

economy as one of the five least corrupt in Asia; and Freedom House labeled Taiwan "free" in 2003 with an improvement in political rights since 2002. President Chen Shui-bian has also demonstrated a commitment to human rights and is credited with solidifying a place for human rights within Taiwanese society during his presidency. The Human Rights Advisory Committee, established by Chen in 2000, is currently in the process of creating a National Human Rights Commission that will serve as the highest institution in Taiwan for the protection and promotion of human rights.

I remain committed to protecting the civil and political rights of the people of Taiwan, and I support Taiwan's inclusion in international organizations, such as in the World Health Organization, WHO. The recent SARS and avian flu outbreaks highlight the importance of giving the people of Taiwan a voice in these organizations. I agree with claims by Taiwanese authorities that it is inhumane for the international community to deny the people of Taiwan access to WHO's medical data and assistance. Unfortunately, despite congressional efforts, Taiwan has still not been granted observer status. This should change in the coming year.

I fear that provocative statements will have dangerous repercussions in this region of the world. Rather than warn and provoke, I hope that the governments of China and Taiwan will engage in a more constructive dialogue and encourage increased cross-strait people to people linkages. I support a peaceful resolution to the Taiwan-China situation, and I will continue to support policies that keep cross-strait tensions in check.

LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2003

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the need for hate crimes legislation. On May 1, 2003, Senator KENNEDY and I introduced the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act, a bill that would add new categories to current hate crimes law, sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable to our society.

Last fall in Portland, ME, Joshua Nisbet pulled up in a car near a bar that caters to the gay community. Nisbet and a friend yelled an antigay slur at two men walking nearby and assaulted them.

I believe that Government's first duty is to defend its citizens, to defend them against the harms that come out of hate. The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act is a symbol that can become substance. I believe that by passing this legislation and changing current law we can change hearts and minds as well.

PETER VLČKO, HUMANITARIAN

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I note with sadness the passing of Peter

Vlčko, a hero for all of humanity. When immense love and bravery coalesce in one person, as they did in Mr. Vlčko, amazing things are bound to happen.

And they did.

Mr. Vlčko's love for humankind manifested itself in his brave fight against evils such as totalitarianism, fascism, and anti-Semitism. During the dark days of World War II, at huge and constant risk to his own life, he fought against the pro-German Slovak Government and rescued over 20 Jews from deportation and death by the Nazis.

His heroic efforts have not gone unnoticed. Among other awards and recognitions, in 1981, Mr. Vlčko received the Silver Medal for Righteous Gentiles from Israel. With descendants of the Jews he saved looking on, he stood witness as a tree was planted in his honor at the top of a hill in Jerusalem. His name has also been forever memorialized in a large granite relief in the Garden of the Righteous at the Holocaust Memorial center in West Bloomfield.

Born in a Slovak village in 1912, Mr. Vlčko volunteered for military service immediately upon completion of his secondary education. He rose quickly through the ranks until the invasion and occupation of Czechoslovakia by the German military in 1939 forced him to be disarmed and reassigned to a war college in Bratislava. He took a break from his studies to serve a tour of duty on the Russian front, but his service was cut short when he sustained shrapnel wounds and an injury to his left leg from the heavy mortar fire. Returning to his studies, he met his future wife, Georgina Reichsfeld.

The strict anti-Semitic laws could not deter his love for Georgina, who was of Jewish ancestry. At a risk to Mr. Vlčko's life, the two entered into wedlock.

As the danger to his young bride and her family mounted, he hid them until he could obtain false identification papers. His perilous efforts did not stop with his bride's family. He continued on, obtaining false papers for twenty other Jews, which identified them as "essential personnel," preventing certain deportation and death.

Summoning more courage still, Mr. Vlčko offered his assistance to an attempt to overthrow the Nazi-friendly regime in Slovakia. Through a variety of disguises, such as a shoemaker and a woman, Mr. Vlčko managed to evade German forces and twice to escape capture. Forced into hiding for the remainder of the war, he was separated from his family for a year when he escaped into Bavaria.

