

and families receive from financing a home factor strongly into the economic decision people make to buy a house or apartment. In fact, studies have shown that the deduction is critical to young families trying to become homeowners.

According to the Mortgage Bankers Association, the average homeowner has \$121,000 in net equity in their home, which represents half of their net worth. Equity in a home is not only a major source of household wealth, but it can also be leveraged to finance goals such as higher education or start-up costs for a small business. Children of homeowners are better educated, less likely to drop out of school, and less likely to be arrested. For these reasons and more, people often tell me that buying their house or apartment is the best investment they have ever made for themselves and their family.

Benefits also extend beyond the homeowner. Due to positive social effects, promoting homeownership has been a bipartisan public policy objective in this country since the 1930s. Regardless of income or other factors, homeowners are more likely to vote, a critical activity to the health of democracy. Studies have shown that municipalities with higher homeownership rates spend more on schools and streets and less on social welfare. Homeowners have a direct stake in the quality of their neighborhoods, work harder to make their community a good place to live, driving out crime, drugs and blight, and attracting investment in cultural, retail and commercial development.

Our Nation's homeownership rate reached a record 69.2 percent in the second quarter of this year. The number of homeowners reached 73.4 million, the most ever. And for the first time, minority homeownership rose above 50 percent. Despite this success, however, homeownership opportunities are not equally available to everyone. For example, while minority homeownership rates have increased, Hispanics and African-Americans still lag significantly behind non-Hispanic whites and Asian-Americans.

As we bring the 108th Congress to a close, I urge my colleagues to give careful thought to America's long-standing tradition of encouraging homeownership. With prudent tax policies we can continue to help citizens on the path to homeownership and in pursuit of the American Dream.

TRAVEL TO THE UNITED KINGDOM, SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO, AND ITALY

Mr. VOINOVICH. Mr. President, earlier this week, I returned from travel to England, Serbia and Montenegro, and Italy, where I joined Senator GORDON SMITH, Senator MIKE DEWINE, Senator CHUCK GRASSLEY and Senator MIKE ENZI as members of the Senate delegation to the fall session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

We first spent time in London to discuss our bilateral relationship and issues impacting transatlantic relations. We met with Prime Minister Tony Blair and his Chief of Staff, Jonathan Powell. We also visited with Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Jack Straw, as well as Shadow Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Michael Ancram and Shadow Secretary for International Development Alan Duncan.

I was glad to have the opportunity to meet with the Atlantic Partnership. The Atlantic Partnership is a network of experts from both Europe and the United States who are willing to use their influence to further European-American relations. The Atlantic Partnership's role is to argue for setting major policy decisions in the context of their impact on transatlantic relations, within the context of strengthening the transatlantic relationship.

Fresh off the heels of the elections in the United States, British officials and representatives of nongovernmental organizations were interested in discussing the election results and the President's relationship with the United Kingdom and the European Union. Some expressed concern about the state of these relationships, and they also discussed some of the unhappiness in Great Britain with the war in Iraq. They stressed the need to work in greater cooperation, and indicated that the United States and Europe should look for areas where we share a common cause to tackle issues of concern, such as the promotion of democracy and peace in the Middle East, consolidating gains in Afghanistan, and peace and security and a viable self-government in Iraq.

With the rapidly declining health of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, we also spent a great deal of time discussing the Middle East peace process and prospects for moving forward with a settlement between Israelis and Palestinians. There was general consensus that it is important to make progress in the Middle East in order to help stabilize the region. In my view, success in Iraq is critical to this process.

Our time in London underscored the critical work that our diplomatic corps is doing as we move forward with efforts to promote stability and security in Iraq and Afghanistan, and as we continue to fight the global war on terror. We must continue to place a great deal of emphasis on efforts to strengthen our transatlantic relationships. Several British officials made it clear that the country must extend the olive branch and put a new face on diplomacy.

