

Mr. BOND. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 5 minutes.

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

Mr. FEINGOLD. Reserving the right to object.

Mr. BOND. I thank the President.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Madam President, reserving the right to object, I will not object to these remarks, but subsequent to that we will begin the postcloture discussion of the issue before the Senate.

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

Mr. BOND. Madam President, I commend my colleagues from Louisiana and Idaho. It was a very touching story of the Senator from Louisiana which highlights the importance of adoption month. This is a wonderful effort that my two colleagues have launched. We are pleased to support them and the President's efforts and all those wonderful people who take adopted children into their home.

(The remarks of Mr. BOND pertaining to the introduction of S. 3009 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

#### MISCELLANEOUS TRADE AND TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS ACT—CONFERENCE REPORT—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. KOHL. Madam President, I want to speak on the miscellaneous tariffs bill.

Last spring, Senator FEINGOLD and I sent a letter to the minority leader making it clear we would object to taking up S. 2200, a bill granting NTR status to Laos because of the human rights situation there. At the time we said:

Reports emerging from Laos remain disturbing. Journalists, human rights groups, and many of our constituents inform us that the Laos government continues to be responsible for serious human rights violations, and that conditions are particularly difficult for the Hmong ethnic group.

The situation in Laos has not changed, and, in fact, over the last several months more disturbing evidence has emerged that now is not the time for us to appear to be rewarding one of the most closed and repressive regimes. For the first time, we have independent corroboration of the types of charges which have been made by many Hmong residents of my State for years and by others who have fled Laos more recently.

On September 13, 2004, Amnesty International issued a report entitled "Military Atrocities Against Hmong Children Are War Crimes." The report, which I will read from momentarily, details horrific crimes committed in May of this year reportedly by Laos soldiers. These crimes were captured on a graphic videotape smuggled out this summer and which I understand the State Department has taken very

seriously, and they were also described by witness testimony.

The attack took place against a group of children, five of whom were killed, in a remote area of the country, and was described by Amnesty International as follows:

The 5 children, between 13 and 16 years old and part of an ethnic Hmong rebel group, were brutally mutilated—the girls apparently raped before being killed—by a group of approximately 30-40 soldiers. The victims—four girls, Mao Lee, 14; her sister Chao Lee, 16; Chi Her, 14; Pang Lor, 14; and Tou Lor, Pang Lor's 15 year old brother—were killed whilst foraging for food close to their camp. They were unarmed.

A witness, who has subsequently fled the country and been recognized as a refugee by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, reported hearing one of the soldiers saying: "Hmong. Your mouth allows you to speak. Your vagina allows you to breed".

He then heard moans and a gunshot.

A 14-year-old girl was shot in each breast and the other bodies were mutilated by what appears to be high-powered rifle shots fired at close range. One of the girls was disemboweled.

Several other members of the group were seriously injured with gun shot wounds but managed to return to their encampment. The rebels have little if any medicine and rely on traditional treatments using plants found in the forest.

It is my understanding that in the last several weeks, our State Department has delivered a demarche to the Lao Government, calling for thorough investigation of these atrocities which happened in May—an investigation that is credible and that would withstand scrutiny by the international community. To date, there has been no such investigation and the soldiers involved with these war crimes have not been held accountable.

Also this year, came startling and deeply upsetting reports. Hundreds of former Hmong-Lao insurgents—many of whom courageously helped our military during the Vietnam War—and their families emerged from the jungles in Laos only to be captured by the Lao military and mistreated, and as some allege, killed.

The emerging Hmong-Lao were under the impression that there was an amnesty program organized by the Laotian government, but there was much confusion about this program. The Lao government has officially denied there was such a program, they have refused to provide our Government with any details of this mass surrender of ethnic Hmong and their families, and they would not accept humanitarian assistance for the sudden influx of people seeking assistance.

In response to these reports, Senator FEINGOLD and I, along with others, sent a letter to Ambassador Negroponte asking for his assistance in urging the United Nations to send a high level UN representative or fact finding mission to Laos to monitor the treatment of the Hmong. I also raised the issue with Secretary Powell when he came to testify before the Commerce-Justice-State Appropriations Subcommittee.

Secretary Powell expressed concerns about the reports coming out of Laos. He agreed that there is a need for greater access and that more needs to be done to secure the safety of the Hmong. And, while Laos hasn't exactly been on the front burner, this spring the Secretary raised the issue of the Hmong in Laos with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, and he wrote to the Lao Foreign Minister to express concerns about the reports related to the supposed amnesty.

It is my understanding that there has been no reply to Secretary Powell's letter.

So, here we are today offering a carrot to a government that has essentially stonewalled our Secretary of State and has restricted access to independent international monitors, leaving us with no way to investigate the many reports coming from Laos.

I am aware that there are supporters of Laos who have raised questions about the veracity of reports of human rights violations against the Hmong. Because of restrictions put in place by the Lao government that deny policymakers, journalists, and humanitarian groups access to the situation on the ground, it is very difficult to confirm these reports one way or the other. More significantly, it is virtually impossible to ensure that these individuals are being treated fairly and humanely. That is why it is essential for us to keep the pressure on the Lao government to push for international access. Such access would be crucial in determining the facts surrounding the treatment of the Hmong and would allow us to ensure that they are not being mistreated.

The sad fate of the Hmong in Laos has been exacerbated by their role in helping the United States during the Vietnam war. By 1963, as many as 20,000 Hmong fighters were trained and armed by the Central Intelligence Agency to fight against the North Vietnamese Army and Pathet Lao forces as part of the so-called "secret war in Laos." Some reports put the number of fighters as high as 40,000 in 1969. The Hmong sustained heavy casualties during those years, working in coordination with the CIA. The impact on the Hmong community extended beyond the actual fighters: Family members lived under terrible conditions, throughout this period, unable to farm because they were constantly moving to keep one step ahead of the Communists. Since they were never in one place long enough to harvest, they had to eat leaves, wild fruit, tree bark, and whatever else they could find in the jungle. The United States is indebted to these former Hmong insurgents who rescued downed American pilots and disrupted North Vietnamese supply lines—under the most difficult circumstances. We cannot forget these courageous individuals and their families.

In the years since the end of the Vietnam war, thousands of Hmong

have fled to Thailand, living a life of separation from their homeland and ongoing transition. Hmong have come to the United States, resettling in California, Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Carolina, and Rhode Island. My State of Wisconsin is the home to 33,000 former Hmong refugees, many of whom are concerned about the status of their family and friends in Laos. And, last December, the U.S. Government decided to admit 15,000 Hmong-Lao refugees who were living in Thailand. These refugees began to arrive in June and they will continue to arrive through the end of the year.

Estimates are that there are as many as 17,000 Hmong still live in the jungles of Laos. According to the Associated Press, about 20 Hmong communities are currently involved in low level combat against the Lao communist government, which came to power in 1975 at the end of the Vietnam War. Most recently, there are reports that as many as two thousand Hmong have been under attack in remote regions of Laos by Lao forces using grenades, machine guns, and mortars. The scattered reports we receive are from those who manage to escape the area, those who call out on satellite phones, and the few reporters who venture onto the dangerous terrain.

In October 2003, Amnesty International issued a report which stated that the Lao government is using starvation as a "weapon of war against civilians"—a clear violation of the Geneva Conventions, which Laos has ratified. The report indicated that the Lao military had surrounded several rebel groups and their families, including civilians, and was preventing them from foraging for food they need to survive. At that time, Amnesty stated that it was greatly concerned "by the sharply deteriorating situation of thousands of family members of ethnic minority groups, predominantly Hmong, involved in an armed conflict with the Lao military in jungle areas of the country." Articles in *Time Asia* in spring 2003 underscored these charges, stating that the Lao government had hunted down and surrounded "this dwindling group of outcasts." The pictures accompanying this and other pieces in *Time* have shown the Hmong in the jungle living in deplorable conditions.

Beyond its treatment of the Hmong, the Lao government also has a history of particularly severe violations of religious freedom which have been documented by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom in a report submitted to Congress last March. The Commission has designated Laos as a "country of particular concern" and has said that "U.S. attention to Laos at this time may advance protections for religious freedom and promote U.S. interests."

I am sure that granting NTR was not the kind of attention the Commission had in mind.

To quote from their report:

... there has been extensive government interference with and restrictions on all religious communities. In more recent years, the government has focused its repression on religions that are relatively new to Laos, including Protestant Christianity... [Violations] include the arrest, prolonged detention, and imprisonment of members of religious minorities on account of their religious activities. ... Lao officials have forced Christians to renounce their faith... dozens of churches have been closed.

This persecution of religious minorities has extended to U.S. citizens as well. In June of this year, the Laotian Government arrested, imprisoned, tried, convicted, and sentenced to 15 years in prison a Lutheran minister, a U.S. citizen, from St. Paul, MN. While in captivity, he was denied consular access for over a week and was subjected to a so-called trial before the Laotian judiciary system. Although he was released after a month, Laotian Christians have not been so lucky. Some Christian pastors say leaders have remained imprisoned for years. As long as there is no pressure on the Lao Government, we can expect the status quo to continue.

