

ensure that first responders will also have this fundamental right.

Granting this right to first responders also benefits the public in essential ways. It creates safer working conditions for public safety employees and increases public safety. It saves money for states and local communities by providing more cost-efficient public safety services. And it gives a voice on the job to the courageous public servants who put their lives on the line each day to protect and serve us.

First responders are well aware what it takes to create safe working conditions, and they know what it takes to enhance public safety. This legislation gives first responders the opportunity to discuss on-the-job safety issues with management, and a meaningful role in establishing policies and practices to protect the public.

In addition to improving public safety, this bill will save money. Experience has shown that when first responders are able to discuss workplace conditions with management their departments can provide more cost-effective services. Extending collective bargaining rights to all public safety employees will encourage innovation, efficiency and partnership in public safety departments, and produce lower costs for the States and local communities they serve.

Our legislation accomplishes its goals in reasonable and moderate ways. Most states would not be affected, because their laws already permit collective bargaining between public safety employees and employers.

Under this bill, states that do not do so may choose to establish their own collective bargaining system, or they may ask the assistance of the Federal Labor Relations Authority in establishing bargaining procedures and regulations. This approach respects existing state laws and gives each state the authority to decide how it will comply with this legislation.

The benefits of this bill are clear and compelling. Public safety workers are one of the largest sectors of the workplace that do not yet have the basic right to form a union and bargain with their employers over wages, hours, and working conditions. It is a matter of basic fairness to give these courageous men and women the same rights that have long benefited so many other Americans. They deserve a voice in the life and death discussions about their work. They have earned that right, and I urge Congress to act quickly to guarantee it.

CELEBRATING NATIONAL SAFE PLACE WEEK

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I am please to recognize the week of March 13 through 19, 2005, as National Safe Place Week. As my colleagues know, the Senate adopted a resolution last week providing for this designation. I thank my colleague, Senator FEINSTEIN, for her work on this issue, and I

also thank the other cosponsors of this resolution: Senator BOXER, Senator COCHRAN, Senator CRAPO, Senator DEWINE, Senator DODD, Senator DURBIN, Senator FEINGOLD, Senator HATCH, Senator INHOFE, Senator INOUE, Senator ISAKSON, Senator JOHNSON, Senator KOHL, Senator LANDRIEU, Senator LIEBERMAN, Senator LINCOLN, Senator LUGAR, Senator MIKULSKI, and Senator MURKOWSKI. The Senate's action recognizes the importance of Project Safe Place and sends a message that we will keep working to protect our children. In countless ours of selfless work, volunteers truly do make a difference every day, and in passing this resolution, the Senate applauds the tireless efforts of the thousands of dedicated volunteers across the nation for their many contributions to the youth of our Nation through Project Safe Place.

Events of the day may turn our attention overseas, but it is essential to remember those who are fighting an ongoing battle right here at home to protect this Nation's most valuable resource: our children. Young people are the future of this Nation; they need to be both valued and protected. Sadly, however, as my colleagues know, this precious resource is threatened daily.

There is a tremendous initiative between the public and private sector that has been reaching out to youth for over 20 years. Project Safe Place is a program that was developed to assist our Nation's youth and families in crisis. This partnership creates a network of private businesses trained to refer youth in need to the local service providers who can help them. Those businesses display a Safe Place sign so that young people can easily recognize a "safe place" for them to go to receive help.

The goal of National Safe Place Week is to recognize the thousands of individuals who work to make Project Safe Place a reality. From trained volunteers to seasoned professionals, these dedicated individuals are working together with the resources in their local communities and through their ties across the Nation to serve young people. Because of Project Safe Place, this all happens under a well-known symbol of safety for in-crisis youth.

Project Safe Place is a simple program to implement in any local community, and it works. Young people are more likely to seek help in locations that are familiar and nonthreatening to them. By creating a network of Safe Places across the Nation, all youth will have access to needed help, counseling, or a safe place to stay. However, though the program has already been established in 42 States, there are still too many communities that do not know about this valuable youth resource.

