

ability of the American people to make the right decisions.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

(The remarks of Mr. ALLARD, Mr. SALAZAR, and Mr. MCCONNELL pertaining to the introduction of S. 186 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

HEROES ACT

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I am very pleased to be standing here today with my colleague and friend, Senator JOE LIEBERMAN. We serve on the Armed Services Committee together. Much has been said in recent years about a lack of bipartisanship in the Senate, but there is an issue before us today that I believe all Members agree on, and certainly Senator LIEBERMAN and I do. We need to be sure that we care adequately and generously for the brave men and women who have lost a loved one who served this country in combat. We have offered together the HEROES Act. We introduced it Monday as S. 77, along with 20 other cosponsors. This is an overdue and critical piece of legislation that contemplates the moral obligation we in the Senate owe to our Armed Forces.

I am pleased Majority Leader BILL FRIST has made this legislation a part of his package of priorities for the year and that Senator JOHN WARNER, who chairs the Armed Services Committee, said he will give us a prompt hearing on the issue. I also note that Senator DEWINE and Senator GEORGE ALLEN of Virginia have also offered legislation relative to this issue.

No amount of money, of course, can ever replace the loss a family feels when their husband, wife, son, or daughter dies defending our country, carrying out the policies of this Government as they are directed by the Congress and the President of the United States. But this is a wealthy Nation, and we can and must do more to ensure that all those who fall in defense of the United States know without a doubt that their loved ones will be well taken care of—generously taken care of.

Earlier this month, on a trip to Iraq, I flew from Baghdad to Kuwait aboard a C-130 about 9:30 at night. It was a very somber trip because traveling with us were two flag-draped coffins, the remains of soldiers who had given their lives for their country. They are doing this too often. They are doing

this true to the mission we ask of them and to the fellowship and the spirit and the courage of the units with which they serve. As those coffins were removed from the aircraft—and I saw all the service people who were at the airport that night spontaneously come out to be there to show their respect—it reminded me, once again, that this legislation is important. This grateful Nation needs to be generous to those who have served.

The families are not coming to us. They are not asking and demanding more money and more benefits. They have always borne the cost and hardship of military service silently, proudly, and steadfastly. However, those of us with the power to enact change must ensure that we are adequately meeting our responsibilities as a people to those families who serve us. The HEROES Act will do that, and it should move through this Congress as expeditiously as possible to final passage.

I am also pleased to announce this legislation has resonated with various organizations that work to ensure the best services and benefits for our veterans. They have read the HEROES Act and decided that this is the right thing to do for our Armed Forces. As of this afternoon, the 380,000 members of the Military Officers Association of America, the 2.4 million members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the 2.8 million members strong of the American Legion and the National Military Families Association have all voiced their unqualified support for this legislation. I am proud to have their backing, and I ask unanimous consent that their letters be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
OF THE UNITED STATES,
Washington, DC, January 24, 2005.

Hon. JEFF SESSIONS,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR SESSIONS: On behalf of the 2.4 million members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and our Ladies Auxiliary, I would like to offer our support for "The HEROES Act of 2005," legislation that would amend Title 10 and Title 38, United States Code, to improve benefits for the families of deceased members of the Armed Forces.

As the number of servicemen and women killed in the war on terror continues, it is imperative that we recognize the need to provide not only emotional support to their families, but much-needed financial assistance during this troubling time.

By increasing the current \$12,000 military death gratuity payment to \$100,000, your legislation will stand by the Federal government's promise to take care of those left behind when a servicemember dies in the line of duty. We also applaud the bill's proposal that would increase the Servicemembers Group Life Insurance (SGLI) maximum benefit from \$250,000 to \$400,000. VFW resolution 642, passed at our National Convention in August, calls for legislation to improve the SGLI benefit; an increase we believe is long overdue.

Once again, thank you for introducing legislation that will help ensure that those fam-

ilies that have lost a loved one in the name of freedom receive the support and financial assistance that truly demonstrates our appreciation for those who sacrificed all.

We look forward to working with you and your staff on this legislation. As always, thank you for your continued support of America's veterans.

Sincerely,

DENNIS CULLINAN,
National Legislative Service.

THE AMERICAN LEGION,
Washington, DC, January 25, 2005.

Hon. JEFF SESSIONS,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR SESSIONS: On behalf of the 2.8 million members of The American Legion, I would like to express our full support for the Honoring Every Requirement of Exemplary Act of 2005/HEROES Act of 2005. The initiatives outlined in this bill will greatly assist the families and loved ones of servicemen and women who died in combat.

The American Legion supports the augmentation of the lump-sum death benefit and the maximum payout from life insurance to families of soldiers killed in combat. For those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our freedoms, this act goes far to ease the hardships incurred by those families. However, The American Legion believes the benefits of this act should be extended to the families of all our servicemen and women killed in the service of the nation.

