

has done his best to try to direct our attention to Haiti's dire needs, I'm particularly pleased that George Brunstad chose to turn his moment of personal triumph into one that will help better the lives of some of the residents of an impoverished nation only a few hundred miles from our shores.

This coming weekend, the Wilton Baptist Church and the Center of Hope will be holding a special celebration in George's honor. I send George, Judy, their family, and all those who will be attending the celebration my best wishes, and my enthusiastic congratulations.

FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION REAUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I am pleased that the Senate has agreed by unanimous consent to pass a substitute amendment to the Federal Trade Commission Reauthorization Act, S. 1234. The bill would reauthorize the Federal Trade Commission in furtherance of its mission to enhance the efficient operation of the marketplace by both eliminating acts or practices that are unfair or deceptive and preventing anti-competitive conduct. Further, the legislation would authorize funding for the FTC through 2008, and enhance the Commission's ability to combat international—or cross-border—fraud.

In addition to reauthorizing this vital consumer protection agency for the period 2005 through 2008, the bill, as amended, is also designed to mitigate the challenges that the FTC increasingly faces in combating cross-border fraud. The FTC's consumer protection responsibilities are essential, particularly in today's global climate of high-speed information and marketing, which know no international borders.

This legislation is crucial to the FTC's ability to protect American consumers by authorizing the Commission to: Share information involving cross-border fraud with foreign consumer protection agencies; secure confidential information from those foreign agencies; work in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Justice to seek redress for American consumers in foreign courts; make criminal referrals to the DOJ for cross-border criminal activity; and generally strengthen its relationship with foreign consumer protection agencies.

Under the FTC's current authority the agency is not able to exchange information with its foreign counterparts to shut down consumer scams originating outside the United States, but perpetrated against American consumers. As a consequence, the FTC is left without the ability to seek redress on behalf of defrauded consumers. In addition, the FTC is not currently considered a "market regulator," and thus, banking agencies may not share suspicious consumer information with the FTC. As a result, the FTC is not able to trade funds derived from illegal Internet schemes sent through U.S. banks and placed in offshore bank accounts. Thus, those who devise and

carry out such schemes are too often allowed to escape the grasp of the FTC. But even if the FTC were able to share information with its foreign counterparts and market regulators, the FTC would be unable to litigate consumer protection cases in foreign courts.

While these are descriptions of merely a few gaps in the FTC's current international consumer protection authority, they underscore how vulnerable American consumers are to cross-border fraud. This legislation would fill these and other gaps in the FTC's current international consumer protection authority, and allow the FTC to function more effectively in carrying out its Congressional mandate to protect American consumers.

This bill, as amended, would also grant authority to the FTC to provide investigative and other services to a requesting domestic law enforcement agency and receive from that agency, if offered, reimbursement for the FTC's involvement. Finally, the amendment would provide to the Commission the authority it has requested to receive gifts or items that would be useful to the Commission as long as a conflict of interest is not created by such receipt.

The underlying bill was considered and reported unanimously last year by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. Since being placed on the Senate Calendar, its provisions have been thoroughly vetted on a bipartisan basis with the multiple federal agencies that have a vested interest in its enactment. We have worked with and received sign off from each affected agency on this substitute amendment.

REPUBLICAN HIGH TECH TASK FORCE

Mr. ENSIGN. Mr. President, I rise to speak about the critical role of technology and innovation in maintaining our Nation's security and prosperity in the future. Technology and the intellectual property that accompanies it is the very lynchpin of our modern economy. Technology is changing all the rules, from the way we do business to how we communicate. It is saving lives, and it is protecting our homeland. In recognition of the critical role that technology plays in the lives of all Americans, Majority Leader BILL FRIST has made technology a top priority by devoting significant time and resources to the Senate Republican High Tech Task Force which serves as the focal point for technology-related issues in the United States Senate.

I have been honored to serve as the chairman of the Senate Republican High Tech Task Force during the 108th Congress. I have been privileged to meet the leading innovators of our great Nation and talk directly to the employees who have made technology their career and are delivering every day the promise of the new "next big thing."

