

Ashcroft on February 13 to discuss this issue and to urge him to reconsider the Department's position.

On March 24, the Attorney General called to inform me that he had personally reviewed this issue and that he was reversing the Department's February decision. More specifically, he pledged to me that the Office would be moved outside of the Office of Justice Programs to become an independent and distinct office, as called for by the law. He also pledged that the Director of the Office would have a direct line of report to him, and not be required to report through the Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Justice Programs, as the Department had previously required. I am grateful that Attorney General Ashcroft took the time to turn his full attention to this matter, to examine the law and legislative history, and to ensure that his Department correctly implemented the act. I commend the Attorney General for doing "the right thing" with respect to the office.

The strength and stature of the Violence Against Women Office will be matched by the strength and stature of its director, Diane Stuart. Pursuant to the new law that requires Senate confirmation, Ms. Stuart testified before the Judiciary Committee earlier this month, and the committee will vote on her nomination on Thursday. Ms. Stuart has been acting director of the office for almost 2 years, and during that time has done terrific work. I am particularly impressed with the extraordinary outreach Ms. Stuart has done thus far, meeting with law enforcement, prosecutors, and service providers from Montgomery County, MD, to Portland, OR. She is truly an expert in the areas of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking, and I look forward to working with her as we fight to end family violence in our communities.

REACH-BACK TAX

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I am concerned about an unfair tax on coal companies and other businesses which is sometimes referred to as the "reach-back tax." It was enacted as part of the Coal Act in the 1992 Energy bill. The Coal Act requires companies to pay a tax on the retirement benefits of miners. The tax applies not only to companies active in the coal mining business but also to companies that are no longer in the coal mining business.

There is one company in the State of Washington that has not employed any miners since the 1950s and is still obligated to pay. Another company that is subject to the tax is the Mississippi Lignite Mining Company, which operates a powerplant at Red Hills near Ackerman, MS. It is time for the Congress to repeal this unfair tax.

If we do not act soon, the combined benefit fund, which provides the money for the retirement benefits, will be bankrupt. I understand that the distin-

guished chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, Mr. GRASSLEY, and the Senator from Oregon, Mr. SMITH, have asked the House Ways and Means Committee to send a bill to the Senate to resolve this issue. I join them in this request and hope the Finance Committee will act with favor on such a bill when it comes over from the House.

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE ACT

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I strongly support S. 1157, the National Museum of African American History and Culture Act. The story of African Americans is a major part of the story of the United States. From the dark times of slavery, civil war, and reconstruction, to the extraordinary accomplishments of the civil rights movement of the past half century, it is essential for all Americans to know and understand that story in all its aspects, and this new museum in the Nation's Capital will be an especially valuable resource in achieving that goal. It will be a valuable cultural and educational experience for every visitor to Washington and for every student of American history in communities across the country.

Our Nation was founded on a promise of equality and opportunity for all, and for more than two centuries, we have struggled to fulfill that great promise. The struggle goes on today, on critical issues, such as guaranteeing that all our citizens are free from hate crimes and racial profiling, and are free to go to the polls and vote without intimidation or attempts to suppress their votes.

We know that civil rights is still the great unfinished business of America. As Robert Kennedy told the students at the University of Cape Town, at a time when the specter of apartheid hung heavily over South Africa:

We must recognize the full human equality of all our people—before God, before the law, and in the councils of governments. We must do this, not because it is economically advantageous—although it is; not because the laws of God and man command it—although they do command it; not because people in other lands wish it to. We must do it for the single and fundamental reason that it is the right thing to do.

It is especially appropriate that this new museum dedicated to African-American history and culture will be part of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington. It is long overdue, and this legislation will help advance the cause.

This museum will be renowned as a source of African-American history throughout the United States. In cooperation with other museums, with historically black colleges, and with many other historical, cultural, and educational institutions, it will make this part of the Nation's history as widely available as possible. And mil-

lions of visitors who come here from throughout the world will be inspired by what they see and learn.

