

DEMOCRACY AGAIN TRIUMPHS IN GEORGIA

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, there is good news from Georgia this morning. In a second bloodless revolution in that country, former Soviet official and Ajaria troublemaker Alan Abashidze fled into exile after thousands of opponents—including some from within his own police and military forces—took to the streets to demand change.

Abashidze's hasty departure is a great victory for the people of Georgia and their leaders, particularly President Saakashvili and Prime Minister Zhvania. By seeking a non-violent solution to the crisis in the breakaway region of Ajari, Saakashvili and Zhvania demonstrated patience in the face of Abashidze's hostile provocations—designed to spark a military conflict.

Reports of the celebrations in the streets of Batumi are inspiring, particularly those of reformers waving American flags along side their own country. I want to remind my colleagues such symbolism is a reality in Iraq, where Georgian soldiers serve alongside U.S. and Coalition forces.

My message to the people of Georgia is clear: America will continue to stand with them as they champion the cause of democracy. We will continue to help them build a country—and institutions—dedicated to the furtherance of freedom and the rule of law.

Once again, democracy triumphs in Georgia.

MILLION MOM MARCH

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, this weekend moms from across the country will converge on Washington to join in a march remembering gun violence victims and urging President Bush to support commonsense gun safety legislation. I am proud to support the moms, and I know my colleagues will join me in commending these women for their leadership.

On Mother's Day, moms will gather on the west lawn of the U.S. Capitol to bring their "Halt the Assault" message to the front door of Congress. These women have come to Washington to urge Members of Congress to support sensible gun safety legislation. Their leadership is desperately needed on this issue, and I applaud all of the moms who will make this journey for their commitment. After the march, the moms will spend Monday visiting our offices and urging us to support commonsense gun safety legislation.

One of the moms attending this Sunday's events is Barb Case, Michigan's Million Mom March President. Mrs. Case has been a member of the Michigan Million Mom March since it first started in 2000. She will be leading as many as 500 Michigan moms to Washington. The Michigan moms will be marching in memory of the 120,000 people who have been killed by a firearm,

including more than 13,000 children and teens, since 2000. Mrs. Case, along with other moms in Michigan, have united with State and local leaders to implement community efforts to address the tough issues surrounding gun violence in my home State of Michigan. And, Barb has organized Michigan's moms trip to Washington every year since the first march took place in 2000.

This year's marchers are focused on the renewal and strengthening of the assault weapons ban, holding gun manufacturers accountable for their products, requiring background checks on all gun purchases, reinstating the 5-day Brady waiting period for all gun purchases, and incorporating safety standards into gun design.

Michigan's moms, just like millions of moms from across the country want an America where their kids are safe from gun violence. Again, I commend all of the mothers coming to Washington this weekend for their hard work and commitment to the issue of gun safety and I hope all of my colleagues will remember these efforts when the Senate considers gun safety legislation in the coming months.

I ask unanimous consent that an article from the Detroit Free Press, which discussed the issue of gun violence and this Sunday's march, be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the Detroit Free Press, Apr. 29, 2004]

WORK TOWARD PEACE THIS MOTHER'S DAY
(By Desiree Cooper)

Sometimes, society's assault on your humanity can be so fierce, you have to throw down the gauntlet and say, "This means war."

That's what happened to two women more than 140 years ago. One was Anna Reeves Jarvis, a West Virginia Methodist pastor's wife. She established Mother's Day Work Clubs to improve the health of Appalachian women and children. But as Civil War casualties mounted, she converted the clubs into nursing squads, determined to save the lives of all soldiers—both Confederate and Union.

Abolitionist Julia Ward Howe, author of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," also had become war-weary. When the Franco-Prussian War began on the heels of the Civil War, she started rallying women for a national Mother's Day for Peace. Together, the nurse and the poet began the antiwar holiday that we know as Mother's Day.

NOT ABOUT DAISIES AND DINNER

We've long since forgotten that Mother's Day was a social movement. But this year, Endolyn Chapman and her daughter Tonisha will hark back to the roots of the holiday and celebrate it on May 9 at the Million Mom March in Washington, DC.

Neither woman has ever seen herself as political. Tonisha, 19, just registered to vote last week. But, like Jarvis and Howe, violence has spurred their fight for peace.