Once reunited, Mr. Vlčko and his family immigrated to the United States, where they began a new life in Michigan. After attending a community college, he went to work for Ford Motor Company.

His new surroundings, however, could not make him forget his violent past. Through his narrative, he tried to edu-

cate people on the horrors of fascism and anti-Semitism. To do so, he both lectured throughout the United States and Canada and published an 860-page autobiography. People needed to know and, thanks to him, we do.

In 1991, Mr. Vlčko was granted honorary Israeli citizenship, and both he and his wife regained their Czechoslovakia citizenship, which was taken from them when they fled Czechoslovakia after the Communists seized power in the 1948 coup. In fact, he had been living under a death sentence issued by the Czech government until 1989. He has been honored by the Czech President and Czech Minister of Defense and has often been the guest of honor of the Czech and Slovak Ambassadors to the United States.

Mr. Vlčko is survived by his wife, Georgina, and their four children. Despite what severe images a background as a soldier might evoke, his wife affectionately describes the full picture: "He loved his family very much and worked his whole life to keep them safe."

Mr. Vlčko left behind more than a family, however; he left behind a legacy of love and hope embodied in the children of the Jews he saved and an outstanding example of courage and decency in the face of darkness and tyranny.

It is that legacy that I am sure will surround him as he rests in peace.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

HONORING THE SERVICE OF BRENDA COWAN

• Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, today I would like to take the opportunity to honor the service of Ms. Brenda Cowan, originally of Sturgis, KY. Her death while performing her duty as a firefighter is a great loss to us all.

On February 13, 2004 Brenda was responding to a domestic violence call. Tragically, Brenda and the person she was trying to help were shot and killed while waiting for police to arrive on the scene.

Her service with the Lexington, KY fire department was exemplary and duly appreciated. Brenda was also a pioneer. She was the first African American woman to become a firefighter in Lexington. As one of the U.S. Senators from Kentucky, I know that Brenda served as a fine example of what it means to serve one's community.

We are humbled and honored by the sacrifice Brenda has made. Without men and women such as Brenda, America would not be as great as it is now. Lexington and Kentucky are truly lucky to have benefited from her fine service. She is an example to us all. •

HONORING SY AND ESTELLE OPPER

• Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I am pleased to note that Sy and Estelle

Oppers are being honored on February 29, 2004 in Sacramento, CA on the occasion of the Shalom School's "Lighting the Way Gala" for their lifelong contributions to improving our society. Sy and Estelle's extraordinary dedication to helping others is worthy of this special recognition.

The Oppers have an exceptional history of humanitarian work. They provided goods and services to their community as owners of five plumbing supply stores and shared their success and time with deserving causes close to their hearts.

In addition to traveling to Israel for several missions, the Oppers are long-time members of American Israel Public Affairs Committee, AIPAC. Sy and Estelle are major donors and participants and helped the Jewish Federation purchase the property and building where Shalom School, Sacramento's only Jewish Day School, is located. Sy Oppers has served as president of the board for several Jewish organizations, including the Jewish Federation and B'nei Israel Congregation, and is currently serving on the board of the Trust Fund for the Jewish Elderly and the Jewish Family Service Board. Estelle Oppers has also been active in many Jewish organizations such as Hadassah, TDX, Sisterhood, Jewish Family Service and the Grandparents Club at Shalom School.

Children's and health causes have also been a priority for the Oppers. Sy has personally contributed and organized fund raising for the Washington Neighborhood Center of Sacramento. This center provides after-school programs that include performing arts classes and tutoring to at-risk children and teens. Estelle has supported and helped raise funds for the Breast Cancer Fund of San Francisco and the River Oaks Center for Children, a multi-service behavioral healthcare agency for abused children and their families. Estelle has also raised funds for the City of Hope National Medical Center that provides assistance to millions of people battling life-threatening diseases.

