

In addition to banning 19 specific weapons, the existing ban makes it illegal to "manufacture, transfer, or possess a semiautomatic" firearm that can accept a detachable magazine and has more than one of several specific military features, such as folding/telescoping stocks, protruding pistol grips, bayonet mounts, threaded muzzles or flash suppressors, barrel shrouds or grenade launchers. These weapons are dangerous and they should not be on America's streets.

The National Rifle Association has said that the ban is ineffective and unnecessary. The NRA asserts that guns labeled as assault weapons are rarely used in violent crimes. But this assertion is not supported by the facts. According to statistics reported by the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, from 1990 to 1994, assault weapons named in the ban constituted 4.82 percent of guns traced in criminal investigations. However, since the ban's enactment, these assault weapons have made up only 1.61 percent of the crime-related guns traced.

In 1994, I voted for the assault weapons ban and in March of this year I joined a bipartisan majority of the Senate in voting to extend the assault weapons ban for 10 years. Unfortunately, despite Senate passage of the amendment, it appears that this important gun safety law will be allowed to expire. The House Republican leadership opposes reauthorizing the law and President Bush, though he has said he supports it, has done little to help keep the law alive.

I hope the letter from Presidents Ford, Carter and Clinton will prompt President Bush to act to promote the passage of the extension of the Assault Weapons Ban.

I ask unanimous consent that the letter from former Presidents Ford, Carter and Clinton be printed in the RECORD.

JUNE 14, 2004.

President GEORGE W. BUSH,
The White House,
Washington, DC.

DEAR PRESIDENT BUSH: We are pleased that you support reauthorization of the federal Assault Weapons Act, which is scheduled to expire in September. Each of us, along with President Reagan, worked hard in support of this vital law, and it would be a grave mistake if it were allowed to sunset.

There continues to be strong support for this law among our nation's police officers who risk their lives every day to protect the public. That is because they remember the days, prior to the enactment of the law in 1994, when military-style, semiautomatic firearms had become the weapons of choice for gangs, drug traffickers, and paramilitary extremist groups. The firearm death rate soared as criminals used these weapons, outfitted with 20, 50 and even hundred round ammunition clips, to kill, maim, and terrorize. We cannot go back to those days.

At a time when terrorism continues to be a serious threat, it is even more imperative that we renew the Assault Weapons Act and limit access to military-style weapons and high-capacity ammunition clips. But with upcoming recesses, there are not many legislative days left for Congress to renew the

law. We urge you to make reauthorization of the Assault Weapons Act a top priority for your Administration and spur Congress to action. If we can be of assistance to you in this regard, we are ready to do so.

Sincerely,

GERALD R. FORD.
BILL CLINTON.
JIMMY CARTER.

NATIONAL VETERANS AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, last week I had the honor of joining with 52 of my colleagues in introducing a resolution, S. Res. 401, expressing the sense of the Senate that the week that includes Veterans' Day this year be designated as "National Veterans Awareness Week." This marks the fifth year in a row that I have introduced such a resolution, which has been adopted unanimously by the Senate on all previous occasions.

The purpose of National Veterans Awareness Week is to serve as a focus for educational programs designed to make students in elementary and secondary schools aware of the contributions of veterans and their importance in preserving American peace and prosperity. This goal takes on particular importance and immediacy this year as we find ourselves again with uniformed men and women in harm's way in foreign lands.

Why do we need such an educational effort? In a sense, this action has become necessary because we are victims of our own success with regard to the superior performance of our armed forces. The plain fact is that there are just fewer people around now who have had any connection with military service. For example, as a result of tremendous advances in military technology and the resultant productivity increases, our current armed forces now operate effectively with a personnel roster that is one-third less in size than just 15 years ago. In addition, the success of the all-volunteer career-oriented force has led to much lower turnover of personnel in today's military than in previous eras when conscription was in place. Finally, the number of veterans who served during previous conflicts, such as World War II, when our military was many times larger than today, is inevitably declining.