"The last time I saw my father, he was driving away as I was coming home," said Tonisha, remembering the even on April 5, 2004. "I wanted to stop and chat with him, but he just waved and drove off."

That night, 44-year old Steven Chapman went to Detroit's Sa-Mari Hand Car Wash on Wyoming and 6 Mile.

"Four men wearing ski masks robbed the place," said Endolyn, who'd been married to Chapman—a former college football player who stood 6 feet 6 and wore a size 18 shoe—for nearly 20 years. "My husband pleaded for his life. He was in a seated position when they killed him."

HOW WILL YOU COMMIT FOR PEACE?

Tonisha has tried to comfort her mother, taking her out on her parents' anniversary. Endolyn, too, has tried to move on, even though her husband's killers remain at large.

Then she read an article about the Million Mom March's Halt the Assault rally to urge Congress to renew the assault weapons ban.

"There is no reason why anyone would need an assault weapon," Endolyn said. "You can't hunt with one. I decided that we'd go to the march because we don't ever want another family to go through what we've been through."

Million Man Marchstate president Barb Case said, "So many women have been touched by the suffering of others and want to do something to change the world." She estimated that about 500 people from Michigan will attend the march. "This is a powerful way for them to get involved."

And what better day to demonstrate that power than Mother's Day.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, tens of thousands of women will come to Washington this Mother's Day weekend to spread the word about the urgent need to renew the Federal assault weapons ban.

I thank these women, and their families and friends who will join them, for their effort to focus the American public on the fact that we could lose this important law unless Congress and the President renew the ban soon.

I ask these committed Americans to do everything they can do to help save the assault weapons ban. They should write the President and urge him to help renew the ban. They should write Senate Majority Leader BILL FRIST and Speaker of the House DENNIS HASTERT and urge them to bring the assault weapons ban up for a vote. They should make their voices heard until the ban is renewed.

Time is running out. The Federal assault weapons ban will expire on September 13 of this year if Congress and the President do not act. This means that AK-47s, TEC-DC 9s, Street Sweepers, and dozens of other types of military-style assault weapons will once again flood the streets of America. We cannot afford to let this happen. We owe the American people more than that. It is just that simple.

Assault weapons pose a grave threat to all Americans, but most especially to law enforcement officers on our city streets.

Just last month, I spoke at the funeral of San Francisco Police Officer Isaac Espinoza, who was shot and killed by a gang member armed with an AK-47 and a 30-round clip. Officer Espinoza took three shots in his back as a gunman fired 15 rounds in just seconds, giving Officer Espinoza and his partner, who was also shot, no time to seek refuge.

Officer Espinoza was a bright young star in the San Francisco Police Department, and he had a promising future and loving family. Now that future is gone. His wife Renata is without a husband. His beautiful 3-year-old girl Isabella is without a father.

And Officer Espinoza is far from the only law enforcement officer gunned down in his prime by an assailant wielding an assault weapon.

A recent study by the Violence Policy Center stated that one in five police officers killed in the line of duty is killed with an assault weapon.

That study listed a number of officers gunned down by assault weapons, and I would just like to list a few examples because if we let the assault weapons ban expire, we can expect many more of these incidents.

On January 10, 1999:

Officer James Williams was killed with a MAK-90 or SA85 7.62mm rifle. Officer Williams was among a group of officers who were searching for a rifle that had been discarded by the occupants of a vehicle that was involved in a chase with police. While they were searching for the rifle, a gunman opened fire from a nearby overpass, killing Officer Williams. Chad Rhodes was arrested and charged with special-circumstances murder, attempted murder, three counts of firing an assault weapon, and possessing an assault weapon. Rhodes pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and was sentenced to life in prison without parole.

On June 12, 1999 in Orange County, California:

Sheriff's Deputy Brad Riches was killed with a MAK-90 or SA85 7.62mm rifle. Deputy Riches was sitting in his patrol car outside a 7-Eleven when his police cruiser was riddled with assault weapon fire. The 7-Eleven clerk said that a customer told him he was carrying an AK-47-style assault rifle to shoot a police officer. Maurice Steksal was convicted on November 19, 2002 of the first-degree murder of Deputy Riches.

And there are many, many more. But the list would be far longer if the assault weapons ban were not in place, because more of these guns would be out there. They would be easier for criminals to get and to use, and more officers would be killed.