I applaud Sy and Estelle for committing their lives to the betterment of their community and beyond, and extend my sincere best wishes for their continued health, happiness and good work. Sy and Estelle Oppers are distinguished members of the Sacramento community, and it is with great pleasure that I recognize them today.●

RECOGNIZING LYNN AUSTIN MONROE

● Mr. MILLER. Mr. President, I want to speak about a great veteran of the U.S. Army, Mr. Lynn Austin Monroe. Mr. Monroe is a World War II veteran who honorably and proudly served his country in the European Theater as a mess sergeant in the Sixth Field Hospital. Prior to his overseas duty, he was an instructor in the Bakers and Cooks school at Camp Pickett, VA.

Major Reiber said Sergeant Monroe was the best instructor he ever had. From there he was sent to be the first mess sergeant to open the Finney General Hospital, Thomasville, GA. His next assignment was the transfer to England to serve as mess sergeant for the Sixth Field Hospital. He remained in that capacity until the war's end.

Often times he had to prepare meals without notice to feed a company of soldiers instead of a squadron. On one occasion, a hungry soldier came to Sergeant Monroe, who asked for a second helping of meat, which was chicken that day. The soldier said, "The chicken is so good, it ain't nothing but a Georgia bird, anyway." Wish granted. That was one happy soldier. In emergency situations, the Sixth Field Hospital kitchen staff would help unload patients who were flown in from the combat zone. Sergeant Monroe's joy as a serviceman in "The Greatest Generation" was feeding the Army of our great country as they fought to save freedom and democracy for future generations.●

HONORING FREDERICK AND MARY ANN LIPPITT OF PROVIDENCE, RI

● Mr. CHAFEE. Mr. President, this week, Frederick and May Ann Lippitt will be honored as recipients of Brown University's President's Medal.

The President's Medal is the highest honor a Brown president may bestow, and honors a person who has achieved distinction in a particular field, including education, scholarship, public service, the arts or philanthropy. It has been awarded seven times since its origination in 1994.

Fred Lippitt has spent more than four decades working on behalf of Brown, including 25 years as a lifetime Fellow, offering his expertise on countless committees spanning every aspect of university life.

Fred has given a lifetime of public service, including service as an elected member of the Rhode Island House of Representatives from 1961 to 1983, and as its minority leader for 10 years. He served as director of the State Department of Administration, as a Providence Housing Court Judge, and as the chairman of the RI Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education.

Mary Ann Lippitt, as the founder of Lippitt Aviation and a leader in a wide array of nonprofit and charitable organizations, has been a pioneer in demonstrating the role that women can play in business and community affairs, and she has inspired a generation of influential Rhode Island women. She has been a consistent supporter of women's athletics, including her own years as an Early Bird Swimmer. This is a testament to her commitment to ensuring a rewarding college experience for Brown's student athletes.

This award is well deserved. Fred and Mary Ann have been consistent advocates for the education and well-being

of all citizens, working for equality, opportunity, and assistance for those striving to advance through education. They are widely admired not only at Brown but throughout Rhode Island for contributing to the betterment of our State.

I know my colleagues join me in saluting Frederick and Mary Ann Lippitt on this achievement.●

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 11:35 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Ms. Niland, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 2696. An act to establish Institutes to demonstrate and promote the use of adaptive ecosystem management to reduce the risk of wildfires, and restore the health of fire-adapted forest and woodland ecosystems of the interior West.

H.R. 2707. An act to provide for an assessment of the extent of the invasion of Salt Cedar and Russian Olive on lands in the Western United States and efforts to date to control such invasion on public and private lands, including tribal lands, to establish a demonstration program to address the invasion of Salt Cedar and Russian Olive, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the House passed the following bill, without amendment:

S. 714. An act to provide for the conveyance of a small parcel of Bureau of Land Management land in Douglas county, Oregon, to the county to improve management of and recreational access to the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area, and for other purposes.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bill was read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 2696. An act to establish Institutes to demonstrate and promote the use of adaptive ecosystem management to reduce the risk of wildfires, and restore the health of fire-adapted forest and woodland ecosystems of the interior West; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bill was read the second time, and placed on the calendar:

H.R. 3783. An act to provide an extension of highway, highway safety, motor carrier safety, transit, and other programs funded out of the Highway Trust Fund pending enactment of a law reauthorizing the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-6397. A communication from the Paralegal Specialist, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation,