

CHRIS DODD of Connecticut deserves an enormous amount of credit, as does Senator KIT BOND of Missouri. The three of us worked long and hard to produce an election reform bill, the theme of which was to make it easier to vote and tougher to cheat. There is, in the context of passing the final omnibus, an additional billion dollars going out to the States to guarantee that we have the cleanest and the most efficient election in American history next November of 2004.

That money must get out the door, and that is another reason we need to wrap up this omnibus appropriation at the earliest possible moment. States and localities all over America are waiting so they can implement this mandate, which is a funded mandate—not an unfunded mandate, a funded mandate—only when the money gets to the States. The sooner we pass the omnibus, the sooner that will happen, and the more likely it is that we will have the most honest, the most efficiently conducted election in American history next November of 2004.

Numerous other legislative accomplishments have been reached during this session. Specifically, the Senate has passed the President's faith-based initiative. We have funded the efforts to eradicate the scourge of global AIDS. We acted to guard our children against abduction and exploitation by passing the PROTECT Act. We improved safeguards from foreign terrorists by enacting the FISA bill. We expanded NATO to include almost all of the former Warsaw Pact countries. We also passed a significant arms reduction treaty with our former enemy, turned ally, Russia. We took steps to bridge the digital divide by providing needed funds to historically Black colleges.

We awarded a congressional gold medal to U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair and affirmed the constitutionality of using the term "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance.

We have a solemn responsibility to the American people to improve their lives, to protect their homeland, and build a future filled with hope and opportunity. This year, we have made excellent progress in fulfilling our obligations to the American people. Next year, it is our hope and intention to do even more.

Let me say in closing, again, how much I admire and how much all of us appreciate the extraordinary leadership of our majority leader, Senator FRIST. He has been very skillful in advancing our legislative agenda in a body which is designed to thwart almost every initiative. He has done it with a very narrow majority. So as we wrap up the first session, plaudits to the leader, to all of our colleagues, not only on the Republican side but throughout the Senate, who have worked extraordinarily hard this year.

We had 459 votes this year. We were doing a lot of voting on a lot of issues during the course of the year. In fact,

we had more votes in the Senate this year than any time since 1995, the first year of the Contract with America. We had a lot of very close votes, a lot of dramatic experiences in the Senate.

Back during the budget, we had three votes on which the Vice President had to break the tie in the chair. So for those who were interested in drama and who typically think of the Senate as a place where you to go watch paint peel, there was a good deal of excitement this year at various intervals in our legislative consideration.

I hope all Members will enjoy the Thanksgiving holiday and Christmas with their families and come back to Washington refreshed to tackle the agenda that remains in the second session of the 108th Congress.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CHAFEE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

INTERNET TAX MORATORIUM

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, on November 1, 2003, the most recent Internet tax moratorium expired. In the weeks prior to and following this expiration date, I have been trying to broker a compromise between those who, like me, support making the moratorium permanent and those who oppose a permanent extension. Unfortunately, we have been unable to reach resolution on legislative language that would allow us to make the moratorium on Internet access technology neutral and permanent. However, I remain committed to passing a revised moratorium next year which ensures that all Americans can receive Internet access tax free, regardless of technology.

I respect the arguments of those Senators who are concerned that the language in S. 150, the Internet Tax Non-discrimination Act, will infringe on the ability of States to tax traditional telecommunication services. Because of their concerns, I allowed the bill to be fully debated on the floor of the Senate for several days. In the end, after spirited discussions, the relevant parties could not reach agreement on appropriate language and the current moratorium had expired.

After that process failed to achieve a resolution, I sought to broker a compromise by laying out a menu of options from which the parties could choose. None of these options were perfect, and none went as far to protect the Internet from taxation as I would have liked. But in the spirit of compromise, I believed that taking some action was better than doing nothing at all. Unfortunately, the various relevant parties disagreed. Every option I suggested was rejected by both sides

and both indicated that no deal was better than any of the options I had set forth. As an aside, this was the first, last and only moment when the various parties were able to reach agreement with respect to anything having to do with taxing the Internet.