The net result of these changes is that the percentage of the entire population that has served in the Armed Forces is dropping rapidly, a change that can be seen in all segments of society. Whereas during World War II it was extremely uncommon to find a family in America that did not have one of its members on active duty, now there are numerous families that include no military veterans at all. Even though the Iraqi war has been prominently discussed on television and in the newspapers, many of our children are much more preoccupied with the usual concerns of young people than with keeping up with the events of the day. As a consequence, many of our

youth still have little or no connection with or knowledge about the important historical and ongoing role of men and women who have served in the military. This omission seems to have persisted despite ongoing educational efforts by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the veterans service organizations.

This lack of understanding about military veterans' important role in our society can have potentially serious repercussions. In our country, civilian control of the armed forces is the key tenet of military governance. A citizenry that is oblivious to the capabilities and limitations of the armed forces, and to its critical role throughout our history, can make decisions that have unexpected and unwanted consequences. Even more important, general recognition of the importance of those individual character traits that are essential for military success, such as patriotism, selflessness, sacrifice, and heroism, is vital to maintaining these key aspects of citizenship in the armed forces and even throughout the population at large.

The failure of our children to understand why a military is important, why our society continues to depend on it for ultimate survival, and why a successful military requires integrity and sacrifice, will have predictable consequences as these youngsters become of voting age. Even though military service is a responsibility that is no longer shared by a large segment of the population, as it has been in the past, knowledge of the contributions of those who have served in the Armed Forces is as important as it has ever been. To the extent that many of us will not have the opportunity to serve our country in uniform, we must still remain cognizant of our responsibility as citizens to fulfill the obligations we owe, both tangible and intangible, to those who do serve and who do sacrifice on our behalf.

The importance of this issue was brought home to me five years ago by Samuel I. Cashdollar, who was then a 13-year-old seventh grader at Lewes Middle School in Lewes, DE. Samuel won the Delaware VFW's Youth Essay Contest that year with a powerful presentation titled "How Should We Honor America's Veterans"? Samuel's essay pointed out that we have Nurses' Week, Secretaries' Week, and Teachers' Week, to rightly emphasize the importance of these occupations, but the contributions of those in uniform tend to be overlooked. We don't want our children growing up to think that Veterans Day has simply become a synonym for department store sale, and we don't want to become a nation where more high school seniors recognize the name Britney Spears than the name Dwight Eisenhower.

National Veterans Awareness Week complements Veterans Day by focusing on education as well as commemoration, on the contributions of the many in addition to the heroism and service

of the individual. National Veterans Awareness Week also presents an opportunity to remind ourselves of the contributions and sacrifices of those who have served in peacetime as well as in conflict; both groups work unending hours and spend long periods away from their families under conditions of great discomfort so that we all can live in a land of freedom and plenty.

Mr. President, last year, my resolution designating National Veterans Awareness Week had 66 cosponsors and was approved in the Senate by unanimous consent. Responding to that resolution, President Bush issued a proclamation urging our citizenry to observe National Veterans Awareness Week. I ask my colleagues to continue this trend of support for our veterans by endorsing this resolution again this year. Our children and our children's children will need to be well informed about what veterans have accomplished in order to make appropriate decisions as they confront the numerous worldwide challenges that they are sure to face in the future.

VICTIMS OF DRUNKEN DRIVERS MEMORIAL WALL FOUNDATION

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, in April of 2000, more than one hundred people gathered to dedicate a memorial for the victims of drunk driving. The memorial, created by The Victims of Drunken Drivers Memorial Wall Foundation, was constructed in Pacific Memorial Park in the city of Anaheim. The Victims of Drunk Drivers Memorial Wall has helped people remember those who were tragically lost, brought comfort to loved ones, educated the public and taught valuable lessons to students about this senseless crime. I salute the founders and the many volunteers who helped create this memorial.

In 2003, 17,401 people died in alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes. It is estimated that alcohol-related crashes kill someone every 30 minutes. The memorial reminds us that these victims are real people with families and loved ones left behind.

The Victims of Drunken Drivers Memorial Wall Foundation has honored victims and raised awareness since the year 2000. A wide range of individuals contributed to the memorial and helped make the project a success. For 4 years they contacted the thousands of families who lost loved ones and accepted small contributions to successfully raise \$25,000. Law enforcement agencies have educated area children about drunk driving using the memorial and have held sessions at the memorial.

