

children or other dependent family members, such as elderly parents who require care, designate a caregiver for their dependents. This person will act in the deployed personnel's place to provide care for these family members during the period of deployment. The caregiver could be a spouse, parent, sibling, or other responsible adult who is capable of caring for, and willing to care for, the dependents in question.

The Jeffords-Feingold amendment would create two programs to provide additional leave options for persons who have been designated as caregivers. The first program would require the Office of Personnel Management, OPM, to create a program under which Federal employees who are designated as caregivers could use accrued annual or sick leave, leave bank benefits, and other leave available to them under title 5 for purposes directly relating to or resulting from their designation as a caregiver.

This amendment would also encourage the Secretary of Labor to establish a voluntary program under which private sector companies would create similar programs for their employees and to solicit participation from private sector companies. I commend the many employers around the country for their understanding and support when an employee or a family member of an employee is called to active duty, and I hope that companies in Wisconsin and around the country will participate in this voluntary program.

In addition, our amendment would require the Government Accountability Office to report to Congress with an evaluation of both the OPM program and the voluntary Department of Labor program. It is my hope that this evaluation will demonstrate the utility of such a leave program for designated caregivers and that these pilot programs could then be expanded to the designated caregivers of additional deployed military personnel.

This amendment builds on a measure that I introduced last year, S. 798, the Military Families Leave Act. That bill would provide a similar benefit to military families by allowing eligible employees whose spouses, parents, sons, or daughters are military personnel who are serving on or called to active duty in support of a contingency operation to use their Family and Medical Leave Act, or FMLA, benefits for issues directly relating to or resulting from that deployment. These instances could include preparation for deployment or additional responsibilities that family members take on as a result of a loved one's deployment, such as child care. I also introduced this bill during the 108th Congress.

Let me be clear, that the Jeffords-Feingold amendment does not amend the FMLA in any way. In fact, FMLA benefits are specifically exempted from the types of leave that can be used by designated caregivers for purposes directly related to or resulting from their caregiver responsibilities. While I

believe that the FMLA could serve as the basis for providing additional leave opportunities for designated caregivers, opposition in some quarters to the original FMLA makes this a difficult proposition. I am proud to have been a cosponsor of this landmark law, and I believe that the FMLA continues to provide much needed assistance to millions of workers around the country as they seek to care for their own serious health condition or that of a family member or as they welcome the birth or adoption of a child. I will continue to support this law and efforts to ensure that the vital benefits that it provides are not eroded.

The Military Family Support Act is endorsed by the National Guard Association of the United States, NGAUS, the National Military Family Association, NMFA, the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States, EANGUS, the Military Officers Association of America, MOAA, and the National Partnership for Women and Families.

I thank the Senator from Vermont, Mr. JEFFORDS, for his work on this important measure, and I thank the chairman and ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee for agreeing to accept this amendment.

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, I rise in support of this amendment to the 2007 Defense authorization bill which I cosponsored with my esteemed colleague from California, Senator BARBARA BOXER. I also thank my other colleagues who have joined us in cosponsoring this amendment.

It is my strong belief that all prisoners of war who die in captivity should be eligible for the Purple Heart, regardless of the cause of death, for they all will have paid the ultimate price. Approximately 17,000 prisoners of war—including fine servicemembers from my own great State of Maine—have died while in captivity since December 7, 1941—the start of World War II. More than 8,100 Korean war servicemen—46 from Maine—and more than 1,800 Americans—14 from Maine—remain unaccounted for from Vietnam.

In rightful honor of all our prisoners of war, I am proud to be co-offering this amendment to the DOD authorization bill that would bestow the Purple Heart upon those Americans who perished while held captive as a result of starvation, disease, or maltreatment. Currently, only prisoners of war who die during their imprisonment of wounds inflicted by an instrument of war—such as a gunshot wound or intentional poisoning—are eligible for posthumous Purple Heart recognition. Those who die of starvation, disease, or other causes during captivity are not.

