

search program for POW/MIA's. There are few people who have as deep of an understanding of the uniqueness of America's relationship with Vietnam, so I fully support the President's choice.

This does not mean that there do not remain myriad outstanding questions and issues in our bilateral relations with Vietnam. One issue that is of particular concern to me is the human rights record of the Vietnamese Government which remains poor. According to the most recent State Department Report on Human Rights Practices, the Government of Vietnam continues to restrict basic freedoms; of speech, of the press, of assembly, of association, of privacy, and of religion. Citizens can be arbitrarily arrested or detained for trying to express political or religious objections to government policies. And although the Vietnamese Constitution provides for the right to privacy, according to the State Department, the Vietnamese Government continues to operate a "nationwide system of surveillance and control through * * * block wardens who use informants to keep track of individuals' activities." The Vietnamese Government also has in place a policy of forced family planning.

Mr. President, this is not a country that shares with the United States the principle that government should exist to promote the general welfare of its people. Nor is it one that has respect for the rule of law.

But, as I said in 1995 when the President first announced his decision to restore diplomatic relations with Vietnam, I believe that diplomatic relations actually enhance our ability to advocate for issues such as human rights and political freedoms. Through a permanent, high-level presence in the country, I believe the United States can intensify the dialog on human rights, work more closely with Vietnamese reformers, and more effectively monitor developments in the human rights situation.

Now I have listened carefully to the veterans in Wisconsin and to the national veterans' organizations. I recognize that the veterans themselves have differing opinions on the issue of diplomatic relations, in general, and of Senate confirmation of this nomination, in particular. The concerns are two-fold: Does having an ambassador on the ground in Vietnam actually help advance the accounting of POW and MIA cases? Or does the dispatching of a President's representative with ambassadorial rank imply that the United States no longer thinks we have reason to withhold a special privilege for Vietnam?

Mr. President, it is my view that having an ambassador resident in Hanoi can serve to better advance U.S. interests, in human rights, as I said earlier, and on issues related to the continued accounting of our POW's and MIA's. I salute the efforts of all those who have tirelessly sought details

about missing U.S. service men and women, and, from most of their testimony, I am inclined to believe that we will enhance our ability to collect more information about the remaining POW and MIA cases through fulfilling the President's commitment to full diplomatic relations.

On the other hand, I think it is equally important to acknowledge that sending a Presidential representative of ambassadorial rank does indicate a symbolic change in our relationship with Vietnam that I know some observers still are hesitant to send. It is my view, however, that the United States can serve two purposes by that change: Better advance our interests as described above, and better indicate our concerns about Vietnam or its government through other actions. For example, that is why I voted against lifting the trade embargo against Vietnam and why I have supported congressional efforts to limit United States assistance to Vietnam.

However, I believe that in an era of global engagement and integration, it usually makes little sense to refuse diplomatic relations with a country in the international community. Vietnam is a large presence in a fast-growing region where the United States has ever-increasing interests. We can no longer hope to isolate it, nor will isolation serve to advance any of our goals.

To reiterate, Mr. President, I support the President's choice of Pete Peterson to be Ambassador to Vietnam because I believe that the United States best serves its citizens by having a Presidential representative of the highest order resident in the country. Nevertheless, I remain concerned about other aspects of our bilateral relations in that country and I will continue to scrutinize carefully the President's policies in that regard.●

COMMENDATION OF LT. COL. STEPHEN G. GRESS, JR.

● Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Lt. Col. Stephen G. Gress, Jr., who recently retired from the U.S. Air Force. A native of Pittsburgh, PA, Lieutenant Colonel Gress has served his country with valor and distinction for more than 22 years as an instructor pilot, a combat pilot, and as a member of the Air Force legislative liaison.

One needs only to look at Steve's academic credentials to see that he is a man of exceptional achievement. In addition to graduating from the Air Force Academy, Lieutenant Colonel Gress earned a masters degree in operation research from the Air Force Institute of Technology at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. Likewise, Steve became a distinguished graduate of the Air Command and Staff College at Maxwell Air Force Base in 1987.