With all due respect to my colleagues on the Finance Committee, I have to say they have been surprisingly eager to grant NTR status to Laos. They have been so focused on taking this step in the context of cleaning up our trade laws and eliminating the distinction between those nations which have NTR status and those that do not have NTR status that they have forgotten that this is not happening in a vacuum. Whether we intend to or not, we are sending a strong signal to the Lao Government, and that signal is that they can act with impunity.

I recognize there is strong support for the miscellaneous tariff bill that has nothing to do with Laos NTR, and that many of my colleagues are not casting this vote with Laos in mind. For many years, I have worked with others, including my colleague, Senator FEINGOLD, to shed more light on the condition of the Hmong in Laos and to assure their safety, and I did guarantee I will continue to do so.

Madam President, I commend to my colleagues a report on the CIA Web site entitled "Supporting the 'Secret War': CIA Air Operations in Laos, 1955 to 1974." The report is by a historian at the University of Georgia.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a report from *Time* magazine of May 5, 2003, entitled "Welcome to the Jungle," which details the deplorable conditions of the Hmong in the jungle in Laos. As one of the Hmong said, "We shed blood with the U.S. ... they should remember us." Also, a report dated September 13, 2004, from Amnesty International entitled "Laos: Military Atrocities Against Hmong Children Are War Crimes." Then a letter from the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom.

And a letter dated March 15, 2004, to the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., John

Negroponte, signed by members of the Wisconsin, California, and Minnesota delegations.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From *Time* Magazine, May, 2003]

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

(By Andrew Perrin)

There were hundreds of them, perhaps a thousand. They wept and knelt before me on the ground, crying, "Please help us, the communists are coming." I had hiked four days to reach this forsaken place deep in the jungles of Xaysomboune, northern Laos. The Hmong rebels prostrate before me were convinced they would all soon die. They knew they were a forgotten tribe, crushed by a military campaign that is denied by the communist leaders of their small, sheltered nation.

In all my years as a journalist I had never seen anything like this: a ragtag army with wailing families in tow, beseeching me to take news of their plight to the outside world. I walked among starving children, their tiny frames scarred by mortar shrapnel. Young men, toting rifles and with dull-eyed infants strapped to their backs, ripped open their shirts to show me their wounds. An old man grabbed my hand and guided it over the contours of shrapnel buried in his gut. A teenage girl, no more than 15, whimpered at my feet, pawed at my legs and cried, "They've killed my husband. They've killed my mother, my father, my brother..." But before she could finish, others were pushing her aside to sob out their own litanies of loss. In this heart of darkness, nobody has a monopoly on grief.

Now, for the first time in nearly three decades, this dwindling group of outcasts are completely surrounded by the Lao government troops that hunt them. They are trapped in a narrow swath of jungle, with all avenues of escape blocked by either soldiers or antipersonnel mines. "This time," says Moua Toua Ther, 46, the one-armed leader of the camp and commander of its pitifully equipped fighting force, "we will not be able to run or hide. When the helicopters come we will be butchered like wild animals."

What is the crime this ragged bunch has committed? It is simply that they are Hmong, mostly the children, grandchildren or even great-grandchildren of fighters who in the 1960s sided with the U.S. to fight communism in Laos during the Vietnam War. Fabled for their resourcefulness and valor, many Hmong became members of a secret CIA-backed militia that helped rescue downed U.S. pilots and disrupted North Vietnamese supplies and troop movements along the Ho Chi Minh Trail through central Laos. The communist Pathet Lao movement—and its patrons in Hanoi—has never forgotten the Hmong's complicity with the Americans. Shortly after the Pathet Lao took power in 1975—two years after the U.S. had fled the country and left the Hmong soldiers to their fate—a communist newspaper declared the Party would hunt down the "American collaborators" and their families "to the last root." But until *Time* recently reached one of the last Hmong outposts, no one truly believed that, after 28 years, the Lao government still meant it. This, then, is the final act of a war that, according to history books, ended in 1973.

The Hmong, who migrated to Laos from southwestern China in the 19th century, have always been a proud, warlike people. In the 1920s a Hmong rebellion against their French rulers erupted in much of Laos and northern Vietnam, ultimately failing but leaving thousands dead. When the French left Laos

in 1953, the Hmong found themselves fighting again—this time against the threat of communism. Among the resisters was a young Hmong general named Vang Pao, who in 1961 was commissioned by the CIA to set up a secret army to fight the advancing communists. Over the next decade nearly half of the 40,000 Hmong fighters in Vang Pao's army are thought to have perished during the fighting. The reward for their sacrifice? The Paris cease-fire agreement of 1973, which signaled an end of U.S. aid. Vang fought on for two more years, but when it became clear that the Pathet Lao would win he fled to Thailand and then to the U.S. Today, some 200,000 other Hmong live in exile communities in the U.S. But not all Hmong made it to America: 15,000 of Vang's brethren were cut off from escape and were forced to melt away into the mountainous jungles of Laos.

Even from California, where he leads the United Lao Liberation Front (ULLF), Vang, 74, casts a long shadow over his people. Moua says he reports directly to Vang—a claim the Californian denies, though he does admit to providing occasional help. From his suburban American home, the exiled general demands democracy and a reinstatement of the monarchy in Laos. Moua and his militia are among the remnants of Hmong rebel groups fighting for that disappearing dream.

Moua joined Vang's secret army at age 15. His left arm ends in a stump—his hand was removed in a 1974 jungle amputation. One of only four people in the village with some writing skills, he is a meticulous keeper of village statistics—there are 56 orphaned children, 40 widows and 11 widowers. By Moua's count, 30% of the villagers have shrapnel wounds. In 1975, when Vang fled Laos, Moua recorded his group at 7,000 people. Today there are only about 800 left.

Although the Hmong have been on the run for nearly three decades, Moua and others in his village regard the past year as the worst. In October, they say, some 500 ground troops attacked them from four directions in Xaysomboune while a gunship strafed them from above. In all, 216 Hmong were killed. Such assaults can come at any time. Last August, a mortar round landed less than a meter from nine-year-old Yeng Houa's family dinner table, killing both his parents. Yeng survived; but I count 18 shrapnel scars on his legs, his jaw is broken and there is an infected sore on his inner thigh. Since the attack, he has not spoken.

The Hmong say they are too ill-equipped to strike back. Most of their fighters are armed with ancient M-16s and AK-47s, and the heaviest weapons at their disposal are two geriatric M-79 grenade launchers. Ammunition is mostly dug up from former U.S. air bases. According to Moua, only a third of the rounds are actually live, negating Hmong chances of launching a viable offensive. As for the Lao government, which declined to talk to Time, it denies allegations that it is decimating Hmong rebels and blames them for much of the unrest in the country. It insists that Hmong are doubling as bandits. In February an ambush on a bus traveling the busy Highway 13 in the north left 12 people dead, including two Swiss cyclists. A calling card pinned to one of the corpses indicated the deaths were the work of Hmong rebels. And on April 20, gunmen opened fire on a passenger bus, killing at least 13 people. Eyewitnesses to this massacre say the gunmen spoke to one another in the Hmong language. Vang Pao angrily denies claims that his men are responsible for attacks on civilians. "In the past there have been several events like this that have taken place and been blamed on the ULLF," he says. "But it was not us. We believe it was organized by the government using Hmong people who serve in the Lao army." For his part, Moua

portrays the Hmong as helpless innocents. "We only defend and run," he says. "If the Lao troops launch an assault, our ammo won't even last an hour."

Back in the mountains of Xaysomboune, Moua and his comrades sleep uneasily on beds of leaves inside banana-leaf huts. Most cannot recall how many times they've relocated, but they remember the people they've lost. Bhun Si, 42, says his wife and two sons were taken from him last October. His friend Soum Sai saw everything: the government troops came in, he says, and shot women and children from a distance of just five meters. Today, Bhun looks barely alive himself. Only two fingers remain on his left hand—he lost the others in a B-41 rocket attack that killed six of his fellow Hmong. His leg still bleeds from a suppurating shrapnel wound he received 13 years ago. One side of his face is a mask of melted flesh, with black sockets where an ear and an eye should be. "Everybody is dead," he says. "Sixteen people in my family are dead, all killed by the communists." In a heartbreaking refrain I heard repeatedly during my stay in the camp, he adds, "America must save us."

Commander Moua, too, wonders where his erstwhile American allies have gone. "We shed blood with the U.S.," he says. "They should remember this. They should find us a land where we're safe and have food to eat." But as the world has watched in awe of the might of the U.S. war machine in Iraq, the final scenes of a 30-year-old war in Indochina that America would rather forget are destined to play out unnoticed.

[From Amnesty International, Sept. 13, 2004]  
LAOS: MILITARY ATROCITIES AGAINST HMONG CHILDREN ARE WAR CRIMES

Amnesty International is horrified by recent reports, including video evidence and witness testimony, of an attack by Lao soldiers against a group of five children, four of them girls, in the Xaisomboune military zone on 19 May 2004.

The children, aged between 13 and 16 years old and part of an ethnic Hmong rebel group, were brutally mutilated—the girls apparently raped before being killed—by a group of approximately 30–40 soldiers. The victims—four girls, Mao Lee, 14; her sister Chao Lee, 16; Chi Her, 14; Pang Lor, 14; and Tou Lor, Pang Lor's 15 year old brother—were killed whilst foraging for food close to their camp. They were unarmed.

The attacks violate the most fundamental principles of international human rights and humanitarian law. These rapes and killings constitute war crimes. The Lao authorities must bring to justice those responsible for this atrocity and cease attacks on unarmed civilians.