Great Britain is, and will continue to be, a vital ally in the war against terror, and the United States must continue to maintain strong relations with the country. An important aspect of this relationship is a strong representative of the United States Government in London. I am hopeful that the President will soon appoint a new U.S. am-

bassador to the United Kingdom, who will be a strong advocate for U.S. policy and help convey to the British people the important work that their country is doing as a key ally in Iraq, Afghanistan and other parts of the world.

I now have a better understanding of the United States' perception in the world and our need to continue to engage with our European allies in our diplomatic process. As the Scottish poet Robert Burns wrote, "Oh, that God would give us the very smallest of gifts, to be able to see ourselves as others see us."

Following our time in London, we traveled to Kosovo and Serbia and Montenegro. We stopped in Pristina, where we were greeted by Phil Goldberg, who is Chief of Mission of the U.S. Office in Pristina. We were also welcomed by Brigadier General Tod Carmony of Ohio, who serves as the Commander of Task Force Falcon, the American contingent of one of four brigades in the NATO Kosovo mission. I was glad to have the chance to spend time at Camp Bondsteel visiting with the nearly 1,000 members of the Ohio National Guard who are serving as part of KFOR under General Carmony's command. Their work is critical to the security in the region. As former Governor of the State of Ohio, I am pleased that the Department of Defense has so much faith in the Ohio National Guard that they have put them in charge of the U.S. contingent of the KFOR mission.

This was my fourth visit to Kosovo since the end of the military campaign in 1999. I was particularly anxious to assess the situation on the ground following the violence that erupted on March 17, 2004, which claimed 20 lives, displaced more than 4,000 people, including Kosovo Serbs, Ashkalia and others, and resulted in the destruction of more than 900 homes and 30 churches and monasteries belonging to the Serbian Orthodox Church—adding to the more than 100 churches that had already been destroyed during the previous five years.

After the violence broke out, I was on the phone with the State Department, particularly Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Marc Grossman, demanding that the United States step up its efforts to stabilize the region. During the last several years, I have continued to call on U.S. officials and members of the international community to enhance efforts in Kosovo. As the events in mid-March demonstrated, significant challenges remain. The death and destruction that took place was a tragic and urgent reminder of the work that remains to be done.

Following the violence in March, I urged the United States and members of the international community to redouble efforts to provide a stable and secure environment for all people in Kosovo, and I called for the resignation of the head of the U.N. Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, UNMIK,

Harri Holkeri. We now have a new team in place. Soren Jessen-Petersen replaced Mr. Holkeri as the Head of UNMIK and the Special Representative of the U.N. Secretary General, SRSG, and U.S. Ambassador Larry Rossin serves as his deputy.

It has been my conclusion that things have not gone well in Kosovo because members of the international community, including the United States, the United Nations, the European Union, and others, have not made it a high priority to stabilize the long-term situation. This has influenced the performance of UNMIK and KFOR.

As the events in March demonstrated, we must do a better job ensuring that KFOR has troops with the necessary training, equipment and authority to carry out its mission. For instance, at present, only 33 of the 55 units in Kosovo are trained to provide crowd and riot control, the most likely type of violence to occur. Of those 33 units, only 22 have the necessary equipment to use their crowd and riot control capabilities. This must be fixed.

It is also important that NATO work to remove national caveats or restrictions, which determine how soldiers from certain countries are able to respond in times of crisis. Brigadier General Carmony assured me that efforts are being made to remove these caveats. I have requested information on this matter, which I will continue to follow-up on in my capacity as a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Later in the week, after we arrived in Venice for the NATO Parliamentary Assembly meeting, I also raised the removal of caveats with Ambassador Nick Burns, who serves as our Permanent Representative at NATO headquarters in Brussels, and with NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Schaeffer. It is my understanding that this is not only a problem in Kosovo, but also in Afghanistan and Iraq. If NATO is serious, restrictions must be removed and troops given the equipment they need to provide the needed security.

