

care that they and their patients expect. Physicians in Utah with whom I have consulted over the past year have showed me the lasting, negative impact that the 2003 reductions would have on patient care. In addition, I have been dismayed to learn from several physicians that these unwarranted reductions would cause them to think twice about remaining in the Medicare Program.

In fact, as representatives of the Utah Medical Association have pointed out to me, Medicare's flawed reimbursement system has made it increasingly difficult for Utah physicians to accept new Medicare patients, putting many seniors who seek care in a quandary. This is not fair to the physicians, and it is not fair to the patients.

While the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, CMS, reports that Medicare physician participation rate was 89.3 percent in January 2002, figures from Utah portray a dramatically different picture. In a recent survey conducted by the Utah Medical Association, the Medicare participation rate among physicians was significantly lower. The UMA found that only 77 percent of Utah's primary care physicians participated in the Medicare Program. I am hopeful that once Utah physicians see that we in Congress are listening and serious about supporting them, other doctors will consider participating in the Medicare Program once again.

I am also pleased that this legislation contains a provision which will provide additional funding for rural hospitals, something that is desperately needed in my home state of Utah. More specifically, the hospital provision contained in H.J. Res. 2 would raise the inpatient base rate upon which payments are calculated for hospitals in rural and small urban areas to the same rate as that in large urban areas for 6 months. This provision will provide both patients and hospitals in my state with necessary and welcomed relief.

Many of us who worked last year to enact needed changes such as this have been dismayed that, despite our best efforts, Congress could not find a collective way to rectify these problems that are doing so much to hurt patient care throughout Utah. It is high time we take this action.

I urge my colleagues to support these two important provisions because both will provide Medicare patients with access to quality and affordable health care across the country. Let's do the right thing and pass this legislation as quickly as possible, this issue is much too important to both Medicare beneficiaries and providers. Medicare providers, and most importantly, the beneficiaries they serve, are depending on us to get the job done.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I am pleased to have submitted an amendment dealing with the Total Information Awareness Program at the DOD. Many of my colleagues may know

about this program designed to test technologies that collect information from public and private databases and try to find trends that could signal threats against the United States. Like many people, I have been concerned that this program could be used to invade the privacy of Americans by snooping around in our bank accounts, personal internet computers, phone records, and the like. In November of last year, I asked the DOD Inspector General to look into the purposes of TIA and to make sure that there are appropriate controls in place to ensure that it is used only for foreign intelligence purposes to protect us against terrorism and foreign threats, but not on Americans or for domestic crime fighting. I am told that the IG investigation is proceeding, and that the IG has ordered a formal audit of TIA.

This amendment limits the use of the TIA funds appropriated by Congress to foreign intelligence purposes. DOD will be required to tell Congress what it is doing regarding TIA, and keep us in the loop on developments. It also provides that TIA can't be used on U.S. citizens once it is up and running.

But the amendment allows development of TIA to continue for foreign terrorism purposes. So it is a great compromise in that it allows the development of TIA to help track international terrorism, but protects against abuses that could violate the privacy of our own people. I encourage my colleagues to support this amendment.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, as an appropriator, I come to the floor this afternoon to express my opposition to this omnibus appropriations bill.

The \$385 billion omnibus appropriations bill cuts almost \$10 billion from what the Senate Appropriation Committee approved last year.

On top of these Draconian cuts, the bill before us includes a 2.9 percent across the board cut, to nonmilitary programs, and will affect critical programs such as homeland security, education, and job training.

This bill is a major mistake and represents a short-sided approach to solving our Nation's problems.

What is happening is the administration's effort to starve domestic programs in order to save dollars for a \$674 billion tax cut. If this effort is successful, we will see interest rates rise, the deficit balloon, and a 10-year cumulative deficit of \$2 to \$3 trillion.

Americans don't know it yet, but soon will learn that this bill makes a house of cards out of homeland security, which loses \$1 billion which were already requested, authorized, and appropriated.

How many Americans know that this bill will likely cut 1,175 FBI agents, 490 food safety engineers, and 1,600 customs inspectors who are vital if we are to protect our homeland from contraband and those that would do us harm.

