

campaign to prevent preterm birth. Also supporting the campaign are the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses and 28 other national organizations. I cannot think of a better group of organizations to take on this serious public health problem. As significant as the March of Dimes campaign will be, success in reducing the incidence of prematurity requires a commitment from the Federal Government as well.

I am pleased to be a cosponsor of vital legislation aimed at reducing the rates of preterm birth. The "PREEMIE Act" authorizes expansion of research into the causes and prevention of prematurity and increases Federal support of public and health professional education as well as support services related to prematurity.

I would like to conclude by telling you the story of Jacqueline Reineri. Born 4 months premature, at just 24 weeks gestation, Jacqueline was given a very slim chance for survival. She was the size of a small doll, weighing just 1 lb., 10 ounces. Jacqueline had a grade-three brain bleed among many other complications and spent 96 days in the neonatal intensive care unit, NICU.

Today, Jacqueline has Spastic Quadriplegia Cerebral Palsy and gets around in a power wheelchair. She has endured four major surgeries and will continue to experience many long-term effects of prematurity. While her family worries about her future, they feel blessed that she is a very intelligent second grader in a typical classroom and a very active advocate for prematurity and children with special needs, serving as the Missouri March of Dimes Ambassador.

As inspiring as Jacqueline's story is many premature babies aren't as lucky. The recent increase in the rate of infant mortality underscores the importance of a comprehensive public-private effort to find the causes and ultimately prevent premature birth.

I ask all of my colleagues to join me today in pledging to do all we can to ensure a day when all children are born healthy. ●

RADIO LIBERTY STIFLED IN UKRAINE

Mr. CAMPBELL. Mr. President, several weeks ago, I addressed the Senate, in my capacity as Co-Chairman of the Helsinki Commission, on critical Presidential elections scheduled to be held later this year in Ukraine. In the latest twist in the lead up to those elections, yesterday Radio Liberty was abruptly informed that its Ukrainian Service programming would be removed from its major radio rebroadcaster's FM schedule, beginning February 17. In a press release, RFE/RL President Tom Dine said, "This is a political act against liberal democracy, against free

speech and press, against RFE/RL, and shows, once again, that Ukraine's political leadership is unable to live in an open society and is compelled to 'control' the media as if it were the good old days of the Soviet Union."

This is not the first time that there has been official Ukrainian pressure to drop RFE/RL broadcasting since September 2001, shortly after the murder of independent journalist Heorhiy Gongadze and the release of secretly-recorded tapes in Ukrainian President Kuchma's office implicating him and other high-ranking officials in the disappearance, corruption, and other dubious actions. Radio Liberty covers these and many issues about life in Ukraine, serving as an objective source of information in a media environment increasingly dominated by these authorities.

In the past I have spoken out about Ukraine's troubled pre-election environment, including its media environment. This latest move, together with repressive measures against the democratic opposition and independent media over the course of the last few months, raise profound questions as to whether the October presidential elections will be free, fair, open, and transparent, in a manner consistent with Ukraine's freely undertaken OSCE and other international commitments. Effectively unplugging an important independent source of information does not bode well for democracy in Ukraine.

EXPORT-IMPORT BANK

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I acknowledge today, February 12, as the seventieth anniversary of the Export-Import Bank, the principal export credit agency of the United States. Since 1934, the bank has played a unique role in helping to facilitate U.S. exports, ultimately supporting thousands of jobs. As an independent U.S. Government agency, it assumes credit and country risks that the private sector is unable or unwilling to accept.

Eximbank has assisted in financing more than \$400 billion in U.S. exports. On average, 85 percent of its transactions directly benefit small businesses which are clearly struggling in today's economy. Historically, the Bank has a loan-loss rate of under 2 percent, which is a respectable record for any financial institution.

As the United States has become economically interdependent with a growing number of foreign trade partners, the Bank's role in leveling the playing field for American companies seeking to market their goods and services overseas continues to grow. In turn, Eximbank plays a vital part in enabling U.S. companies, both large and small, to turn export opportunities into concrete sales.

Mr. President, I am pleased to make not of Eximbank's important contribution to the U.S. economy and hope the institution continues to honor its mission through the twenty first century.

