

understand that philanthropist Richard Goldman got the inspiration for the Goldman Environmental Prize after reading about the winners of the Nobel Prize, and wondering why there was no equivalent for extraordinary efforts to conserve our natural environment.

Now, less than two decades since its inception, the Goldman Environmental Prize has risen to rival the Nobel as a marker of achievement. Every one of this year's winners fought to protect the environment in a way that affected the lives of thousands, if not millions, of others, often alone and at great personal cost. All of them have my admiration. And I am grateful the Goldman Environmental Prize will continue to recognize and reward conservationists who protect the land, and promote the well-being of the people who use it.

All of that said, I speak today for one reason. Craig Williams has been a friend for over 20 years, and an inspiration. Craig won this award because he dared to speak out against an immovable, hidebound bureaucracy—the Department of Defense—and he won. He is proof that, sometimes, David really can slay Goliath. This year, he has been honored as the North American recipient of the Goldman Environmental Prize.

For 20 years, Craig's vigilance has proven invaluable in ongoing efforts to ensure the Department of Defense destroys its hundreds of tons of chemical weapons as safely and efficiently as possible. These deadly materials are stored at Blue Grass Army Depot, which is near Craig's home in Berea, KY, and at several other locations across the United States. Thanks to his activism, we are closer than we ever have been to taking tangible steps towards removing these heinous weapons from the face of the Earth once and for all.

Craig's biggest fans are his neighbors, the people of Madison County, KY. To them, Craig is an absolute hero. Imagine if you lived just a short distance away from over 500 tons of the deadliest materials ever conceived by man, VX nerve agent. As little as 10 milligrams of VX will kill a human being. That is about the mass of 10 grains of sand. If inhaled, death is immediate.

Too many people have lived for too long with that mortal threat hanging over them. Thanks to Craig, they can see light at the end of the tunnel.

Obviously, Craig is very effective. But let me explain why he is so effective. First of all, he is tenacious. After 20 years of commitment to this cause—with little or no pay or recognition—he and the nationwide group of concerned citizens he founded, the Chemical Weapons Working Group, are more active than ever.

A lot of people come to Congress every day with dire warnings about this or that issue. And a lot of them turn out to be Chicken Littles, warning about a sky that never falls. Craig is

no Chicken Little. He is credible, because he knows what he is talking about. I listen to Craig, as do my Senate colleagues, because he is so often right.

The work Craig and I have done together is a perfect model for how government can and ought to work with the people it serves. Too often, collaboration between lawmakers and informed citizens—also known as lobbyists, please excuse my language, I know that is a dirty word—is portrayed as unethical or sleazy.

The truth is that the vast majority of people who come to Congress for help are people like Craig Williams. They have a lot of passion, a lot of knowledge, and want to persuade the government to use its power for their cause.

Craig's cause is just, and his advocacy is persuasive. When Craig tells me something, I know it is worthy of consideration, and I will be inclined to move the levers of government to get the results he and I want. For 20 years I have been happy to do just that. Government works because of people like Craig Williams.

I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Craig Williams on this well-deserved honor.

A TRIBUTE TO THE NEPALI PEOPLE

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to speak briefly about recent events in Nepal.

As Senators are aware, last February 1 King Gyanendra seized absolute power, dissolved the multiparty government, and imprisoned his political opponents. He justified his power grab as necessary to bring peace and democracy to that impoverished Himalayan nation that has been in the throes of a bloody conflict with Maoist insurgents for a decade.

Yet, as many predicted, in the past year the Maoists have gained strength while Nepal's fledgling democratic institutions have been badly weakened. Finally recognizing that the King's real purpose was to consolidate his own power and take the country back to the feudal days of his father, the people lost patience.

Over the past few weeks, hundreds of thousands of Nepali citizens took to the streets in a show of defiance and braved bullets, clubs, and tear gas to force the King to back down.

Tomorrow, Nepal's Parliament will reconvene and it is expected to begin discussion of a date for the election of a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution. Among the key issues to be addressed is what role, if any, the monarchy will have in Nepal's democratic future. Another necessary step will be to guarantee the army's subservience to civilian authority.

I wish to pay tribute to the people of Nepal. They have suffered for generations from poverty, discrimination, corruption, and repression. Yet through it all they have persevered,

and they have shown that not even the most recalcitrant despot who uses the national army as his own palace guard can withstand the will of the people when they are prepared to risk their lives for freedom.

Today, Nepal begins a new chapter in its history. The future is far from certain and the road ahead is filled with potential pitfalls. But no one can doubt the opportunity that this moment offers, nor the importance of what is at stake for Nepal.

It is up to Nepal's political parties, whose leaders have too often put their own personal ambitions ahead of the good of the country, to show that they have a practical vision for the future and that they can govern. In a democracy that means dialogue, it means tolerance, it means compromise, it means acting in good faith as representatives of the people, it means keeping one's commitments, and it means being willing to step aside for the next generation when it is their turn.

The Maoists must also recognize that the Nepali people's foremost desire is peace. The Maoists have announced another cease-fire, which is welcome, but there is no justification for any return to violence. Too many innocent people have died and too many Nepali families have suffered needlessly. It is time for the Maoists to renounce violence and join in a national dialogue to restore democracy and develop a strategy to address the root causes of the conflict.

The international community, particularly India, the United States, Great Britain, China, and the United Nations, also have an important role to play in supporting Nepal at this critical time. Like Afghanistan, East Timor, and other unstable countries emerging from years of conflict, Nepal will need technical assistance for the election of a constituent assembly and the drafting of a new constitution. It will need international monitors of the cease-fire and of the observance of human rights by both Maoists and the army. It will need resources to help build the institutions of democracy and to hold accountable those on both sides of the conflict who are responsible for atrocities.

During the 5 years of his troubled rein, King Gyanendra took Nepal to the brink of disaster. He stubbornly ignored the pleas of Nepal's friends. He shamelessly used the army to trample on the people's cherished rights. He squandered his opportunity to continue on the path of his predecessor to nurture democracy and help guide Nepal into the 21st century.

The Nepali people, 15 of whom gave their lives in the protests, want nothing less than a democratic future. They want a government that respects the worth of every Nepali, regardless of the family they come from, their ethnicity, religion, gender or profession. It is time for Nepal's leaders to show that they are worthy of the Nepali people's confidence and support.

SEVEN YEARS AFTER COLUMBINE

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, last Thursday marked the seventh anniversary of the tragic Columbine High School shooting. None of us will forget the sight of hundreds of terrified students running out of their high school while police and S.W.A.T. team members frantically searched for 2 young gunmen who, before taking their own lives, had murdered 12 innocent children, a teacher, and wounded 2 dozen other students.

In the aftermath of the Columbine tragedy, I said I would try to make a statement each week on the issue of commonsense gun safety to help draw attention to an issue that, unfortunately, continues to go unaddressed. Heidi Yewman, who graduated from Columbine High School 13 years before the shooting, wrote about her frustrations and the lack of congressional attention to this issue in a recent newspaper editorial. As she put it, "This summer I will attend my 20-year high school reunion, and Topic A will be as it has been for the past seven years: the massacre and what hasn't happened since." I will ask that the text of Ms. Yewman's editorial be printed in the RECORD.

One of the things mentioned by Ms. Yewman that hasn't happened since the Columbine High School shootings is a Federal requirement of a background check on the sale of all firearms, including those that are sold at gun shows. Under current law, when an individual buys a firearm from a licensed dealer, there are Federal requirements for a background check to insure that the purchaser is not prohibited by law from purchasing or possessing a gun. However, this is not the case for all gun purchases. For example, when an individual wants to buy a firearm from another private citizen who is not a licensed gun dealer, there is no Federal requirement that the seller ensure the purchaser is not in a prohibited category. This creates a loophole in the law, making it easy for criminals, terrorists, and other prohibited buyers to evade background checks and buy guns from private citizens. This loophole creates a gateway to the illegal market because criminals know they will not be subject to a background check when purchasing from another private citizen even at a gun show.

During the 108th Congress, I cosponsored an amendment that passed the Senate which would have required background checks on all firearms sold at gun shows. However, when the Senate passed the amendment, the National Rifle Association and its allies in the Senate then removed their support for the underlying bill and it was defeated. Unfortunately, the Senate has failed to address this important gun safety issue since.

In the years since the Columbine High School shootings, Congress has also failed to renew the 1994 assault weapons ban. On September 13, 2004,

this legislation was allowed to expire, allowing 19 previously banned assault weapons, including the TEC-9 handgun used by the Columbine shooters, and other firearms with military style features to be legally sold again.

I have cosponsored legislation to reauthorize and strengthen the assault weapons ban. Last Congress, the Senate adopted an amendment to reauthorize the assault weapons ban for 10 years. However, like the amendment to close the gun show loophole, the bill to which the amendment was attached was later defeated, and despite the fact that a bipartisan majority of Senators voted to support reauthorizing the ban on assault weapons, the Republican leadership has refused to schedule another vote on the issue.