Once again, The American Legion fully supports Honoring Every Requirement of Exemplary Act of 2005/HEROES Act of 2005. The American Legion appreciates your continued leadership in addressing the issues that are important to veterans, members of the Armed Forces and their families.

Sincerely,

STEVE A. ROBERTSON,
Director,
National Legislative Commission.

NATIONAL MILITARY FAMILY ASSOCIATION.

The National Military Family Association thanks Senator Jeff Sessions and Senator Joe Lieberman for their active interest in the well being of our military families should the unthinkable happen. NMFA is grateful for the recognition in The HEROES Act of 2005 that the election of insurance is a family decision and for including a provision to ensure that spouses are included in that important decision.

For the family members of a fallen servicemember, NMFA knows that there is no way to compensate them for their loss, only to help them prepare for their future. We strongly believe that all servicemember's deaths should be treated equally. Servicemembers are on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Through their oath, each servicemember's commitment is the same. The survivor benefit package should not create inequities by awarding different benefits to families who lose a servicemember in a hostile zone versus those who lose their loved one in a training mission preparing for service in a hostile zone. To the family, there is no difference. NMFA therefore supports proposals for improvements to the survivor benefit package that are consistent with our philosophy that all active duty deaths be treated equally. We encourage Members of Congress to examine the total package with the goal of recognizing the service and sacrifice of the servicemember and family and providing compensation that promotes the financial stability of the family.

KATHLEEN B. MOAKLER,
Deputy Director, Government Relations.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I thank them for their service to the Nation over the years, for their concern for our men and women in uniform, and for their support of this legislation. The loss of a family member in combat is, indeed, a terrible tragedy for the survivors. I have had the responsibility to call numerous families in Alabama since the war on terrorism began and talk to family members and attend funerals and wakes for those who have been lost. So many things occur to these families all at once. In the midst of their grieving, plans must be made for funerals, transportation of loved ones, and families must bear all the expenses and arrangements. To the survivors, it will feel like everything in the world has come to a shattering standstill. Indeed, there may be requirements that a family move, relocate, or either sell or purchase a house. There are great numbers of expenses that can occur for them at that time. The enhanced benefit package we have offered will ensure that our military families do not have to worry about these day-to-day realities as they are having to go through the painful exercise of burying a loved one.

Senator LIEBERMAN is here. He has cosponsored and worked with us on this legislation. I note that it raises the \$12,000 death benefit to \$100,000. It raises the Servicemen's Group Life Insurance from \$250,000 to \$400,000. Those increases will keep these payments up to date with current reality and be an expression of national support for those families.

It is an honor to work with Senator LIEBERMAN on the committee on a lot of different issues. We thank him for his leadership in the Senate and for his support of our men and women in uniform.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I thank my friend and colleague from Alabama for his kind words. I thank him for his leadership on this issue and so many other matters to our Nation's security and for those who fight and serve in uniform to protect us.

Senator SESSIONS and I have worked together as members of the Armed Services Committee. He was chair, and I was ranking Democrat on the Airland Subcommittee. In some ways, the public, after listening to the chatter and the noise, would be surprised to hear we work so often in these committees with total nonpartisanship in the national interest, which is the way it ought to be.

I forgot the moment, but we were considering the question of what kinds of benefits there are for our men and women in uniform, and we came to death benefits. We were both, frankly, shocked and embarrassed and ultimately outraged that it had been \$6,000, just raised to \$12,000. When you think of death benefits generally and the impact on a family, the loss of a

loved one, it just cried out for some kind of change. That is what this proposal, the HEROES Act, is all about and why I am so proud to join with Senator SESSIONS and the other cosponsors in introducing it and why I am grateful Senator FRIST included this as one of his priority items on his leadership list of measures introduced.

I had one of those moments we all have—I guess all Members of the Senate do this—where I got word today of a loss of another Connecticut soldier, SGT Thomas Vitagliano. If I am not in the State because we are in session, I always reach out to call the family.

I spoke with his mother earlier today. These are extraordinary people. She spoke with a strength that I must say was inspiring. I said: There is nothing I can say to fill the gap that is there because of the loss of a loved one in service of country. All I can say to you is, thank you on behalf of myself and a grateful nation and please know that your son is a hero.

She said to me: He loved his service in the military. He was a big guy and he had a great sense of humor, but he was really serious about his service in the military.

I know that he was killed by an improvised explosive device, IED, basically a bomb. She said to me: I know that he died in service of his country, he died doing what gave his life meaning.

She also said to me: Senator, I am really thinking now in just the words you said, as the mother of a hero. There will be a time after his burial when I will think as a mother, and it will be a very hard time. But today I am thinking as the mother of a hero.

