

an obligation to people on our coasts to fund NOAA and see that it can do its job well, and we should work to fulfill that obligation.

In the United States, NOAA's National Weather Service operates two tsunami warning centers, the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center in Hawaii and the West Coast/Alaska Tsunami Warning Center in Alaska. In the event of a tsunami, the Centers will issue local tsunami advisories to the Emergency Managers Office of each potentially affected State. The decision to evacuate a coastal area rests with each responsible EM. The Seattle Post Intelligencer reported that the current U.S. network consists of six deep-sea sensors in Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Hawaii, and near the equator off the coast of Peru. In addition to the six tsunami buoys, the warning system takes advantage of existing tidal monitoring stations and USGS seismic monitoring and reporting capabilities. The NOAA official in charge of the system described the current configuration as the "bare minimum" needed for adequate warning. There are plans to expand the system to 20 tsunami buoys in the next five years, 10 of which will be placed in the Aleutian Islands. NOAA is estimating one-time costs of \$8.7 million and recurring costs of \$8.5 million to enhance the current system.

NOAA also runs a Tsunami Research Program out of the Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory in Seattle. The objective of the Tsunami Research Program is to improve warning guidance, hazard assessment, and implementation planning. The Joint Institute for the Study of the Atmosphere and Ocean, a partnership between NOAA and UW, has also worked with the Tsunami Research Program on hazard assessment modeling.

PMEL has also developed instruments it has named tsunameters. With six deployed in the middle of the Pacific since 2001 in waters 2.5 to 4 miles deep, the tsunameters can detect the perturbations in water pressure as a tsunami passes above. When it detects something, it sends a signal by sound waves to a buoy on the surface. The signal is relayed to a satellite and then back to Earth to tsunami warning centers in Hawaii and Alaska, a process that takes only 2 minutes.

No significant tsunamis have yet occurred in the Pacific for the tsunameters to detect, but they have prevented a false alarm. In November 2003, a magnitude 7.8 undersea earthquake occurred near the Aleutian Islands, spurring officials to issue a tsunami warning. When the wave passed over a tsunameter, they saw it was small and canceled the warning.

In conclusion, I again express my condolences and those of Washingtonians to those who have lost family members in this tragedy. The Senate should do all it can to help all those who face a long and difficult cleanup.

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I wish to express my profound condolences for

the victims of the earthquake and tsunami in Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Africa. I commend our two leaders for writing S. Res. 4, passed unanimously by the Senate earlier this afternoon. It is right and fitting that on our first day of business in this Congress the Senate has united to send a message of hope and leadership to the victims of this horrible disaster.

We were all mortified to learn of the devastation caused by this disaster as we awoke after a day of Christmas celebrations. The news from this disaster has been arriving so fast and furious that it is hard to put the kinds of numbers we are talking about in perspective. We know there are more than 150,000 people dead—that is 150,000 personal tragedies. And there are hundreds of thousands of others who are homeless and whose lives have been turned upside down by this tragedy. We said clearly to their families and loved ones in our resolution today that we are here to help them recover and rebuild.

The generosity and compassion of America will be felt in Bangladesh, Burma, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Maldives, Seychelles, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, and Thailand. In fact, our troops and humanitarian assistance professionals are already bringing hope to those countries in the form of water, food and comfort. We thank our troops for their hard work and for showing the world the best of America, as they always do.

I am also mindful this afternoon that this terrible disaster has wreaked havoc in our own country and in my own state of Colorado. My thoughts and prayers go out to all the victims and their families.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator is recognized.

TRIBUTE TO MONSIGNOR IGNATIUS McDERMOTT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it is with sadness that I rise to pay tribute

to the life of a great friend, a great man who passed away on December 31. His name was Monsignor Ignatius McDermott and he was known as Father Mac, from the city of Chicago. He was a model of compassion, commitment, and service.