Mr. President, Lieutenant Colonel Gress was one of the military's premier pilots. He served as an instructor pilot for the T-38 at Webb Air Force Base,

and later, for the T-41 at his alma mater, the U.S. Air Force Academy. In 1979, the Air Force chose Steve from a very select few to become an F-15 fighter pilot. Steve also distinguished himself in the Air Force Special Programs Office, where he managed the development of future fighter weapons systems. During his tenure at Bitburgh Air Force Base, Steve's extensive knowledge of fighter combat operations led to an appointment as the chief of wing inspections, a position that is critical to the combat effectiveness of all Air Force organizations.

I would also note that Lieutenant Colonel Gress is a war hero. As an F-15 flight leader, he flew 19 combat missions in Operation Desert Storm.

Later in 1991, Steve returned to the Pentagon. Once again, the Air Force came to rely upon his keen understanding of fighter combat. As the branch chief for both air to air weapons and fighter development, he worked to ensure that the next generation of fighter systems would secure American air dominance.

Steve moved to the Office of the Air Force Legislative Liaison in 1993. He worked his way up from the branch chief for fighter and fighter weapons to the division chief of the weapons systems division. As always, Steve took tremendous pride in his work. He strove to ensure that critical military issues were presented to Congress in a clear and nonparochial manner. Over the years, many congressional staff members have come to know Steve both as a serious professional and as a man of integrity.

As Lt. Col. Stephen G. Gress, Jr. retires to private life, I ask my colleagues will join me in commending the outstanding service he has given this country. On behalf of the Senate, I would like to wish Lieutenant Colonel Gress and his family the very best.

FENTON A.J. PHILLIPS LIBRARY

● Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the Fenton A.J. Phillips Library as it celebrates the 10th anniversary of operations in its current building. The history of the library dates back to 1906, when local industrialist A.J. Phillips bequeathed his old office building to the community for use as a library. Since then, the library has experienced many changes, but it has never stopped serving the residents of Fenton. In order to properly celebrate this achievement, the city of Fenton and the Fenton Library Board is holding a gala event which will include some of Neil Simon's hilarious sketches. These will be presented by the actors of the Readers Theatre at the library. Mayor Patricia Lockwood has proclaimed April 17, "Pride in the Fenton A.J. Phillips Library Day."

The Fenton Library is one of 18 libraries in the Genesee County Library System. It serves over 10,000 residents of Fenton, Fenton Township, and Tyronne Township. It contains over 55,000

volumes and offers online services to the community. It provides CD's, videos, and books on tape. The library also offers special programs for adults and children, and complete reference services. In 1988, the library was awarded the Michigan Municipal League's Municipal Achievement Award Honorable Mention for its outstanding work.

I recently visited the Fenton A.J. Phillips Library and saw the positive influence it has on the local community. In this era when institutions are being asked to do more with less, it is heartening to see this library continue to provide quality service to the public. I know my Senate colleagues will join me in honoring the Fenton A.J. Phillips Library on its 10th Anniversary.●

COMMEMORATING THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF AMERICA

● Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the Dallas Public School System in my State of Texas, and North Dallas High School in particular. Today the school is holding a celebration of cultural unity to recognize a wonderfully diverse student body made up of young Americans with family heritage from 33 different cultures around the world. To celebrate the day, the students of North Dallas High School have painted a mural titled "Unity Among Cultures," which will be unveiled today.

The Dallas Public School System, which administers North Dallas High School, covers over 300 square miles and 208 schools. Over 60 different cultural and linguistic groups are represented, from Amharic to Vietnamese. Within this school system, and most notably at the newly designated First International School of America, these diverse cultures come together as they always have in this country to form the great American culture.

Since its very beginnings as an independent republic, Texas has been a place to which people come to build their lives while helping build the land. No State in this great Nation represents a more diverse and exciting mix of cultures than Texas.

The First International School of America represents this great Texas heritage in a truly unique way, and gives life to the very foundation of these United States, engraved on the wall above me: E Pluribus Unum—From Many, One.

Mr. President, the future of my State and our country passes through the schoolhouse doors of Texas and schools around the country every day. I ask my colleagues to join me in commending North Dallas High School—the First International School of America—for leadership and wisdom in celebrating the cultural unity that makes America great.