How many Americans know that the Head Start cut of \$107 million could

prevent 2700 youngsters from a Head Start experience, or leave 224,000 needy individuals without the meals provided by WIC, or 230,000 veterans without medical services.

To make matters worse, this bill is being offered at a time when our Nation continues to face significant challenges in protecting homeland security, increasing school achievement, and strengthening our workforce.

Essentially what this bill does is cut the money from a number of critical projects so this body can pass a tax cut of \$674 billion, which will lead to a \$2 trillion deficit over the next 10 years.

Every day this body is faced with tough choices. But in my decade in the Senate, I believe that this bill represents one of the worst pieces of legislation to pass this Senate.

MURDER OF AMERICANS IN INDONESIA

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, let us commend the chairman of the Foreign Operations Subcommittee for the strong report language on Indonesia. I particularly appreciate the reference to the Americans murdered in Papua in August 2002, and the demands that justice be served for these crimes. I share this sentiment completely and believe that inaction by Indonesia on these murders will result in a negative reaction by both the congress and the Administration.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I appreciate my friend's comments, and believe he is right that the absence of a credible investigation into these murders will have repercussions. While we all recognize that Indonesia continues on a difficult path of political and economic reform—at the same time being a frontline state on the war on terrorism—the Government of Indonesia cannot and should not underestimate the seriousness of the crimes committed in Papua and the need to bring justice to the victims and their families.

Mr. ALLARD. I understand that the Federal Bureau of Investigations may be in Indonesia in the very near future to assist in investigating this crime. Does the chairman share my support for the FBI's involvement in this case?

Mr. MCCONNELL. Absolutely. The FBI should pursue all leads, and determine whether the reports of the Indonesian military's involvement in the ambush are accurate and credible.

For the benefit of my colleagues, let me take a moment to describe the Indonesia provisions in the fiscal year 2003 bill. We earmark funds for Indonesia, including \$10 million for the fragile peace agreement in Aceh and \$5 million for reconstruction efforts in Bali. The bill does not contain restrictions on the International Military Education and Training program for that country but maintains the conditions on assistance under the Foreign Military Financing program. The fiscal year 2003 request for IMET is \$400,000,

which is slightly less than that requested for Sri Lanka.

Mr. ALLARD. The Foreign Operations bill strikes an appropriate balance between our national security interests in that vast archipelago and the realities of a developing Indonesia. I want to be on record that I will continue to closely follow the investigation into the murder of Americans in Papua last year and I encourage the Chairman and all my colleagues to pay attention to that case.

I also recommend that the administration report to Congress on a regular and ongoing basis into the progress the Government of Indonesia is making into resolving these murders.

Mr. MCCONNELL. My friend from Colorado's advice is excellent, and I hope that Secretary Powell will take note to the request for regular briefings into the murder of American citizens in Indonesia.

SCAAP FUNDING

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise with a number of my colleagues and the chairman of the Commerce, Justice, State Subcommittee, the Senator from South Carolina, to discuss funding for the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program, popularly known as SCAAP. As my colleagues know, States and localities across the Nation are facing extraordinary costs associated with incarcerating criminal illegal aliens.

Since the September 11th terrorist attacks, State and local governments have borne unprecedented costs that the Nation's critical infrastructure and public are protected. As a result, State and local governments are facing tremendous budget deficits. Moreover, the budgets of local law enforcement agencies are stretched to the limit. California, for one, is estimated to face a shortfall of at least \$26 billion over the next 18 months.

In the face of these new challenges, the burden placed on States by the Federal Government's long-standing inability to control illegal immigration continues to grow. States like California continue to shoulder extraordinary criminal alien incarceration costs. One out of every seven prison beds in California is occupied by an illegal criminal alien.

SCAAP funding helps all States that are experiencing increasing costs from incarcerating undocumented felons—both low-impact and high-impact States. Last year, more than 400 local jurisdictions, including all 50 States, received SCAAP funding. With States facing budget deficits reimbursement for the costs they have incurred will be even more important. Congress must continue to support communities that must shoulder the burden of what is, in essence, a Federal responsibility. Given the rising costs associated with criminal alien incarceration, I had hoped that the Senate would see fit to increase the funding for this important program to \$650 million, or at minimum, at last year's level of \$565 million.

