

and its expansion in 1997, Texas has issued concealed weapons permits to more than 400 criminals with prior convictions, and has since arrested more than 3,000 licensees.

Based on the LA Times investigation, it appears that the law billed as part of an "anti-crime" package could really be more accurately described as pro-crime. A recently released study from the Violence Policy Center disclosed that Texans with concealed-carry licenses were 66 percent more likely to be arrested for firearms violations than Texans who did not have such licenses.

The LA Times story explains that part of the problem is that in many cases, concealed permits were given to those whose records should have disqualified them. Perhaps the most disturbing case is that of Terry Gist, also known to his friends as "Holsters" because of his well-known affection for guns. Before he even applied for his permit to carry a concealed weapon in Texas in 1997, Gist had already been to court for trying to choke his wife and threaten her with a gun (she had a restraining order out against him) and arrested while in the army for brandishing his handgun at a local citizen in Haiti. After he passed the state background check and received his concealed weapons permit in the mail, he was known to carry two semiautomatic handguns, sometimes three, with him at all times. Gist bragged that he displayed one of those guns to a driver during a "freeway feud." In 1998, Gist was arrested and convicted for sexually assaulting an eight-year-old girl who said during the trial that she was afraid he was going to shoot her.

The most common category of problems associated with concealed weapons holders, however, are not those of Terry Gist, but those of people like Paul Leuders. Leuders, a Houston computer analyst, became so upset when he almost missed his bus that the concealed weapons licensee took out his gun and shot the bus driver in the chest.

Law abiding citizens, armed with concealed weapons, are too often turning what would otherwise be unpleasant but not catastrophic events, such as fender-benders and commuting hassles, into tragedies. The "shall issue" laws in Texas and in states around the country don't make us safer, they make us less secure. In addition, they send the wrong message to our children, that the way to deal with the problems of modern life is with a gun. People around the country reject the NRA logic that they are unsafe in public places if they are not armed. Legislatures should do the same.

America has come a long way since the days of the wild west. Over the last years our law enforcement agencies have developed better ways to reduce violent crime and keep our streets safe. "Shall issue" laws go in the wrong direction by increasing the number of weapons on the streets and the dangers we and our children face.

NATIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP ACT OF 2000

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I am pleased to be a cosponsor of the National Rural Development Partnership (NRDP) Act of 2000 introduced yesterday by my friend from Idaho, Senator CRAIG, and 25 of our distinguished colleagues.

The NRDP is a nonpartisan inter-agency working group whose mission is to "contribute to the vitality of the nation by strengthening the ability of all rural Americans to participate in determining their futures." Today the NRDP is comprised of nearly 40 State Rural Development Councils [SRDCs]. The NRDP also brings to the task of developing rural America more than 40 agencies, in addition to state, local, tribal, for- and non-profit organizations.

The Partnership has thrived in recent years because of the hard work of thousands of dedicated Americans throughout the country who are committed to reinvigorating rural life through coordination of their efforts and those of the public and private sectors. However, the NRDP has never been formally authorized. The future of this important organization can only be secured if the NRDP, the National Rural Development Council, and the SRDCs are formally recognized by the Congress and authorized to receive appropriations.

Mr. President, that is exactly what this legislation would do. Additionally, the Craig-Conrad bill delineates specific responsibilities for each component of the NRDP while refocusing and reinvigorating many current activities. It does not, however, create any new bureaucracy. This legislation grew out of a hearing of the Agriculture Committee's Subcommittee on Forestry, Conservation, and Rural Revitalization that Senator CRAIG and I, as chairman and ranking member, held on March 8 of this year. The support expressed at that hearing for the NRDP was broad-based and considerable.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of the NRDP's work. Every region of our nation has benefited. In my part of the country, the NRDP has been particularly valuable in bringing together previously independent rural development efforts, creating a synergistic effect.

As I have discussed on the Senate floor and in committee on numerous occasions, in the Upper Great Plains we are facing a crisis of staggering proportions, placing unprecedented stress on every aspect of economic and community life. This is a very serious matter for the entire country. The farms of the Dakotas and the surrounding states produce wheat, corn, and soybeans in abundance, but something much more important: good families and great kids. The rural way of life helps foster the values of hard work and fortitude that have made America great.

In my view, the ongoing crisis in agriculture represents as great a threat

to our nation's future as any of the foreign threats we face today. As we work to combat this domestic national security threat and preserve the rural way of life, the NRDP is a truly vital asset. I hope all my colleagues will join the 27 of us on this bill in pressing for its passage and enactment at the earliest possible moment.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

FATHER NICHOLAS MAESTRINI AND FATHER JOHN BORACCO CELEBRATE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF PRIESTHOOD TOGETHER

• Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize Father Nicholas Maestrini and Father John Boracco, two men who have dedicated their lives in service to the Catholic Church, and who have often found their paths cross along the way. On October 22, 2000, the paths of these old friends will converge once again, as they will be honored together by the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME) in Detroit, Michigan, in recognition of their 70th Anniversary of Ordination.

