

want me. But on this one, I have to be able to get up in the morning and look in the mirror and be true to myself.

I have spoken what I believe to be true this morning. I believe marriage is more profoundly important than we might now recognize. Before we let a few tell the many what it is going to be, I think we ought to debate it, carefully consider it, because while we debate issues of war and peace and recession and prosperity, some will say there are so many more important things to discuss than this.

I say to you, there probably isn't a more important issue to discuss than the legal structure that binds men and women together for the creation and the rearing and nurturing of future generations of Americans. I make no apology for my vote for this process, for an amendment that defines marriage, because that is where it is headed, because the courts will compel it. And our legal structure gives American citizens an avenue to be included. So with my vote, I say include we the people.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum, and I ask unanimous consent that the time be equally divided between both sides.

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

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

SUICIDE EPIDEMIC ON INDIAN RESERVATIONS

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, yesterday on the Senate floor and this morning watching an interview on NBC's "Today Show" by my colleague from Oregon, Senator SMITH, there was a great deal of discussion about the issue of youth suicide. All of us in this Chamber, as part of the Senate family, have extended our hearts, thoughts, and prayers to the Smith family upon the loss of their son. It is devastating to lose a child. I lost a beautiful, wonderful daughter some while ago to heart disease.

Yesterday, as I listened to my colleague, Senator SMITH, describe the loss of his son and discuss the issue of suicide, I know that it adds a dimension to what is an almost unbearable burden of losing a child, to lose a child to suicide. So my thoughts and prayers have been with the Smith family, and I know, too, that what Senator SMITH has done in providing leadership for the legislation passed last evening is going to save lives.

We will not know their names, but there are going to be young people in this country whose lives are going to be saved because the grants and the resources that are going to be made available through the legislation

passed by the Senate last night. I am glad to be an original cosponsor of this bill. It is going to give kids who are despondent and have despair and depression hope, opportunity, and counseling. So what the Senate did last night is going to save lives, and we owe a great debt of gratitude to Senator SMITH. I hope the lives that are saved in the years ahead in some way are a memorial to the late son of Senator SMITH and his family.

I had come to the floor some 2 months or so ago intending to speak about a young girl on the Spirit Lake Nation Indian Reservation in North Dakota. When I came to the floor, I saw my colleague was in the Chair at that point and I decided that I really did not want to describe the circumstances of her death because she had committed suicide. I knew the burden the Smith family had been dealing with surrounding the loss of their son. So I did not describe that young girl's death in any detail, but I would like to today in light of the speech that was delivered and in light of the action the Senate took last evening, which has given me some hope.

I will describe this young girl. This young girl was named Avis Littlewind. She died a few months ago now. She took her own life. She was 14 years of age. She lived on the Spirit Lake Nation Indian Reservation. She was a seventh grader at the Four Winds Middle School. I am told she enjoyed riding horses, playing basketball, grooming her animals, and listening to music. The day after she died, someone told me about the plight of this little girl. So I called the reservation and talked to the psychologist and the social worker involved. Since that time, I have gone to that reservation, I have sat around in a circle for an hour visiting with her classmates in the seventh grade, talked to the counselors, talked to the school administrators, talked to members of the tribal council about what is happening on our Indian reservations. Because, although I am speaking today about Avis Littlewind, there is an epidemic of suicides on Indian reservations. The legislation that Senator SMITH, Senator DODD, and others offered in the Senate last evening will help address this epidemic by making tribal governments also eligible for grant funding for suicide prevention.

Avis Littlewind died just recently by her own hand. Her sister took her life 2 years ago. Her father took his life in a self-inflicted bullet wound 12 years ago. But it is more than that. The tragedy of suicides is not just a problem on the Spirit Lake Indian reservation—Just in North Dakota, I have gone on the same mission to talk to people at the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation when there was an epidemic of threats of suicide by young people.

In this case with Avis Littlewind, there were a lot of warning signs. This little seventh grade girl missed 90 days of school up until April. She was lying in her bed day after day in a near fetal position.

Tragically, she had an appointment to see the IHS social worker later the same day that she took her life. She did not live long enough to make that appointment.