FIRST A.M.E. OF LOS ANGELES AND REV. CECIL MURRAY

● Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I would like to pay tribute today and commemorate the 125th anniversary of the First African Methodist Episcopal Church in Los Angeles, CA. First A.M.E., as it is known to millions of southern Californians, is the oldest predominately African-American church in Los Angeles. For the past 20 years, First A.M.E. has been led by the Reverend Cecil L. "Chip" Murray, who has distinguished himself as one of the leading black clergymen in America during his tenure at this church.

This year's anniversary celebration is about much more than longevity. It is about a legacy of and commitment to leadership and inspiration. First A.M.E. is not only the oldest and most well-known African-American church in Los Angeles, it is also the most highly respected. Its reputation as a place of worship and a center of black community fellowship and action is known to Angelenos of every social and ethnic background. Its voice has been an essential part of a city known for dynamic civic dialog.

In addition to its central role as a church, First A.M.E. also provides much-needed leadership and social service assistance in the community. Church outreach efforts include providing food and housing assistance to families and individuals in need, job training and placement services and working with young people to encourage them along the paths of personal and spiritual fulfillment and social responsibility. Although its focus is primarily local, First A.M.E. has also hosted leaders of national and international stature at its Sunday services. In so doing, First A.M.E. has provided a valuable forum, which has stimulated dialog and action in the community.

One-hundred and twenty-five years ago, a former slave, Biddy Mason, founded the First A.M.E. in her home in what is now downtown Los Angeles. Today, the congregation worships in a beautiful building designed by the renowned black architect Paul Williams. When the first service was held there were only 12 people in attendance. When I was there last year, there were over 600 people at just one service, and there were several held that day.

The Reverend Chip Murray joined First A.M.E. in 1977, when the congregation had but 300 active members. Today, this number has increased to over 9,000, representing all age ranges and every socioeconomic group in Los Angeles' diverse African-American community. Under Reverend Murray's leadership, First A.M.E. has developed 30 task forces that focus on such issues as health, substance abuse, aid to needy families and the elderly, housing and economic development, job training, and tutoring. I cannot say enough about First A.M.E.'s efforts to reach out to people from all walks of life.

Reverend Murray's mission has been to expand the church beyond its walls.

As an example, every new congregant is asked to participate in a task force. Efforts such as this help ensure that First A.M.E. remains intimately involved in the life and times of the great city which it serves. Because of this dedication to public service, Reverend Murray and First A.M.E. have become beacons of hope and inspiration in a city where all too often fear and despair prevail. Their hard work and boundless decency represent well the power of faith leavened with action.●

WASTE TIRE RECYCLING, ABATEMENT, AND DISPOSAL ACT OF 1997

● Mr. CHAFEE. Mr. President, on March 14, I came to the floor to introduce S. 445, the Waste Tire Recycling, Abatement, and Disposal Act of 1997. Today, I want to make sure that the record is clear on an issue relating to the retreading of radial-type tires.

It has come to my attention that my remarks regarding retreading have led to some concern on the part of those engaged in the retreading industry. There are approximately 1,440 retreading plants in the United States, and approximately 90 percent of the retreading plants are independently owned small businesses.

In my oral remarks on March 14, I said "the nature of modern steel belted radial tires makes it very difficult to recycle these tires into new ones. Once upon a time, old tires were retreaded, as we all know. You cannot do that with radial tires." While that statement is true with regards to recycling rubber from modern radial tires directly into new radial tires, it is not accurate with respect to retreading of radials.

The Tire Retread Information Bureau and the International Tire and Rubber Association recently provided me with the information on the retreading of tires in 1996, when a total of 29.1 million tires were retreaded in the United States. This breaks down to approximately 4.2 million passenger car tires, 99 percent of them radials; 7 million light truck tires, 80 percent of them radials; and 16.5 million medium truck tires—tires for so-called 18 wheelers, 89 percent of them radials. The remainder are off-road vehicle tires, aircraft tires, and specialty tires.

My bill, S. 445, recognizes that retreading tires is an environmentally beneficial fate for tires that would otherwise require immediate disposal. Proposed section 4011(d)(1)(B) provides tire retreaders with an exception to the general prohibition on storage of more than 1,500 unshredded waste tires for a period greater than 7 days. This section affirmatively promotes retreading by allowing retreaders to store at their plants the greater of either 2,500 tires; or a number equal to the number of tires to be retreaded over a 30-day period.●