Indeed, these shootings underscore the fundamental danger assault weapons pose to our society.

The good news is that the Senate has gone on record in support of extending the ban on military-style assault weapons. In a bipartisan vote in March, the Senate approved a straight 10-year renewal of the current ban as an amendment to a bill being pushed by the National Rifle Association giving gun manufacturers and dealers protection from civil lawsuits.

But in a bizarre twist, the NRA scuttled its own bill to prevent the extension from becoming law. This is the power of the NRA.

In over a decade as a U.S. Senator, I have encountered no lobby stronger than the gun lobby. I am convinced that if the NRA is going to be defeated, it will be by the mothers and fathers of this Nation—parents who want a future for their children free of the violence

and bloodshed sparked by the vast overproliferation of guns throughout our country.

These are the people who came together in the first Million Mom March 4 years ago, and these are the people who will come together again this weekend.

These people will stand firm and say: Enough is Enough. Now is the time to protect our families from assault weapons. There cannot be any turning back.

Over the past decade, we have had a chance to examine the assault weapons ban and to determine if it works and enjoys support.

The results are in.

The ban works. Recent Department of Justice records indicate that the use of banned assault weapons in crimes has declined measurably—by 65 percent in one analysis—since the measure took effect.

The men and women of law enforcement across the Nation support the ban because, on the front lines, they know it protects them and makes communities safer. The Fraternal Order of Police endorses another 10 years, as does almost every other major law enforcement organization, including chiefs of police all across the Nation.

No weapons have been confiscated from legitimate gun owners. In fact, the bill specifically protects 670 shotguns and rifles used for hunting.

Almost three-fourths of the American people, and two-thirds of gun owners, support renewing the ban.

In fact, a recent University of Pennsylvania Annenberg poll found that 71 percent of all Americans support renewing the assault weapons ban; 64 percent of people in homes with a gun supported extension of the ban; and even 46 percent of people in NRA households support extending the ban, contrary to claims by NRA leadership that its members are universally against this proposal.

Some in the Senate opposed the ban a decade ago, fearing it would do little to reduce crime, and could threaten the constitutional rights of law-abiding gun owners and hunters.

Now, 10 years since that vote, America has seen just the opposite: the ban has made our streets safer, it has protected law enforcement officers, and in no way has it diminished legitimate gun owners' rights.

Moreover, we all know that the world has dramatically changed since 1993. September 11, 2001, has taught us many lessons; among them that terrorism lurks in our own cities and communities. Given today's dangers, it defies logic to let suicidal terrorists, gang members and others simply walk up to a counter and buy these weapons for potential attacks.

Assault weapons pose a fundamental danger to law enforcement and our society, and we will continue to work to extend the ban in the Senate. The assault weapons ban is too important to let die.

The bottom line is this—what is the argument for letting these banned guns back on the streets?

Who is clamoring for newly manufactured AK-47s?

Who is clamoring for new TEC-9s?

These are guns that are never used for hunting. They are not used for self-defense, and if they are, it is more likely that they will kill innocents than intruders.

These guns—and everyone knows it—have but one purpose, and that purpose is to kill other human beings. Why would we want to open the floodgates again and let them back on our streets? There is simply no good reason.

For a number of years now, President Bush has indicated that he supports renewing the assault weapons ban for another decade. But he has not lifted a finger to help. Ultimately, however, the voice of the White House will be pivotal in determining if the ban is ultimately approved by Congress and signed into law.

Now is the time to renew a sound law for another 10 years.

We do this in the memory of Officer Espinoza and all the other police officers shot and killed with assault weapons.

We do this on behalf of all the women who are marching on Washington this weekend.

And we do this to keep our communities safe.

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 in our society.

Robert Martin was found lying outside an abandoned school in Ashburn, GA, with head injuries from a blunt object. Martin was wearing a dress at the time. Press reports indicate that Martin had been beaten and harassed before because of his perceived sexuality.

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.

THE NEED FOR NATIONAL ELECTRICITY RELIABILITY STANDARDS

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I rise to express my strong support for the Electricity Reliability Act of 2004, S. 2236. I am proud to be an original cosponsor of this legislation and I hope that the Senate acts on this bill soon. Although we cannot agree on the comprehensive energy bill that has been before the Senate, we can agree on