At this point it became clear to me that no agreement was in the making with respect to a permanent or even multiyear extension of the Internet tax moratorium. I therefore suggested that we pass, as a part of the omnibus appropriations bill, a so-called "Internet-tax CR"—basically an extension of the expired statute to cover the gap between November 1 and the second session of the 108th Congress when the Senate would be able to return to this issue.

My concern was that if we did not extend the moratorium, the Internet would be open to multiple and discriminatory taxes for the first time in 5 years. And while a simple extension would not have addressed the troubling efforts in several States to begin taxing DSL access, I still believed that doing something was better than doing nothing. Further, I was prepared to make it clear that the spirit of the original moratorium was intended to make all Internet access tax free, and that extending the current moratorium should not be an invitation for any State to continue or begin anew taxing DSL.

Much to my disappointment, even a simple extension of the original moratorium failed to gain consensus support. And even when we agreed to consider modifying the original language to prevent states from taxing DSL for the duration of this Internet-tax CR, the House of Representatives was unwilling to agree.

As the strong bipartisan support of the Internet moratorium indicates, there is a growing consensus that the Internet should never be singled out for multiple or discriminatory taxation and that all forms of Internet access should be tax free. Rather than finding new ways to tax the Internet, the unprecedented benefits it offers to our society and economy should be encouraged by policymakers at the Federal, State and local levels. We must not allow differences over details of the moratorium to result in tax policies which damage this critical economic engine of the future. The Internet is too important.

I specifically thank Senator MCCAIN, Senator SUNUNU, and Senator ALLEN for their excellent leadership and dedication to this issue. Their efforts have ensured that this important technology issue receives the attention it deserves from Congress. As majority leader, it is my intention to work hard to get the strongest, longest ban on Internet taxes as possible. As such, I will make passing a meaningful, revised Internet tax moratorium a priority for next year.

CADET NURSING CORPS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, some of us are barely old enough to recall the end of World War II. And we remember that it was an effort that involved the entire Nation in a monumental struggle against the evil of fascism.

During World War II the United States sent more than 250,000 nurses to the front lines to care for our wounded Allied troops.

By 1942, the country was experiencing a shortage of nurses for domestic medical needs. In fact, the shortage was so severe that many clinics were forced to close.

To alleviate our domestic medical crisis, Congresswoman Frances Payne Bolton introduced legislation creating the United States Cadet Nurse Corps in 1943. Over the next 5 years, the Corps recruited about 125,000 young women to assume the duties of nurses who had been dispatched to the front lines. Throughout World War II, cadet nurses accounted for 80 percent of the nursing staff in our domestic medical facilities.

Cadet nurses completed rigorous training under the jurisdiction of the Public Health service. They also pledged to serve at any time during the war, at any hospital or clinic where they might be needed. They were often required to leave their families and fill vacant positions across the country. They acted as both caregivers and medical doctors—as there was also a scarcity of doctors—to the sick and wounded.

The Cadet Nurse Corps provided the support of health care system needed. By putting the needs of the Nation ahead of their own, these young women made it possible for Allied troops to receive the best possible medical care during a time of war.

Although the uniforms of these dedicated cadet nurses were decorated with patches certified by the Secretary of the Army, and they served under the authority of commissioned officers, the Cadet Nurse Corps has never been recognized as a military organization.

Today, many of these cadet nurses are no longer living. Those who do survive are in their seventies and eighties. Ironically, they are not entitled to use the veterans health care system, nor do they receive other benefits such as disability pay.

Even more important, they rarely receive the recognition they deserve for their service to their country. And every year, as more of the cadet nurses pass away, it becomes too late to recognize them.

These women served their country in a time of war. I believe they deserve to be recognized as veterans of that war effort. Therefore, I support veterans status for members of the Cadet Nurse Corps.

I have introduced legislation that would accomplish this goal. I hope my colleagues will support this effort so we can finally properly recognize the cadet nurses for their outstanding service to this country.