Fr. Maestrini and Fr. Boracco began their long histories of dedicated service to the Catholic Church together as seminary classmates in Monza, Italy. Shortly after becoming ordained priests, both chose to enter into the PIME missionary. PIME is an international community of priests, lay missionaries and lay volunteers who have dedicated their lives to service in foreign lands. Founded in Italy in 1850, it is now a global organization that operates missions throughout the world. Its international headquarters are in Rome, Italy, while PIME U.S. Region is based out of Detroit.

Both Fr. Maestrini and Fr. Boracco joined missions in Asia, and both experienced struggle and hardship there during the chaotic period before, during and after World War II. Fr. Maestrini served as a missionary in Hong Kong from 1931-50. During this time, he suffered through the strife of the Great War and of being interned by the Japanese. Fr. Boracco had it no easier in China, where he was stationed from 1934-54, first in the northern Henan Province and then at Kai Pheng. He was forced to persevere through imprisonment, the Japanese occupation, and the Communist revolution. In 1954, he was condemned to die at the hands of the Communists, but was instead expelled.

In 1951, Fr. Maestrini was named Superior of the PIME U.S. Region. Four years later, he was joined in Detroit by Fr. Boracco, who was assigned to help with the seminary expansion started by his friend. For the next 19 years, the two formed the perfect team. Fr. Maestrini focused his energy on external matters, such as public relations and fundraising, while Fr. Boracco served as rector and spiritual director

of PIME's theological and high school seminars. With success, their roles expanded. Fr. Maestrini oversaw the establishment of three seminaries, two award-winning films, and many fund raising and public relations programs benefitting the foreign missions. Fr. Boracco became Director of the PIME residence for priests, brothers and seminaries. While Fr. Maestrini retired as Superior in 1974, Fr. Boracco retired just last year.

Both Fr. Boracco and Fr. Maestrini remain active within the Catholic community. Aside from assisting at his local parish, Fr. Maestrini publishes a mission newsletter, and continues correspondence with missionaries and benefactors. Fr. Boracco regularly assists several parishes in the Archdiocese of Detroit.

I applaud Fr. Maestrini and Fr. Boracco on their extraordinary legacies of service. For 70 years, they have tirelessly spread the message of faith and good will to others embodied by the Catholic Church, and they have done so while forming a friendship that is truly unique. On behalf of the entire United States Senate, I congratulate Father Nicholas Maestrini and Father John Boracco on 70 years of successful service, and wish them both continued success in the future.●

TRIBUTE TO MR. BENNIE THAYER

● Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, Senator BOND and I would like to submit for the RECORD a tribute to Mr. Bennie Thayer, a long-time business advocate and remarkable man who passed away Monday.

Mr. BOND. Yes, Mr. President, Senator KERRY and I would like to join in making the following statement recognizing Mr. Thayer's lifetime accomplishments.

The remarks follow:

Mr. Thayer earned the respect and admiration of the small business community. Until his passing, Mr. Thayer served as the eloquently outspoken President and CEO for the National Association for the Self-Employed. Representing more than 200,000 members nationwide, as head of NASE Mr. Thayer fought for relief from unfair government regulations and pushed for legislative action on issues ranging from taxes to retirement plans. I think we will all remember him for his tireless work to get 100 percent deductibility for health insurance purchased by the self-employed. It wasn't easy. In fact, it was a long, long fight, but he managed to build bi-partisan support for 100 percent deductibility. How fitting it would be for Congress to pass such legislation before we adjourn.

In addition to Mr. Thayer's leadership at NASE, he has chaired and served on the board of many local and national business associations covering economic development, credit development, small-business enhancement, and general business growth. Of course, Mr. Thayer knew what he was doing. He could identify with the needs of small business owners and the self-employed because he himself was co-owner of the Board of Natural Health Options and A.W. Curtis Products, a manufacturer of natural health products. In his distinguished career, Mr.

Thayer also was called upon at times to advise the past three Presidents—President Reagan, President Bush, and President Clinton.

But Mr. Thayer should be remembered for much more than his impressive resume or for being a champion of and advocate for small businesses and the self-employed. He served tirelessly in several capacities as a leader in his community. For the past seven years, Mr. Thayer was Senior Pastor of the United Methodist Church of the Redeemer in Temple Hills, Maryland. He also worked toward community development and youth mentoring as a board member of such organizations as REDEEM Inc. and the Board of Eagle Flight Inc.

