will reduce our capacity from Afghanistan to Sudan, from war zones to earthquake zones, will do almost nothing to rein in our budget deficit. But they will cost thousands of lives overseas, and they will increase the threats to our own country. At a time of great challenge to American interests abroad, we must step up at home and provide the vital funds that our diplomats need.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that a letter be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND,
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDER,
MacDill AFB, FL, February 11, 2009.

Mr. ROB GOLDBERG,
Director, International Affairs Division, National Security Programs, The Office of Management and Budget, 17th Street, NW., Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. GOLDBERG, I would like to underscore the importance of the U.S. Institute for Peace (USIP) to the missions the United States is currently pursuing in Iraq and Afghanistan. While I have long been an avid reader of USIP's analytical products, which are second to none in tracking the challenges we face in both countries and in outlining policy options, I have more recently been impressed with USIP's on-the-ground peacebuilding efforts.

In Iraq, the Institute stepped up to the plate beginning in August 2007 to assist the 10th Mountain Division in a reconciliation effort in Mahmoudiya, a community on the southern edge of Baghdad that was once known as the "Triangle of Death." Since then, General Odierno and I have often cited Mahmoudiya as a striking success story. USIP's continuing reconciliation efforts at the community level, especially in Diyala

and Ninewa, as well as at the national level in Baghdad, hold great promise for the future.

In Afghanistan, USIP's work on the informal justice system has been invaluable as we work toward improving the rule of law at the provincial level. Their plans for reconciliation efforts at the community level on the Afghanistan/Pakistan border are likewise a potential key to success in the enormous challenges we face.

USIP's experience working closely with the U.S. military will be a great asset in developing stronger unity of effort between civilian and military elements of government. In fact, I hope soon to see U.S. military officers training alongside civilian governmental and nongovernmental counterparts in USIP's headquarters at 23rd and Constitution. Their facility is not just an important symbol of our nation's commitment to peace; it is also home to a wonderful training center that we hope to leverage to increase understanding and unity of effort in today's complex operations.

We can be proud of what USIP has done in the past, and I look forward with confidence to the contributions the Institute will make in the future.

Sincerely,

DAVID H. PETRAEUS,
*General, United States Army,
Commanding.*

9/11 HEALTH FUNDING

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, we rise today to engage in a colloquy regarding funding for the 9/11 health program. The chairman has been a tireless supporter of the 9/11 World Trade Center health program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's, CDC, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, NIOSH. This program has helped our first responders who bravely rushed in on September 11 and thousands of others who were in the area on that terrible day.

The 2011 continuing resolution proposed by Senator INOUE that the Senate will vote on today makes fiscally prudent adjustments to our Nation's spending, but I wanted to clarify with the Senator, through this colloquy, that none of the spending reductions in the CR will impact the current health care screening and treatment for first responders, survivors, residents, students and others related to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. As the Senator knows, we successfully enacted a bipartisan bill to provide mandatory funding to take care of the first responders and others who became sick from toxic fumes, dust, and smoke after the 2001 attack on the World Trade Center. This new law was our Christmas miracle. It is very important to me and my constituents that there is no disruption in the care that eligible responders and victims can receive.

Mr. HARKIN. I thank the Senators. The Senator is absolutely correct, the 2011 continuing resolution that was proposed by Senator INOUE will not reduce any services or treatment available to responders in the World Trade Center Health Program. In fact, we

have been assured by the staff at HHS that there are sufficient funds for treatment and screening of the responders and victims to continue without interruption.

Mr. SCHUMER. It's my understanding that the fiscal year 2010 appropriation included \$70.7 million for the World Trade Center Health Program, but that the 2011 continuing resolution proposed by Senator INOUE does not specify an amount for the implementation of the new law.

Mr. HARKIN. Yes, the \$70.7 million provided to the program in the fiscal year 2010 omnibus remains available to NIOSH to use until expended. It is our understanding that \$13 million remains of that \$70.7 million and that it will be used to continue access to the program.

Mr. MENENDEZ. I thank the Senator for that clarification. I too am very concerned about continuity in the World Trade Center Health Program. The mandatory funding will start on July 1, 2011, and it is critically important that the transition be as smooth as possible. I would like to thank the Senator for ensuring that this program will be able to continue under the 2011 CR, and I would like to ask, on behalf of all of us and our constituents, that we work together to ensure that the fiscal year 2011 discretionary funds support the full and timely implementation of the mandatory program. It is very important that funding is provided to ensure that NIOSH and the World Trade Center monitoring and treatment programs can seamlessly continue their work.

Mr. HARKIN. Yes, I commit to working with the Senator. I commit to the Senators that we will specifically allocate in the CR that will pass the Senate the amount of funds that are necessary to ensure a smooth transition in July.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. I thank the Chairman for that clarification and for ensuring that these American heroes were not forgotten. I hope we can all work together each year on this important program.

ARGENTINA'S DEBTS

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the treatment of American creditors by the Republic of Argentina. Almost 10 years ago, the Argentine government defaulted on over \$81 billion in sovereign debt. Nearly \$9 billion of this debt was held by the U.S. Government and American citizens. Following its default, Argentina made take-it-or-leave-it settlement offers well below international norms for settling sovereign debt defaults.

I am glad to report that recently Argentina has shown a willingness to negotiate in settling some of this debt. Argentina recently informed the Paris Club, a group of sovereign governments that includes the United States and represents 19 creditor countries, that it will pay its outstanding sovereign debt,

including \$360 million owed to the United States. Argentina's willingness to pay its debts to the Paris Club demonstrates its capacity to go further and compensate private American creditors, who have been trying to collect outstanding debt from Argentina for years. The fact that Argentina has agreed to pay its public debts to other sovereign nations is a welcomed first step. However, private U.S. creditors are still owed billions of dollars.