In addition to making changes within KFOR, I believe it is essential that UNMIK work with Kosovo's political leaders to ensure that the necessary steps are taken to secure an environment where respect for human rights and the rule of law are protected. When I met with UNMIK representatives, I made it clear that things must improve with regard to the enforcement of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1244. Unless we do a better job, minorities will continue to leave Kosovo, and the international community will be a witness as Kosovo moves further away from becoming the free, multi-ethnic and democratic society that we hope will become a reality.

This is not an easy process, but we must take a close look at how we can more effectively move forward in Kosovo. Following the March violence, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan

asked Norwegian Ambassador Kai Eide to conduct a comprehensive review of the policies and practices of all actors in Kosovo and prepare recommendations to move forward. Ambassador Eide prepared this report, which includes several points of consideration for UNMIK and members of the international community.

In his report, Ambassador Eide recommends prosecuting those responsible for the atrocities in March and completing reconstruction of homes and churches. He also suggests streamlining the standards process, and transferring more authority to Kosovars. Further, Ambassador Eide recommends granting greater control over local areas to the Serbian minority, and he suggests restructuring UNMIK to ensure concentration on key priorities. Ambassador Eide also calls on the European Union to develop an economic development strategy, and he suggests that the international community open a more comprehensive dialogue with Belgrade. Finally, Ambassador Eide recommends that NATO maintain the KFOR presence to ensure a safe and secure environment.

In our meetings, I asked UNMIK officials and Kosovo's political leaders for their reaction to the Eide report. Generally, the responses that I received were positive. As we consider ways to move ahead, U.S. officials and members of the international community should take a close look at the report prepared by Ambassador Eide and consider implementing a number of his recommendations.

While in Pristina, we met with leaders from both the Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb communities. We visited with President Ibrahim Rugova and Bajram Rexhepi, who served as prime minister until parliamentary elections were held in late October. It seems increasingly likely Mr. Rexhepi will lose this position as a new government is formed.

I have met with Mr. Rugova and Mr. Rexhepi on several other occasions, including a visit to Kosovo in May 2002. At that time, I reiterated a plea that I made in February 2000, urging Kosovo's leaders to start a new paradigm of peace and stability for all people in Kosovo. I continue to believe it is essential that minorities in Kosovo, including Serbs, Roma, Egyptians, Bosniaks, Croats, Turks, Ashkalia and others, are able to move about as they wish and live lives free from fear. As such, though it has been more than five years since the end of the NATO military campaign, I was very disappointed that President Rugova did not decry the destruction that took place on March 17th of this year. Until Kosovo's minorities are protected, there cannot be consideration of final status for Kosovo.

We also had the opportunity to visit with Kosovo Serb leader Oliver Ivanovic. Part of our conversation focused on the results of the October parliamentary elections, in which less

than one percent of Kosovo Serbs chose to cast ballots. Mr. Ivanovic attributed the poor turnout in part to mixed messages from Belgrade, as well as calls for a boycott from the Serbian Orthodox Church. Many Kosovo Serbs chose to boycott the elections because they feel their lives have not improved by participating in the political process. However, I believe it is crucial that they re-engage, and I encouraged them to get back into the government, take the two seats promised in cabinet, and work to improve the situation for Kosovo's minorities.

I also encouraged Kosovo Serbs to work with Kosovo Albanian leaders and members of the international community to move forward with the reconstruction of churches and monasteries damaged or destroyed in March. The Provisional Institutions of Self-Government have committed 4.2 million for this purpose. However, the Serbian Orthodox Church has withdrawn from the commission charged with the reconstruction of religious sites.

I believe it is important that the Serbian Orthodox Church work with political leaders in Kosovo to find a way forward that is acceptable to all parties to repair and rebuild cultural and religious sites. If this does not happen, it will seriously undermine efforts to move toward a lasting, sustainable peace in Kosovo.