A witness, who has subsequently fled the country and been recognized as a refugee by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, reported hearing one of the soldiers saying: "Meo (Hmong). Your kael ni (mouth) allows you to speak. Your hin (vagina) allows you to breed".

He then heard moans and a gunshot. Mao Lee was shot in each breast and the other bodies were mutilated by what appears to be high-powered rifle shots fired at close range. One of the girls was disembowelled.

Several other members of the group were seriously injured with gun shot wounds but managed to return to their encampment.

The rebels have little if any medicine and rely on traditional treatments using plants found in the forest.

The Lao authorities must, as a matter of utmost urgency, permit UN agencies and independent monitors unfettered access to those rebels who are recently reported to have 'surrendered'. They must also permit

humanitarian agencies to provide medical and food assistance to those injured as a result of this and other military actions against the rebels.

#### BACKGROUND

The Hmong ethnic minority group in Laos was allied to the US during the Viet Nam war and its spill-over fighting in both Laos and Cambodia. The Hmong people have a long history of resistance and aspirations of independence from Lao government control. Following the creation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic in 1975 and the fall of the former regime, as many as a third of the Hmong ethnic minority are believed to have fled the country. Most of these refugees resettled in the USA, but a large number spent many years in refugee camps in Thailand.

Sporadic military resistance to the government has continued among some ethnic groups, predominantly Hmong. There are also continuing allegations of serious human rights abuses against those Hmong perceived as still being opposed to the Lao government.

There have been increasing concerns over the last two years at an apparent increase in Lao government military activity against rebel groups, who along with armed adult men also comprise a large number of women, children, elderly and sick. The upsurge in military activity followed increasing international concern at the situation, which was triggered by a number of journalists visiting rebel groups and reporting their plight.

Credible sources have reported the deaths of scores of civilians, mainly children, from starvation and injuries sustained during the conflict. It is known that several of approximately 20 rebel groups with their families are surrounded by Lao military and prevented from foraging for food that they traditionally rely on to survive. Amnesty International has protested to the Lao authorities at what it believes is the use of starvation as a weapon of war against civilians.

Several hundred ethnic Hmong rebels are reported to have 'surrendered' to the Lao authorities in recent months. UN agencies, diplomats and journalists have not been given access to these people and Amnesty International has received conflicting reports as to their reception and treatment by the authorities.

Amnesty International has also repeatedly condemned indiscriminate attacks by armed opposition groups that have reportedly killed and injured civilians in Laos. Amnesty International unequivocally condemns these acts and has and will continue to call upon the perpetrators to cease all activities that are in violation of human rights and international humanitarian law.

UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON  
INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM,  
*Washington, DC, March 20, 2003.*

Senator HERB KOHL,  
*U.S. Senate,*  
*Washington, DC.*

DEAR SENATOR KOHL: On behalf of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, I am pleased to enclose the Commission's 2003 report and policy recommendations on Laos. The Commission is charged with reviewing the facts and circumstances of violations of international religious freedom. By law, a key function of the Commission is to submit to the President, Secretary of State, and Congress its findings and recommendations for U.S. policies with respect to foreign governments engaging in or tolerating violations of religious freedom.

In its most recent report, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom determines that the government of Laos has been engaged in particularly severe violations of religious freedom, as defined in the

International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (IRFA). These violations include the arrest, prolonged detention, and imprisonment of members of religious minorities on account of their religious activities.

The Commission draws attention to abuses including arrests, prolonged detention and imprisonment of members of minority religions, forced renunciations of faith of Christians, and extensive governmental interference with and restrictions on all religious communities, including Evangelical Christians, Roman Catholics, Baha'is and Buddhists. In July 2002, the Lao government promulgated a new decree on religious affairs that provides a legal basis for control of and interference with religious activities by government officials.

Lao officials perceive the United States to be influential in the provision of international aid for Laos' development and some have thus demonstrated a willingness to address U.S. concerns, including human rights concerns raised by the Commission, the State Department, and non-governmental organizations. The United States has a unique opportunity to engage the government and people of Laos in a process of reform that would end the suppression of religious freedom and other related human rights, and relatively small measures of attention and assistance could accomplish a great deal.

Therefore, the Commission makes the following recommendations to the President, Secretary of State, and Congress:

1. President Bush should designate Laos as a "country of particular concern" to make clear U.S. concerns over particularly severe violations of religious freedom in Laos, thus engaging the U.S. government in a process to promote changes that would advance legal as well as practical protections of freedom of religion and related human rights in that country.

2. The U.S. government should urge the government of Laos to take specific steps to improve respect for religious freedom, including the possible establishment of a bilateral human rights dialogue that would also address the broader range of human rights concerns such as torture and other forms of ill-treatment.

3. The U.S. government should provide assistance to Laos to take genuine steps to reform its practices, policies, laws, and regulations that contribute to religious freedom violations.

The report, as well as information about the Commission, can be found on our Web site at [www.useirf.gov](http://www.useirf.gov). For further information, please contact the Commission at (202) 523-3240.

Sincerely,

FELICE D. GAER,  
*Chair.*

U.S. SENATE,  
*Washington, DC, March 15, 2004.*

Ambassador JOHN D. NEGROPONTE,  
*U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, United States Mission to the United Nations, New York, NY.*

DEAR AMBASSADOR NEGROPONTE: We are writing to ask for your assistance in urging the United Nations to send a UN representative or fact-finding mission to Laos to monitor the treatment of hundreds of Hmong-Lao, many of whom are former insurgents and their families, who have recently emerged from the jungles of Laos. A high-level UN presence is essential in securing the safety of these individuals, as well as in providing greater transparency regarding Lao governmental actions to the international community.

Over the past several weeks, hundreds of Hmong-Lao and their families have left the jungles of Laos. Many of these former insur-

gents fought with the Central Intelligence Agency during the Vietnam War to rescue downed American pilots, to thwart supply lines along the Ho Chi Minh trail and to hold off North Vietnamese troops. When the Vietnam War ended and the communist Pathet Lao took over the government, thousands of Hmong were killed and sent to reeducation camps. Most Hmong fled Laos or hid in the jungles of Laos, fearing for their lives. Some estimate that as many as 17,000 Hmong have been living in the jungles since 1975. The United States remains indebted to these courageous individuals and their families.

The U.S. government claims that these individuals have surrendered to the Lao government and are participating in an unofficial and "unstated" amnesty program organized by the government of Laos. Yet, our offices have heard contradictory information. Reports indicate that the Laotian government denies the existence of any amnesty program for these individuals. In addition, many of our constituents claim that these former insurgents have been captured by the Lao military and did not surrender. Our constituents fear that these people are in serious danger and allege that many have already been killed, including women and children. Amnesty International in a report on March 4, 2004 states, "Amnesty International has received conflicting reports as to their [the Hmong's] reception and treatment by Lao authorities."

The restrictions imposed by the Lao government on international access have prevented policymakers, journalists and humanitarian groups from knowing the reality on the ground and understanding the needs. The United Nations can play a crucial role in shedding light on the situation. We ask you, therefore, to urge the United Nations to send a UN representative or fact-finding mission to ensure that these former insurgents are treated humanely and that the Lao government respects its obligations under international law.

We thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Russ Feingold, U.S. Senator; Herb Kohl, U.S. Senator; Barbara Boxer, U.S. Senator; Mark Dayton, U.S. Senator; Dianne Feinstein, U.S. Senator; Ron Kind, U.S. Representative; Mark Green, U.S. Representative; Devin Nunes, U.S. Representative; George Radanovich, U.S. Representative; Dana Rohrabacher, U.S. Representative.

Mr. KOHL. I thank the Chair. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Madam President, I rise today to express my strong opposition to efforts to push through a provision normalizing trade relations with Laos.

First, let me thank my senior colleague, Senator KOHL. I enjoy working with him on so many issues, from our dairy industry in Wisconsin, to our excellent National Guard. But I am particularly proud he and I have been able to cooperate and work so hard with regard to the Hmong people living in Wisconsin and the concerns they have regarding issues not only concerning their own lives in Wisconsin but also the issues involving their families and their relatives in places such as Laos. I thank the Senator for all the work we have done together on this issue, and we will continue this battle to make sure there is accountability with re-

gard to the human rights record of the Government of Laos, which is not a good record.

It is for this reason I am deeply disappointed the decision was made to insert this provision in the Miscellaneous Trade and Technical Corrections Act of 2004 conference report. Let's again remember—and Senator KOHL pointed this out—so there is no misunderstanding, this bill would sail through the Senate if this provision on Laos was not included. Senator KOHL and I are not trying to block the larger legislation. However, I cannot support upgrading Laos's trading status as long as the human rights situation in that country remains so disturbing, and I am not prepared to let this bill pass without at least some further debate on this important matter.

As Senator KOHL just said, this is the wrong time to reward the Government of Laos with normal trade relations. Reports emerging from Laos continue to demonstrate that human rights conditions in Laos remain appalling. Despite the Lao Government's denials, human rights organizations, the U.S. Government, my constituents, and various news agencies have all documented the Lao Government's blatant disregard for human rights.

I have tried to carefully and closely monitor the human rights situation in Laos as a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs, and as a representative of over 35,000 Hmong in Wisconsin, many of whom fled Laos following the end of the Vietnam war.

