

the President signs this bill. The House and Senate have found a compromise that works for both parties. The version we passed in the Senate passed with 68 votes, more than enough to override a veto. The compromise version is very much like the Senate version, even though some of us would like to see us do a bit more.

The compromise would cover 4 million American children, as I said, 75,000 of them living in my State of Ohio. These children did not choose to be uninsured. They are not uninsured because their families walked away from private insurance. Understand, most of the children in the Children's Health Insurance Program are sons and daughters of working parents, parents who are working hard, playing by the rules, simply not making enough money to buy private insurance, and their employers are not providing that insurance.

The fact is, private insurance too often steers clear of too many working families in Akron and Toledo and Zanesville and Marion and Lima and Marietta. These families are uninsured because they have no choice. Their children have no choice. But we have a choice. We can choose to help them. Let's do it.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

NICS IMPROVEMENT ACT AND LEAHY-SCHUMER AMENDMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I rise to speak about H.R. 2640—it is called the NICS Improvement Act—and the Leahy-Schumer amendment.

I have worked long and hard on this bill. It has been a long time in coming. Now it is time to get it passed. To put it simply, the young man who was behind the great tragedy at Virginia Tech had a long history of mental illness but still fell through the cracks of our checking systems and bought guns and ammunition.

It is against the law for someone with serious mental illness to buy a gun. When the system fails, we are all less safe. This bill will get desperately needed resources to the States to help improve our Federal background check process. This bill will make it harder for someone to get lost in the system.

We cannot wait any longer before passing this commonsense piece of legislation. We cannot sit back and watch another Virginia Tech shooting happen without doing everything we can to stop it.

I have worked hard on this bill for more than a decade and the background check system to which it is added. In 2002, Representative CAROLYN MCCARTHY and I introduced legislation similar to what I am discussing today. It was in response to another senseless shooting. This one was at Our Lady of Peace Church, in our State, in Lynbrook, on Long Island. That was where someone with a long history of

mental illness bought a gun, walked into Our Lady of Peace Church, killed Father Lawrence Penzes and a longtime parishioner, Eileen Tosner.

So back then we introduced a bill to get money to the States to help them get important records—on mental illness, convictions, things such as that—into the NICS system. But because of the climate of mistrust on all sides of the gun issue, that bill was never passed into law. I believe it passed the House once. I believe it passed the Senate once. But the two never hooked up.

Now, here we are again. It saddens me that it has taken this long—it has been years since Our Lady of Peace; it has been 5 months since Virginia Tech—to move the debate forward and try to get something done about safety on our streets and college campuses.

Now we are so close. The House has passed similar legislation that went through with the support of both the NRA and the Brady Campaign. That does not happen too often. As you know, when the NRA and I agree on an issue, there is a good chance some good can come of it.

We already have a comprehensive background check system, but since the system relies on up-to-date computer searches to produce fast results, it is only as good as the automated information the States provide. That is why the focus of the bill is to get more records into the system. So under the bill, States that opt into the system that do well will be rewarded with grants and financial incentives. States that do not will be punished.

We have modified that so smaller States that have more difficulty keeping the records because they have smaller budgets will not be penalized. Senator LEAHY correctly insisted that be done to protect his State of Vermont. But it affects smaller States as well. The amendments Senator LEAHY has suggested and been added to this bill, I believe, improve it without getting any of our delicately balanced coalition out of kilter in any way. So I thank Senator LEAHY for doing that.

Perhaps the most important thing I can say about this bill is it is all about public safety. It is all about enforcing the laws on the books. This is not—and this is important—is not a gun control bill. No lawful gun owners are going to have their guns taken away. Nobody who should be allowed to get a gun will have his or her rights restricted.

The bill targets only those records that are supposed to be in the system already—records that demonstrate whether someone is seriously mentally ill, a felon, or so on. What Virginia Tech showed us is when the background check system fails, the consequences can be terribly tragic.