When I called the reservation to talk to leaders about these issues and then subsequently went there to visit with them, this is what I discovered: The reservation has one psychologist and one social worker. They did not have nearly the capability to follow up with these cases. They just could not cope. They did not have the capability to give somebody a ride to the clinic. They have to borrow a car, beg somebody to give someone a ride to some medical help.

It is interesting to me, and tragic as well, that the Federal Government is directly responsible for the health care of only two groups of people. We have a trust responsibility for the health care of American Indians. That is a trust responsibility. That is not optional, that is our responsibility. And we have a responsibility for the health care of Federal prisoners.

Do you know that on a per capita basis we spend almost twice as much for health care for Federal prisoners as we do for health care for American Indians? So little girls like Avis Littlewind are found dead by suicide, and we don't have the mental health services to reach out and help these kids. The mental health services are not available. Just call around and ask.

There are kids who, for their own reasons, are desperate, are depressed, are reaching out, and yet the services are not available to them. We must do much better than that.

Let me describe the circumstances on our Indian reservations in this country because on many of them it looks as if you are visiting a Third World country. Alcoholism, seven times—not double, triple, quadruple—but seven times the rate of the national average; tuberculosis, seven times the rate of the national average; suicide, double the national average in this country; homicide, double; diabetes, four times. On the Fort Berthold Reservation, the rate of diabetes is 12 times the national average. We have to do much better. We have a responsibility.

I never met this young girl, but I met her classmates and they told me about her. She, like a lot of kids, was a wonderful young woman, but she lived in a circle of poverty in a family in which two other family members had taken their lives. Her cousin, incidentally, 2 weeks after Avis Littlewind's death, threatened suicide and had to be hospitalized.

But it is not just this family. It is an epidemic on our Indian reservations with young people. We need resources to deal with it. That is why I was so pleased last evening to hear the speech given by Senator SMITH, a speech that was obviously very difficult for him to give on the Senate floor. Then that was followed by legislation enacted by this Senate that will begin the long road to

do something about this problem, to save the lives of kids like Avis Littlewind. She may not long be remembered because she is just a statistic with respect to teen suicides on Indian reservations, but this young girl, I am sure, wanted the things that we want and that our children want—a good life, an opportunity. She wanted to have hope for the future. She is now lying in a grave, having taken her own life.

We bear some responsibility because the resources that were necessary, needed to help treat the depression that this young girl had, were simply not available. I met with the school administrators, the tribal council, all those folks. The fact is, it was clear to me no one took it upon themselves to reach out. If you have a young 14-year-old lying in bed for 90 days, not attending school, in desperate condition, something is wrong. Someone needs to intervene. Someone should have saved her life.

I am not blaming anybody today. I am just saying today there is hope. There was not before. Today there is hope. The Senate has taken action on a significant piece of legislation that I think will save lives. It is too late to save Avis Littlewind's life, but it will save other lives. Today I commend my colleague, Senator SMITH, whom I believe, through the pain and suffering that his family has experienced, has done something that will give others hope and offer life and opportunity to others.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. DOLE). The Senator from Utah.

MR. HATCH. Madam President, let me add to the Senator's remarks. I listened to my dear friend, my partner, GORDON SMITH, yesterday on the Senate floor, and I was very impressed, having seen what he and his family have gone through and what others have gone through. It meant so much to have him lead the fight for this particular bill.

I certainly appreciated the remarks of the distinguished Senator from North Dakota. There is no question, this is a serious problem for young people throughout our country—again, especially for those who are Native Americans. I believe the bill, sponsored by my dear friend from Oregon, and of course a number of the rest of us, will go a long way toward helping to resolve and alleviate some of these problems.

I compliment all concerned for their sensitivity and their desire to do what we can to alleviate these problems and to help our children throughout our country.

My home state of Utah has one of the highest suicide rates in the country, in fact, suicide rates in Utah for those 15 to 19 years of age have increased close to 150 percent over the last 20 years. In response to these disturbing statistics, I authored legislation in 2000 to direct the Secretary of Health and Human

Services to provide grants to states and other entities in order to create programs to reduce suicide deaths among children and adolescents. This legislation was included in the Children's Health Act of 2000 which was signed into law by the President.

