

helping the people of interested countries train their men and women to work in education, community development, agriculture, health care, and public works. Peace Corps volunteers are also unofficial ambassadors of goodwill, promoting both a better understanding of America throughout the world, and a better understanding here at home of the world around us.

Today, the Peace Corps' mission is more important than ever. Peace Corps volunteers are a critical part of the global fight against HIV/AIDS. The Peace Corps was also part of America's response to the tsunami, deploying Crisis Corps volunteers to Sri Lanka and Thailand to assist with rebuilding tsunami devastated areas. And when Hurricane Katrina hit here at home, some 272 Crisis Corps volunteers answered the call to assist with relief efforts along the gulf coast in partnership with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA.

It is with great pleasure that I join with Peace Corps volunteers, past, present and future, to congratulate the Peace Corps on its 45th anniversary.

NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I rise today to offer a few brief comments on the National Security Agency eavesdropping program.

The truth is that we don't know what is going on under this program. And we have an obligation to find out and a committee set up to do just that.

Senator ROCKEFELLER has been correct from the beginning to call for a full and thorough Intelligence Committee investigation. I couldn't agree more with my colleague from West Virginia and was deeply disappointed his March 7 motion calling for a full committee investigation failed along party lines.

I have been arguing consistently since we found out about this program in December that we need to do here what we did when we originally crafted the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, FISA.

For several years preceding the enactment of FISA in 1978, the Judiciary and Intelligence Committees conducted extensive public and private hearings and staff investigations that built the record for the act.

FISA was a bipartisan product; in the Senate, the original version was sponsored by Senators across the ideological spectrum—including Birch Bayh, TED KENNEDY, Mac Mathias, James Eastland, and Strom Thurmond.

The Senate ultimately adopted the bill on April 20, 1978, by a strong bipartisan vote of 95 to 1. At the time the bill was approved in the Senate, I stated that it "was a reaffirmation of the principle that it is possible to protect national security and at the same time the Bill of Rights." I was also a member of the conference committee that produced the final version of the law that was enacted with broad support in October 1978.

I was proud of what we were able to accomplish then and sincerely hoped that we could undertake the same serious, thoughtful, bipartisan process here. And the first step is to undertake a full Intelligence Committee investigation, just as my colleague Vice Chairman ROCKEFELLER has been pushing for months.

It is essential that such a carefully considered record be developed so we don't act precipitously either to legislate or not to legislate. Issues concerning the core privacy rights of U.S. citizens, whether we are fighting an effective war on terrorism, and the fundamental structure of our separation of powers are directly involved here and deserve a full and thorough examination.

At present, our knowledge of the National Security Agency program is severely limited. We need to know much more, for example: No. 1, the nature and scope of the program or programs; No. 2, the extent of the impact on U.S. citizens; No. 3, why the administration did not seek amendments to FISA; No. 4, why some high Justice Department officials were hesitant to approve the program; No. 5, the actual value of the information gathered; No. 6, how decisions are made on whom to target; and No. 7, any procedures followed to protect civil liberties. Senator ROCKEFELLER understands that we need to know the answers to our questions.

But politics and protecting the President seem to be the order of the day. I am told one of the committee Republicans went so far as to say that some of the committee Democrats "believe the gravest threat we face is not Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda, but rather the president of the United States." That is totally uncalled for; it is ridiculous.

I understand a special subcommittee has now been created to conduct at least some oversight over the NSA surveillance program going forward. But this just isn't enough—the whole committee should be undertaking an investigation, and it should be a full and thorough investigation, just as Senator ROCKEFELLER has called for.

It also is a grave mistake to put forward legislation authorizing the NSA program outside of the FISA system and in advance of actually knowing anything about the program, as some of my colleagues are proposing. Talk about putting the cart before the horse.

So I would hope we learn from history and listen to Senator ROCKEFELLER. Let's go back to what worked so well in the past when we all worked together to craft FISA. Let's first hold a full and thorough investigation in the Intelligence Committee.

Then, and only when we know what is going on, should we make a judgment about whether FISA needs to be updated. If additional changes need to be made, this Senator stands ready and willing to engage in that exercise.

NATIONAL AGRICULTURE DAY

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, I rise today to speak in honor of National Agriculture Day and to discuss a couple of important agricultural issues. My home State of Nebraska has a proud agricultural heritage. The rural way of life is something we are proud of and we believe it needs to be preserved.