That is what this HEROES Act is all about, Honoring Every Requirement of Exemplary Service Act, the HEROES Act of 2005. We could not come up with any sum of money to reimburse a family for the loss of a loved one, but the fact is that these folks put their lives on the line for us. They are there, more specifically, as a result of our decision and the President's as Commander in Chief. The least we can do for them is \$100,000 in a death benefit.

I am very pleased, also, as I believe Senator SESSIONS said, that under this HEROES Act we are going to increase the Servicemen's Group Life Insurance, or SGLI as it is called. That is a benefit that is now at \$250,000. It is basically term insurance. It is a pretty good plan. It is not a typical death benefit that we are offering for those who are killed in action, but it certainly, obviously, goes to the survivors of those killed in action. By the HEROES Act, we are adding \$150,000 of life insurance for troops serving in a combat zone, and the premium for that \$150,000 will be paid by the U.S. Government.

So we have a circumstance where if a soldier has bought the SGLI, the Servicemen's Group Life Insurance, their family will receive the \$250,000, for which the soldier pays, \$150,000 which we pay, and \$100,000 that will now be

the death benefit, and that will be a half million dollars, which in these days is not a lot of money for families left without a parent, a spouse, children who are going to have to be sent through college and all the expenses related thereto.

The \$12,000 that is the existing death benefit is so shockingly paltry, but all the more so when you focus on the fact—and this earlier \$6,000 goes way back when it was first set—that the military has changed. Our military, as all of us know who serve on the service committees or visit our military or just see our Guard and Reserve at home, is no longer primarily a group of 18-, 19-, and 20-year-old single men. More than 60 percent of our service men and women on Active Duty have a family.

If my colleagues have visited, they know in Iraq about 40 percent of the Americans there in uniform are Guard and Reserve. Those folks are in their thirties, forties, and during my visit at the end of December I saw a few who were in pretty good shape but looked as though they were in their fifties.

So these are people who have families, and if killed, it will leave a terrible void in the life of those families. And in some small way we hope to fill that void monetarily by providing this increase in support.

Incidentally, the HEROES Act will also direct the military to discuss the level of insurance selected with a spouse or other beneficiary to ensure that family members are informed and fully participating in these important decisions.

The great President Theodore Roosevelt once said: A man who is good enough to shed blood for his country is good enough to be given a square deal afterward. I would attempt to update the great TR's wisdom and words by saying that a man or a woman who is good enough to shed blood and risk life for our country should know when doing so that their families will be taken care of no matter what happens. That is the purpose of the HEROES Act.

I do not think I have ever introduced legislation that I have felt better about or, frankly, felt more optimistic about. I cannot believe this is not going to pass overwhelmingly and be supported overwhelmingly. When we think of all we are spending—incidentally, it is retroactive so anyone who has been killed in Iraq or Afghanistan will receive these full death benefits. What it will amount to in total is a fraction of one percentage point of what we are spending every month, probably every day, in Iraq. It is the least we can do.

I am proud to be part of it with Senator SESSIONS. I thank him again for his leadership. He and I and all the others are going to stick with it until we get this done and the checks start to go out to those who have given their all to protect our security and advance the cause of freedom.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. TALENT. Mr. President, has the Senator from Alabama finished?

Mr. SESSIONS. I would like a few minutes to finish up if the Senator will yield.

Mr. TALENT. I will yield.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SESSIONS. I thank Senator TALENT for his courtesy which is well-known in this body.

Mr. President, Senator LIEBERMAN is correct. The families I talk to so often say to me about their son or daughter or spouse who lost their life that they loved their work, they were doing what they wanted to do, they believed in what they were doing, and that gives them comfort. I have heard that over and over again. It is very similar to what the Senator heard today.

I know the Senator's call was very comforting to the family because I know the Senator has the sensitivity and judgment to reach out to them in the proper way. It is not an easy thing to do, for sure.

I have, indeed, valued the Senator's partnership on the Airland Subcommittee. We have never had a harsh word nor even a serious disagreement. It does show that those of us who are from different parties love America, we want to see our military using the money wisely and doing the right things with it.

It has been a pleasure for me to work with the Senator from Connecticut. I have learned so much from him.

I will not go over the benefits of the program, which Senator LIEBERMAN has already mentioned. I think that this legislation is a step in the right direction. I would note that it is retroactive to the beginning of the war in Afghanistan. I would also note that the Defense Department has studied this legislation. I asked them to do that last year as part of our Defense bill. They support it. It will have an initial cost estimated at \$459 million, and it should drop to half of that in the future and hopefully much less than that. I think these costs are clearly justified.

Our service members are assigned all over the globe in dangerous parts of the world. As an editorial in the San Diego Union Tribune said:

The costs are beside the point. This is a case in which lawmakers have a moral obligation to do the right thing, regardless of cost.