Congresswoman CAROLYN MCCARTHY and I saw that in Long Island and, of course, the Nation saw it at Virginia Tech. Nothing can bring back the 33 young people who died last April, and we do not know if we can prevent another Virginia Tech from happening,

but our bill will take a substantial step toward making the system better and keeping our streets and schools safer.

I yield the floor.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I was unable to cast a vote on Friday, September 21, on amendment No. 2898 to the Defense authorization bill. I have voted against similar measures in the past, and had I been available to vote on Friday, I would have again voted against this attempt to direct a precipitous withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq.

The terms of this amendment would have required U.S. troops to begin leaving Iraq within 90 days of the Defense authorization bill's enactment and complete that withdrawal within 9 months. While I understand public frustration with the war, I believe a precipitous and arbitrary withdrawal mandated by Congress is not a wise solution to the situation in Iraq. I cannot support attempts to set an arbitrary deadline for withdrawing our forces from Iraq, which endangers our troops, our safety at home and the overall stability of Iraq and the Middle East.

I believe our military commanders should determine how and when our troops begin leaving Iraq based on conditions on the ground. General Petraeus announced this month that he would be able to begin withdrawing U.S. forces from Iraq. I believe Congress should rely on the guidance and leadership of General Petraeus and our other commanders on the ground to determine how best to eventually bring our troops home from Iraq.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote: "The time is always ripe to do right."

This week, the time is ripe to do right by America's children.

Last Friday, my colleagues and I unveiled a strong, bicameral agreement to renew and improve the Children's Health Insurance Program.

CHIP covers kids whose parents don't qualify for Medicaid, but who cannot afford costly private insurance.

CHIP works to get health coverage to uninsured kids in America's working families.

The agreement we reached to renew CHIP will make sure that more than 6½ million children with health coverage today will keep that coverage.

The agreement we reached will make sure that millions more low-income, uninsured American children get a healthy start.

It is a good agreement. It is fiscally responsible. It has broad support across the Congress. And most importantly, it puts children first.

In August, 68 Senators voted for nearly the exact same \$35 billion agreement to renew and improve the Children's Health Insurance Program. They

voted to reach millions more uninsured children in low-income, working families.

This week, Senators can stand up for kids again.

I know that there is pressure from the White House. The White House is asking Senators to turn away this time.

But the President is endangering children when he distorts what this bill does. The President is endangering children when he repeats his veto threats.

Moreover, the agreement does exactly what the President says it should.

The agreement will target the Children's Health Insurance Program toward the lowest-income eligible children. It will give States bonus funding for enrolling the poorest kids for health care. And it will reduce Federal funding for children in higher-income families.

The agreement will not raise the eligibility level for CHIP. That will still be for the administration and the States to decide. That is how the CHIP law was written in 1997, by a Republican-led Congress. We do not change that.

Our goal is to reach more of the low-income, uninsured children who are already eligible for CHIP today. Our goal is to keep the program for kids.

That is why our agreement will curb coverage of adults in CHIP.

It will improve the kids' coverage in so many ways, from outreach for minority communities to dental care for every child who enrolls.

In addition, a straight extension of CHIP at current funding, or at the President's cut-rate budget proposal, will cause thousands, even millions of children to lose their health coverage.

Many families would have no choice at all to get health care for their kids. They would have no way to pay the doctor. They would have no way to buy the medicine.

But CHIP can get kids in working families the doctor's visits and medicines that they need when they're sick. CHIP can get them the checkups that they need to stay well.

In 10 years, the Children's Health Insurance Program has reduced the number of low-income children living without health insurance by one-third.

And 82 percent of Americans want Congress to cover more low-income, uninsured kids with CHIP.

This week, Congress is heeding the call. This week, we will choose to do right by America's kids.

The President should look beyond politics. The President should look to the faces of America's uninsured children.

The President should see that the time is ripe for him to do right, as well.

I thank my colleagues, and urge their support for America's children this week.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

STAFF SERGEANT ROBB ROLFING

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I wish to pay tribute to SSG Robb Rolfing and his heroic service to our country. He was killed in action on June 30, 2007, by enemy small arms fire while on a mission near Baghdad. Robb was a member of the elite Green Berets as a special forces engineer to Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group, Airborne, in Fort Carson, CO. Robb was on his second tour of duty when he was killed.