As we begin to analyze the success and failures of the last farm bill, we need to thoroughly review that information in order to make improvements to the next farm bill. As a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I am looking forward to working on this bill next year. I believe there is a lot of work to be done for the American farmer and our rural communities. I have started to call this next bill the Food and Fuel Security Act of 2007 because I believe its focus should be on securing a safe, healthy food supply as well as investing in the production of biofuels so as to substantially improve our fuel and energy security. I think the focus should be on crafting a bill that is more effective for the majority of farmers and rural communities and with an emphasis on the opportunities presented by biofuels production.

I look forward to listening to the concerns and recommendations of farmers, ranchers and businesses in the coming months as the Senate Agriculture Committee begins consideration of this bill. I also look forward to reviewing the findings and analysis from Secretary Johanns and the USDA as a result of their listening sessions. I will be evaluating all of this and other available information and will look to work with the other members of the committee and the Senate to put forth an effective Food and Fuel Security Act.

One area that will certainly warrant consideration is payment limits on production subsidies and efforts to transition current production subsidies towards a system more focused on "green payments" modeled after programs like the Conservation Security Program, CSP, and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, EQIP. We should also look to significantly expand those and similar programs to compensate farmers for the environmental and conservation benefits they provide.

I believe we must also seriously consider improving our rural development efforts in the next bill. There are opportunities to help rural communities by encouraging entrepreneurial investments and helping these communities capitalize on their unique advantages, resources, and qualities.

Our focus on rural development and improving rural communities must also include addressing the problems young farmers face in choosing the farming way of life. As the current generation of farmers approaches retirement, it is imperative that we provide opportunities to those members of the next generation who are interested in

farming. The daunting obstacles for young farmers, from the price of land, equipment and inputs to the low margins from farming, must be addressed in a sound manner so that we can help secure this profession and America's food security for future generations. Doing so is important for the rural communities that would otherwise lose these talented young people and the economic activity associated with farming. But this is also important for the future of our Nation's food security. I often tell people that if they like importing about 60 percent of their fuel now, they are really going to love importing 60 percent of their food in the future. Helping a new generation of young farmers get started in farming and helping them work toward successful careers as farmers is vital to securing a safe, healthy, and affordable food supply. We should make this a priority in the Food and Fuel Security Act.

There is another important component of the next bill that has gained much welcomed attention lately: biofuels. In order to improve our energy and fuel security situation we must make it a priority to invest more into research, market development, and infrastructure development, as well as feedstock development, for biofuels. I have long believed the only way to break the cycle of our dependency on foreign oil is to invest in alternative and renewable fuel technology.

As a Nebraskan, my focus has been on the role agriculture can play in the development of alternative sources of energy. Agriculture is positioned to supply the Nation with an abundant source of clean, high-quality energy that will reduce our destructive reliance on foreign oil.

Biofuels production can be the catalyst for a new wave of American innovation in a continuing search for better energy solutions. The virtue in producing cleaner, more sustainable fuels derived from our own fields rather than extracted from distant lands could help spur new technologies, new jobs, and new growth in our national and rural economies.

We in Nebraska know the value of ethanol. We know the benefits it holds for the environment and our farmers and we know that it is critical in lessening our dependence on foreign oil. We currently have 11 ethanol facilities in Nebraska that have the capability to produce 534 million gallons of ethanol annually. These facilities represent more than \$700 million of capital investment and have a net value of production that tops \$1 billion annually. Plus, more than six thousand Nebraskans are now employed directly or indirectly in Nebraska ethanol production, and we have more facilities and jobs on the way.

I believe a national emphasis on biofuels production represents an important investment in the proud tradition of the American farmer, American ingenuity, and American productivity. There is not an area of the country

that does not have some agricultural product that can be used as an alternative energy source, whether it is corn in Nebraska; forestry wastes in the Northeast and Northwest, sugar cane in Hawaii, Louisiana, and Florida; or the potential of dedicated energy crops like switchgrass that can be grown throughout the country. So in honor of National Agriculture Day today, I want to emphasize the importance of biofuels for agriculture and for our Nation. We must make increased production and usage of biofuels a national priority.

Today we honor those who work so hard to feed not only the people of our Nation but also people around the world. One day is not enough. I am thankful for our farmers and agricultural producers every day, but I am pleased to pay them a special tribute today.