In summary, from all of our discussions in Kosovo, as well as our conversations in Belgrade, it was clear that the question of Kosovo's final status is on everyone's mind. Kosovo Albanian leaders call for immediate independence, while Kosovo Serb leaders argue that this is impossible given the current situation for minorities in the province. Political leaders in Belgrade maintain that Kosovo remains a part of Serbia and Montenegro, while varied opinions exist among members of the international community. Despite different points of view, it is evident that there is a long road ahead as we look to guarantee security and stability for all people in Kosovo. Until minorities are protected, I believe it is very difficult to answer questions about Kosovo's final status.

Following our time in Kosovo, we traveled to Belgrade, where we met with U.S. Ambassador Michael Polt, Serbian President Boris Tadic, Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica, President of Serbia and Montenegro Svetozar Marovic, Foreign Minister of Serbia and Montenegro Vuk Draskovic, Serbia and Montenegro's Minister of Defense Prvoslav Davinic, and Serbia and Montenegro's Minister for Human and Minority Rights Rasim Ljajic.

We had good conversations regarding positive developments in Serbia and Montenegro that have taken place during the more than four years since Serbian voters went to the polls and removed Slobodan Milosevic from power in October 2000. Since that time, there has been considerable progress. We have worked with the Paris Club to negotiate favorable terms on debt relief

for Serbia and Montenegro. The United States has extended normal trade relations (NTR), and we have continued to cultivate relations between Washington and Belgrade.

Additionally, along with my colleagues, I was thrilled to see Boris Tadic's clear victory on June 27, 2004 to serve as the next President of Serbia. The significance of this development cannot be overstated. Voters in Serbia embraced democratic reform and European integration and rejected nationalism that has for too long marred the past. It remains my sincere hope that this is a sign of things to come in Serbia and Montenegro.

However, it is clear that challenges remain. Perhaps highest among them is cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). We made clear to Prime Minister Kostunica that he must take a leadership role to ensure that indicted war criminal Ratko Mladic and others are behind bars at The Hague. This is essential if Serbia and Montenegro hopes to move toward Europe's democratic institutions, including the European Union. It is also critical if Serbia and Montenegro chooses to join NATO's Partnership for Peace.

I have been urging Vojislav Kostunica to further cooperation with the War Crimes Tribunal since he became President of Serbia in October 2000, and I continue to call on him to take action on this matter in his capacity as Serbia's Prime Minister. Thankfully, there are those in Serbia, including President Tadic, Foreign Minister Draskovic and others, who understand the importance of ICTY cooperation and are trying to make the case to the Serbian people. I am hopeful that they will prevail in the end, and Serbia and Montenegro will move toward European integration.

On a more positive note, I was glad to hear that economy is slowly improving. This was underscored by the President of the American Chamber of Commerce of Serbia and Montenegro. This is important to the Serbian people, and it will also help to further democratic reforms in the country.

I was also inspired by the good work of nongovernmental organizations, such as the German Marshall Fund's Balkan Trust for Democracy, as well as the charitable work that is being done by Crown Prince Alexander and Crown Princess Katherine.

During my time in Belgrade, I continued to be encouraged by the forward thinking of President Boris Tadic and his advisors, who ran on a platform of democratic reform and European integration. This is the type of agenda that will help to ensure a stable, secure and prosperous future for the people of Serbia and Montenegro.

We concluded our travel in Venice, Italy for the fall session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. In my view, this is an important forum where legislators and parliamentarians from NATO member and partner countries

gather to discuss transatlantic issues. I have regularly attended these meetings, and I serve as Vice Chairman of the Assembly's Political Committee.

Our participation in the session was limited to the first two days, as we had to return to Washington for work in the Senate for the conclusion of the 108th Congress. However, we had two solid days of work, including meetings with our Permanent Representative to NATO, Ambassador Nick Burns, and NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Schaeffer. We discussed a number of issues impacting the NATO Alliance, including NATO's role in Afghanistan and Iraq, the capabilities and contributions of NATO allies, and the NATO Response Force, among other things.

