

There is no doubt that I and every other Member in this body will do all in our power to protect our troops while they are serving so bravely in Iraq or wherever else their political leaders decide to send them. That is why there was overwhelming Senate support for the Murray resolution, S. Res. 107, which we voted on prior to the Gregg resolution.

I would remind our colleagues that I have fought as hard as anyone in the Congress to ensure that our troops have the equipment and resources they need in Iraq—on some occasions over the objections of the administration and their congressional allies, I might add.

In 2003, the Army identified \$322 million in shortfalls in critical health and safety gear—ranging from body armor, camelback hydration systems, and com-

bat helmets to equipment for deactivating high-explosives—all priorities that the Rumsfeld Pentagon and Bush administration failed to provide for in their initial budgets. I offered an amendment to the emergency appropriations bill to resolve these problems. Unfortunately, the Bush administration opposed this legislation, and the amendment was defeated along party lines with the help of the very same Senators who are now claiming to be supporting our troops.

In 2004, we tried a different approach—requiring the Department of Defense to reimburse military personnel who bought equipment with their own funds for military service in Iraq and Afghanistan that the Rumsfeld Pentagon had failed to provide. This time, despite ardent objections of Secretary Rumsfeld's Pentagon, Congress approved the legislation in October 2004. President Bush signed the bill into law. We approved similar legislation in 2005 to further extend this benefit as troops, their families, and their communities continued to dig into their own pockets to buy needed life-saving equipment for use on the battlefield.

Last year, the difficulties associated with equipment shortfalls posed a far more serious problem. I offered an amendment to address a \$17 billion budget shortfall to replace and repair thousands of war-battered tanks, aircraft, and vehicles. Without these additional resources, the Army Chief of Staff claimed that U.S. Army readiness would deteriorate even further.

That said, still more remains to be done if the men and women on active duty, in the Reserves and National Guard are to be fully equipped and ready to defend our country. We need to make certain that our troops have the resources they need to stay ready to fight wherever and whenever duty calls. Regrettably, the war in Iraq is actually draining these resources and making us less safe. That is why I am going to work to continue restocking our troops' equipment inventories to restore their readiness and assure their protection.

Voting for a resolution expressing support for the troops is not the same as making concrete decisions to actually do so. Making sure they are fully equipped and that the mission they have been sent to do is achievable is a fundamental part of meaningfully supporting the troops. For me and many others in this body, our vote in support of the Reid resolution, S.J. Res 9, was a vote to support our troops by mandating a different direction in the current failed policy in Iraq, namely the phased redeployment of our combat troops from Iraq, and a narrowing of the mission for those who remain.

I will continue to stand up for what I believe is a necessary change in course in Iraq and in American strategy. I will continue to fight to reverse the President's failed policy which has made us less safe, which has created a safe haven for extremists and terrorists in Iraq, and which has undermined the moral and political standing of the United States around the world.

Most important, I will continue to stand up for our brave men and women in uniform. I will continue to fight for increased funding for body armor and other critical needs. I will continue to fight for funding for our military personnel to keep them safe and effective and to ensure they are not forgotten if they come home injured and in need of care.

I will continue to call for meaningful actions in this Congress to redirect funding away from major combat operations, while ensuring that we have the means and tools necessary to continue vital training and equipping of Iraqi security forces, counter terrorism operations, and the diplomatic, political, and economic offensive and strategies that are the key elements to finding a solution to the crisis in Iraq and in the wider region.

I refuse to be cowed or bullied by false choices. It is long overdue that we stand up to unreasonable arguments, conflated logic, attacks against dissent and debate, and most important, failed policies which are making our country less safe, each and every day.

HEALTHY FAMILIES ACT

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, on Thursday, March 15, 2007, I proudly joined Senator KENNEDY as a cosponsor of the Healthy Families Act. This legislation will provide full-time employees with up to 7 paid sick days a year so that they can take care of their own medical needs or the medical needs of family members. Part-time employees would receive a pro-rata amount of paid sick leave. All employers—public and private—with at least 15 employees would be covered by the Healthy Families Act.