PROPOSED MERGER BETWEEN AT&T AND BELL SOUTH

Mr. DORGAN. The proposed merger between AT&T and BellSouth is controversial. The proposal should trigger a serious evaluation by both the Justice Department and the Federal Communications Commission.

A recent column in the March 20 issue of Business Week by Leo Hindery caught my eye, and I want to share it with my colleagues. I don't necessarily share all of his conclusions, but I think his perspective is an interesting one. I hope that others will weigh in as we try to make a judgment about whether this proposed merger is in the interest of the American people.

For me, it remains an open question whether this merger should be allowed. In the meantime, it is useful to hear many different perspectives about it and I wanted to share Leo Hindery's column with my colleagues.

I ask unanimous consent to print the column in the RECORD.

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

[From Business Week, Mar. 20, 2006]

IDEAS OUTSIDE SHOT

(By Leo Hindery Jr.)

Watch This Hookup Closely. Who says you can't put Humpty Dumpty together again? With AT&T's acquisition of BellSouth, Ma Bell will (almost) be back. The stated justifications for this huge new merger are to save \$2 billion a year in expenses on a \$120 billion combined revenue base and, says Chief Executive Edward E. Whitacre Jr., to enable the combined company to "have more products, better services, and better prices."

Unfortunately, neither justification is likely to pan out, and there is not one product or service that AT&T will have with BellSouth that it could not have had without it. Not one. So the only real advantages from this merger for AT&T shareholders are a clarified management structure at the two companies' Cingular cellular joint venture and probably slightly faster rollout of wireless Internet calling. Those two changes are certainly important, but they're not nearly desirable enough to allow this merger to proceed without regulators imposing some very tough conditions.

I'm so skeptical because every time a major cable-systems merger was proposed in the past, the justifications were essentially the same: modest cost savings that would fuel more services and better prices for consumers. But those never materialized. Why not? Once a telco or major cable company has achieved scale, and they all have by now, these purported justifications become ludicrous, especially when (as with AT&T and BellSouth) there is little or no preexisting overlap of their service areas.

As a businessman and former cable operator, I can appreciate Mr. Whitacre's desire to bulk up to better compete in both traditional telephony and newer growth areas like broadband video distribution. Not only is he battling stiff competition in voice-over-Internet telephony from the likes of Vonage, Google, and Skype, but he also faces an array of newer delivery technologies such as Wi-Fi, WiMAX, and broadband over power lines. Then there are the major cable companies, which are deeply entrenched in video distribution and have the huge advantage of vertically owning much (in fact, way too much) of the nation's programming.

But the telcos and cable already have virtual strangleholds over wire-line access. (A combined AT&T and BellSouth would control 71 million local phone customers in 22 states.) So this proposed megamerger will be devastating for consumers unless some strong limitations are put on the merged company in two areas: bundling and pricing practices and "Internet neutrality."

Indeed, with broadband soon to be AT&T's (and all other significant distributors') major offering, the Bush Administration and the Federal Communications Commission must stand up for consumers and insist that AT&T, Verizon, Qwest, and cable operators not layer on to their broadband services unreasonable user surcharges and "speed controls" that favor one service provider over another. Such acts would crimp consumers' access to the Net and give distributors unwarranted monopoly-like profits and controls. Likewise, regulators must restrict discriminatory bundling and predatory pricing, which limit consumer choice, in both services and content.

That's not to say that regulators should crack down only on telcos. Washington should give AT&T, Verizon, and Qwest nationwide video-transmission rights so they can compete sooner and better with cable in video distribution. And it must end the vice grip of vertical integration that allows programming owned by a distributor (especially cable operators) to be treated more favorably than independent programming. Such vertical integration, when abused, is a fraud on consumers and an impediment to competition. It needs to be restrained, and Mr. Whitacre should demand that as a quid pro quo for the limits that are sure to be imposed on his proposed deal.

So let Mr. Whitacre have his merger—heck, the Administration and the FCC let Comcast acquire AT&T Broadband in 2002 without blinking an eye. But let's hold him to his promise of "more products, better services, and better prices." Given the grave potential for abuse to consumers by those with quasi-monopoly power, the Administration, the FCC, and Congress must impose appropriate restrictions on the AT&T-BellSouth merger.

NATIONAL SUNSHINE WEEK

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, this week our country is celebrating the second annual National Sunshine Week, established last year by an extraordinary coalition of print, radio,