Judges also require convicted drunk drivers to visit the memorial and reflect on their actions.

I commend The Victims of Drunken Drivers Memorial Wall Foundation for their hard work. The memorial continues to reach families and serves as a

constant reminder of the consequences of drunk driving. I wish the foundation continued success.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

HONORING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF MELISSA GAYLE BRIDGES

• Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, I pay tribute and congratulate Melissa Gayle Bridges of Mayfield, KY on being awarded the Kentucky Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company scholarship from the Kentucky Farm Bureau Education Foundation. This academic scholarship will provide Melissa with \$2000 toward her education.

Melissa has proven to be a very able and competent student by winning this prestigious award. She will represent the graduates of Graves County High School very well when she enrolls at Murray State University in the fall. She plans to study Education.

The citizens of Mayfield should be proud to have a young woman like Melissa Gayle Bridges in their community. Her example of dedication and hard work should be an inspiration to the entire Commonwealth.

She has my most sincere appreciation for this work and I look forward to her continued service to Kentucky. •

DARFUR HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

• Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to address the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Darfur. The facts in this case are, in my view, clear. Sudanese refugees have been flooding into Chad as a result of the coordinated policies of local militias and the Government of Sudan. The conditions that have forced the refugees to flee their home and their country are beyond horrific, including systematic murder, rape, torture, and abduction. Although it is impossible to know the exact figures, up to 30,000 individuals have been killed and over a million have been displaced. The United States, the United Nations, and many international organizations are predicting that over a million will die with the change of seasons in the region, the lack of food and water, and the onset of disease.

At a minimum, these atrocities amount to ethnic cleansing on the part of the local militias and the Sudanese Government. At worst, they constitute genocide. In either case, the atrocities should have been stopped much earlier. Furthermore, they can and should be stopped now.

Within the last few weeks, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell and U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan have visited the region. I consider this an extremely belated effort on the part of the United States and the United Nations to address a series of problems that were both predictable and preventable. Unfortunately, the administration's attention and resources are so

focused elsewhere that it lost sight of a humanitarian crisis of catastrophic proportions. Sadly, Sudan is where it is today because no one at a high level felt the region and its people mattered enough to pay attention and do something. Sadly, the administration only paid attention when Congress wrote letters in June—letters that I signed—requesting that they do so.

These letters—one to President Bush and one to Secretary-General Annan—requested that very specific steps be undertaken to stop the current crisis, in particular committing additional human and financial resources to the region, identifying the individuals and governments responsible for the actions, requiring a U.N. Security Council resolution that condemns the atrocities that have occurred, and delineating a viable multilateral effort to bring them to an end.

Let me emphasize that at present there are 260 individuals in Sudan attempting to monitor the crisis, this in a region the size of the State of Texas. The brutality continues unabated because the collective will to stop it has been nonexistent. It is time for President Bush to say clearly what his intentions are. It is time to offer a clear strategy. It is time for him to make this a priority. It is time to organize international action to bring the crisis to an end. •

MARGUERITE'S PLACE CELEBRATES ITS 10TH ANNIVERSARY

• Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I rise today in honor of a remarkable organization in Nashua, NH. For the past 10 years, Marguerite's Place, Inc. has provided safe, affordable housing for women and their children. More importantly, it has been a critical stop on the road for those families who are fighting to rebuild their lives and brighten their futures.

Although there are many words which can be used to describe Marguerite's Place, the one which best captures why it is so special is "Hope". During my first visit in 1997 and on countless others I have made since then, I have been amazed by the overwhelming positive spirit filling every room there. The women who have come to Marguerite's Place have been through very difficult situations and yet they are actively reaching to retake control of their world. In almost all cases, they succeed. Of course, the reason for this impressive track record is the staff and supporters do not let them fail. Marguerite's Place gives these women a warm and safe home, the needed assistance in finishing school or launching a career and an energetic daycare center for their children. Most of all, these women learn they have unique abilities and skills which will take them far. In short, they are given the hope they need to take back their lives.

One of my favorite spots at Marguerite's Place is the child care center.