The work of the Senate Republican High Tech Task Force increases in importance each day, as technology be-

comes ever more a part of our lives. It is the responsibility of the Task Force to be leaders on technology issues in the Senate. We are tasked by the majority leader to reach out to the technology community to listen and learn and then advise our colleagues and lead on legislation related to this important sector of our economy. And we have been very successful this year. Senate Republican High Tech Task Force members have passed important legislation that protects technology and helps foster continued innovation. Just a few of the many accomplishments in the past few months include the following: Senator ALLEN has championed intellectual property protection and has utilized his position with the Committee on Foreign Affairs to ensure that American intellectual property is protected abroad and that overseas piracy of copyrighted materials is fought to the fullest extent possible. Senator ALLEN was also successful in passing legislation out of the Senate to keep State, local, and Federal tax collectors from driving up the cost of broadband with Internet access taxes.

Senator GRASSLEY has championed free trade agreements with Singapore, Chile and Australia. Free trade is the life blood of our economy and ensuring that American companies are able to access new markets on a fair footing with all appropriate intellectual property protections creates and protects American jobs.

Senator SUNUNU has led Senate efforts in protecting nascent voice over internet protocol technology which promises to provide new data services for businesses and consumers, fundamentally changing the way we look at phone service.

Senator BURNS worked tirelessly to successfully secure passage of the CAN-SPAM Act which was passed unanimously by the United States Senate. Unsolicited commercial e-mails are overwhelming our telecommunications infrastructure and costing Americans productivity and now, more alarmingly, affecting their confidence in online transactions. The CAN-SPAM Act was a successful first step, and the Task Force will continue to work to restore confidence and protect American consumers from SPAM.

Senator SMITH and I have been successful in seeing the Invest in the USA Act passed out of the Senate. This important legislation will bring back a cash infusion of over \$400 billion to be reinvested in America and create over 600,000 American jobs. This will allow money that American companies earn overseas to be brought back to the United States where it can create jobs and grow our economy.

My colleagues and I have been very busy during the 108th Congress. We have visited technology centers around the United States and met with top innovators and the most talented employees in the world. The work of the High Tech Task Force will continue through the remainder of this session and into the 109th Congress.

The Senate Republican High Tech Task Force remains focused on securing final passage of important priorities such as: final passage of the JOBS Bill that includes international tax reform, extension of the R&D Tax Credit and the Invest in the USA Act; preserving broad-based employee stock option plans that are threatened by FASB; class action reform to stop frivolous lawsuits that stifle innovation and drive up costs for consumers; bringing an end to patent fee diversion that harms the ability of U.S. innovators to bring their exciting products to market. Four-year delays to obtain patents hurt innovation; final passage of the Internet Tax Moratorium legislation to keep state, local, and federal tax collectors from driving up the cost of Internet access; final passage of the Spectrum Relocation Bill which will provide additional spectrum for the wireless revolution and has the potential to yield more than \$500 billion in economic and consumer benefits over the next decade, spur \$50 billion or more in capital investment, and create thousands of American jobs.

These priorities are critical to our country's continued leadership in the world, and we are redoubling our efforts to see these issues through to signature by the President. We are more committed than ever to ensuring that American workers are getting the best education in order to become the innovators of the future. And yet there are new issues arising each day. Members of the task force will be intimately involved with rewriting the Telecommunications Act of 1996. Issues such as the regulatory treatment of voice over internet protocol and hastening the availability of spectrum for next-generation wireless broadband, along with many others, will be added to our list of priorities for the coming session of Congress.

In conclusion, we have accomplished much over the past year on many technology issues. The Senate Republican High Tech Task Force has been an effective voice for technology on Capitol Hill. Our members are leaders on every major technology issue and are fighting to protect American innovation. While we have been very successful in pursuing our policy platform, technology is ever-changing. We will work diligently to ensure that we stay ahead of the curve and, if nothing else, help keep government out of the way to allow American innovators and entrepreneurs to bring the latest and greatest to the doorsteps of all Americans.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR NATIVE PEOPLE

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, when troubles befall our Nation, whether it is a hurricane in Florida, a tornado in Oklahoma, or an earthquake in my State of Alaska, America turns to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA, to help it recover.