Robb Lura Rolfing was born on December 4, 1977, to Rex and Margie Rolfing in Sioux Falls, SD. He grew up admiring "MacGyver," prompting him to start carrying duct tape everywhere he went.

Before Robb became a soldier, he attended Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, NY, majored in physics and astronomy, and played soccer. During his time as captain on the Vassar soccer team, he took the team to Vassar's first ever NCAA tournament postseason playoff, in any sport, where he scored the winning goal in the first round of games. To further demonstrate his talent as a soccer player, he was named to the NSCAA/Adidas All-Region Team and the All-New York Team. A Vassar basketball coach told the Rolfing family that he would often see Robb practicing soccer out on the field by himself in the morning and after regular scheduled practices. The coach said, "If I had 5 Robb's we would win every game because of the determination and focus he showed." After college, he went to work in field management at Rollins College in Winter Park, FL, and then moved on to coach soccer at Currey College in Boston.

Robb's mom Margie says that she has started a list called "Amazing Robb." This list is a compilation of stories, thoughts, and recollections that the family has gathered from family and friends of Robb. Margie recalls one particular moment when Robb's sister, Tiffany, was about to graduate from high school. The family thought that he was still overseas during his first tour, but he showed up at home wearing a blanket of Tiffany's college over his head just standing at the door. The only way Tiffany recognized it was Robb was because of his shoes—he had them duct taped because he refused to buy new shoes as the ones with duct tape were far too comfortable to throw away.

Robb always wanted something more out of the life he was given. After the events of September 11, 2001, Robb's calling to help serve his country was jolted into action and he joined the Army in January of 2003. He completed his basic training at Fort Benning, GA, and was assigned to the 101st Airborne at Fort Campbell, KY. Shortly after returning from his first tour, he qualified and was accepted into the special forces unit where he became a Green Beret.

Robb's good will and service touched the lives of many people. Although his

life was cut short, he continues to inspire all those who knew him. Our Nation owes him a debt of gratitude, and the best way to honor his life is to emulate his commitment to our country.

Mr. President, I join with all South Dakotans in expressing my deepest sympathy to the family of SSG Robb Rolfing. He will be missed, but his service to our Nation will never be forgotten.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

2007 DAVIDSON FELLOWS AWARD

• Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, it is with great admiration that today I recognize some of the most intelligent, driven young minds in this country. I would like to acknowledge the 17 recipients of the 2007 Davidson Fellows Award, a scholarship awarded to exceptional students to assist them in furthering their education. These scholarships are given by the Davidson Institute for Talent Development to inspiring individuals under the age of 18 who have completed academically rigorous projects that demonstrate a potential to make a significant, positive contribution to society. This year's recipients achieved academic excellence in the areas of science, literature, mathematics, technology, and music. As I read through the accomplishments these young minds have achieved, I can assure you that this year's recipients are more than deserving of such an honor. I would like to take a few moments to describe what each recipient has accomplished.

Richard Alt II, a 17-year-old from Fredericksburg, VA, has compared three weather forecasting methods to formulate a brandnew forecasting method. He has done this through detailed interpretation and analysis of varying aspects of climatology. Through his findings, Richard has created a universal process that allows meteorologists to compile more accurate forecast data and help public officials prepare seasonal response plans for various weather patterns.

Another 17-year-old from Vienna, VA, Christina Beasley has explored human perception and beauty in her portfolio, "An Experiment in Free Speech." This young lady has compared emotion in famous literary works to her own pieces of writing to reveal the tucked away beauty of common occurrences. She has realized through careful research and interpretation that a person must make the connection between emotion and rationality to fully understand the intricacies of the human mind.

Sixteen-year-old Nate Bottman of Seattle, WA has found an array of solutions to the Nonlinear Schrodinger Equation, NLS, that shows the pattern of waves in fluids and plasmas that have sharp boundaries and dissipation. Nate has developed a method of finding