

one of the broadest coalitions I have ever seen behind any piece of legislation. It is a huge and important coalition. It represents America. It is people who work every day at building the infrastructure, utilizing the infrastructure, and making sure our homes are safe from flooding. The list includes the National Governors Association. It is a rarity to have that kind of a list.

At this point, we are supposed to vote at noon, and we will be back to you with some further comments.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2013

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 601, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 601) to provide for the conservation and development of water and related resources, to authorize the Secretary of the Army to construct various projects for improvements to rivers and harbors of the United States, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 12 noon will be divided and controlled in the usual form.

Mrs. BOXER. While we discuss how we are going to proceed, 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.

Mrs. BOXER. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mrs. BOXER. I ask unanimous consent that the time during quorum calls be divided equally.

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

Mrs. BOXER. I note the absence of a quorum.

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

MILITARY SEXUAL ASSAULT

Mrs. HAGAN. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the sexual assault crisis that is facing our military and the need to act immediately to address this problem.

Last week, the Department of Defense released a report estimating that over 26,000 servicemembers—and this includes men and women—were sexu-

ally assaulted in 2012, and this is up from approximately 19,000 in 2010. This is astounding and totally unacceptable.

Even more alarming is the fact the number of cases actually reported remains just a fraction of the total. Only 13 percent of these cases are actually reported. Let me repeat that: Only 13 percent of assaults were actually reported in 2012.

As a member of the Armed Services Committee and a Senator from North Carolina, home to the third largest military population in the country, I find these statistics appalling. The brave servicemembers who put their lives on the line should not have to worry about their personal safety on bases in the United States and around the world. The men and women who are already tasked with so much, who have vowed to serve and protect our country, should feel they are afforded the same protection in return, but they are not.

The stories I hear from our female servicemembers are astounding. One woman marine was raped by an acquaintance, her fellow marine, in her barracks one night. No one heard her cries for help. The next day she did report the assault to her chain of command. An investigation was launched from there. While that investigation was underway, from June to January, she was heavily alienated by her peers. She was called derogatory names, and her sergeant major even told her the assault was her fault because she must have given her rapist a reason to think it was OK. In the end the official investigation found her claim was “unfounded” because there were no witnesses, and she did not know at the time she should have gone to the hospital and had a rape kit analysis done.

Other servicemembers—women who have served on forward operating bases in Afghanistan—have told me they limit their water intake throughout the day so they do not have to use the latrines in the middle of the night and by doing so put themselves at further risk of being assaulted. No one should ever have to deal with those kinds of concerns, especially when they are already putting their lives on the line to protect our Nation.

The Department of Defense has reported that half of all servicemembers who were victims of sexual assault say they are actually afraid to report out of fear of retaliation or that their confidentiality will not be maintained. Others believe reporting the crime will jeopardize their military career. They fear they would not receive opportunities for advancement—opportunities they have earned through service to our country.

This is just totally unacceptable. The men and women of our Armed Forces deserve far more. We have to deal with this problem once and for all, and I am encouraged the National Defense Authorization Act of 2013 includes specific directives to reduce the alarming number of assaults that take place and often go unreported.

Specifically, these provisions include independent review boards to examine how sexual assault cases are handled, the creation of a special victims unit, ensuring convicted offenders are permanently barred from the military, improving how the military collects data on this topic, and several other needed provisions.

During his confirmation process, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel said he was committed to fully implementing these directives, and I urge Secretary Hagel to report to Congress on the progress made as swiftly as possible. I still believe Congress should and must do more. The steps I believe we should consider are, first, the creation of a special victims counsel that would include advocates who can support victims and help them report incidents of sexual assault.

As I mentioned, too many victims do not come forward because they are either afraid of retaliation, they do not believe their confidentiality will be maintained, or they do not have faith in the military justice system. As in the case of the woman I described who had been raped, she did not know she should have had an analysis of rape actually done. These victims advocates would have given her that advice.

Second, we are fortunate in the Senate to have a number of former prosecutors engaged on this issue. Over the last 20 years, they and their colleagues have made great strides in handling sexual assault cases in the civilian world, and I believe we should take the lessons learned from that process to improve the military’s response—lessons including proper training for tackling evidentiary issues and addressing victims’ needs.

Third, commanding officers can overturn verdicts of jury trials, as happened in the Air Force earlier this year. These are commanding officers, they are not appellate judges; they are not legally trained. They should not have the authority to overturn a verdict. I believe we should review that authority as it applies to sexual assault cases, something Defense Secretary Hagel has indicated should be a priority.

Finally, we need to explore whether the present Uniform Code of Military Justice is up to the task of addressing the problem of sexual assault. I believe both the Armed Forces and the cause of justice would be well served by a vigorous debate in Congress on whether sexual assault cases can be effectively handled within the chain of command or whether this process needs to occur independently. Significant overhauls of the Uniform Code of Military Justice should not be approached lightly, but we owe it to our servicemembers to think outside the box and consider all possibilities.

These men and women of our military cannot wait another day, and they should not have to wait another day for this problem to be addressed. I urge my colleagues to join me in taking concrete steps to address this issue and to