FEMA, in turn, relies upon some 4,000 part time, temporary employees called disaster assistance employees to help it meet the heightened workload demands. These disaster reservists, who live in all corners of our Nation, are organized into cadres and are pressed into service when their services are needed.

The Federal Government transports these individuals from their home to the disaster site, houses them, pays a Federal civil service wage for their services and returns them home at Federal expense when their services are no longer needed.

In the native villages of my home State and in native communities across the Nation, the level of unemployment is unacceptably high. Native people are often left with the choice of relocating to urban areas where jobs are in greater supply, leaving their native culture behind or remaining in their communities where jobs are scarce.

I suspect that native people who live in the rural villages of Alaska will find the opportunity for intermittent employment with FEMA desirable. Employment such as that offered by FEMA in the Disaster Assistance Employee cadres allows my native people to participate in the cash economy without completely losing their ties with the traditional subsistence culture in their villages. I expect the same is true for native people who live on our Indian reservations and native Hawaiians.

Last evening, joined by Senator INOUE and Senator STEVENS, I offered an amendment to H.R. 4567, the Homeland Security Appropriations Bill on this subject. This amendment encourages the Secretary of Homeland Security to make an effort to improve the representation of American Indians, Alaska natives and native Hawaiians in the Disaster Assistance Employee cadres by actively recruiting in our native communities. The amendment was adopted by unanimous consent last evening, and I want to thank my colleagues for supporting it.

I hope that this amendment will serve its intended purpose, which is to encourage FEMA to be proactive in identifying opportunities to reduce unemployment among our qualified and motivated native workforce, and I hope that this lesson will not be lost on the other Federal agencies.

As thousands of native people from across our Nation descend on Washington next week for the opening of the National Museum of the American Indian, it is fitting that our Federal Government renew its commitment to provide native people, many of whom reside in the remotest parts of our Nation, with access to Federal employment opportunities. Last night the Senate did just that, and I am grateful to my colleagues for their support of my amendment.

TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PASSAGE OF THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, today I rise to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the passage of the Violence Against Women Act, VAWA. One of the most prominent woman Latin American writers, Isabel Allende, once said, "How can one not speak about war, poverty, and inequality when people who suffer from these afflictions don't have a voice to speak?" Ten years ago today, this body rose up and spoke for a group in our society that is frequently left voiceless.

The number of women in the United States who have been murdered by an intimate partner is greater than the number of soldiers killed during the Vietnam War. In 1996 alone, over 30 percent of all female murder victims in the United States were slain by their husbands or boyfriends. These women who lost their lives in the war of domestic violence that plagues our country began to have a voice because of the passage of VAWA.

Today, there are roughly 143.4 million women in the United States. Of this population, it is predicted that almost 28.7 million, or 20 percent, will be raped during their lifetime, and one-third will be physically or sexually abused. Battery is the single greatest cause of injury to women in the United States, accounting for more emergency room visits than all other injuries combined. Yet, with these sobering statistics there are three times more shelters for neglected animals than there are shelters for battered women.

Jane Addams said, "Action indeed is the sole medium of expression for ethics." Ten years ago on this day, the United States Congress acted to ensure that all women who are victims of violence receive the protection and support they need and deserve. However, there is still more work to be done. Domestic violence is a problem that continues to afflict our country.

It is estimated that family violence costs our Nation from \$5 to \$10 billion annually in medical expenses, police and court costs, shelters, foster care, sick leave, absenteeism, and non-productivity. Remarkably, the VAWA domestic violence programs have helped to save money, while saving lives. The original VAWA that was authorized 10 years ago saved taxpayers at least \$14.8 billion in net averted social costs. This year, as we move through the appropriations process, I ask all of my colleagues to remember the millions of innocent women in this country who have been the victims of violence and the effects that violence has had, not only on them, but also on their families and our society.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I rise to commemorate an important event in this country's history. Today marks the tenth anniversary of the passage of Violence Against Women Act. I am proud that I was an original cosponsor of that bill which has done so much to reduce domestic violence.