If your State does not already have a Safe Place organization, please consider facilitating this worthwhile resource so that young people who are abused, neglected, or whose futures are jeopardized by physical or emotional

trauma will have access to immediate help and safety in your community. To create more Project Safe Place sites in Idaho, the staff in several of my State offices have completed the training to make them Safe Place sites, and now have the skills and ability to assist troubled youth. In the coming years, Project Safe Place hopes that every child in America will have the opportunity to connect with someone who can provide immediate help by easily recognizing the Safe Place sign.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I also rise today to recognize National Safe Place Week, which begins on March 13, 2005.

I am proud to join Senator CRAIG as an original cosponsor of S. Res. 71, which designates the week of March 13-19, 2005 as National Safe Place Week. This resolution recognizes the participating businesses, community organizations, youth service agencies and volunteers that are part of the YMCA National Safe Place program and work for the safety and well-being of at-risk youth.

Youth today face an ever-growing amount of pressure in their daily lives at school, at home, and in the community. For some youth, problems include abuse or neglect at home, drug or alcohol addictions of family members and friends, trouble at school or dangerous situations on a date. Young people who face these situations should not feel left alone, but should have a place in their community to which to turn.

Over the past 22 years, the National Safe Place program has connected over 79,000 youth in crisis to immediate help at Safe Place locations and has provided over 78,000 youth with counseling by phone. Present in 41 States and serving 714 communities, the National Safe Place program brings together the private and public sector to reach out and help at-risk youth who are lost, scared, threatened or in unsafe situations. In my home State of California, there are nine designated Safe Place programs with over 1,667 Safe Place sites located in 65 communities.

National Safe Place sites include fast food restaurants, convenience stores, fire stations, libraries and other public buildings and are marked by large, yellow Safe Place signs displayed prominently in front windows. Any youth can walk into a Safe Place site and receive immediate help from a trained volunteer, and further help from a Safe Place staff person who can provide counseling, residential assistance or professional referrals, as needed.

The National Safe Place Week recognizes the time, resources and energy of thousands of businesses, community organizations and volunteers who make this effective, growing network of support for youth possible. In addition, it seeks to increase awareness of the crises that youth face today.

I am encouraged by the National Safe Place Program's positive impact on communities throughout the Nation, and I hope that more communities will

choose to participate in this innovative program. I believe that the National Safe Place program brings us closer to making our country safe for youth, and for that I offer my full support.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN GILLILAND

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I rise today to commend John Gilliland, who worked for me on the trade staff of the Finance Committee for the last 2 years. He left to go work for the law firm of Miller and Chevalier, where I know he will be a great success.

We were lucky to have John with us on the Committee for 2 years. But he has been working hard on public policy issues for much longer than that.

John began his Senate career in the office of my good friend and colleague, Senator BLANCHE LINCOLN. John worked for 2 years as her legislative counsel on trade and agriculture issues. Senator LINCOLN, of course, was instrumental in helping us pass the 2002 farm bill and the Trade Act of 2002, and John was her key staffer on both pieces of legislation.

My staff worked closely with John on these issues, and everyone was so impressed by him that I hired him to help us on the Finance Committee.

I am glad we did. John has been a tremendous asset. He knows agriculture and trade inside and out. I am always amazed that I can ask him almost anything, and he not only knows that answer, but can give me all of the history, politics, and nuance.

His knowledge of agriculture was particularly important for Montana, where farming and ranching are the engine of our export income. John is somebody who I trusted to represent me in Montana, and someone who I trusted to represent Montana here in Washington. That alone is saying a lot.

John worked on some difficult and important issues while on the Finance Committee. He played a key role in the Australia free-trade agreement and was responsible for oversight of WTO negotiations. He was also a strong advocate for our work to end the embargo against Cuba, and he helped negotiate the first ever Montana-Cuba agriculture trade deal. In fact, John traveled with me on several of my trade missions, including to Cuba, Asia, Australia, and New Zealand.

John is also someone who is very dedicated to his family. He is lucky to have a wonderful wife, Rebecca, and three great kids—Will, Hudson, and Rebecca Jane. And they are fortunate to have a hard-working and talented husband and father.

Now, all of this is not to say that John doesn't have his faults. Most of his colleagues give John a hard time for not being able to match his clothes. Their criticism is warranted. In fact, on a trip to Thailand last year, we finally forced him to buy a new suit and some dress shirts. I am confident that we have now set him on the right path.