Just like Senator KOHL, I am regularly contacted by constituents concerned about their friends and family in Laos. Again and again, my office encounters reports of atrocities committed against the Hmong in Laos and other deplorable practices by the Lao Government. These reports, combined with the Lao Government's absolute refusal to investigate allegations or to permit independent monitoring, lead me to believe it is not in our country's national interest to adopt normal trade relations with the Lao Government at this time.

The State Department has documented these abuses through a series of reports, including their Human Rights Report, Trafficking in Persons Report, and Religious Freedom Report. In their Country Report for Human Rights Practices for 2003, the State Department reported the Lao Government's "human rights record remained poor, and it continued to commit serious abuses." As described by the report, the abuse of detainees and prisoners, inhumane prison conditions, arbitrary arrests, detention and surveillance by police, a corrupt judiciary, and restrictions on freedom of speech, the press, assembly, and association are just some of the conditions that Laotians face.

Trafficking in women and children for prostitution and forced labor in

Laos is also a serious problem. The State Department's 2004 Trafficking in Persons Report placed Laos in their tier 2 watchlist which they said reflected the "lack of evidence of increasing Lao Government efforts to prosecute traffickers and to provide adequate protection for victims." It also stated that some local government officials "likely profit from trafficking."

The State Department's International Religious Freedom Report for 2004 describes restrictions on freedom of religion, stating that while the country's constitution allows for freedom of religion, the Lao Government actually "restricts this right in practice." The report states that local officials were reported to pressure Christians to "renounce their faith on threat of arrest or forceful eviction from their villages. There were also several instances of persons detained or arrested for their religious faith."

The report goes on:

The absence of rule of law has created an atmosphere in which authorities may act with impunity against persons regarded as threats to social order. Persons arrested for their religious activities have been charged with exaggerated security or other criminal offenses. Persons detained may be held for lengthy periods without trial. Court judges, not juries, decide guilt or innocence in court cases, and an accused person's defense rights are limited. A person arrested or convicted for religious offenses has little protection under the law. All religious groups, including Buddhists, practice their faith in an atmosphere in which application of the law is arbitrary. Certain actions interpreted by officials as threatening may bring harsh punishment. Religious practice is "free only if practitioners stay within tacitly understood guidelines of what is acceptable to the government and the LPRP . . ."

—The Lao Republic Revolutionary Party, the country's ruling party.

A particular concern to my constituents and to me is the steady flow of reports of atrocities committed against the Hmong in Laos. My office is regularly bombarded with reports of murders, rape, and starvation of the Hmong in Laos. We cannot verify each of these claims, but the stream of videos, photographs, eyewitness reports, and articles is deeply disturbing. These allegations cannot be dismissed outright, as the Lao Government simply does again and again, denying the Hmong's very existence in the jungles of Laos. My constituents and the constituents of many Members of Congress care deeply about the well-being of their friends and families.

It is not just our constituents and Members of Congress who are concerned. Patricia Haslach, our U.S. Ambassador to Laos, stated in her nomination hearing on April 22, 2004, that her first priority was to press the Lao Government to respect the rights of ethnic groups, especially the Hmong population. The former Ambassador to Laos, Ambassador Douglas Hartwick, also made this a priority in his dealings with the Government of Laos and recognized the need for greater transparency and reform.

As Senator KOHL pointed out, and as I reiterate, let us not forget the obligation the United States has to the Hmong. During the Vietnam War, the Central Intelligence Agency recruited, trained and armed approximately 60,000 Hmong to fight the Vietcong in a secret war. They fought with the CIA to rescue downed American pilots, to thwart supply lines along the Ho Chi Minh trail and to hold off North Vietnamese troops. Following the ascendancy of the communist Pathet Laos regime in 1975 in Laos, the Lao government cracked down on its perceived political opponents, including the U.S.-trained Hmong guerilla fighters. Lao and Vietnamese troops crushed nearly all remnants of the Hmong army. Tens of thousands of Laotians, including the Hmong, died while attempting to flee the Lao communist regime, and many others perished in reeducation and labor camps. Hundreds of thousands of people fled to Thailand, and between 1975 and 1998, nearly 130,000 Hmong refugees were admitted to the United States.

The Hmong's relationship with the CIA was not acknowledged by the U.S. until 1994 when the former CIA Director William Colby told Congress of the Hmong's cooperation with the CIA. At that hearing, he stated that the Hmong contribution was "substantial and at great sacrifice." He further stated:

Many of the Hmong who bore the burden of that effort did so in hopes of a better life for their families and children, only to see them flee their homes in fear of their enemies to become dependent refugees in foreign lands . . .

The largest Hmong communities are now in Wisconsin, Minnesota, California and the State of the Presiding officer, North Carolina. There are approximately 280,000 Hmong nationwide. My State of Wisconsin is home to the third largest Hmong community in the United States, most of whom came to this country from Laos as refugees after the Vietnam War. I am proud of the Hmong veterans and their families who sacrificed so much during the Vietnam War.

The Hmong people have made important contributions to Wisconsin and this Nation. They have brought new traditions and new perspectives, which have enriched the cultural life of my State and many others. I have consistently admired their passion and commitment to tackling a host of difficult issues confronting their community in the United States, Laos and in Thailand. They have endured tremendous hardship, even in the United States, as they have adjusted to an entirely new way of life here. I admire their strength and perseverance. In December 2003, the United States Government announced the creation of a new resettlement program of approximately 15,000 Hmong-Lao, who were living at a temple named Wat Tham Krabok in Thailand. They have already begun to resettle in the United States, and some have come to Wisconsin, which has a

proud tradition of welcoming refugee populations.

However, while most fled Laos, it appears that remnants of former Hmong insurgent groups and their families, who once fought with the CIA and the Royal Lao government, remain in remote areas of Laos. The Lao leadership refuses to acknowledge that these groups exist. In a speech on January 27, 2004, then-U.S. Ambassador to Laos Hartwick stated that Laos needs to make progress in human rights and should find a humanitarian solution to the people still hiding in Laos' jungles. He actually stated:

Remnants of former Hmong insurgent groups who once fought on the side of the Royal Lao Government some 27 years ago, still hide deep in the Lao forest, afraid or unwilling to come out. The Lao leadership is unwilling to acknowledge publicly that these groups exist, nor to explain in detail to the international community the amnesty policy Laos has had in place for years to encourage peaceful resettlement. Much more needs to be done. Only improved cooperation and dialogue among the Lao authorities, the forest people leaders, and those outside of Lao borders who encourage this standoff can resolve this tragic situation that continues to claim innocent lives and fuel bilateral tensions . . . My government and the international community stand ready to assist in resolving this complicated issue if requested by the concerned parties.

An article in Time Asia from September 20, 2004 reiterated that thousands of Hmong "remain trapped deep inside the mountains, playing a deadly game of cat and mouse with the government."

Recently, my constituents have informed me that attacks have only escalated against the Hmong in the jungles by Laotian military forces. I want to highlight some of the examples of these disturbing reports.

Amnesty International in October 2003 reported that the Lao Government was using "starvation as a weapon of war." They reported that the Lao military had surrounded several rebel groups and their families and was preventing them from foraging for food they need to survive. Amnesty International stated that they were gravely concerned by the "sharply deteriorating situation of thousands of family members of ethnic minority groups, predominantly Hmong, involved in an armed conflict with the Lao military in jungle areas of the country."

Following this report, I wrote a letter with other Senators to the Ambassador of Laos, bringing his attention to the Amnesty International report and asking the government to investigate the treatment of Hmong in the jungles of Laos, and to permit international monitors and humanitarian relief agencies to provide food and medical supplies. The Lao Ambassador dismissed the Amnesty report outright, and the Lao Government refused to investigate the claims.

In a Time Asia article from May 5, 2003, journalist Andrew Perrin wrote of his journey to visit a group of Hmong deep within the jungles in northern

Laos and spoke of the Hmong being hunted down and trapped by Lao military forces. He wrote this "ragtag army with wailing families in tow" was "completely surrounded by the Lao government troops that hunt them." He goes on, "What is the crime this ragged bunch has committed? It is simply that they are Hmong, mostly the children, grandchildren or even great-grandchildren of fighters who in the 1960s sided with the U.S. to fight communism in Laos during the Vietnam War . . . The communist Pathet Lao movement . . . has never forgotten the Hmong's complicity with the Americans."

In another article from Time Asia on June 30, 2003, Andrew Perrin again highlighted the plight of the Hmong, stating, "In Laos, no political dissent has been allowed in 28 years, nor any right of assembly. Scores of political prisoners and youth have been detained for years in dark cells without trial; many have been tortured. Christians are persecuted, told to denounce their faith under threat of imprisonment" and Hmong women and children are "trapped in the mountains, starving, shot at and dying in droves." He continued, "Most of this brutality passes unnoticed or uncommented upon by Western governments, because Laos does not register on their radar."

Well, it registers on my radar and the radar of my constituents. However, it appears that this brutality has gone unnoticed by some members of Congress who wish to move forward on normal trade relations with Laos. Do these reports not give some of my colleagues any hesitation about granting normal trade relations to Laos at this time?