I understand that the House-passed Commerce, Justice, State appropriations bill provides \$500 million for the SCAAP program. Given that fact, I would like to inquire of my friend from New Hampshire if there is something that can be done to increase funding for this bill for SCAAP to at least the funding level approved by the House.

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I wish to associate myself with the remarks of my good friend, the Senator from California, and also look forward to working with the chairman and ranking member of the subcommittee to resolve the funding disparity in the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP).

Before I begin my comments about this important program and the level of funding in the Senate Commerce-Justice-State Appropriations bill, I want to state my full support for what I have been told will be a \$500 million funding level for SCAAP in the House fiscal year 2003 bill.

Through the Crime Control Act of 1994, the Congress created SCAAP to reimburse States and localities for the costs they incur incarcerating criminal illegal aliens. Such costs, it has been made clear, are the responsibility of the Federal Government. Previously, SCAAP was authorized at \$650 million, although total expenditures of the States and localities exceeds \$1.6 billion per year. Last year, the Congress reauthorized the program for the next 2 fiscal years at an open-ended level.

Though the financial burden to process and incarcerate criminal illegal aliens overwhelms the budgets of many States and localities, SCAAP has never even been allocated to its full authorization. Over the past 5 years, SCAAP has usually been funded at levels between \$500 million and \$600 million, which has provided States and localities reimbursement of about 30 cents for each dollar spent on incarceration.

The Congress would be doing the right thing if it allocated \$1.6 billion. In fiscal year 2002, the State of Arizona and its localities incurred costs of well over \$305 million to incarcerate criminal illegal aliens, and received \$24 million in Federal reimbursement—when SCAAP was funded at \$565 million overall.

To reduce the total 2003 SCAAP funding from its \$565 million to zero is unacceptable. Should the funding be eliminated, all 50 States, D.C. and the increasing number of localities that incur costs, which now receive an unacceptable 30 cents for each dollar spent, will receive nothing, if Congress were to eliminate funding altogether.

Mr. President, I very much hope that Senators GREGG, HOLLINGS, FEINSTEIN, SCHUMER, and I can work to resolve these issues before this bill is signed into law.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I rise today with my colleagues from California and Arizona to ask for support for the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP) and to ask that it be

funded, at the very least, at last year's level of \$565 million in fiscal year 2003 in the Commerce, Justice, State Appropriations Report. Before I continue, I want to thank my colleagues for their hard work and dedication to the upkeep of this program.

SCAAP reimburses States and counties for the costs associated with the incarceration of undocumented criminal aliens. Unfortunately, Federal efforts are often not adequate to combat illegal immigration. By some estimates, the total annual cost to States and local governments exceeds \$1.6 billion. The broad principle on which the SCAAP Program is based is simple: the control of illegal immigration is a Federal responsibility. When the Federal Government falls short in its efforts to control illegal immigration, it must bear the responsibility for the financial and human consequences of this failure. Thus, the "State Criminal Alien Assistance Program Reauthorization Act" would properly vest the Federal Government the fiscal burden of incarcerating illegal immigrants who commit crimes in our communities.

Southwestern States are not the only ones shouldering the extraordinary financial burdens of this type of incarceration. Northern border and interior States are increasingly bearing these costs, too. SCAAP funding has been on the rise even in historically low immigration States and counties. It is important to note that SCAAP receives widespread bipartisan and bicameral support. I encourage my colleagues on the Commerce, Justice, and State Subcommittee to support this very important program to help alleviate the impact of these unfunded Federal mandates on State, and in particular, county governments.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I thank my friends from California, Arizona, and New York for their efforts in relieving the burden of illegal immigration on our State and local governments. I know that they have been tireless in their efforts to secure both an end to illegal immigration and to ensure that the Federal Government assume a share of the financial responsibility for its inability to control illegal immigration.

I know, as well, Mr. President, that my colleagues from California and Arizona were among the principal authors of the SCAAP Program when it was created by the 1994 crime bill, and that they both worked very hard to help secure the \$565 million which was appropriated last year. They have also worked to ensure that the program remains authorized over the next 2 fiscal years.