Today, 57 million workers in the United States do not have paid sick days. Thus, when faced with either a personal or family medical issue, they are forced to choose between caring for themselves or their loved ones and

going to work to keep food on the table and a paycheck in the mail. This is not acceptable. People get sick every day. They should have the right to get medical treatment without jeopardizing their jobs or harming the people around them. The Healthy Families Act would guarantee them that right.

According to Harvard University's Global Working Families Project, 139 nations provide some sort of paid sick days; 177 of those nations guarantee at least a week of annual sick pay. The United States, however, has no such guarantee—the federal Family and Medical Leave Act provides only unpaid sick leave for serious personal or family illnesses. This lack of paid sick leave puts our Nation's workforce, both present and future, at risk.

As ranking member of the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, I am extremely conscious of the regulatory burden that our businesses face—particularly our small businesses. I believe that government should avoid weighing down small businesses with unnecessary regulations. However, the more I have examined this issue, the more obvious it becomes that this legislation benefits both employees and employers.

It does not take a rocket scientist to figure out that healthy employees are the key to a productive and vibrant economy. Healthy employees are more productive and often more efficient. But, without paid sick days, many employees will go to work rather than take time off to get regular preventative medical checkups or to recover from an attacking illness or to care for a sick child. Thus, they will get sick more often, and their illnesses will spread. Employees who opt to come to work when sick can make their condition worse or even spread their illness to coworkers. For a business, it is far more costly to cope with a depleted staff or to search for a replacement when an employee is suffering from an extended illness than it is to provide just 7 sick days. Providing employees with a small number of paid sick days is a simple and commonsense fix that will save businesses time and money.

In addition, I have heard that small businesses often complain that they want to offer this benefit but are unable to and need a level playing field. This legislation would offer them just that.

Mr. President, I hope my colleagues will take a look at the Healthy Families Act and will join me in cosponsoring it.

ASSAULT WEAPONS

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, the National Rifle Association leadership has stated repeatedly that a ban on assault weapons is ineffective and unnecessary. They assert that guns labeled as assault weapons are rarely used in violent crimes and that most people use them for hunting. However, despite these repeated assertions, the list of

people speaking out against assault weapons continues to grow.

Jim Zumbo, an outdoors entrepreneur who lives in a log cabin near Yellowstone National Park, has spent much of his life writing for prominent outdoor magazines, delivering lectures across the country and who starred in a highly rated TV show about big-game hunting. Jim has been an NRA member for 40 years, and, according to his Web site, has appeared with NRA officials in 70 cities across the country. This relationship changed drastically when Jim expressed his commonsense opinion on assault weapons.

Last month, after learning that some hunters were using assault weapons to hunt prairie dogs, Jim expressed his thoughts in his personal blog on the Outdoor Life magazine website. He wrote:

Maybe I'm a traditionalist, but I see no place for these weapons among our hunting fraternity. I'll go so far as to call them "terrorist rifles."

He continued by stating that in his:

... humble opinion, these things have no place in hunting. We don't need to be lumped into the group of people who terrorize the world with them, which is an obvious concern. I've always been comfortable with the statement that hunters don't use assault rifles. We've always been proud of our "sporting firearms."

The reaction from NRA officials was swift and callous. They immediately severed all ties with Mr. Zumbo. His TV program on the Outdoor Channel was canceled, and his longtime career with Outdoor Life magazine ended. In addition, many of his corporate ties to the biggest names in gun making, such as Remington Arms Co., were terminated.

Jim Zumbo has worked for years to improve the image of outdoorsmen. As he put it:

As hunters, we don't need the image of walking around the woods carrying one of these weapons. To most of the public, an assault rifle is a terrifying thing. Let's divorce ourselves from them. I say game departments should ban them from the prairies and woods.

We all owe Jim Zumbo a debt of gratitude for his forthrightness, his honesty and his courage. We must put the safety of our communities first by taking up and passing sensible gun legislation that includes renewing the assault weapons ban.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

CONGRATULATING GLENN MEANS III AND REBECCA SCHWAGER

• Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, I would like to congratulate and honor two young Kentucky students who have achieved national recognition for exemplary volunteer service in their communities. Glenn Means III of Mount Sterling and Rebecca Schwager of Louisville have just been named the top two honorees in Kentucky by the 2007 Prudential Spirit of Community

Awards program, an annual honor conferred on the most impressive student volunteers in each State and the District of Columbia. This award was created by Prudential Financial in partnership with the National Association of Secondary Principals.