It is an honor to be a sponsor of this legislation, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

IN MEMORY OF STAFF SERGEANT AARON WHITE

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the memory of a remarkable man. SSG Aaron Dean White was an Oklahoman through and through. People say he was a hard worker, dedicated, friendly, and that he loved his family and country. Those who knew him best remembered him as being always willing to help others. He even served alongside his father as a volunteer firefighter for the town of Sasakwa, OK. A former resident of both Sasakwa and Shawnee, OK, he graduated from Shawnee High School in 1994. He entered the U.S. Marine Corps shortly thereafter, gladly serving his Nation for 9 years, and eventually moving up to the position of crew chief on a CH-46 Sea Knight Helicopter.

Staff Sergeant White was passionate about his job—excited to serve—proud to be a marine. After being deployed to Iraq in January of 2003, he was upset because he was not as close to the action as he had hoped. A passionate lover of flying who had earned his pilot's license, he volunteered to be a gunner on a helicopter, just so he would have the opportunity to fly more often.

On Monday, May 19, Staff Sergeant White was one of four individuals on board a helicopter on a resupply mission when the chopper went down into the Shat Ahilala River in Iraq. Tragically he, along with four other marines, did not survive the incident. This courageous man who was living out his dreams lost his life while defending his country.

Staff Sergeant White's remarkable life of helping others was commemorated at his funeral ceremony in Wewoka, OK, at which friends and family filled the chapel. His many loved ones grieved, including his parents, Shawnee, OK, residents Darrell and Karen White; his wife Michele; his daughter Brianna Nicole; and his sister, Sergeant Patricia LaBar, who was serving with the U.S. Army in Germany when her brother passed into the next life. However, I know they are incredibly proud of this man—son, husband, father, and brother—lover of life and soldier of freedom. He is a man who has set a higher standard for all of us to follow. We will never forget him, SSG Aaron Dean White.

IN MEMORY OF PETTY OFFICER BOLLINGER

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, no one can truly put into words the magnitude of respect and admiration we feel for those who sacrifice their lives so that we might continue to live in freedom. However, I am honored today to try, since the young man whom I pay tribute to was a proud son of my home State the great State of Oklahoma.

Petty Officer 3rd Class Doyle Wayne Bollinger grew up in the community of Poteau, OK. A member of the Poteau Valley Baptist Church, he was remembered by those who knew him best as one with a generous heart—never thinking of himself, but devoting his time to the service of others.

Upon graduating from Poteau High School, Petty Officer Bollinger heard the call to serve his country. He joined the United States Navy, becoming a member of the Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 133, based in Gulfport, MS. In January of 2003, he and his fellow patriots were sent to Iraq, and possibly into harm's way.

On Friday, June 6, 2003 Petty Officer Bollinger was with his battalion, repairing a bridge across the Tigris River in Iraq. He was tragically killed when unexploded ordnance accidentally detonated nearby. At the age of 21 this man lost his life so that we might stand here today, without fear, and in freedom.

I cannot fully describe to you the pain in the hearts of his loved ones as they sat at his funeral on the grounds of Poteau High School, where they had watched him graduate only a few years earlier. Our thoughts and prayers are with them now. And though we are all grieved at the loss of this man, we shall never cease to be proud of him—Oklahoma's son—Petty Officer 3rd Class Doyle Wayne Bollinger.

IN MEMORY OF PRIVATE FIRST CLASS JEROD R. DENNIS

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the memory of a man who, at such a young age, displayed the courage and valor of a true American hero. Private First Class Jerod R. Dennis was a proud son of the great State of Oklahoma, growing up in the community of Antlers. Remembered as being energetic, outgoing, and humorous, he graduated in 2002 from Antlers High School, where he was a standout tennis player, twice making it to the State championships.

Even before the attacks on America on 9/11, PVT Dennis knew that he wanted to dedicate himself to service in the United States Army. He enlisted prior to his graduation from high school, and arrived in boot camp merely 3 weeks after receiving his diploma. His parents, Jerry and Jane Dennis of Antlers, realized that their son was proud to be answering the call to serve his country. Despite their worry for his safety, they sent with him their support and love as he was assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment based out of Fort Bragg, NC.

As a part of the U.S. effort to stamp out the threat of terrorism, PVT Dennis, now an Army sharpshooter, along with the rest of his regiment, was sent to fight in Afghanistan. On April 25, 2003, PVT Dennis was on patrol in eastern Afghanistan with other soldiers when they drove into an ambush. A firefight with rebel fighters quickly followed. When his sergeant was shot, PVT Dennis made his way to a foxhole

and provided cover fire as his comrades took the sergeant to safety. Tragically, PVT Dennis was mortally injured in the process.

