

of the U.S. Senate for his service to this country and for his profound commitment to freedom, democracy and peace. When I think about this just cause in which we are engaged, and the unfortunate pain that comes with the loss of our heroes, I hope that families like Joseph's can find comfort in the words of the prophet Isaiah who said, "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces."

May God grant strength and peace to those who mourn, and may God be with all of you, as I know He is with Joseph.

HONORING CORPORAL ERIC LUEKEN

Mr. President, I rise today with a heavy heart and deep sense of gratitude to honor the life of a brave young Marine from Southern Indiana. Eric Lueken, 23 years old, died on April 22 in combat operations in the Anbar province of Iraq. With his entire life before him, Eric risked everything to fight for the values Americans hold close to our hearts, in a land halfway around the world.

A 2001 graduate of Northeast Dubois High School, Eric joined the Marine Corps in October 2003 to challenge himself and see the world. He previously served in Afghanistan for 8 months, before heading out to Iraq in March. He was a decorated war hero, who was awarded with a Purple Heart, two Combat Action Ribbons, a National Defense Service Medal, a Sea Service Deployment Ribbon, Iraq and Afghanistan Service Medals and the Global War on Terror Service Medal. A Marine who took his work seriously, Eric had planned to marry his girlfriend Ericka Merkel upon his return from Iraq. She told a local paper, "He always put other people before him." I stand here today to express my gratitude for Eric's sacrifice and that of his family and loved ones.

Eric was killed while serving his country in Operation Iraqi Freedom. He was assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force based at Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii. This brave young soldier leaves behind his parents Glenn "Jake" and Melinda Lueken, and his brother Brent.

Today, I join Eric's family and friends in mourning his death. While we struggle to bear our sorrow over this loss, we can also take pride in the example he set, bravely fighting to make the world a safer place. It is his courage and strength of character that people will remember when they think of Eric, a memory that will burn brightly during these continuing days of conflict and grief.

Eric was known for his dedication to his family and his love of country. Today and always, Eric will be remembered by family members, friends and fellow Hoosiers as a true American hero and we honor the sacrifice he made while dutifully serving his country.

As I search for words to do justice in honoring Eric's sacrifice, I am re-

mined of President Lincoln's remarks as he addressed the families of the fallen soldiers in Gettysburg: "We cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here." This statement is just as true today as it was nearly 150 years ago, as I am certain that the impact of Eric's actions will live on far longer than any record of these words.

It is my sad duty to enter the name of Eric Lueken in the official record of the U.S. Senate for his service to this country and for his profound commitment to freedom, democracy and peace. When I think about this just cause in which we are engaged, and the unfortunate pain that comes with the loss of our heroes, I hope that families like Eric's can find comfort in the words of the prophet Isaiah who said, "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces."

May God grant strength and peace to those who mourn, and may God be with all of you, as I know He is with Eric.

HONORING STAFF SERGEANT ERIC A. MCINTOSH

Mr. President, I rise today with a heavy heart and deep sense of gratitude to honor the life of a brave young man from Indianapolis. Eric McIntosh, 29 years old, was one of three Marines killed on April 2 during combat operations in the Anbar province of Iraq. With his entire life before him, Eric risked everything to fight for the values Americans hold close to our hearts, in a land halfway around the world.

A former Roncalli High School student, Eric had been in the Marines for 10 years and was on his second tour in Iraq when he was killed. Although he graduated high school unsure of what he wanted to do with his life, he found purpose during his time as a Marine. After completing his second tour, he hoped to become a recruiter for the military. Despite having battled asthma as a child, Eric was an avid athlete and an enthusiastic surfer. His brother Richard, who served in the Army during the Gulf War, recalled his pride in Eric and Eric's passion for his job. "He loved the Marines. He loved his job," said Richard. "He was a way better soldier than I was."

Eric was killed while serving his country in Operation Iraqi Freedom. He was a member of the 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force. This brave young soldier leaves behind his mother Betty, his brother Richard, his sister Lisa Schoenly; and his wife Cynthia.