Having visited John at his desk, I can also say that I am happy that OSHA

never paid him a visit. I heard someone describe John and his office best when they said that he combines southern charm with northern efficiency and third-world desk organization.

All of that said these are about the worst things you can say about John. In fact, you would be hard pressed to find a person who does not like John. He is truly one of the nicest and most genuine people you will ever meet. There are a lot of people in this town with substantive knowledge, but there are few who can put together the substance, personality, and strategy and be truly exceptional. John is one of those people.

I always say that public service is one of the most noble things a person can do. John Gilliland embodies the best in public service. He is ace. And I wish him the best.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

CONGRATULATING BODE MILLER

• Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize and congratulate a great Granite Stater, Bode Miller. On Saturday Bode became the first American in 22 years to ski his way to the overall World Cup title. An Easton, NH native, Bode perfected his talents on the slopes of Cannon Mountain and now serves as the Director of Skiing at Bretton Woods. His style may not be conventional. It has been said that, like a good many New Hampshire natives, he has a mind of his own and enjoys doing things his own way. That independent spirit helped him do something else his own way this past Saturday—win the overall World Cup trophy.

The American World Cup drought has been in place since 1983 and, as Bode said on Saturday, had grown into "curse" proportions. In New England, we don't take kindly to sports "curses." Since the turn of the century, New Hampshire's sporting faith has been rewarded with three Super Bowl trophies from the New England Patriots and, of course, the much talked about World Series title in October by the Boston Red Sox. Bode's extraordinary feats on the ski slopes of Europe have gained him worldwide recognition and has an extra special importance for those from New Hampshire who enjoy some of the best skiing in the world in the White Mountains. We are proud that the slopes we enjoy skiing each winter, albeit at speeds much slower than Bode, have been the training ground for the world's best skier.

Bode donned his first pair of skis at the age of 3 and spent much of his early skiing life on the slopes of Cannon Mountain. He entered his first race when he was 11 and attended the Carrabassett Valley Academy in Maine and went on to the Junior Olympics in 1996, where he first made a name for himself. Bode competed in the 1998 and 2002 Winter Olympics, and he has collected eighteen World Cup wins over his career.

At 27 years of age, Bode Miller has accomplished the most sought-after spot of every skier, and has done so with his own style, determination, physical stamina and personality. Today we congratulate Bode Miller on this tremendous accomplishment, and we look forward to continuing to follow the eventful progress of the world's greatest skier.●

HAPPY BIRTHDAY GEORGE WIDMAN

• Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, it is with great pleasure that I come to the floor today to wish a legendary North Dakota businessman, George Widman, a happy belated birthday. On Saturday, March 12, George turned 85. He celebrated this momentous birthday yesterday with friends and family. I never forget George's birthday because we share March 12 as our birthdays.

George and I have known each other many years, and his resiliency is something I have long admired. Following the disastrous floods and fire that struck downtown Grand Forks in 1997, George was wondering whether or not his world famous Widman's Candy Store would see another day. He told his wife, Betty, they could build the new candy store anywhere in the world, but they both agreed it was best to stay in Grand Forks and rebuild their business they had spent so many years crafting into a downtown Grand Forks landmark.

After Grand Forks had started to rebuild following this disastrous flood, George was kind enough to send every U.S. Senator a Widman's chocolate bar with the words "thank you" imprinted on it. This describes George's approach to life: give of yourself for the benefit of others.

George epitomizes everything North Dakota represents. Growing up during the Great Depression, he learned at an early age that in order to succeed hard work is required. He is very proud of his military service in World War II. He is a Navy veteran and served on the USS *Bunker Hill* from 1942 until his ship was hit in battle in 1945. He is devoted to his family, his community, and his Nation—all reasons we should pay tribute to George on his birthday and every day.

Today, three of George's six children are also in the candy business. Even though he has long passed the normal retirement age in our Nation, he stills comes to work every day to make candy and interact with the public he loves dearly. As George puts it, it's not about the money, but the people he serves.

Again, it is my pleasure to honor George on his 85th birthday and wish him continued health and happiness.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Williams, one of his secretaries.