At just 19 years of age, PVT Dennis lay dying from his wounds, worrying more about the physical condition of his fellow soldiers than his own health and well being. PVT Dennis passed on to the next life that day, but no one could deny the bravery displayed by this young man from a small town in far southeastern Oklahoma.

Hundreds gathered at the funeral for PVT Dennis, held at the First Baptist Church in Antlers. They will never forget this incredible young man who displayed such great love for his country. As Army Brigadier General Abe Turner stated so eloquently at the funeral ceremony, "We will remember you. We will honor you, and you will always be a hero." He is Oklahoma's hero—Private First Class Jerod R. Dennis.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO LINCOLN COUNTY AND MESCALERO APACHE INDIAN HEROES

• Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I rise today as we move toward the American Independence Day holiday to honor a group of dedicated people in Lincoln County and the Mescalero Apache Tribe of New Mexico who have launched a major project to ensure that their war dead are never forgotten.

These citizens, led by Walter Patrick Limacher of Hondo, are compiling and publishing the "Lincoln County and Mescalero Apache Tribe Honor List." This list includes the names of all those from this mountainous southern New Mexico region who gave their lives defending the United States in World War I, World War II, the Korean war, and Vietnam.

As families and communities rally on July 4th to celebrate the 227th birthday of our Nation, the honor list organizers understand that our celebrations are made possible by the servicemen who came from their very own small communities and ranches to take up arms in the name of liberty and freedom.

The honor list serves to unify this region of New Mexico, equally paying tribute to those who made the ultimate sacrifice. The list reads like the history of New Mexico itself, including warriors of American Indian, Hispanic, Anglo and other descents.

The collection has been a joint effort of a great many, from tribal and county citizens and officials, to the Department of Defense. My distinguished colleague from Arizona, Senator MCCAIN, Secretary of State Colin Powell, General Norman Schwarzkopf, and former New Mexico Governor Gary Johnson have all issued citations to the list. I want to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Limacher for his dedication and tireless work.

I, too, take pride in honoring these servicemen. They are all specially honored in this record.

The Lincoln County and the Mescalero Apache Indian Tribe Honor List will be presented to surviving family members of those who served, and placed in libraries located throughout south central New Mexico so all can remember these great men. The stories of these brave servicemen from Lincoln County and the Mescalero Apache Indian Reservation are forever unfinished because of the circumstance of their deeds, but their sacrifices do not go unnoticed. The honor list will create a unique bond between future generations and the past fallen heroes.

They are all heroes who fought for their country and gave their lives for our freedom, liberty, and independence. Because of their courage we are what we are. To them and their families, and to all our men and women of our armed services past and present, I salute you this Independence holiday.●

AL BRAIMAN: DEPAUL UNIVERSITY CLASS OF 2003

• Depaul University's Class of 2003. Al was the oldest graduate of Depaul's Class of 2003 when he graduated on June 14. Al completed a degree in liberal arts at Depaul's College of New Learning with a grade point average of 3.92 out of a possible 4.0.

Born in Kiev, Russia, in 1920, Al immigrated to the United States at the age of one. His family took up residency in Chicago, where he lived most of his life. After high school, Al turned down an academic scholarship for college to support his family. Al joined the Army and served with distinction in WWII, spending most of his time on Guadalcanal.

After leaving the Army, Al owned and operated Lakeview Grocerland until the mid 1960s when he became an insurance salesman with Equitable Life Insurance Company. He became a certified life underwriter and chartered financial consultant. Al won many awards in the industry, including induction to the Equitable Hall of Fame.

After retiring in 1985, Al decided to earn a college degree, something he promised his mother earlier in his life. Al's interest in politics led him to take many political science and history courses at Depaul University. Some of his favorites included a class on American Presidents and a course on race relations. He also enjoyed learning many new things such as use of the Internet, photography, and art. Al has proven that it is never too late to learn and we could all learn a great deal from his perseverance.

I know my fellow Senators will join me in congratulating Al Braiman, Depaul Class of 2003. His story contains all the elements of a great American life and I am honored to share it with my colleagues in the Senate.●