Also in June 2003, in a highly publicized case, the Lao government arrested a Hmong-American and two European journalists for visiting Hmong in restricted areas of Laos. According to reports, they received a 15-year prison sentence following a two hour trial, demonstrating the flawed judicial process in Laos. After intense diplomatic pressure, they were released. According to an AFP report, one of the journalists stated, "Everything was decided in advance. It was a total mockery of justice, a parody . . . At one point we had black hoods on our heads and were handcuffed . . . They said we were carrying drugs and weapons, they were all lies." However, the Lao citizens apprehended with the three foreigners were not so lucky. They remain in jail, having been sentenced to between 12 and 20 years. News reports indicated that they were tortured while in detention.

Even the United Nations has been unsuccessful in getting answers from the Lao Government regarding human rights violations in Laos.

In August 2003, the United Nations Committee to Eliminate Racial Discrimination strongly criticized the Lao People's Democratic Republic and expressed its grave concerns regarding reports of human rights violations, including brutalities inflicted on the Hmong. The committee "expressed its

grave concern at the information it had received of serious and repeated human rights violations in that country; was extremely disturbed to learn that some members of the Hmong minority had been subjected to severe brutalities; deplored the measures taken by the Lao authorities to prevent the reporting of any information concerning the situation of the Hmong people . . ." The committee "urged the state party to halt immediately acts of violence against the Hmong population."

In March 2004, an Amnesty International reported that large numbers of ethnic Hmong rebels and their families had emerged from jungles of Laos and surrendered to authorities in at least two areas of the country. The U.S. State Department confirmed these reports, believing that anywhere from 350 to 700 Hmong surrendered to Lao authorities and were participating in a Lao amnesty program. However, the Lao government has denied the existence of an amnesty program. Furthermore, some of my 26 constituents have raised fears that these Hmong did not actually surrender, but were captured and in some cases summarily executed. Several colleagues and I urged the administration to pursue increased international access to monitor this issue under United Nations auspices. In addition, we urged the State Department to investigate the allegations and gain access to the Hmong emerging from the jungles.

Following these reports, in March 2004, I contacted the U.S. Ambassador to the UN with other members of Congress, asking for his assistance in urging the United Nations to send a representative or fact-finding mission to Laos to monitor the treatment of the Hmong. In addition, I also wrote Secretary Powell with other members of Congress to investigate reports of atrocities and to take further action to protect the Hmong.

In a letter of response, Ambassador Negrofonte informed my office that both the Embassy and the United Nations Development Programme—UNDP—continue to urge the Government of Laos to address this humanitarian issue in a peaceful and transparent manner, and have asked the Lao government to provide access to the areas where these people are seeking assistance.

It seems that no access was granted. In addition, in my response to Secretary Powell's letter, the U.S. State Department informed me that they too shared our concern about the treatment of Hmong living in remote areas and that they were seeking access to these people in order to learn about their status firsthand. Furthermore, the State Department informed us that Secretary Powell wrote to Lao Foreign Minister Somsavat, requesting that the Lao government allow the U.S. embassy and UN or other international organization 29 personnel access to these groups. The Foreign Minister never wrote Powell back. The Foreign Minister never even responded to our Sec-

retary of State at all. Now Congress wants to grant normal trade relations to Laos? Why would we reward the misbehavior and human rights abuses of this regime?

Most recently, in September 2004, Amnesty International, CNN and other news sources reported on a recently released video, which documented the murder of five Hmong teenagers in Laos, allegedly by Lao military forces. Amnesty called these attacks war crimes. The children aged between 13 and 16, were murdered while foraging for food near their camp in Laos in May 2004. According to the reports, the 4 girls were raped prior to being killed. Not surprisingly, the Lao government initially dismissed the allegations, calling the tape a fabrication. After intense pressure by the United States State Department to launch an investigation, the Lao government stated that they undertook an investigation and were not able to find any evidence of a confrontation between the Lao military and these Hmong teenagers. But they have refused to make their report on the incident public.

Mr. President, Michael Vang of California and Houa Ly of Wisconsin, two United States citizens, were last seen near the border between Laos and Thailand in April 1999. We do not know what fate they met in Laos. Joint U.S.-Lao investigations were unable to find them. The Lao government needs to make greater efforts at finding these two men.

While we in Congress cannot verify every allegation, the information we receive from journalists, human rights organizations and our constituents is incredibly disturbing and cannot be disregarded. We just do not have enough information. But, the Lao government does not help us find the truth by restricting the international community from getting any more information.

Despite all of the Lao government's stonewalling of our inquiries and the flood of reports of human rights violations by the Lao government, this Congress is now about to grant normal trade relations to Laos. Why now? Why do we choose to reward this oppressive and brutal government when they have not adequately responded to our concerns? When the Foreign Minister of Laos has not even responded to Secretary Powell's letter to his government, requesting more information? If these allegations are untrue, as they claim, then why does the Lao government not allow international monitors into the areas where the Hmong are living?

But our concerns go unheeded, and we continue to be confronted with the most horrific accusations about conditions in Laos with no way to respond. We should not be giving Laos NTR, when they refuse to open to us in meaningful ways.

The Lao government must assure the international community that they are

attempting to address the problem of these men and women and children in the jungles of Laos through a humanitarian solution. The Lao government must allow international humanitarian organizations to have access to areas in which Hmong and other ethnic minorities have resettled, to allow independent monitoring of prison conditions, and to release prisoners who have been arbitrarily arrested because of their political or religious beliefs.

The U.S. has an obligation to the Hmong people, and I strongly believe that we have a moral interest in reducing human suffering and protecting human rights abroad. We cannot ignore these allegations of atrocities in Laos. Granting NTR is not appropriate at this time. I urge my colleagues to join me in insisting that the conference report before us not be used as a Trojan horse to sneak through a provision that conflicts so fundamentally with our country's dedication to human rights, to democracy, and to fundamental decency.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. NICKLES. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be able to proceed as in morning business for 30 minutes.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Reserving the right to object, I certainly will not object, and I look forward to hearing the remarks of my colleague, the Senator from Oklahoma, whom I have enjoyed serving with very much, especially on the Budget Committee, and simply indicate to the Senate that I intend after this to get back to the business of debating the pending issue. But with that, I do not object.

Again, I commend the Senator on his wonderful service to this body.

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

FAREWELL

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I thank my friend and colleague for his consideration.

My wife and I, our families, were taking our Christmas photo a few days ago and I was surprised to realize that our two oldest children were actually older than we were when we came to the Senate. They are in their thirties and I think I was 32 when I was sworn in, just turned 32, and now we have a couple of children who are that age or more. It tells me we have been here a little while. I am actually very surprised that I am concluding 24 years in the Senate.

I have absolutely loved working in the Senate. The Senate is a great institution. It is one of the true pillars of

democracy in the world, one which people look to with great respect and admiration. I have always been proud to be called a Senator and I have always been proud to represent my State and my country. To me, it represents a shining city on a hill, and a true beacon of democracy for the free world which has stood for more than two hundred years.

My first time to visit the Senate and sit in the gallery was in 1974 and I was coming to Congress as a businessman to give my impressions on a bill that was pending before Congress. The bill was called ERISA, Employment Retirement Income Security Act. I ran a small business in Ponca City, OK, and I thought the better title for the bill was "Every Ridiculous Idea Since Adam."

But that was in 1974. I happened to be here, it was a coincidence at the time, and Senator MCCONNELL will appreciate this, being a political historian, it was a time when an election was contested and it happened to be the Senate election of Oklahoma. Henry Bellman, was reelected by a very close margin over Congressman Edmondson. As all of our colleagues know, the Senate is the final arbiter in contested elections and it was being contested on the floor of the Senate the time I was here.

Senator DOMENICI remembers that. It was a very contested, spirited debate.

I was quite taken by the debate. I sat in the gallery for hours. I remember Senator ALLEN, a Democrat. The Democrats controlled the Senate at that time. Henry Bellman was a Republican. He won by a very narrow margin—I can't remember what it was, a couple thousand votes. There were disputes on election-counting machines. That sounds kind of familiar. It was a great debate. I remember Senator ALLEN spoke on Senator Bellman's behalf, and then they had the rollcall vote and enough Democrats voted with Senator Bellman, and that was the end of it.

I happened to ride back on the plane that day, and guess what. I was riding with Senator Bellman and Congressman Edmondson. They were friends and they were shaking hands. I was impressed. And I was impressed with this body. I was impressed with the Senate. I was impressed with the Senators. I was impressed with the conduct of the debate. I was impressed with the fact that almost all Senators were here during the debate.

It was such a special occasion. I was so pleased because Henry Bellman was reelected and affirmed by the Senate because I also considered him a mentor and a leader in Oklahoma. He was the first Republican Senator elected in our State in a long time and now he was reelected. Senator DOMENICI served with him on the Budget Committee. He was the ranking Republican on the Budget Committee, on the formation of the Budget Committee in 1974. I served with Ed Muskie and he did a wonderful job in that capacity.

That was my first, personal impression of the Senate. My impression of the Senate was very good then and it has been very good ever since. I have absolutely had the greatest respect for this institution and for this body. This body is composed of great Members.

I remember the time coming into the Senate when I was elected. It was 1980. That was a big election year. We have had a few big election years in my time, but I'm not sure we have ever had one quite as big, as dramatic a change as we did in 1980. There were 18 new Senators elected in 1980, and 16 of the 18 were Republicans. The majority leader became Howard Baker from Tennessee. He was nice enough to be my mentor, and I thought the world of him then as I still do today. He is a wonderful Ambassador to Japan, and he and Nancy Kassenbaum were wonderful Senators. It was a great time to serve in the Senate.