In the most recent issue of "Self-Employed America," NASE's bi-monthly publication, there is an article entitled "Make Yourself Memorable." Mr. Thayer did. His first impression was a lasting impression—a warm, sincere handshake and an incredible, mesmerizing voice. Even if you didn't agree with something he said, you always liked how he said it. We will miss him.

Our condolences go out to his wife Bernice, his two daughters, his two grandchildren and his home community in Prince George's County Maryland, where he touched the lives of so many. May God bless his family and friends, and may the remarkable Bennie Thayer rest in peace.●

HONORING A COLUMBINE HERO, BOY SCOUT EVAN TODD

● Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I rise today to share with my colleagues a pair of statements I recently received from an exceptional young man in Colorado, Mr. Evan Todd of Littleton. Evan was one of the many unfortunate victims of the horrific shooting that took place at Columbine High School on April 20, 1999. Evan was the first student shot in the library at Columbine High School, and despite his injuries he assisted other students and administered first aid to a seriously wounded peer until emergency services could arrive. Evan, an active Boy Scout, was awarded the prestigious Boy Scouts of America Honor Medal for his inspiring actions. Still a Columbine student, Evan has dedicated a tremendous amount of time to speaking to other students and adults around the nation concerning the problems of youth violence and the cultural influences on American youth. I am honored that Evan took the time to write to me and I ask that a copy of Evan Todd's letter to his fellow Scouts and a copy of a speech he delivered at "The Gathering," a meeting of victims of school violence, be included in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

The material follows:

Dear Fellow Scouts, I have been told that into each life some rain must fall. Some get rained on more than others. The rain that came down on us at Columbine High School was a cloudburst of epic proportions. This act was senseless, tragic and without justification, whatsoever. 13 murdered 25 wounded and 1,951 students youth destroyed. As a student who was shot and wounded in the library, it has changed my life, forever.

I believe that the children of a society are nothing more than the reflection of the society that they are brought into. The event here at Columbine in Littleton Colorado, and

the events at Moses Lake Washington, Pearl Mississippi, Jonesboro Arkansas, Edinboro Pennsylvania, Fayetteville Tennessee, Springfield Oregon, Richmond Virginia, Conyers Georgia, Los Angeles California and elsewhere indicate to me that our nation has a serious character flaw. Since the Columbine tragedy, I have tried to stay abreast of the "adult society" debate as to the "why" and "how" of these terrible incidents. The adults debate and argue over what constitutes good and what constitutes evil; what is right and what is wrong. At the time of the Columbine tragedy, our national leader, the President, stated the youth of this nation need to learn to resolve our differences with words, not weapons. At the time this statement was made, we as a nation, were bombing Yugoslavia. They tell us that the youth of this nation need to be more tolerant, kinder, gentler, more understanding. Yet our entertainment, music, TV, movies, games (and actions of) the adult world provides for our consumption are all too often filled with violence, sex, death and destruction. If we were to take into our lives what is provided to us by our society, our actions would also violate the Scout Oath & Law. Other solutions to school violence have been nametags to be carried around our neck as millstones, metal detectors, increased video surveillance, etc. Our nation has always had guns. Our nation has always had children. What our nation hasn't always had is children murdering children and their parents, and parents murdering their children. The ingredient that has made America different is the last couple of 'adult generations', and their changes towards what is right & wrong, good & evil. It appears to me that our society is confused. The adult world seems as a ship with no rudder being cast around by the wind and storms of our times, with no control or understanding as to why. Many of these storms appear to have been caused by their own accord. It's as if our adult society has no compass, no bearing, no standards for our society. I have found them confused. Even at our age, we can discern the difference between what you say and what you do. . . .

In regard to the solution of watching what comes out of us by monitoring closely our world with surveillance cameras, what we say, how we look, etc., our society needs to watch carefully what goes into us. In my room is a picture of the Grand Teton mountain range in Wyoming. Below the picture is the following:

"THE ESSENCE OF DESTINY

"Watch your thoughts, for they become words. Choose your words, for they become actions. Understand your actions, for they become habits. Study your habits, for they will become your character. Develop your character, for it becomes your destiny."

The good news for those of us that are Scouts is that we are privileged to be a part of an organization that provides us the tools and instructions to put into us that which builds a better person, a better nation. Those tools are called the Scout Oath and Scout Law. Robert Gates, former Director of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and our current President of the National Eagle Scout Association (NESA) recently stated that there is a war going on for the souls of our boys and young men in this nation. He sees clearly. If you are to be a scout, don't be a scout in word only. Learn and practice the Oath & Law in everything you think, say and do. I understand well how hard that can be, but "Do Your Best." To the Boy Scouts of America, thank you for defending our 90-year record and not allowing the Oath & Law to be redefined. As you say, it has stood the