How can we say that anyone who dies at the hands of our enemy doesn't deserve this mark of respect and honor from a grateful nation—whether they make the ultimate sacrifice on the battlefield or behind barbed wire? They fought for America and died at the hands of our enemy—what more do we

need to know and what more could they have given than their very lives? They and their families have earned this honor.

The intent of this amendment is to correct this injustice by requiring the President, our Commander in Chief, to review the current circumstances establishing eligibility for the Purple Heart and advise Congress on modifications to the criteria for the Purple Heart award, which I strongly believe should take into account such inhuman war tactics as the deliberate withholding of medical treatment for injury or disease by enemy forces.

Last month, the House Armed Services Committee adopted their version of the Honor Our Fallen Prisoners of War Act—which had 216 cosponsors—during committee markup of the Defense authorization bill. The Honor Our Fallen Prisoners of War Act has been endorsed by a number of prominent military and veterans organizations, including the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Korean War Veterans Association, National League of POW/MIA Families, and the Tiger Survivors.

The posthumous awarding of the Purple Heart Award to members of the armed services who died while in captivity or died due to injury or illness incurred while in captivity would be of only some comfort to the next of kin of these fine service men and women. I sincerely hope that the Senate Armed Services Committee will follow suit by taking similar action as the House and adopt this legislation.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. TALENT. Mr. President, on behalf of the majority leader, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM DAY

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, yesterday, my colleague and friend, Senator SANTORUM, hosted a bipartisan, bicameral event to evaluate the status of religious freedom in America and around the world. I thank Senator SANTORUM for his passionate commitment to the cause of religious liberty, as well as my colleagues NORM COLEMAN and SAM BROWNBACK for their participation.

Religious freedom is the bedrock of our founding principles. Indeed, it is the very first clause of the first amendment of the U.S. Constitution:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

As George Washington wrote in his letter to the United Baptist Chamber of Virginia, May of 1789: "Every man, conducting himself as a good citizen,

and being accountable to God alone for his religious opinions, ought to be protected in worshipping the Deity according to the dictates of his own conscience."

We are blessed to live in a country built on freedom of conscience, thought, and action. Waves and waves of hopeful aspirants have flocked to these shores to exercise this basic human right.

But in every era, religious freedom, like all other freedoms, has come under challenge. And in every era, we have been called upon to promote and defend religious liberty here at home and in faraway lands. We do so as a matter of principle. Freedom of conscience and religion is the most basic, fundamental human right. No person should be persecuted, imprisoned or harmed because of their personal faith. But as 9/11 showed us with such terrible force, we also do so as a matter of national security.

I thank Senator SANTORUM for bringing this topic front and center to Capitol Hill yesterday, along with his distinguished panelists.

We heard from the eminent U.N. Ambassador John Bolton on the gains that are being made around the globe. We also heard from courageous dissidents, including Dr. Wafa Sultan and Eli El-Khoury, who have suffered for their faith and been persecuted for their convictions.

America must remain ever vigilant to the threats, challenges, and opportunities we face. From North Korea to the troubled Middle East, for millions of people, religious liberty is still a fragile hope they look to us to nurture.

It is our duty as Americans and our honor as sons and daughters of the greatest revolution and the ongoing American experiment in ordered liberty and religious freedom.

TRIBUTE TO MANNY CORTEZ

Mr. REID. Mr. President, when people around the world think of my home State of Nevada, their first thoughts are usually of Las Vegas.

Around the world, people know us for our first-class entertainment and resorts, our world-class dining, and for slogans like "what happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas." But what most people don't know is that Las Vegas is the city it is today because of the hard work of one man—Manny Cortez. Manny was a friend, and it is with great sadness that I come to the chamber today to pay tribute to his life. He passes away from a heart attack on Sunday. He was 67.

Manny Cortez achieved so much in life. He served on the Clark County Commission, the Taxi Authority, and in the district attorney's office. He was, however, best known as the president of the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority. He held this post for 13 years, from 1991 to 2004. Under Manny's tenure, Las Vegas went from seeing 21 million visitors a year to

more than 35 million, from 1.8 convention delegates to nearly 6 million, and from 73,000 hotel rooms to 140,000 hotel rooms.