Mr. President, the threat of gun violence in our schools and communities has not diminished. Last week alone, as families and friends remembered those who were lost in the Columbine shootings, law enforcement officials apparently thwarted planned Columbine-style school shootings in Kansas, Alaska, Mississippi, and Washington. According to published reports, students in at least two of these small towns had already acquired the guns and ammunition necessary to carry out such an attack.

Were it not for the courage of the students who stepped forward to report violent threats from their fellow students and the investigative work by law enforcement officials that followed, another community might well have had to face the horror that the residents of Littleton, CO, faced 7 years ago. Congress must take up and pass common sense gun safety legislation to help prevent such tragedies from occurring in the future.

I ask unanimous consent that the before-mentioned editorial be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the Columbian, Apr. 16, 2006]

LOCAL VIEW: GUN ADVOCATES IGNORE LESSONS OF COLUMBINE

(By Heidi Yewman)

This summer I will attend my 20-year high school reunion, and Topic A will be as it has been for the past seven years—the massacre and what hasn't happened since.

Seven years ago, this Thursday (April 20), two teenage gunmen massacred 12 students and one teacher at my school, Columbine High in Colorado. That teacher, my high school basketball coach Dave Sanders, bled to death after being shot in the chest; 24 other people were injured.

It was a terrible, sad day that sparked massive debate regarding guns and gun laws in the United States. Much discussion also centered on the nature of high school cliques and bullying, violent movies and video games, but mostly on guns like the two shotguns, the assault rifle, and the TEC-9 assault pistol that the two troubled kids at Columbine used to shoot their victims before killing themselves.

So what exactly has changed as a result of all that despair, discussion and debate?

Virtually nothing.

Colorado and Oregon immediately passed initiatives requiring background checks at gun shows. Today 32 states still do not require background checks on gun purchases at gun shows including Washington.

The Federal Assault Weapons Ban expired in 1994 and was not renewed, putting guns like Tec-9s back on the streets.

In 2005 Congress passed and the president signed into law a measure that, astonishingly, provides immunity from prosecution for gun manufacturers and sellers.

The National Rifle Association is pushing hard to pass "take-your-guns-to-work" laws in all 50 states that would turn companies into criminals if they barred guns on their private property. So far the legislation has been introduced in 11 states.

Seven states have passed legislation that eliminates a citizen's duty to avoid a threat, and allow the use of deadly force before other options when a gun user simply feels threatened.

You've got to give the NRA credit. It is an effective lobbying organization that fights hard for its beliefs and has enjoyed remarkable success in the past seven years. But at what price? If only common sense had lobbyists.

A MASSACRE EVERY DAY

Since the Columbine tragedy, 210,000 people have died in America due to gun violence, and school shootings continue to occur without much notice. Can you even remember the names of the schools where kids were shot and killed in the past seven years? It's become routine news, sandwiched between the latest from Iraq and the weather.

Since 9/11, America has monitored library cards, listened in on cell phone calls, tracked fertilizer purchases, and made us take our shoes off before boarding an airplane, but it has done almost nothing to make it harder for either terrorists or criminals to buy guns. We continue to put the right to own a Tec-9 over common sense precautions to protect our nation and our kids. I find such inaction inexcusable.

Columbine did mobilize millions of moms across the nation, and a small, vocal minority is railing against this country's gun culture. In March, 32 states received grades of D's or F's in the Brady Campaign's 2005 annual report card. Washington state earned a D-plus and Oregon got a C-minus because they haven't passed common sense gun laws that protect our children and families. Do we perhaps think that, because our memories have faded, the threat is any less real? Don't we know that 10 of the 19 school shootings since Columbine happened in the spring? Didn't Benjamin Franklin say that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results?

On April 20, 1999 I saw my high school turned into a morgue for innocent teenagers. I truly thought the carnage would prompt some meaningful change.

I was wrong.

I guess we're all just hoping that our child, our school isn't next. But wishing won't make it so. What we can do is call on our legislators to pass a law requiring background checks at gun shows in 2007, legislation that we have been trying to pass in Washington since Columbine.

I wonder if at my 30-year reunion the massacre at Columbine High School will still be "the worst school shooting in U.S. history."

Sadly, I doubt it.

WELCOMING HIS EXCELLENCY
ILHAM ALIYEV, THE PRESIDENT
OF AZERBAIJAN

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, the Senate recognizes Azerbaijan as a key