I remember the highlight of my Senate career was on Ronald Reagan's inaugural day on January 20, 1981. It was a beautiful day, and I remember the hostages in Iran were released that very day. They were held hostage for 444 days. They were liberated on that inaugural day. I will never forget what a euphoric feeling it was for not just those of us who were elected to the Senate and taking control—the Republicans were taking control of the Senate for the first time in decades. I think none of those Republicans had ever been in the majority, and I don't believe any of those Democrats had ever been in the minority.

That was a big change. It was kind of a fun change from my vantage point. There was so many new people. I was one of 18 new Senators, and it was a great time. That was a big turnover any time in this institution. To think that the hostages were released and Ronald Reagan was elected—it was a big exciting time, and a lot was accomplished.

I was coming to Congress as a businessman from Ponca City, OK, with an agenda. Part of the agenda was not to be here forever. Frankly, I told people I was running because I thought our country had declined far too much militarily, economically, and morally, and I wanted to do something about it.

I came here to cut taxes and to cut regulations, particularly in the energy industry, and to see if we couldn't make positive changes for the country. Economic issues aside, I wanted to defeat the Communists. This was of particular concern to me, as I thought our country had declined way too much militarily.

We did a lot of those things. We accomplished a lot in the 1980s under Ronald Reagan's leadership. I am absolutely amazed when I look back at when Ronald Reagan was elected, and when I was elected. The maximum tax rate was 70 percent, and 8 years later it was 28 percent. I am still amazed at that. What an unbelievable accomplishment. I remember how it was accomplished. It took a lot of strong

leadership and work by Howard Baker and Bob Dole. It took working with other people. I remember Bill Bradley working on some of these tax bills. That was a big change.

I came from a business background and, oh, yes, if you made some money, you can be taxed all the way to 70 percent on the individual side, and 80 percent on the corporate side. You were working more for the Government than you were yourself. To me, that represented a real loss of personal and economic freedom. I wanted to restore economic freedom for all Americans and be part of that change.

My father, unfortunately, died in 1961. We had a small family-held business. The Government contested, basically, my mother and our family for 7 years over the value of Nickles Machine Corporation. They wanted a big chunk of that business. I always resented that. I thought Government was supposed to protect private property; not confiscate it.

On the 1981 tax bill, I remember talking to Secretary Don Regan when I said: We really should eliminate the estate tax on surviving spouses—and we made sure that was included in the 1981 tax bill. I am probably as proud of that as any other thing. I had a little something to do with a very profamily, very probusiness, very progrowth-oriented bill becoming law. That success told me that we could accomplish great things here.

Of the 18 Senators who were elected with me in 1980, there are only 3 left. CHRIS DODD is still here, CHUCK GRASSLEY is now chairman of the Finance Committee, and ARLEN SPECTER will be chairman of the Judiciary Committee. Only 3 of the 18 are left.

I respect them greatly, and I compliment them for their many years of service.

Over the years, I've had many great mentors. I mentioned Bob Dole and Howard Baker. I'll mention one other one with fond affection. That would be Senator Jesse Helms. I remember one time when we were engaged in a filibuster, and I encouraged the Senate not to have many filibusters, but that is the first one I can remember. I believe it was 1982 or 1983. This was a little filibuster on the Nickles gasoline tax. Some of us believed that the States should do it rather than the Federal Government. Three of us were opposed to that: Senator Helms, Senator East, and myself. That was when the filibuster was a real filibuster. We spent the night on cots outside the Senate Chamber.

I remember laying awake at night somewhat nervous. The heart was still beating, and I remember some grumbling amongst some of our colleagues who weren't very happy about the fact that we were here in late December arguing over a Nickles gasoline tax. I remember that this wasn't quite worth falling on the sword over.

I communicated that to my friends and colleagues, Senator Helms and

Senator East. I eventually convinced Senator Helms, and it took a little longer to convince Senator East, and we dropped the filibuster.

What I wanted to say about Senator Helms is I remember that we had a lot of discussions during these times. We were actually in session two or three nights around the clock. He told me something I will never forget, which I will pass along to our colleagues.

He said: DON, when I am flying over North Carolina and I look around and see all those lights, I am amazed at how many people live in that State and how many people there are, particularly in rural areas. And I wonder if those people think they have anybody in DC who really cares about them, and probably most of them don't think anybody cares about them. He was just as genuine as he could possibly be.

When I am on a plane at night looking out at the lights and see how big our cities, towns, and rural areas are, I think about that. Do the people in those areas really think somebody is fighting for them, working for them? Jesse Helms is one of those individuals. He is very special. He had a reputation of being kind of tough and mean, but personally he is probably one of the nicest Senators with whom I have had the pleasure of working. He knew everybody who worked the elevators. He was nice to the staff. He was a gentleman's gentleman. I understand his health is not real good right now, so my thoughts are with him, and I wish him all the best at this time. He was a great Senator. He knew the rules of the Senate, and he would fight for what he believed in, and he would fight with tenacity. He also was a Senator's Senator, and I'm am fortunate to say I have had the pleasure of serving with many colleagues who fall into that category.

I came here with a real interest in trying to change things in the energy field. I served on the Energy Committee, but I wanted to make some changes. I ran and maybe was elected in large part because of some of the things that Congress was passing in 1978 and 1979 and 1980 with which I just totally disagreed. One of those was the windfall profits tax. I campaigned vigorously against it. I wanted to repeal it. I was disappointed that I couldn't get it repealed in 1981, or in 1982. I introduced legislation every single year. We finally got it repealed in 1986.

As I told somebody last night, it was \$77 billion too late. But eventually it was repealed.

We did some other things that I think were very positive—undoing some of the things that were passed in the last couple of years of the Carter administration.

We deregulated natural gas. I did that working with Wendell Ford and Bennett Johnston on the Energy bill. That was very positive, significant legislation that one of my predecessors, Bob Kerr, had worked on 20 years before. We got that done.

We repealed the fuel use tax. We eliminated the Synfuels Corporation. The Synfuels Corporation was run by an Oklahoman who ran against me, Ed Nobel. He ran against me in 1980. Ronald Reagan appointed him chairman of the Synfuels Corporation. I campaigned to eliminate it, which we eventually did.

I have had a lot of fun in this capacity. In the mid-1980s, I was appointed to the Appropriations Committee. I have great, fond memories of that. The Democrat leader, HARRY REID, was my colleague on two or three committees. I think we both were either chairman or ranking, and we switched back and forth a couple of times on the District of Columbia Appropriations Committee, our penance, and the Interior subcommittee, which either Senator REID or Senator BYRD was chairman and/or ranking members. We worked together on those committees for years.

We did a lot of good things together, such as reforming the frank so you couldn't mail out thousands and thousands of pieces of mail, particularly prior to election time.

HARRY REID is my friend and his word is as good as gold. He will be a good leader for the Democrats, and he will be a good Senator for Senator FRIST and Senator MCCONNELL to work with to get things accomplished. So I am excited about his elevation.

I was selected by our colleagues to be campaign chairman back in 1989 and 1990, one of the tougher jobs. I compliment GEORGE ALLEN for the fine job he did this year. I compliment BILL FRIST for the fine job he did in that position, and MITCH MCCONNELL when he had that position. It is probably one of the toughest elected positions we have in leadership, but one which I thoroughly enjoyed. The reason I enjoyed it is you work hard, and you get to know your colleagues. We get so busy around this place we often don't get to know our colleagues. If you are campaigning with somebody, if you are spending the night, as I did at Gordon Smith's home in Oregon, or campaigning in Maine with Senator SNOWE or Senator COLLINS, or if you are campaigning in Minnesota, or when you campaign with people and you are traveling with them for a day or two, or in Montana on a bus tour with CONRAD BURNS and his wife Phyllis, you get to know them.

I have gotten to know our colleagues well. I think I have been in almost everybody's State, at least on our side of the aisle, campaigning. I thoroughly enjoyed getting to know my colleagues. The Senate is composed of a great group of individuals, Democrats and Republicans, and we need to get to know each other better. I think if we get to know each other better, our body works better and we will do better.

After that, I was fortunate enough to be elected policy chairman. I had that position for 6 years, and it was another job I absolutely loved. I succeeded Bill



Armstrong, and I was fortunate to keep some of his staff, some of the best staff on the Hill, I might add. They stayed with me, and I appreciate that. Eric Ueland and Doug Badger would fit in that category, and they were outstanding.

Bill Armstrong is another one of my mentors. I met with Bill Armstrong and a couple of other Senators in a prayer group once a week for 12 years. He is probably the most articulate Senator I have had the pleasure of serving with, an outstanding leader. I wish he would have continued his service. He decided to return to the private sector, and since I am doing that, I respect that greatly. But I have always looked up to him because he was a man of conviction, and he got things done.

Let me add, JON KYL who is now the policy chairman, and there could not be a better policy chairman, is doing a fantastic job, a very important job. I compliment him for his leadership.