On December 31, when he left this Earth, he was 95 years old. He made his name in Chicago because of his dedication to some of the poorest people who lived in that city. When he was a young priest, he had many options. He worked in parishes and had different assignments, but he knew there was a special calling in his life, a calling that very few priests, very few people would even consider. Monsignor McDermott, Father Mac, dedicated his life to walking Chicago's meanest streets, skid row, and becoming the priest, the chaplain, of thousands of people on those streets addicted to drugs and alcohol.

Ironically, he died on the 29th anniversary of the day that he cofounded Chicago's largest addiction treatment center, Haymarket Center.

He was born in the "Back of the Yards" neighborhood. If you read Upton Sinclair's book "The Jungle," you know what the stockyards meant to the city of Chicago. That is where the immigrant families headed. That is where they could find a job that required hard work and a strong back and barely make a living. That is where he grew up.

He was known in his youth as just the kid brother of the famous alderman, Jim McDermott. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1936. He was assigned to what is now known in Chicago as Maryville Academy, a home for neglected and abandoned orphaned children. It was there that he saw for the first time in his ministry how alcoholism affected families.

He disagreed with the common sentiment in Chicago and across the country that alcoholism was just a character flaw: If you had a little better character, you might overcome that problem. He understood it was a disease and it needed to be treated. So Father McDermott brought Alcoholics Anonymous, which in the late forties was really a creation for the middle class of America, to the people of skid row in Chicago, people whose alcoholism had left them in the worst possible plight.

In 1963, he founded the Central States Institute of Addiction because he recognized the need for qualified treatment counselors and educators. It was there that Illinois's first program for offenders convicted of driving under the influence of alcohol was created.

In the 1970s, he led the charge in our State to decriminalize public drunkenness. On New Year's Eve 1975, along with Dr. James West, who would go on to direct the Betty Ford Center in California, Father McDermott founded Haymarket Center.

I have had the privilege in public life to meet some amazing people, and I count Monsignor McDermott—Father Mac—as one of those people.

When I first came to the Senate, the Irish-American clubs of Chicago came to me and suggested we should have a postage stamp that would acknowledge the contribution of Irish immigrants to America. I was surprised it had never happened. So the first phone call I made in the Senate was to my colleague, Senator TED KENNEDY. If there is anything dealing with Irish Americans, you better get TED KENNEDY on board. He thought it was a great idea. So we worked together, and we were successful.

The Postal Commission decided to commission a commemorative stamp commemorating the immigration of the Irish to Chicago. TED and I tried to decide which one of us would announce the stamp. By seniority, he was able to announce the first-day issue in Boston, the same day I would unveil the stamp in Chicago.

I thought to myself: Who will I invite from this city of so many great Irish Americans to come and represent those of that ethnic origin at the unveiling of the stamp? I looked around at some of the obvious: Father John Smith of Maryville, the institution I mentioned earlier, who did so much to help so many young children; Sister Rosemary of Misericordia Center, just an amazing, wonderful, and warm, touching center for children who were born with mental affliction and mental illness. I thought of Father Jim Close, who runs Mercy Home for boys and girls in Chicago. I thought what a great contribution he made. I thought of my pastor from my parish, Father Jack Wall from old Saint Pat's, a downtown parish that serves so many people in that community. But I also thought of Father Mac.

I brought them all together. They were up there with me on that stage when we unveiled the stamp. When I got up, I said: If you want to know the contribution of the Irish people to the city of Chicago, look at these five people and the dedication of their lives and what they have done to help so many people. Had the Irish been pushed away and shunned from coming to America, would someone else have stepped into their roles?

I thought about that again when Father Mac passed away. He took an assignment most priests would not even consider: going to those mean streets, those poor areas of Chicago. That was his ministry. How many times would each one of us, as we are walking along with our family on the street, see someone who is obviously intoxicated or sick with addiction and maybe pick up our pace and walk a little faster? For Father Mac, that is exactly when he would slow down and stop to try to determine what he could do.