SUPPORTING OUR TROOPS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, as we approach the Thanksgiving Day holiday, we as Americans have much for which to be thankful. Around dinner tables this year, there will be added joy of loved ones returning home especially in the case for those families of members of our Armed Forces. Other homes may not be as joyful, as those who have chosen to defend their Nation are stationed abroad, particularly in Iraq and Afghanistan. Both of these scenes will occur in my home State, NM.

We as a Nation are ever grateful to the men and women of our military and the families they leave behind to serve. Today, I rise in support of an important effort to assist these dedicated military personnel and their families.

The Armed Forces Relief Trust, AFRT, is a non-profit fund established to help ease financial burdens on our military personnel and their families. With so many of our troops on extended overseas deployments, the benefit provided by the Trust is needed more than ever.

Today nearly 140,000 soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines are deployed overseas in the war on terror. Thousands more are stationed abroad guarding our freedom. For the families left behind, the financial burden of caring for children and meeting other demands can be a strain. And with an increased number of National Guardsmen and Reservists currently overseas, the number of families facing such hardship is even greater.

In my own home State of New Mexico, many have been affected by the frequent and lengthy deployments associated with the war on terror. Most recently, 60 National Guardsmen from the 515th Corps Support Battalion out of Springer, NM, were activated to support combat forces in Operation Iraqi Freedom. They join more than 900 other New Mexico Guardsmen already deployed worldwide, including those from the Army's 717th Medical Company and the 720th Transportation Company—both from Santa Fe. And only recently did we welcome home to Las Cruces the 281st Transportation Company following its service in the Persian Gulf. These many deployments from New Mexico represent what is happening all over the country.

Clearly, many military members and their families face burdens that are compounded by months of separation and tight budgets. For example, a soldier overseas might face the unexpected cost of airfare to attend his father's funeral; a deployed airman's expectant wife might incur costs for special medical care; or a sailor's child may need assistance to cover burdensome costs associated with attending college. These situations are what the Armed Forces Relief Trust is designed to address.

It seems to me that these are the sorts of things that we ought to be

doing to help boost the morale of our troops. Many endure months away from home and, in some cases, face the pressure of operating daily in a combat zone. The kind of benefit provided by the Trust gives them some peace of mind and allows them to focus on their vital mission. I salute the Military Aid Societies representing the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps for coming together to create the Armed Forces Relief Trust. Perhaps more importantly, I salute all those who have donated to the Trust and are helping to ensure that the needs of our brave military personnel and their dedicated families are being met.

As we all gather with our families this Thanksgiving and count our blessings, I believe we should remember our brave men and women in uniform, and consider supporting the Trust and its work to these personnel and their families in need.

AIR POLLUTION CLOSE TO HOME

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I would like to ask my colleagues and the American public some serious questions today—questions about air pollution and its impacts closer to home.

Many of us listening today have children and grandchildren. How many of them have asthma? How many of us have taken children to the emergency room in the middle of the night, desperate to put a stop to their terrifying asthma attacks?

How many of the Nation's growing number of asthmatic children have to carry inhalers to school, and wish they could run, play, and breathe freely like the other kids?

How many Americans know young children who depend on their asthma inhalers to get safely through a simple game of baseball? Their asthma attacks could be some of the six hundred thousand caused by air pollution every year.

How many of our own children or grandchildren yearn to play outdoors during school recess, only to have their teachers warn them the air is too unhealthy?

How many of us have parents or siblings with emphysema? Or chronic lung disease? Reduced lung function, or lung cancer? Air pollution decreases lung function and causes asthma and asthma attacks, lung disease, emphysema, lung cancer, and heart problems.

Do Americans ever worry that their own lives may be shortened by three or four years, just because the air is so dirty?

Sixty thousand people die prematurely in this country every year because of air pollution. It's hard to believe, isn't it? Let me put it another way.

Air pollution is responsible for more deaths than breast cancer, colon cancer, pancreatic cancer, skin cancer, prostate cancer, brain cancer, lymphoma, or leukemia.

Half of the deaths caused by air pollution are due to power plants alone. In