Today, I join Eric's family and friends in mourning his death. While we struggle to bear our sorrow over this loss, we can also take pride in the example he set, bravely fighting to make the world a safer place. It is his

courage and strength of character that people will remember when they think of Eric, a memory that will burn brightly during these continuing days of conflict and grief.

Eric was known for his dedication to his family and his love of country. Today and always, Eric will be remembered by family members, friends and fellow Hoosiers as a true American hero and we honor the sacrifice he made while dutifully serving his country.

As I search for words to do justice in honoring Eric's sacrifice, I am reminded of President Lincoln's remarks as he addressed the families of the fallen soldiers in Gettysburg: "We cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here." This statement is just as true today as it was nearly 150 years ago, as I am certain that the impact of Eric's actions will live on far longer than any record of these words.

It is my sad duty to enter the name of Eric McIntosh in the official record of the U.S. Senate for his service to this country and for his profound commitment to freedom, democracy and peace. When I think about this just cause in which we are engaged, and the unfortunate pain that comes with the loss of our heroes, I hope that families like Eric's can find comfort in the words of the prophet Isaiah who said, "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces."

May God grant strength and peace to those who mourn, and may God be with all of you, as I know He is with Eric.

COSPONSORSHIP OF S. 722

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I rise today to express my support for legislation introduced in the Senate which has a significant impact on more than 800 small businesses in Montana and hundreds of thousands more around the country. S. 722 would reduce the tax burden on every barrel of beer, which currently stands at \$18. Prior to 1991, this tax was only half of the cost today.

This tax was originally enacted as a means to pay for the U.S. Civil War. The lesson is that there is no such thing as a short-term tax. The tax on beer, which accounts for 44 percent of a bottle of beer and a whopping 80 percent cost of a six-pack, has been steadily increasing since 1991.

The taxation of beer falls unfairly on Montanans who can least afford to pay it. A report by Citizens for Tax Justice indicates that people whose family's income is in the top 20 percent pay five times less in excise beer tax than those whose family is in the bottom 20 percent.

The Tax Code was intended to raise revenue for the Federal Government. It should not be used to influence behavior or personal choice. This excessive tax on beer is not efficient at raising revenue, and the cost of each dollar imposed is much greater in terms of jobs lost and economic drag.

There are, of course, concerns about the social costs of alcohol consumption. I am very sensitive to those concerns and am encouraged by the reductions in drunk driving and alcohol abuse. But the fact is, this tax punishes all beer consumers instead of the minority who act dangerously. In any case, these problems must be addressed directly through specific legislation rather than indirectly through the Tax Code, which is already complicated enough.

Mr. President, because this tax has grown so much since 1991 and because it not only affects beer wholesalers and resellers but hard-working Montanans who enjoy these products responsibly, I am pleased to cosponsor this legislation in the Senate.

PASSING THE MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, every day we see more evidence that this economy is not working for millions of Americans. One troubling trend is the growing divide between rich and poor the widening gap in income inequality and the distribution of wealth in our country.

Over the past 24 years, the most fortunate Americans, in the top 1 percent, saw their incomes more than double from an average of \$306,000 to over \$700,000. During that same period, the incomes of average Americans grew just 15 percent.

But the poorest fifth of our citizens saw their already inadequate incomes grow just \$600—over 24 years.

As a result, the top 1 percent of Americans now get over 12 percent of all the income, up over 50 percent 24 years ago. And the share of the average family actually dropped. The share going to the bottom fifth dropped even more.

We are moving apart, not coming together, as a nation. Last year, the Chair of the Federal Reserve called growing concentration of income in the hands of a tiny minority “a really serious problem.”

There are many things we need to do to get our economy working for working families. One place to start is at the bottom among those Americans who work at full-time jobs and remain below the poverty line. We should not permit that to happen. If we honor work, we have to reward it. We should not stand for any American to work a full-time job and come home too poor to meet the basic needs.

The minimum wage has not increased since 1996—and all of that increase has been wiped out by the cost of living. The minimum wage today, at \$5.15 an hour, is even worth less in today's dollars than the \$4.25 rate it replaced.