As his successor on the convention board, Rossi Ralenkotter, said: Manny was one of the cornerstones that made Las Vegas the success it is today.

Former Clark County Commissioner Paul Christensen has echoed that sentiment, saying: Putting Manny Cortez in charge of the (convention authority) was one of the better moves we ever made. He never ever told you he would do something that he wouldn't back up.

Throughout his life, Manny was recognized as an astute marketer and businessman. For example, he was named Person of the Year by Travel Magazine in 1999. He was past president of the Boys and Girls Clubs in Las Vegas. He served on a number of boards. But for all his achievements and success, I think the Las Vegas community will remember Manny more for being a leader and good man.

In Monday's Las Vegas Sun, Editor Brian Greenspun shares this recollection of Manny.

When the late Gov. Mike O'Callaghan appointed Manny to the Taxi Authority, he said that in Manny he had a man who cared about people and about doing what was right. Manny lived that obligation throughout his life.

That is how I will remember Manny too, as a good man who always did the right thing.

Manny—like Las Vegas—was a true American success story. He was born in Las Cruces, NM. His father was a baker. His mother was a retailer. They moved to Las Vegas when Manny was 5. A product of Las Vegas schools, he held a degree from Nevada Southern University. He didn't start at the top, but he ended up there.

Manny leaves behind his wife Joanna, two daughters, Catherine and Cynthia, and two grandchildren, Andrew and Christina. Today, Mr. President, our prayers are with them.

Many is gone. He will be missed. And his presence will be felt by everyone who visits Las Vegas.

IMPROVING SERVICES FOR HOMELESS VETERANS

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, yesterday I introduced legislation to improve services for homeless veterans, and prevent chronic homelessness amongst our returning servicemen and women in the war on terror. This bill will expand the housing and services available to our Nation's homeless veterans and their dependents, and improve the ability of the Department of Veterans Affairs, VA, to provide health care services to this same group of deserving Americans. I will take a few moments now to explain the provisions of this legislation.

Public Law 107-95 was the last comprehensive homeless veterans assistance act signed into law. A number of the authorizations in that law, aimed

at preventing and reducing homelessness amongst veterans, have expired or will expire this year. In March, I held a hearing on these needs, at which VA, its Federal partners, and community-based service providers to the homeless testified about what is working, what isn't, what duplication might be eliminated, and where deficiencies exist that must be addressed.

At the hearing, we learned that this year alone, more than a half dozen Federal agencies will devote over \$2 billion to homelessness. VA alone will spend upward of \$221 million on grants, housing and treatment of underlying conditions. In fact, the budget the Senate passed included record-level funding for the sixth straight year for targeted programs for homeless veterans. These figures do not include the total costs of the law enforcement and emergency medical treatment for the homeless, which are astounding.

Plainly stated, America's chronically homeless are some of the most expensive people in communities across this country, yet they live lives no one wants to imagine having. We must ensure that our resources are invested carefully so that homeless veterans can resume their self-sufficiency and independence. I believe this bill will help us realize this shared goal.

Among other things, this measure extends the authorization of appropriations for comprehensive services for homeless veterans, a grant program for homeless veterans with special needs, a technical assistance program, and extends the authority of the Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans. It also extends the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to transfer properties obtained through foreclosures of Department home mortgages to certain organizations to assist homeless veterans and their families in acquiring shelter. The bill also includes the authorization of appropriations for a program designed to prevent homelessness by providing financial assistance to eligible entities to provide and coordinate the provision of supportive services for very low-income veteran families occupying permanent housing.

I am pleased to introduce the Comprehensive Homeless Veterans Assistance and Prevention Act of 2006 along with my committee ranking member, Senator AKAKA, as well as two committee members who have been particularly active on issues facing homeless veterans, Senators BURR and OBAMA.

Over the coming days, the Committee on Veterans' Affairs will be taking up this bill and other legislation introduced to improve the range of services and benefits available to our Nation's veterans. I look forward to working with my colleagues throughout the rest of this Congress on these and other important efforts.