Knowing of the great need for adequate funding for SCAAP, I assure the Senators that I will make it a high priority during the conference between the House and Senate.

Mr. HOLLINGS. I concur with my colleague from New Hampshire. I understand the importance of this funding for the States affected by the high

rates of criminal alien incarceration and I am hopeful we can provide an adequate funding level for SCAAP during conference.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. I thank the Senator for his encouraging words. As I am sure he knows, the SCAAP reimbursements provided in prior years did not nearly cover the costs States and localities incurred do incarcerate illegal aliens in their jurisdictions.

The cost for States and localities amounted to more than \$11 billion. Thus, last year's funding level of \$565 million covered a mere 5.1 percent, of the actual costs.

Failing to fund the program altogether would be devastating to our States. The State of Wisconsin, for example, would lose more than \$3.5 million in funding; Massachusetts would lose over \$13 million; Pennsylvania would lose over \$2.6 million; Virginia would lose more than \$6.4 million; North Carolina would lose \$5.2 million; Michigan would lose \$2.9 million; Minnesota would lose \$1.8 million. Thus, even States that have not traditionally had to confront the growth in illegal immigration are now bearing the costs of this Federal responsibility.

When the Federal Government fails in its responsibility to control our Nation's borders, local taxpayers should not have to foot the bill for incarcerating undocumented criminal aliens in State and local jails. I will work closely with the Senators from New Hampshire and South Carolina and my colleagues in both bodies ensure that this bill adequately funds SCAAP.

PROSTHETIC AND SENSORY AIDS DEVICES

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I have come to the floor today to compliment the Chairman of the VA-HUD Appropriations Subcommittee Senator BOND and the Ranking Member Senator MIKULSKI on an excellent job of balancing all the very important programs in the VA-HUD Appropriations bill, included as part of the omnibus bill now pending before the body. I know the spending limitations imposed on the Subcommittee do not permit the chairman and other members of the Subcommittee to address each and every issue as fully as they would like to but nonetheless the chairman has achieved a balanced and good result.

Earlier this year, I contacted the subcommittee to express the view that the Veterans Health Administration be as proactive as possible to help ensure that disabled veterans have the most advanced prosthetic and sensory aids devices made available to them, as would be medically appropriate. In this regard, I was pleased to see that the committee approved the administration's fiscal year 2003 budget request for \$739.1 million for prosthetic and sensory aids devices providing an increase of \$60.3 million over the last year.

One of the exciting new prosthetic and sensory aids devices known as the iBOT was invented in my home State of New Hampshire. It is a mobility de-

vice that climbs stairs, traverses all terrain and balances the seated user at standing eye-level. It would be my view that some portion, at least one percent, of the approximately 25,000 veterans with service connected spinal cord injuries should have access to this advanced mobility device. In fact, at the request of Congress, the VHA conducted a study of this mobility device last year that concluded with the finding that "the subjects were unanimous in their recommendations that the Veterans Health Administration should provide iBOTs to veterans"—and that—"the iBOT could improve integration and work performance." Additionally, as Secretary Principi has established a priority of "restoring the capability of disabled veterans to the extent possible" it is my expectation that such devices will be actively considered and provided to disabled veterans as medically appropriate.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I want to add my praise for the job done by Senators BOND and MIKULSKI and associate myself with the comments just made by Senator GREGG. I am also familiar with the mobility device which Senator GREGG mentioned. I also believe that some of the veterans with service connected spinal cord injuries could benefit from, and should be assisted by, making these devices available to them. Therefore, it is also my expectation that the Department will aggressively pursue, within available funds and current policy, making this mobility device and other state of the art assistive technologies available to disabled veterans as medically appropriate.