IN MEMORY OF MILTON WESLEY SANDERS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, Milton Wesley Sanders passed away on Tuesday, February 10, in Washington, DC. He was one of the rapidly vanishing members of what we rightfully call the "greatest generation".

These valiant Americans who fought in World War II did not merely defeat a savage and evil enemy. They literally saved the free world. What would our own lives have been like if the forces of Nazism had prevailed in that war? It is truly unthinkable, and thanks to the greatest generation and men like Milton Sanders, we will never have to know the answer.

This generation of Americans grew up during the Great Depression, so they already knew about sacrifice. And when their country called upon them to sacrifice even more, they did not hesitate.

Milt Sanders' first heroic act occurred when he was still in flight school in Florida. During a training flight near Tallahassee, FL, his new P-47 aircraft malfunctioned because of a missing part.

Rather than bail out over a populated area, he decided to take the airplane in for a "safe" crash landing. He could have landed safely on the campus of the Florida State College for Women now known as Florida State. But when he saw a lot of students walking across campus, he headed for a nearby field.

In the instant before landing he had to divert the aircraft to avoid hitting a farmer. In the resulting crash, he suffered a skull fracture and numerous other injuries. But his quick thinking and courage had saved innocent lives.

During the war, Milt flew 116 combat P-47 fighter-bomber missions with the 9th Air Force in the European theater of operations. He supported operations from the pre-Normandy invasion build-up through the race across France, the Battle of the Bulge, and the final victory over Nazi tyranny. He brought back seven aircraft so badly shot up that they were immediately sent to the scrap heap. He was credited with shooting down one German aircraft and destroying more than 25 aircraft on the ground. For his valor, Milt was awarded two Distinguished Flying Crosses, 20 Air Medals, two Presidential Unit citations, the French Croix de Guerre with Silver Star, and the Belgian Fourragere.

Milt, who was known to some of his squadron buddies as "Sandy," experienced the heroism of war, and he also saw the horror.

He saw one friend's aircraft crash into the ground. He saw another man bail out only to be knocked unconscious when he collided with his airplane. That man's parachute never opened.

He saw dead bodies that were booby-trapped.

He befriended an English family in London, only to find when he went to visit them that their home had been destroyed by a German V1 rocket.

Milt and his comrades knew the dangers they faced. After flying a mission at night, he would later recall that ground fire is frightening during the day, "but to see it at night at a low altitude, you think every shot coming up has your name on it."

Yet despite the dangers, he fought without fear.

After World War II, Milt continued to serve in the U.S. Air Force Reserve, rising to the rank of lieutenant colonel and retiring with 20 years of honorable service in 1962.

Even when his active duty service had ended, he continued to serve our country through his work with several firms providing weapons systems and equipment to the Department of Defense. This association continued until his civilian retirement in 1989 at the age of 72.

The measure of a man's life is not solely in what he did, but in what he did for others. Throughout his life, Milton Sanders constantly sacrificed his time and talents in service to others in his church, his community, and his Nation. Every person who came into contact with him knew he was a friend they could always count on, no matter the hour, no matter the need.

Perhaps Milt's greatest contribution to our Nation comes from the legacy of his 46 years of loving marriage to his wife Jean. They have eight children, including two graduates of our military service academies; 28 grandchildren; and 17 great-grandchildren.

I will always treasure the memories of my monthly home teaching visits to the Sanders home. His piano playing, story-telling and beautiful prayers will always be vividly present in my mind. Jean, I learned during these visits, has always been the foundation of their wonderful relationship.

Like so many other members of his generation, Milton Sanders was a great yet humble patriot. Because of the sacrifices they made, our lives are immeasurably better than they otherwise might have been. Our Nation owes them more than words can ever convey.

HOMAGE TO BILL AND TERI POPP

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. President, today I pay homage to Minnesotans who are helping the Minnesota National Guard and their families. The National Guard serves our country and the States as a unique organization among all branches of the United States Armed Forces. The Guard is America's community-based defense force, located in more than 2,700 cities and towns across the Nation. Sixty-two of those cities are located in Minnesota. National Guard members are citizen-soldiers and airmen who are integral members of their communities. Minnesota National Guard members live, shop, work, worship, and go to school in Minnesota's cities and towns. This inexorable link between the community and its citizen-soldiers is what makes

the National Guard an important and necessary part of their local and national communities.