Again, I am proud to be an original cosponsor of the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act and I credit its rapid passage through the Senate last night to one person—my dear friend, Senator GORDON SMITH.

A JOINT RESOLUTION PROPOSING AN AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES RELATING TO MARRIAGE

MR. HATCH. Madam President, I have been around here for 28 years. I have seen a lot of very important issues. I have seen a lot of phony arguments through the years. One of the phoniest arguments I have seen is, Why are you moving toward this constitutional amendment to preserve the traditional definition of marriage? We have so many other more important things to do. Why, we have the economy, we have the war—we can name thousands of things that are more important to some of the opponents of this measure than this particular measure. But I say I don't know of anything in our society or in our lives or in our country or in the world that is more important than preserving our traditional family definition.

I don't know of anything that is more important to children. I don't know of anything that is more important to morality. I don't know of anything that is more important to education. I don't know of anything that is more important to strengthen our country. I don't know of anything that is more important to the overall well-being of our citizens than the preservation of the traditional marriage definition that has been the rule for 5,000-plus years in this world; that is, marriage should be between a man and a woman.

Everybody in this body knows I have led the fight in three AIDS bills. I have been the primary sponsor of those bills along with Senator KENNEDY. Everybody knows that I have fought hard against hate crimes. One of the principal bills that lies before us is the Hatch-Smith-Kennedy-Feinstein bill against hate crimes, part of which are hate crimes against gay people. I do not believe in discrimination of any kind, and I do not believe that what some people have done to gay people in our society is relevant or right.

Some of it has been purely prejudicial. I don't believe that type of thinking should see the light of day.

But like my colleague from Oregon and others, I draw the line when it comes to traditional marriage and the definition of traditional marriage. So I rise in support of an amendment to our Constitution that would maintain the institution of marriage between a man

and a woman, an institutional arrangement that is to this date supported by all of our State legislatures, every State legislature in the country. The bedrock of American success is the family, and it is traditional marriage that undergirds the American family.

The disintegration of the family in this country correlates to the many serious social problems, including crime and poverty. We are seeing soaring divorce rates. We are seeing soaring out-of-wedlock birth rates that have resulted in far too many fatherless families. Weakening the legal status of marriage at this point will only exacerbate these problems, and we simply must act to strengthen the family. It is one of the most important things that we can consider and that we should do.

To me, the question comes down to whether we amend the Constitution or we let the Supreme Court do it for us. I know which is the more democratic option, and that is for us, as elected officials, to amend the Constitution. Questions that are as fundamental as the family should simply not be left to the courts to decide. If we permit ourselves to be ruled by judges, we further erode the citizenly responsibility that is central to our republican form of government.

Many in this body, in the ivory tower, often fret that Americans do not take politics seriously enough. Perhaps that is because we, through our inaction, routinely suggest to the electorate that the most important questions facing us as a political community should be decided by a handful of Harvard-educated lawyers, rather than by the people themselves. A free citizenry should not accept such a goal, and should not accept such thin gruel.

Our hope for this amendment is that it will maintain the traditional right of American people to set marriage policy for themselves.

We do not take this proposal lightly. The Constitution has functioned to secure and extend the rights of citizens in this Nation, and it serves as a beacon of hope for the world. Aside from the Bill of Rights, it has rarely been amended, but when it is, we have done so to expand the rights of democratic self-government and to resecure the Constitution's original meaning.

That is precisely what we are intending here. Marriage policy has traditionally been set by the States. The States have made their opinion on this subject clear. They have overwhelmingly acted in recent years to preserve traditional marriage.

Still, absent an amendment, we should have no faith that the courts will uphold these State decisions. Believe me, there are other ways we would rather spend our time. We did not choose this schedule—the courts did. But as public representatives, bound by the oath to defend the Constitution, we will not hide from our obligations.

Our case is simple. Last fall, in its *Goodridge v. Department of Public*