RUM COVER-OVER TAX PROVISION

Mr. GRASSLEY. It has recently been brought to my attention that there has been a controversy over a Puerto Rican excise tax on beer. Unfortunately, the Omnibus Appropriations bill is an inappropriate forum to address this issue. But we realize the importance of ongoing negotiation.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I co-sponsored your amendment because I agree that inclusion of a tax provision in this bill is inappropriate. In 1983, under the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act, the excise tax collections on imported rum are transferred or rebated to the treasuries of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. The tax code provides a rebate of \$13.25 of the \$13.50 excise tax to Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands for the excise tax collected on rum imported into the United States (without regard to the country of origin). The amount of the rebate is scheduled to decrease to the 1983 level of \$10.50 after December 31st, unless Congress extends the current \$13.25 rebate.

Perhaps the expiration of the increased amount transferred provides time for resolution of the dispute?

Mr. GRASSLEY. I commit to working together with those concerned to address this issue through the Finance Committee, which is the appropriate

jurisdiction for resolution of this matter.

Mr. CAMPBELL. I thank the Senator for his time and efforts to work on this issue with us. This issue is a horribly excessive tax that needs to be discussed immediately, which was my motivation towards working with Senator STEVENS in addressing this issue in the appropriations bill. I agree with Senators GRASSLEY and BAUCUS that resolving this issue prior to the end of this year is very important. As such, I accept the amendment offered by Senators GRASSLEY and BAUCUS which strikes this provision from the Omnibus Appropriations bill, Title I, Section 128.

We want to encourage all parties involved to immediately come to the table to begin working together to solve this issue. As I have previously stated, this excise tax on beer hurts producers, farmers, and working people, and has to be resolved.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I look forward to working with the Senator and his staff on this issue.

CIVIL EDUCATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. One area in the Foreign Operations portion of this omnibus bill where I have had particular interest is the section entitled Democracy Programs. We have worked closely in our approach to this section where we have addressed the funding needs for democracy programs, including in predominantly Muslim countries.

The bill we are considering today will increase funding in Section 524(b) of the Foreign Operations portion from \$15,000,000 to \$20,000,000 and correspondingly adds "civic education" as a program and activity under this section that the subcommittee wishes to fund.

Does the Ranking Member agree with me that this increase of \$5,000,000 is intended to ensure that democracy programs, including civic education programs, receive additional funding?

Mr. LEAHY. I agree with my friend from Kentucky, the chairman of the Foreign Operations Subcommittee. The additional \$5,000,000 in section 524(b) will ensure that these programs are expanded, including through the establishment of civic education programs in countries with a significant Muslim population, and where such programs and activities would be important to United States efforts to respond to, deter, or prevent acts of international terrorism.

Is it the understanding of my friend from Kentucky that funds made available under Section 524(b) for civic education are intended to be awarded as a grant or grants to—among other eligible applicants—educational organizations with experience working in other countries, including organizations in the fields of democracy education, civic education, community service, global education and learning through interactive Internet-based technologies and experience in the field of civic and international elementary and secondary education?

Mr. McCONNELL. The Senator from Vermont is correct, and I thank him for this useful exchange.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that all first-degree amendments to H.J. Res. 2 be filed at the desk by 6 p.m. on Tuesday, January 21, with the exception of the managers' amendments which are cleared by both managers.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

TRIBUTE TO PETER ARAPIS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, Peter Arapis, Jr. was born in Nevada at the Las Vegas Hospital Clinic on 8th Street. His father, Peter Arapis, Sr., was born in Greece and was heavily involved in the Las Vegas Greek community throughout his life. Peter Arapis, Sr. was the Head Chef at the Nevada Test Site for many years beginning in the early 1950s. Peter Arapis, Sr. was active in the election of Michael O'Callaghan as the Governor of Nevada in 1970. He always helped me whenever I ran for public office.

It was probably due to his father's involvement in politics that Peter Arapis, Jr. was quickly drawn in as well. As a student at Rancho High School, Peter volunteered to walk the neighborhoods, hanging campaign information on doors. All Peter's hard work paid off because O'Callaghan was elected as Governor, and I was elected as Lieutenant Governor. Little did I know that Peter would one day become an invaluable member of my senior staff and a trusted friend.

After graduating from Rancho High School in Las Vegas, NV, Peter worked as a car valet for a few years before attending college at UNLV. In 1985, he received a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. This same year, Peter was the recipient of the L.B.J. Scholarship which afforded him the opportunity to come and work in my office in the House of Representatives as a congressional fellow. This is when Peter got his first taste of politics on Capitol Hill.