As I mentioned before in this Chamber, these private creditors have won over 100 U.S. Federal court judgments against Argentina. Now that Argentina has shown that it can and will pay its debts through the Paris Club negotiations, the administration should work to get this issue resolved for the remaining American bondholders and taxpayers.

I hope my colleagues will join me in urging the administration to protect the well-being of the American citizens impacted by Argentina's failure to pay its debts.

Rx IMPACT DAY

Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota. Mr. President, I rise today in advance of the Third Annual National Association of Chain Drug Stores RxIMPACT Day to recognize pharmacy contributions to the American health care system. Over the course of the next 2 days, over 300 members of the pharmacy community, including practicing pharmacists, pharmacy school faculty and students, State pharmacy leaders and pharmacy company executives, will visit Capitol Hill to share their views with Congress about the importance of protecting access to neighborhood pharmacies and utilizing pharmacists to improve quality and reduce health costs.

Pharmacists play an important role in improving our health care system by providing services and expertise that help patients manage their medications and overall health. In many communities, pharmacists are the most accessible health care provider group. Today's pharmacies offer a variety of preventive healthcare services including immunizations and vaccinations, health screening services, disease management services and routine advice on the best and most effective over-the-counter products for patients' specific needs.

Through medication therapy management, MTM, pharmacists reduce medical errors and help patients manage and adhere to their prescribed therapies. Drug therapy management services can play a critical role in improving the quality of care and containing health care costs, as these services help patients make the best possible use of their medications. MTM services require a partnership of the pharmacist, the patient or their caregiver, and other health professionals to promote the safe and effective use of medications and help patients achieve targeted health outcomes. I am pleased

the Affordable Care Act recognized the health benefits and cost savings associated with MTM and includes a series of grant programs to encourage MTM as part of coordinated care models and chronic disease initiatives. Reform also improves the MTM benefit in Medicare Part D and establishes a bonus payment for Medicare Advantage plans that promote MTM.

Analysis conducted by the New England Healthcare Institute estimates that the overall cost of incorrect use of medication is as much as \$290 billion per year, not to mention the avoidable loss of quality of life for patients and their loved ones. With increasing evidence this benefit can improve patient health outcomes, I support community pharmacy's efforts to strengthen the MTM benefit. I joined colleagues earlier this year in introducing the Medication Therapy Management Empowerment Act. In addition to extending MTM services to seniors and others struggling with chronic conditions, this bill provides appropriate reimbursement for pharmacists' time and service. The bill also establishes standards for data collection to evaluate and improve the Part D MTM benefit.

Throughout my service in Congress, I have been a strong supporter of pharmacies and recognize their important role in our health care system. Today, I celebrate the value of pharmacy and support efforts to protect access to neighborhood pharmacies and utilize pharmacies to improve the quality and reduce the costs of health care. I commend pharmacy leaders, pharmacists, students, and executives and the pharmacy community for their contributions to improving the health of the American people.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I rise today, March 8, to celebrate International Women's Day, on which we honor the economic, political, and social achievements of women in Colorado and across the world. It also happens to be the 100-year anniversary of International Women's Day. For 100 years, diverse nations have spoken as one to honor the achievements of women and look forward hopefully to a future with greater economic opportunities for all women, including my three daughters, Caroline, Halina, and Anne.

I would like to celebrate today by discussing ways that we can build toward that future and create better economic opportunities for women in all countries—from Afghanistan to Zambia, two countries which, incidentally, celebrate International Women's Day as an official holiday.

All too often, in many developing countries, women represent a disproportionate number of the poor. According to the United Nations Development Program, women represent 60 percent of the 1.4 billion people living on less than \$1.25 a day. They also lack

access to the same educational and health services as men. For example, two-thirds of the world's illiterate people are women.

These disparities are stark, and their causes are the product of historical second-class citizenship for women. Such historical disadvantages are pervasive and systemic. Only with the determined effort of the international community can we begin to break down these barriers and foster true economic opportunities for women.

Many women and girls are trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty because of their limited access to basic financial services. Women often manage the household and produce food for the entire family, but they are unable to save money, protect against calamity, or obtain a small loan—simple banking tools you and I take for granted.

For example, 75 percent of the world's women cannot obtain formal bank loans, partly because they lack permanent employment, capital, and assets, such as land. In some countries, like Burkina Faso, laws do not specifically discriminate against women, but they do establish landowner criteria that effectively exclude women.

One way to bridge this gap is to connect women with access to financial services and microfinance. Very small loans can help some women start and expand small businesses. Others need a safe place to store money as they save for school fees and health care services for their children. Some small businesswomen and female heads of households wish to purchase simple forms of insurance to protect against unexpected illnesses, which can often wipe a family out. By increasing women's access to such basic financial services, we can help countless women weather unexpected storms and gain agency over their economic well-being.

Creating economic and financial opportunities for women worldwide is the right thing to do, and it is also the smart thing to do. In countries like Pakistan and Yemen, supporting women can lead to measurable progress in the economic success of families and the direction of tomorrow's youth. In sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, these efforts can help small-scale, subsistence farmers, most of whom are women, prevent future food crises and help stabilize struggling democracies.

Mr. President and all other Members here today, please join me in celebrating International Women's Day by supporting efforts to expand economic opportunities for women around the world.

TEACHING GEOGRAPHY IS FUNDAMENTAL ACT

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I rise in strong support of the Teaching Geography is Fundamental Act, introduced by Senator COCHRAN and myself last week. Increasing geography literacy is essential to STEM education, and investing in our children's science