In celebration of its 50th anniversary, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly convened a special plenary session with the North Atlantic Council. NATO Secretary General de Hoop Schaeffer delivered an impressive speech, in which he challenged delegates to the meeting to encourage their respective constituencies to enhance participation in NATO as the Alliance looks to meet new challenges in Afghanistan, Iraq and the war against terrorism.

As our meeting demonstrated, the NATO Alliance remains strong. NATO is playing a critical role in efforts to promote stability and security in Afghanistan. Many soldiers from our NATO allies are standing alongside American forces in Iraq, and other NATO members are providing training for Iraqi security forces. Moreover, NATO remains integral to peace-keeping missions in the Balkans.

That being said, it is clear that challenges remain as the Alliance reviews its role in Afghanistan and Iraq and the broader war against terrorism, and it is important that we remain engaged and active to help meet these challenges.

THE NISEI INTELLIGENCE WAR AGAINST JAPAN

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, the World War II war against Japan has been described in John Dower's book "War Without Mercy" as the most savage, bitterly fought racial war in history. Caught in between this epic struggle as innocent victims were the Nisei, American citizens of Japanese ancestry, who were neither accepted nor trusted by both America and Japan. The widespread question and doubt as to their loyalty to America extended to grave uncertainty of whether the Nisei would be willing to fight against an enemy of their same ancestry. This calls for the telling of the little-known story that there were over 6,000 Nisei who more than willingly and resolutely fought against the Japanese enemy during World War II as military intelligence linguists serving in the American and Allied forces. Briefly, this is that story.

As the probability of war against Japan mounted in the summer of 1941,

the U.S. War Department realized its deficiencies in the intelligence operations against Japan. The Military Intelligence Service Language School, MISLS, was hastily authorized and created to train linguists skilled in interpretation, translation and interrogation in the Japanese language, established at the Fourth Army Intelligence School located at Crissey Field, Presidio of San Francisco. With a meager budget of \$2,000 and an initial enrollment of 60 students, the first classes commenced their studies of military Japanese on November 1, 1941, a scant 5 weeks before the Pearl Harbor attack by Japan. After a grueling 6 months of training, only 45 of the initial enrollment of 60 students survived to graduate in May 1942, 35 of whom were immediately assigned and deployed out to the Alaskan and Guadalcanal campaigns.

From the outset the Army recognized that the American Nisei possessed the best qualifications, competence and potential for Japanese intelligence specialist training, yet harbored grave doubts about the Nisei's loyalty to America. Soon news came back from the field of vast sources of new Japanese intelligence uncovered by a pioneer linguist team lead by Captain John Burden of Hawaii in the battle of Guadalcanal, and field commanders began flooding the MISLS with demands for more Nisei linguists. The need to meet this surging demand for Japanese language linguists led the MISLS in December 1942 to recruit 58 Nisei from the 100th Battalion then training at Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, to secure the transfer of 250 Nisei from the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, RCT, at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, to scour the 10 relocation camps to recruit MIS students from behind their barbed wire enclosures, and to conduct two recruiting trips to Hawaii in June 1943 and February 1944 to enlist over 500 Hawaii Nisei for intelligence training at MISLS.

With the forced evacuation of 110,000 Japanese from the West Coast under Executive Order 9066 in the spring of 1942, the MISLS was transferred to Camp Savage, Minnesota where it continued to recruit, train and graduate successive classes of Japanese linguist specialists at roughly six month intervals totaling some 1,600 graduates. The ever-increasing enrollment overtaxed the facilities at Camp Savage forcing the MISLS to move to larger facilities at nearby Fort Snelling in the spring of 1944. Here, classes training WAC students, oral language training and occupation civil affairs administration were added to the curriculum. By V-J Day in August 1945, 10 classes had been trained and graduated from MISLS at Camp Savage and Fort Snelling and another 3,000 students were enrolled and learning Japanese at the Snelling facilities at that time. In all, during its history MISLS trained and graduated 6,000 students for combat and occupational duty against Japan in World