Mr. Means, a senior at Montgomery County High School, is being recognized for starting "Helping Older People Smile, HOPS." This youth-senior friendship club is a program that pairs young volunteers with nursing home patients for weekly visits. Mr. Means has paired more than 120 residents with middle and high school students since its founding.

Miss Schwager, an eighth-grader at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School, is being recognized for helping to raise thousands of dollars to benefit genocide victims in Darfur, Sudan as the co-chair of her school's Committee on Conscience. She also volunteers as a tutor and mentor for immigrant and refugee children at Arcadia Community Center.

In light of numerous statistics that indicate Americans today are less involved in their communities than they once were, it is vital that we encourage and support the kind of selfless contribution these young citizens have made. Young volunteers like Mr. Means and Miss Schwager are inspiring examples to all of us, and are among our brightest hopes for a better tomorrow.

Mr. Means and Miss Schwager should be extremely proud to have been singled out from such a large group of dedicated volunteers. I heartily applaud Mr. Means and Miss Schwager for their initiative in seeking to make their communities a better place to live, and for the positive impact they have had on the lives of others.

All of these young people have demonstrated a level of commitment and accomplishment that is truly extraordinary in today's world, and deserve our sincere admiration and respect. They serve as an example to the Commonwealth and show the best of community service that Kentucky has to offer.●

IN HONOR OF DOUGLAS K. O'CONNELL

• Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, today I honor Douglas K. O'Connell, a recipient of the 2007 Rotary Paul Harris Award. The world's first service club, The Rotary Club of Chicago, IL, was formed in 1905 by Paul P. Harris, an attorney who wished to recapture in a professional club the same friendly spirit he had felt in the small towns of his youth. As Rotary grew, its mission expanded to help serve communities in need around the world. Today, 1.2 million Rotarians belong to some 32,000 Rotary clubs in more than 200 countries. Local Rotarians constantly pool their resources and contribute their talents to help serve their local communities and address such pressing

issues as illiteracy, environmental degradation, world hunger, and children at risk.

For over 20 years, Mr. O'Connell has donated countless hours of community service to the northwest corner of Connecticut. Through his work with the Winsted Chapter of Rotary, United Way, the YMCA, as a volunteer basketball coach, and a dedicated member of the Torrington Board of Education, Mr. O'Connell has made a longlasting impact on his community.

Mr. O'Connell embodies Rotary's principal motto: "Service Above Self." Mr. O'Connell, a talented attorney himself, is receiving the Paul Harris Award in appreciation of his tangible and significant assistance given for the furtherance of a better understanding and friendly relations between the peoples of the world in the true spirit of Rotary.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

The following messages from the President of the United States were transmitted to the Senate by one of his secretaries:

REPORT RELATIVE TO HAITI MEETING THE CONDITIONS REGARDING ENFORCEMENT OF CIRCUMVENTION UNDER SECTION 213A(e)(1) OF THE CARIBBEAN BASIN ECONOMY RECOVERY ACT—PM 10

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States, together with an accompanying report; which was referred to the Committee on Finance:

To the Congress of the United States:

The Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement Act of 2006 (Division D, Title V of Public Law 109-432), amends the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act (Title II of the Trade and Development Act of 2000, Public Law 106-200) (CBERA), to make certain products from Haiti eligible for preferential tariff treatment. In accordance with section 213A of CBERA, as amended, I have determined that Haiti meets the eligibility requirements under section 213A(d)(1) of CBERA, as amended, and that Haiti is meeting the conditions regarding enforcement of circumvention under section 213A(e)(1) of CBERA, as amended.

GEORGE W. BUSH.
THE WHITE HOUSE, March 19, 2007.

REPORT RELATIVE TO THE SUPPLEMENTARY AGREEMENT ON SOCIAL SECURITY BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND SWEDEN—PM 11

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States, together with an accompanying