He dedicated his life to these people. There were so many amazing stories that came from it, lives that were saved, people who were given a chance to succeed. When he opened the Haymarket Center—it is right behind Greek Town in Chicago, if you happen

to know the city a little bit. It used to be a part of the city that mainly was warehouses. Now it is becoming pretty gentrified with a lot of lofts and condominiums, with a lot of people moving in, a lot of trendy restaurants, but when it was one of the poorest parts of Chicago, Father Mac established Haymarket Center because that is where he could find the people who needed his help.

I have been there several times. He had a little chapel in Haymarket where he would hold mass on Sundays, and many people came to join him at that little service. As they walked around Haymarket Center, they understood that even though those were some of the poorest people in some of the worst places in our city, Father Mac always treated them as his brothers and sisters. He went out of his way to give them the dignity and attention they deserved.

Those of us who were privileged to have known Father Mac will remember his wonderful ability to always see good in people and to convince those same people not to give up on themselves. He was a visionary, he was a leader, and he was a friend. But he was more. When I think back on my life, on those I have met who made a profound impression on me and who if they did not reach the level of sainthood were knocking at the door, Father Mac was one of those people.

I extend my deepest condolences to all of those who join me in treasuring the fond memories of Monsignor Ignatius McDermott. We start the new year with a heavy heart but with a renewed commitment that each of us in some small way will try to continue the ministry of this wonderful man.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SUNUNU). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CORNYN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

ASBESTOS LEGISLATION

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I have sought recognition to discuss briefly the status of efforts to have asbestos tort reform legislation, a matter which has been before the Congress of the United States for more than two decades.

I had my first contact with the issue back in 1984 when then-Senator Gary Hart of Colorado brought in a constituent to talk about asbestos. It has been an issue which we have labored with long and hard, and in the last Congress, Senator HATCH, Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, advanced legislation with the concept of a trust and a schedule of payments to avoid the costs and risks of litigation and to

treat asbestos injuries very much like workers' compensation.

A bill was passed out of the Judiciary Committee last July, pretty much on a party-line vote, as the distinguished Presiding Officer, Senator CORNYN of Texas, knows because he was and is on the Judiciary Committee and did a prodigious amount of work on this issue. The bill was passed out with a number of problems. I voted for it to move it along. I then enlisted the assistance of the former Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, Edward R. Becker, who was in senior status. Judge Becker convened a large group of so-called stakeholders in his chamber. For two full days in August, he met in his chambers with representatives of the manufacturers, representatives of the AFL-CIO, representatives of the insurance industry, the reinsurance industry, and trial lawyers to start to work through a large number of problems which appeared to be intractable. We have worked through many of those problems, but some still remain.

There had been some talk about a draft bill being offered, but it is not appropriate to offer legislation until later this month under the procedures established by the majority leader, and the proposed draft legislation is not quite ready, although a great deal of work has been done on it.

There have been major issues raised as to what the total amount of the trust fund should be. There have been issues raised as to how much money should be in the startup fund; how long the trust fund ought to function before giving the claimants the right to revert to the judicial system because the legislation necessarily takes away their right to jury trial in consideration of a certain amount of money to be paid under the trust fund; and the problems that many victims are having where they are unable to collect from anyone—people with mesothelioma, a deadly disease, with cancer, with many ailments from the exposure to asbestos.

This would be the offset to giving up the right to a jury trial.

We have adopted an approach of reverting back to the right to jury trial if the elaborate system does not work. I think the system is realistically calculated to be successful.

Following the meetings in Judge Becker's chambers last August, there have been some 32 sessions held in my conference room, presided over by Judge Becker with myself in attendance for most of those meetings.

To repeat, a lot of progress has been made. It is my hope to be able to circulate a draft bill as a vehicle for discussion. I call it a discussion draft bill. My hope is that it could be circulated before the end of the week, but it is not possible to make any firm commitments because candidly every time we come upon a sequence of negotiations, other problems arise. If there is any way to reconcile them and to have a consensus before going into print, we are trying to do that.