I think this legislation is the right thing. I do believe we have great support so far and I look forward to seeing it become law. I also thank the Chair for his cosponsorship of this legislation.

I thank Senator TALENT for his courtesy, and I yield the floor.

Mr. TALENT. Mr. President, I was happy to yield to my friend. I thought he was finished or I would not have sought the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri is recognized.

COMMEMORATING THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LIBERATION OF THE AUSCHWITZ EXTERMINATION CAMP IN POLAND

Mr. TALENT. Mr. President, I rise today on behalf of Mr. WYDEN and myself to speak about a resolution we are submitting to commemorate the liberation of Auschwitz, where more than 1 million people were murdered at the hands of the Nazis. Sixty years ago tomorrow, allied forces successfully liberated the most notorious of Nazi death camps, freeing those who managed to live in the most deplorable of conditions and yet somehow survive the greatest evil the world has ever witnessed.

For 5 long years at Auschwitz, men, women, and children arrived in cattle cars from all parts of Europe. Whether young or old, rich or poor, they were systematically stripped of their dignity before being murdered because of their religion and their deeply held faith in God. But 60 years ago tomorrow the genocide ended and the gates to freedom were opened.

With the passage of time, people tend to forget the events of the past, particularly if those events occurred well before their birth. The survivors of Auschwitz are elderly and they are dwindling in number, but their stories of how good successfully triumphed over evil will live on in our history and our hearts.

The resolution Senator WYDEN and I introduce today commemorates Auschwitz and urges all Americans to remember those who were murdered there, murdered for nothing more than practicing their religion. We owe it to ourselves and to future generations never to forget that horror.

I am pleased to say leaders from around the world, including Vice President and Mrs. Cheney, are traveling to Poland for tomorrow's commemoration ceremony. They will be joined by survivors who are still able to make the trip out into the Polish countryside.

I hope this resolution will serve as a reminder that the Senate, indeed all Americans, remembers the events of 60 years ago tomorrow. It is also my hope that when anti-Semitism rears its ugly head, the world will feel a collective responsibility to stand up and speak out against religious hatred. That at least will give meaning to the sacrifice of those who were murdered and incinerated in the ovens of Auschwitz.

Mr. President, I am informed that the resolution has been cleared on both sides. I am very pleased to hear that. On behalf of the leader, I ask unanimous consent the Senate now proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 18, which was submitted earlier today, the resolution about which I have been speaking.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:
A resolution (S. Res. 18) commemorating the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz extermination camp in Poland.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

LIBERATION OF AUSCHWITZ

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, perhaps more than any other word, Auschwitz is synonymous with evil.

Sixty years ago today, Russian soldiers liberated Auschwitz.

The horrors of Auschwitz are incomprehensible and undescrivable.

Over 1 million people lost their lives at Auschwitz—the largest of the Nazi death camps. Ninety percent were Jews. Hundreds of thousands were children.

Auschwitz represented the Germans' campaign to exterminate a people—the Jews. They almost succeeded—killing 2 out of 3 Jews in Europe.

As a Polish American, I carry the images of Auschwitz in my heart.

The Nazis considered all Poles to be an inferior race. After Poland was conquered, German authorities expelled much of the native Polish population from regions of the newly annexed territories. Polish cities were given German names and German settlers were colonized on Polish land. In occupied Poland, the Nazi Governor, Hans Frank, proclaimed: "Poles will become slaves in the Third Reich."

The Nazis set out to destroy Polish culture. Thousands of Polish teachers, politicians, university professors and artists were executed or sent to Nazi concentration camps. Catholic priests were among the main targets of Nazi mass murder in Poland.

In fact, Auschwitz was created as an internment camp for Polish dissidents. And thousands of Poles were murdered alongside the Jews in Auschwitz.

Many Poles risked their lives to save Jews:

Irena Sendler was a young social worker in Warsaw. She used her position to smuggle 200 Jewish children out of the ghetto to safe houses. In 1943, Sendler was arrested by the Gestapo, brutally tortured and condemned to death. On the day of her execution, she was freed with the help of the Jewish underground.

Irena Adamowicz, a Polish Catholic, aided in establishing contacts between the Jewish Underground and the main Polish resistance organization.

Jan Karski, who, while working for the Polish Government in exile, was one of the few outsiders to visit the Warsaw Ghetto. He appealed to the Allies to do something.

As a Polish American, I traveled to Poland in the late 1970s. I was a Congresswoman. And I wanted to see my heritage. I went to the small village where my family came from. It was a very moving and historic experience.

But I also wanted to see the dark side of my history, and I went to Auschwitz.

In touring Auschwitz, it was an incredibly moving experience to go through the gate, to see the sign, to go to see the chambers. I went to a cell that had been occupied by Father