Thereafter, Peter returned to Las Vegas and worked as part of my campaign staff the first time I ran for the U.S. Senate. In 1986, I was fortunate to

be elected to serve my first term in the Senate, and from that date until now, Peter has been an indispensable part of my team.

One of Peter's first lessons in Nevada politics came shortly after my first Senatorial campaign. He was hiking in Nevada, east of Ely in White Pine County, and planning to camp up on top of Mt. Moriah. Mt. Moriah had a wilderness area at the top whose preservation had been an issue during the campaign. While hiking, Peter was confronted by ranchers who were trying to keep people off the mountain. They made it quite clear to him that no one was welcome on the mountain. Unbeknown to Peter, the ranchers were the very same ranchers that had been extremely cooperative with respect to the wilderness issue during the campaign. Reason being, the ranchers were mountain lion hunting guides, and they had surrounded the entire mountain. The only way to get to the roads to gain access to the wilderness area up on top was to cross over their private property. By surrounding the mountain they had in essence turned the wilderness area into their own private property to help their guide service flourish. Peter later made the connection.

After working on the 1986 election, Peter earned a master's degree in Political Science from UNLV in 1987 where he also served as a teaching assistant.

Over the years, Peter has held nearly every position in my office. He worked for 4 years, 1987 to 1991, in my Las Vegas office as a state representative. In 1992, he decided that he wanted to return to Washington, DC, and he came to work as a Legislative Assistant responsible for Appropriations for Energy and Water, Interior and Related Agencies, Commerce-Justice-State, and Military Construction. Shortly thereafter, he served as a Deputy Legislative Director.

Peter returned to Nevada to work as a deputy campaign manager in my 1998 Senate race. He was a vital part of my team in a very close re-election. Realizing that he had caught the "Potomac Fever," and having met Lynn Breaux at her restaurant, the famous Tunni Cliffs Tavern, Peter once again returned to Washington, DC.

From 1999 to today, Peter has diligently worked for me as my floor manager and senior policy adviser, aiding me daily in my capacity as Democratic whip. I am thankful to have had such a loyal and dedicated employee, but more importantly, I am thankful that I can call him my friend.

I say to Peter: Good luck, I will miss you, but always remember you are a Nevadan.

LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2001

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the need for hate crimes legislation. In the last Congress Senator KENNEDY and I introduced the

Local Law Enforcement Act, a bill that would add new categories to current hate crimes law, sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society.

I would like to describe a terrible crime that occurred October 6, 2001 in Topeka, KS. A 21 year-old man from Bangladesh was attacked in a convenience store. Police say that the victim entered the store when three men began asking him questions about his national origin and religion. One of the men used a racial slur and then started punching the victim. The victim was treated at a local hospital for injuries sustained during the attack.

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 is 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.

A REPORT CARD ON STATE GUN SAFETY LAWS

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, this week the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, in partnership with the Million Mom March and State gun safety groups, released its 6th Annual Report Card on State Gun Laws Protecting Children. According to the report, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data showed a welcome decrease in the number of children killed by guns. However, children continue to be at great risk from gun violence.

The Brady Campaign State Report Cards evaluate each State on several criteria: Does the State have juvenile possession laws or juvenile sale and transfer laws? Does the State have child access prevention laws? Does the State have gun safety lock and safer design standards? Does the State allow cities to regulate guns? Does the State provide secondary private sales background checks? Does the State have carrying concealed weapons laws? In addition to these criteria, States can also receive extra credit and/or demerits for a variety of gun safety measures such as permits for handguns.

This year, according to the Brady Campaign, 11 States were awarded Sensible Safety Stars. These States resisted efforts to weaken gun safety laws and/or enacted gun safety laws that protect children from guns. I am disappointed to report that my home State of Michigan was not among them.

According to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms and the Brady Campaign, seven states, all of whom received poor grades, were major sources of crime guns. Further, the ATF found that gun traffickers seek out States that allow criminals to purchase firearms without background checks at gun shows.

The Congress has the ability to pass legislation that will further reduce