After that position—and I thank my colleagues for giving me that responsibility—I served 6 years as assistant majority leader, and I guess at some point maybe assistant minority leader. It was a great honor and a pleasure to work with TRENT LOTT, which I enjoyed greatly. TRENT did a fantastic job as our Republican leader, and I'd like to take this opportunity to commend him on his outstanding service. MITCH MCCONNELL has my old post now, and he is doing a super job. Again, it is a position where you get to know your colleagues really well. You not only learn how to count votes, but you find out what makes people tick and where they are coming from, what they are trying to accomplish, and what they are trying to do. And MITCH MCCONNELL is doing a fantastic job in that capacity.

During my tenure in the Senate, we have had the pleasure of passing a lot of legislation. I am fortunate to have so many colleagues who have helped me do some things that I think have become good laws.

The Republicans took control of the Senate in the 1994 elections, and in 1995 I think the first bill we passed was the Congressional Accountability Act that Senator GRASSLEY and a lot of Democrats and Republicans passed. We worked hard on that. I am glad to see that happened.

We passed the Congressional Review Act that Senator REID was my principal Democrat sponsor on, where we could review expensive and expansive Federal regulations. We actually used that to repeal the ergonomics rule which the Clinton administration tried to pass in the last couple of days of their term. Although he supported the regulation, Senator REID, to his credit, defended the Congressional Review Act which is still the law of the land. We used that to repeal what I felt was a very intrusive, expensive, and unwarranted regulation. Again, that is another case where Senator REID stated—he did not agree with repealing the reg-

ulation, but he defended the law we repealed it with, and some people were trying to undermine that.

Senator LIEBERMAN and I passed the Defense of Marriage Act, an act that became a little more noteworthy in the last year or two. I thank Senator LIEBERMAN for his help and leadership on that issue. Bill Clinton signed that bill. I am not sure he wanted to, but he did sign it in the wee hours of 1996. That act is still the law of the land. It basically says States do not have to recognize other States' legalization of same sex marriage. Some States have legalized gay marriage, which is their prerogative, but due to our bill other States do not have to recognize that. Some people presume that it will be declared unconstitutional. I hope it is not. I would be disappointed if the Supreme Court did overrule that. That bill passed with 80-some-odd votes in the Senate and still is the law of the land.

We passed the International Religious Freedom Act. Again, I say "we." Senator LIEBERMAN joined me in passing that bill. We passed that in 1998, and it is now the law of the land. It is very important that we note countries that are very repressive and oppressive in stifling religious freedom. Unfortunately, we have seen such oppression in many countries around the world. That kind of bigotry is the genesis of a lot of the hatred and violence and the wars we are fighting today.

We have ensured, with the passage of this act, that the State Department will be much more proactive in not only identifying cases of religious intolerance and persecution, but will take proactive steps to change such behavior as a matter of U.S. policy.

Senator LANDRIEU and I passed, in 2000, the Child Citizenship Act, which basically grants citizenship to foreign born children who are adopted. I think 150,000 children became citizens in one day as a result of that act, and I am greatly pleased to have been a part of that success.

I have had the pleasure for the last couple of years of being chairman of the Budget Committee. I look back at some of our accomplishments, and I have to think maybe those were some of the best in my career as a Senator.

The budget we passed in 2003 was a real challenge. We probably spent more days, more hours, and had more votes on the 2003 Budget Act than any other Budget Act in history. I think we had 80-some-odd votes. It took more than a week. It took about a week and a half, almost 2 weeks, on the floor.

I compliment Senator ZELL MILLER for his assistance in that. We passed that budget with the Vice President breaking the tie. That was not easily done. We defeated numerous amendments, and were successful in passing a budget that allowed us to have the opportunity to have an economic growth package. President Bush was nice enough to ask me to introduce the package and to try to carry it, and we

did. Again, ZELL MILLER was the principal cosponsor with me of the bill, the growth package. We introduced that package in January of 2003. We passed it in June of 2003.

When we first took up that legislation, the Dow Jones was at about 7,700. Today, the Dow Jones is over 10,500. We wanted to pass that package so we could stimulate the economy because it was, at that time, pretty anemic. Government receipts were still down. We wanted to get something to grow the economy. We passed that package, and not only did the stock market go up, receipts are up, and we have created a couple million jobs since then.

We accelerated the tax cuts that were slowly being phased in from the 2001 tax bill. So now we have a maximum rate of 35 percent. Although some people say that is too much of a giveaway, it is the same rate the corporations pay, and I do not think individuals or self-employed people should pay a higher rate than Exxon or General Motors. So we passed that.

We also passed a 15-percent tax on capital gains and a 15-percent tax on corporate distributions, dividends, which I firmly believe has greatly helped not just the market but the economy. So I am proud of that.

I am proud of ZELL MILLER because he had the courage to be a cosponsor, to stand up and fight for those things and make them become law. It also made a \$1,000 tax credit per child become law. It also eliminated or greatly reduced the marriage penalty on married couples. If they have taxable income of \$58,000, that is \$900 of tax relief. Those are positive things. It would not have happened without ZELL MILLER.

ZELL MILLER only served 4 years in the Senate. He replaced a very dear friend of all of ours, Paul Coverdell. I mourned Paul Coverdell's loss, and I stated at the time he cannot be replaced; and he certainly cannot be replaced. But ZELL MILLER has been one outstanding addition to this body. He is a great patriot, not a great Democrat or a great Republican, he is a great patriot, and he stands for what he believes in, and he helped us enact these measures which are vitally important.

I also read in the Washington Post today that somebody said, well, the Budget Act is not working, and so on, and there is no discipline in Congress. Frankly, they don't know what they are talking about. I hate to tell them that.

They also said we did not pass a budget this year. Well, they don't quite know what they are talking about there either. In the last 2 years, thanks to the collective will of this body, we have made 82 budget points of order—in the last 2 years—78 of which were sustained. I voted to waive a couple of them. We defeated \$1.7 trillion of additional spending over a 10-year period on those 78 budget points of order.

The Budget Act did work. We passed a budget through the Senate earlier

this year that had domestic discretionary spending at \$821.9 billion.

I am confident that when the leader brings up an Omnibus bill this year, it is going to meet that goal of \$821.9 billion. That is several billion dollars less than a lot of people wanted.

I thank my colleague, Senator STEVENS. I have wrestled with him every day on appropriations bills. But Senator STEVENS helped us pass the \$21.9 cap on the DOD Appropriations bill. I could not get the budget resolution to pass. We passed it through the Senate and through the House. I could not get the conference report adopted. That was one of my disappointments.

One of our accomplishments, as most people didn't know, was we did put in the spending cap on the DOD Appropriations bill and we are enforcing that cap and we are abiding by that cap today. So I wanted people to know that. I also thank people such as THAD COCHRAN and Senator SPECTER, because they enforced the cap as chairmen of their respective Appropriations subcommittees, probably more than anyone. I didn't have to make the points of order; they did it. It worked. We have nondiscretionary and nonhomeland security growing at less than 1 percent this year, compared to a 14-percent growth a few years ago in President Clinton's last years. Yes, we are spending a lot of money in defense and homeland security, no doubt about it.

Are the deficits too high? You bet. Are they coming down? You bet. The deficit this year was finalized at 400-something, over \$100 billion less than the administration projected 9 months ago; and that is because revenues are up and the economy is growing. The changes we passed in 2001 are working significantly.

I project, and CBO projects, they will continue to climb by another \$100 billion in the next year or so. Is the war expensive? Yes. Is it worth it? You bet. Is the war on terrorism worth it? Yes.

Earlier this year—I would say this was a real highlight—I went to Iraq and Afghanistan with Senators SESSIONS and LIEBERMAN. I have done a lot of things, and I have been to a lot of places around the world, but I cannot tell you how proud I was to be in Iraq, basically when there was a transition of power, when Mr. Allawi assumed control of Iraq.

We met with the Defense Minister and he said: Yes, we want to protect our country. When we met with our military leadership and theirs, we were in the process of training 210,000 Iraqis, and we had a chance to meet with Iraqis there that are hungry for freedom and thankful for our support and eager to assume and take control.

They are talking about elections in January, and I am hopeful and prayerful that those will be successful. I believe they will be. Senator SESSIONS and I also went to Afghanistan and met with now-President Karzai. It was around July 4. They were scheduled to have elections in October. They did

that and he was elected overwhelmingly.

The success we have had in Afghanistan has been absolutely phenomenal. I remember well the debates here, with many people saying: You are going to be involved in a quagmire; you will never be able to have democracy. You cannot get in there. The Soviets were there 10 years and lost tens of thousands of troops. You are going to do the same thing.

Frankly, our military was successful, working with the Afghan northern alliance and other Afghan people who wanted freedom in Afghanistan. We basically helped them take control of that country with a few hundred troops on the ground and our Air Force. We have liberated Afghanistan. They have had elections and they have proved they can have a democracy. They will have parliamentary elections early next year.

So the success we have had and have seen in Afghanistan is restoring freedom to millions of people there. I believe we are in the process of restoring freedom and liberating the Iraqi people for the long run so the Iraqis can control their own destiny. If you look at those things, we have had an outburst, an outgrowth of freedom.

Abraham Lincoln said in the Gettysburg Address:

This Nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom.

This country is largely responsible for not only this country having a new birth of freedom, but frankly countries throughout the world, in our own hemisphere and in the former Soviet bloc, and now even in places as remote as Afghanistan and Iraq. To have been able to play a small part in that over these last 24 years has been a real pleasure.