The Minnesota Army and Air National Guard are reserve components of the United States Army and Air Force. During times of national emergency, National Guard members may be called into active Federal service by the President of the United States. Guard members from Minnesota have served in every major conflict involving the United States Armed Forces since the Guard's inception more than 360 years ago. At this time, Minnesota National Guard members are serving in Iraq, Bosnia, Afghanistan, and Kosovo, as well as in other countries and within the State of Minnesota.

For the past 40 years, National Guard members have primarily served within their own communities, helping assist local law enforcement agencies during emergencies. In this capacity, members worked for the Guard on a part-time basis, usually just during emergency situations. Guard members earned the majority of their income from their jobs in the community. In the past couple of years, Guard members have been called to active duty. Because of this, they no longer earn their civilian incomes. For the most part, their civilian pay far exceeds their pay on active duty. In addition, when Guard members are deployed, they and their families need to support two households—the Guard member in their remote location and the family the Guard member leaves behind. While employers are encouraged to meet the pay differential for the Guard, oftentimes small companies cannot meet this obligation. Many Guard members and their families are caught in an unanticipated set of circumstances due to long terms of deployment overseas while supporting and protecting our country.

Inspired by the National Guard's members' dedication, patriotism, and selflessness, many Minnesotans have stepped forward to help Minnesota National Guard soldiers and their families. The efforts of Bill and Teri Popp, of Minnetonka, MN, deserve special praise. Long-time supporters of the Guard, they gave generously and challenged other Minnesotans to join them in supporting the Minnesota National Guard. Bill, founder and owner of POPP Telecom, believes that his company can and should improve the quality of life for everyone in his community. To that end, the Pops donated \$1,000 to every Minnesota National Guard member who was serving in Iraq, as of November 14, 2003. The gift the Pops made to Guard members in Iraq totaled \$166,000.

A true patriot, Bill included a thank you letter to each Guard member that received the donation that provided: "Thank you for putting your life on hold, and on the line, in service to our country. Thank you for . . . risking your life to advance liberty and justice for all people of the world."

To then set an example to the community, the Pops made an additional

donation to the Minnesota National Guard Foundation to help Guard members in financial need. Bill, through his company, also prepared and ran announcements on Minnesota radio stations encouraging other people and companies in Minnesota to make donations to the foundation to support members of the Minnesota National Guard and military reserves who have been impacted economically by extended periods of active duty service.

The Pops not only have promised to make sure the sacrifices the Guard and other military personnel make in service to our country will not be forgotten, they have followed through to help that promise come true. They epitomize the strength and patriotism of our great Nation.

On behalf of all Minnesotans, I express my heartfelt appreciation to Bill and Teri Popp for their generosity and patriotism. They deserve all our thanks.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SERGEANT BENJAMIN GILMAN

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I rise today to speak in tribute to U.S. Army Sgt. Benjamin Gilman, of Meriden, Connecticut, who died in Afghanistan on January 29, 2004, at the age of 28.

Sergeant Gilman was killed along with seven other American soldiers in a weapons cache explosion near the town of Ghazni. He was part of the 41st Engineer Battalion, 10th Mountain Division, based in Fort Drum, NY.

Benjamin Gilman was always doing his best to help others, long before he enlisted in our Armed Forces. As a teenager, he won an award for his volunteer work at the Veterans Memorial Medical Center. When visiting his mother at her job at the Curtis Home for the elderly, he would spend time with the senior citizens who lived there, sharing conversations over games of checkers. While working at a fast food restaurant at the local mall, Benjamin made friends with a group of elderly women he would come to call his "adopted grandmothers."

While he was committed to service of all kinds, it was always Benjamin Gilman's dream to serve his country in the military. Even as a 7-year-old playing with action figures, young Benjamin told anyone who would listen that he would be a soldier someday.

Benjamin was a special person for many people, and there were many people who were special to him. One of those people was Jean Moran. When Benjamin was 11 years old, he met Jean through a local Big Brother/Big Sister program. It was the first time that the program's organizers had assigned a big sister to a boy. But Jean became a fixture in Benjamin's life for years to come, taking on the role of the older sibling that he never had.

Of all the bonds and friendships Benjamin had, though, none was more lasting or special than his relationship with his mother, Edie Gilman. A single