Today, the minimum wage is worth only a third of the average hourly wage of American workers, the lowest level in more than half a century. The bottom rung of the ladder of opportunity is broken. It is time to fix it.

That is why I am a cosponsor of S. 1062, which will raise the minimum wage in three stages, over the next 3 years, to \$7.25 an hour.

That means a pay raise for over 7 million workers and lifting the floor under everybody's wages.

It has been 10 years since we last raised the minimum wage. Over the past few years, we have passed tax cuts that last year alone gave over \$100,000 to the wealthiest among us. The gap between rich and poor is now as big as it was during the Great Depression.

Raising the minimum wage is only the first step in restoring balance and fairness to our economy. But it is past time for us to take that step. We must not wait any longer.

BE KIND TO ANIMALS WEEK

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I am pleased to announce that this week, May 7 to 13, 2006, has been designated by the American Humane Association as the 92nd Be Kind to Animals Week. The American Humane Association, which is headquartered in Englewood, CO, was founded in 1877 and is the oldest national organization dedicated to the mission of preventing cruelty to animals, as well as to children. Through this work, American Humane has helped America shed light on the nature and origins of cruelty and through this annual observance reminds us that the practice of kindness can both heal hurt and yield constructive reform.

When, in 1915, American Humane launched the Nation's first national week for animals, its purpose was simple: “to direct the attention of the public to the importance of giving proper care and attention to animals.” This message resonated powerfully with Americans and quickly evolved into a national public education campaign with a broader mission: promoting the teaching of humane education in our schools; promoting the good works of animal shelters; and helping Americans understand the unique bond between humans and animals.

Be Kind to Animals Week is the oldest event of its kind. Each year it reminds us how animals enrich our lives through their companionship, friendship and love. Over the last 91 years, a central theme of this annual event has been the importance of teaching the principles of kindness and compassion to children. Humane groups spend much of their time reacting to mistreatment of animals as it occurs. American Humane believes that, if we share our humane values with our children, these problems can be prevented and our society made safer and kinder.

American Humane's Be Kind to Animals Week is as much a lifelong atti-

tude as it is a weeklong event. It is about animal shelters, veterinarians, humane educators, animal control professionals, and the faith community promoting discussion and reflection about kindness to animals, to individuals, within families and perhaps most important, within communities. But Be Kind to Animals Week isn't just about animals. It is also about children and those who care for and about them.

As a veterinarian, I have seen firsthand how important animals are to people. When a family adopts a pet, it becomes one of them. Usually, when people bring an animal to a veterinarian, it is because there is something wrong with the animal. It was always obvious to me the love that people had for their animals. The illness of a pet can cause great sorrow, but the healing of a pet brings great joy. Many studies have shown the increased happiness and healing powers of spending time with a pet.

During Be Kind to Animals Week, we should all keep in mind a simple but powerful message. The week should serve as a reminder that as humans, we need to be ever more compassionate about the animals in our world, whether they are companion pets, service animals such as seeing-eye dogs, zoo critters, livestock, or nature's wildlife. It is a reminder that the bond between humans and animals is a vital one and is capable of bringing joy and healing to people of all ages. It is also a reminder to be more kind and compassionate to our fellow man. We co-exist in this world—human to human and human to animal—and those bonds must be maintained, they must be kept strong.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

HONORING SIGNATURE SCHOOL

• Mr. BAYH. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Evanville's Signature School, which was recently ranked by Newsweek Magazine as one of the top one hundred high schools in the Nation. This ranking is a remarkable honor to the school, and it demonstrates the hard work and dedication to educational excellence of the students and teachers at Signature.

I am honored to have the opportunity to commend the achievements of Signature's students and the commitment of Signature's families and teachers, which made this prestigious recognition possible. Now more than ever, education is the key to greater personal opportunity. Here in Washington, I have fought to ensure that education is available and accessible to all our Nation's students. However, the real, heroic work is done on the ground, in our schools. The Signature School is a perfect example of what can happen when teachers and students unite around the goal of achieving academic excellence.

Signature was the first charter school in Indiana, created to offer a