

that they would be activists who would legislate from the bench." While we may differ on whether a judge's record evidences judicial activism, Republicans can hardly now be saying that such inquiry is inappropriate.

Another Republican Senator argued in 2000 in defense of his record of stalling Senate consideration of judicial nominees voted out of the Judiciary Committee that having "strong qualifications and personal attributes," being "fine lawyers [who] are technically competent" was not the test. He said then: "My concern is with their judicial philosophies and their likely activism on the court. . . . Judicial activism is a fundamental challenge to our system of government, and it represents a danger that requires constant vigilance." He went on to say that the Senate should not defer to the President "if there is a problem with a series of decisions or positions [judicial nominees] have taken."

Another Republican Senator said in 1998 that the Republicans were "not abusing our advise and consent power. As a matter of fact, I don't think we have been aggressive enough in utilizing it to ensure that the nominees to the Federal Bench are mainstream nominees."

Yet another Republican said in 1994: "My decision on a judicial nominee's fitness is based on my evaluation of three criteria: character, competence and judicial philosophy—that is, how the nominee views the duty of the court and its scope of authority."

There are numerous other examples, of course, but these suffice to make the point.

I ask that my full statement in opposition to the nomination of Justice Owen from the Judiciary Committee consideration be included in the RECORD at the end of these remarks. It focuses on the merits of the nomination, as did Senator FEINSTEIN, Senator KENNEDY, Senator SCHUMER, Senator DURBIN and Senator DEWINE. A few of the statements in the two-hour debate before the Committee were not helpful to a reasoned debate, but by and large the Committee debate was on the merits. That followed an extensive hearing, that lasted six hours, which Senator FEINSTEIN chaired fairly and patiently. A thorough hearing and a fair vote is what Justice Owen's nomination received from the Committee.

The name-calling, threats, tactics of intimidation and retaliation are not helpful to the process. Holding up important legislative initiatives is harmful. Holding up "the comma bill" and threatening Democrats that they will be barred from Air Force One are silly.

Today the Senator Judiciary Committee reported a conservative Republican nominee to the Senate for a vacancy on a Court of Appeals. This nominee, Judge Reena Raggi, was first appointed by President Reagan and she came before the Committee with strong bipartisan support and without the divisive controversy that accom-

panies so many of President Bush's circuit court nominees. Judge Raggi was reported out unanimously today. Indeed, since the change in majority less than 15 months ago, the Committee has worked hard to report 80 judicial nominees to the Senate. They include a number of very conservative judges.

I have made suggestions to the White House for improving the nominations and confirmations processes but those suggestions continue to be rebuffed. I wish the White House would work with us rather than stridently insist on seeking to skew the federal courts ideologically.

LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2001

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about hate crimes legislation I introduced with Senator KENNEDY in March of last year. The Local Law Enforcement Act of 2001 would add new categories to current hate crimes legislation sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society.

I would like to describe a terrible crime that occurred in August 2001 in St. Paul, MN. Two men leaving a Ku Klux Klan rally attacked a four year old boy of mixed race. The attackers pushed the boy off his bicycle, yelled racial epithets, and punched the child in the side of the head.

I believe that Government's first duty is to defend its citizens, to defend them against the harms that come out of hate. The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act of 2001 is now a symbol that can become substance. I believe that by passing this legislation and changing current law, we can change hearts and minds as well.

SITTING DUCKS

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, last week the Violence Policy Center, VPC, released a report entitled Sitting Ducks detailing the danger of the .50 caliber sniper rifle as a terrorist threat to, among other things, refineries and hazardous-chemical facilities. According to the VPC's report, the .50 caliber sniper rifle, equipped with explosive or armor-piercing ammunition, is capable of hitting a target accurately from more than a thousand yards away making it well suited to attack fuel tanks and other high-value targets from a distance.

The VPC report highlights the danger of a .50 caliber sniper rifle being used in a simple conventional attack with potentially disastrous results. The weapon is not only readily available, "low technology", but a .50 caliber sniper rifle is so powerful that it has been said to be able to wreck several million dollars' worth of jet aircraft with one or two dollars' worth of ammunition.

Despite its obvious power, under current law .50 caliber sniper rifles are no more regulated than hunting rifles.

That is why I cosponsored Senator FEINSTEIN's "Military Sniper Weapon Regulation Act," S. 505. This bill would change the way .50 caliber guns are regulated by placing them under the requirements of the National Firearms Act. This action would subject these weapons to the same regimen of registration and background checks to which other weapons of war, such as machine guns, are currently subjected. This is a necessary step to assuring the safety of Americans.

Mr. President, .50 caliber weapons are too powerful and too accessible to be ignored. Tighter regulations are needed. I urge my colleagues to support Senator FEINSTEIN's bill.

COMMEMORATING SGT. FIRST CLASS CHRISTOPHER JAMES SPEER

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, as we meet here just days from the anniversary of the terrorist attacks on our country, it is my sad duty to report that another of my statesmen has lost his life in the war on terror. Sergeant First Class Christopher James Speer, a former resident of Albuquerque, NM, died on August 7, 2002 as a result of wounds he sustained during a firefight with suspected terrorists in Afghanistan. Today, I want to take a few moments to convey my condolences to the Speer family, and to talk a little bit about who this special young man was.

Christopher Speer was a 1992 graduate of Sandia High School in Albuquerque. Upon graduation, he enlisted in the United States Army and became a medical specialist. In 1994, he volunteered for and was selected for Special Forces training. After completing this training, he was assigned to the 3rd Special Forces Airborne Group at Fort Bragg, North Carolina where he served as a medical sergeant. Last spring, Christopher was sent to Afghanistan as part of a Joint Special Operations task force.

On July 27th of this year, Christopher took part in a U.S. operation aimed at confirming intelligence about enemy activities in one of the most dangerous parts of Afghanistan. During that operation, our troops were ambushed and a four-hour gunbattle ensued. During this battle, five American personnel were wounded, and one of them—Christopher Speer—lost his life. For his valor and ten years of dedicated service to country Christopher received the Soldier's Medal, the Bronze Star with "V" device, the Purple Heart, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Army Commendation Medal and two Army Achievement Medals.

In addition to patriot, Christopher was very much a family man, as well. And for those family members who knew him best and loved him most, this September 9th will be especially difficult. Because on that day, Christopher was to have turned 29 years old. To Tabitha, his wife; to Taryn and