I thank my constituents, the people of Oklahoma, for giving me the opportunity and the privilege to serve them for the last 24 years. I thank my family, and especially my wife for her tolerance in allowing me to do this for the last 24 years. I thank my colleagues who I have had the pleasure of serving with and working with and the pleasure of knowing. Frankly, my best friends are my colleagues. I have spent a long time here and I have absolutely loved this work. I love the Senate.

I think the Senate is in very good hands. My replacement is Dr. TOM COBURN. I am honored that an active physician would leave his career and serve in the Senate. We have not seen it often. We saw it with Dr. BILL FRIST, and I am so grateful that he set aside his career as a talented physician to serve in the Senate. I am delighted he is the majority leader. He has done a fantastic job. I am delighted Dr. COBURN has left his profession to serve in the Senate. What a great addition to the Senate. I have had the pleasure of working with JIM INHOFE, and I see JIM and TOM COBURN doing an outstanding job in representing our State.

I look at the leadership in the Senate today with BILL FRIST, MITCH MCCON-

NELL, JOHN KYL, and the rest of the team on this side, and with HARRY REID and others on the Democrat side, and I see good things ahead for the Senate, positive things.

I have been so fortunate also to have what I have often said are the best staff on the Hill. I have truly been blessed. I have many staff members who have been with me for a long time.

Looking to my left is Bret Bernhardt, my chief of staff, who has worked with me for over 20 years. Hazen Marshall came in as an intern many, many years ago, and he is now chief of staff on the Budget Committee. Nobody knows the budget or taxes any better than Hazen Marshall. Both of these men are true professionals.

I have so many people to thank. I cannot go down the whole list. I will recognize some who have been with me for over 20 years. In my Oklahoma City office, there is Joey Bradford, who worked for me going back to Nickles Machine Corporation in 1978 to 1979. She is still with me. She will be the last person to turn out the lights. She is a wonderful person. Jo Stansberry goes way back. She was my secretary when I was a State senator in 1978, bless her heart. She is the sweetest person you will ever know. She is still with me today. Also, in my Oklahoma City office, Judy Albro and Maurie Cole have been with me almost the entire time. Sharon Keasler has been running my Tulsa office for over 20 years.

In my DC office, Zev Teichman and Cynthia Singleton have been with me the entire time.

They are wonderful people and true public servants, all of whom could have done much better financially on the private side, but they have stayed with us on the public side, as well as many others.

I look at our staff and we still have most of the staff still with us. I am grateful for that. They are all anxious about new careers, and they have been generous with their time and very loyal in their support, not just to me but to the people of Oklahoma and to this institution called the Senate. The Senate is a very special place.

I also would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge two or three other people who have had a profound and positive impact on my life. One is Doug Coe. Some of our colleagues know him very well. Doug Coe was a friend, brother, and mentor whom I respect and love greatly. He is also a golfer, and that is my favorite vice, I guess. Most golfers play for a little money. Doug would say, "I will play you for a Bible verse." We would do it and, of course, I would lose—predestined from on high. I will never forget when Doug said here is a verse for you to memorize. It was, I think, John 13:34: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another." He made me learn that. I learned it in, I think, about 1981 or something. He has been a very positive guiding light. I have tried

to keep that commandment in my heart when I am on this floor and conducting my business, and it is good advice. I wanted to thank him.

Also, I will mention a couple other people. One is Dick Halverson, the first Senate Chaplain with whom I had the pleasure working. He was maybe one of the most Christlike persons I have ever known. Lloyd Ogilvie, who succeeded him, was a great mentor. He led many of us in our Bible studies for years. He is a wonderful, wonderful brother and friend. And now Barry Black. Barry Black, when he was giving the prayer today, said we may seek to accomplish causes beyond our lifetime. And he is so right. That is what the Senate is about. It is about causes. It is about things that can have consequences, that can have real meaning beyond our lifetime eternally.

So I thank God for the opportunity and the privilege and the pleasure to serve in this great body.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

#### TRIBUTES TO RETIRING SENATORS

DON NICKLES

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, on leader time, I want to make a few comments in tribute, not in response, to the great man we just heard on the floor of this institution. Over the last several days, all of us have taken that opportunity for three of our colleagues on this side of the aisle and others on the other side of the aisle, to reflect on the past and how people have affected us directly.

All of us have prepared remarks, and we have taken the opportunity to read them into the RECORD or enter them into the RECORD. What we just heard does reflect in many ways why so many of us have such strong feelings about DON NICKLES and his family—Linda and their children.

For me, it boils down to two general areas. One is the tremendous respect he has and continues to have and will always have for this institution. He literally reveres this institution. We heard it in his words today, the way he closed referring back to Chaplain Barry Black's opening this morning where causes beyond our lifetime is the essence of this institution, and he has captured that in his 24 years in the Senate—respect for the institution, for its traditions, for its values, for its rules, for its precedents, all of which he has manifested.

The second general area when I think of DON is his wise counseling that he has been able to reflect in different ways to each and every one of us. For me, it is the National Republican Senatorial Committee. When I was first thinking about running, I went directly to DON NICKLES because in the early 1990s he developed a model which was revolutionary at that time which really did go to what happens at the

grassroots, and it applied both in terms of politics and fundraising. That model is one that has come full cycle.

One thing he did not mention directly but touched me in a very special way is what he did 2 weeks ago, and that is run, whether it is marathons or short races or out for a daily jog—I call it a jog; he actually runs. But for about a year, at least once a week, sometimes several times a week, we ran together with a few Senators—I think there were more than two—a few Senators, but more than that, about 8, 9, 10, it got up to about 14 other people who every morning at 6 o'clock would take off and go initially for 30 minutes, an hour, an hour and a half, 2 hours, 3 hours, and DON kept going. But those are my memories.

What is interesting is that of the people running with us, there were some new people, but then there were also people who had done this for years and years, and those rich relationships were played out on the floor of the Senate or with his golf, which everybody knows about, or the running, which is touching me.

A few weeks ago, he ran in the New York City marathon. He ran it by himself. He probably ran it in 3 hours. I would go much longer than that. I was back here, but I was really with him, thinking of him when he was going to be taking off and at each of those miles, as you run through those boroughs. I was really with him because it brought back memories of us spending time together.

That was for, again, a cause that goes beyond our lifetime because our running and the group that he put together was for an effort that Linda, his wife, I think introduced him to, the Lombardi Cancer Center. Again, it shows how everything comes together, in ways beyond going out to have a good run and working for this greater cause.

He mentioned getting to know each other. In terms of counseling to me, directly or indirectly, you cannot go anywhere in this town without DON NICKLES being recognized, without him having touched or having a relationship in some special way over the last 24 years, and counseling in terms of the prayer breakfast. DON NICKLES was there every single week, and the Bible studies again touch me directly in that those few moments every week we have the opportunity to come together and share.

He mentioned the positive and guiding light of Doug Coe in the same way he has touched us in those prayer breakfast meetings.

He mentioned the budget, again the wise counsel that he set in place that we will be using over the next several years as we look at tax relief, but also the impact it has had on the jobs and growth in this country.

I have to mention his overall optimism because there is nobody more optimistic in the Senate, even in very tough times, trying times. There were

times dealing with the budget over the last 4 years that were tough, difficult, hard, challenging, especially in 2003. Even through all that, he was optimistic, upbeat, reaching out. He always knew there was some way to get the best out of people working together.

I will close by mentioning—and we had this conversation two nights ago—his overall commitment to family. Everything comes back to Linda and their four children—Don Nickles, Jr., Jenny Rossiter, Kim Nickles, and Robyn Nickles. Everything he does comes back through that unit, to Linda who has—he used the word “tolerance,” and it does take a lot of tolerance to put up with DON NICKLES, I am sure. Linda was there, I should also add, with support through every one of his endeavors.

It has been a real privilege for Karyn and me to get to know them and their entire family.

He used a Bible verse, his favorite Bible chapter, Galatians 5. The Apostle Paul lists a godly man's attributes. A godly man works hard, says Paul, lives a life of—the words that are key—love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, and faithfulness. As we look at that string of words, those nouns, I cannot think of a better description of DON NICKLES.

So, DON, we will miss you. I say that recognizing all our relationships will continue to grow. We will clearly miss you on the floor of the Senate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, most Americans probably do not know the Senate is a continuous body. From the day the Founding Fathers established this marvelous institution up until today, it has never had a termination point. It goes on and on. Senator BYRD can tell us exactly how many Members of the Senate there have been. The last figure I heard was something over 1,500.

Candidly, a significant number of those probably did not make much difference. They filled the seats. They made sure the continuous body continued. But very few left any footprints on the sands of time. We have honored a handful out here off the Senate floor, people such as Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, John C. Calhoun, and just a couple of others.

I have been here now a couple of decades, a little bit less than my friend from Oklahoma. I can say without fear of contradiction, from the moment I got here until today, the Senator from Oklahoma has been a leader in this body. He has been involved in virtually every issue of consequence in the 20 years I have been here in some kind of leadership capacity or providing his inspiration or, as the majority leader indicated, his enthusiasm for getting a solution to the problems confronting America at that particular moment.

So I say to my friend from Oklahoma, he has left footprints in this body.

He is one of the great Senators in the history of our country. We will always