

new commission. I had the chance earlier this month to meet with Stuart Bowen, who is that inspector general and in that position. We discussed this amendment, and he agreed it was a good proposal, one that deserved to be implemented to enhance the ability to uncover and prosecute gross abuses of the public trust.

No matter where one stands on the war in Iraq, I would hope we could agree on the need to eliminate all waste and fraud and prosecute those who facilitate such fraud and such waste. These actions bring dishonor to our Nation and, in a word, are unpatriotic. We should do everything we can to root out such abuses, and this amendment is an important first step to do that.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

SCHIP

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I came to the floor earlier today and spoke very favorably of my friend, CHARLES GRASSLEY from Iowa, and he deserved that attention that I gave him, those accolades that I extended to him.

I also want to extend my appreciation to Senator HATCH, who has worked on this. He is a member of the Finance Committee. He did an outstanding job and helped us get to the point where we are now. We are going to talk more about SCHIP tomorrow. I do not want those who worked so hard on this side to think that I have forgotten about them just because I said so many nice things about Senator GRASSLEY.

Senator BAUCUS, the chairman of the committee, has been a champion from the very beginning. He worked hard to try to explain to everyone that we could not do everything the House wanted to do, even though he and I wanted to do that.

The same applies to Senator ROCKEFELLER, who is the subcommittee chair who worked on this. He did a wonderful job. He attended meetings with the House when his presence was extremely important.

I want to make sure that everyone understands the great work done by Senators BAUCUS, GRASSLEY, HATCH, and ROCKEFELLER as members of the Finance Committee to get us to a point where tomorrow sometime we will finish our work on SCHIP.

HATE CRIMES

Mr. REID. Mr. President, Matthew Shepard was a 21-year-old student at the University of Wyoming when he was savagely beaten on October 6, 1998.

Why? Because he was a homosexual; he was gay. Two men who had offered him a ride home robbed and pistol whipped him, beat him so severely they smashed his skull. If that wasn't enough for these demons, they tied him to a fence with a rope in the cold of winter, lonely—you can appreciate it if you spent a few of them in Wyoming—and left him to die. And he did die. He died of severe head injuries less than a week after the beating that was given.

What happened to Matthew was a tragedy for this young man, of course for his family, for other gay men and women who were and have been terrorized by this awful crime. It was certainly a tragedy for our Nation. The men who murdered Matthew Shepard were not charged with committing a hate crime because crimes of violence committed on the basis of sexual orientation were not prosecutable as hate crimes under Wyoming or Federal law. This is still the case today. The Matthew Shepard Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act would strengthen the ability of Federal, State, and local governments to investigate and prosecute hate crimes.

This amendment would remove the current limitation on Federal jurisdiction that allows Federal involvement only in cases in which the assailant intended to prevent the victim from being engaged in a "federally protected activity," such as voting. This amendment would expand the groups protected under current law to include all hate crimes, including those based on disability, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity—including race and ethnicity. This amendment would provide the Department of Justice the authority to assist State and local jurisdictions in prosecuting violent hate crimes or taking the lead in such prosecutions where local authorities are unwilling or unable to act.

Unfortunately, some of these crimes of hate-motivated violence have been directed to our men and women in uniform.

Just a few years ago, Alan Schindler, a sailor in the Navy, was stomped to death by a fellow serviceman because of his sexual orientation.

A short time after that, PFC Barry Winchell, an infantry soldier in the Army, was beaten to death with a baseball bat because his attackers believed he was gay. They didn't know—they believed he was gay. To them he acted gay, whatever that means.

In December of 1995, two paratroopers who were members of a group of neo-Nazi skinheads at Fort Bragg shot an African-American couple in a random, racially motivated double murder that led to a major investigation of extremism in our military. These killers and 19 other members of this division were dishonorably discharged for neo-Nazi gang activities.

According to a recent Southern Poverty Law Center report, the problem is only going to get worse as members of hate groups have been entering our

military, which is increasingly desperate for new recruits. In fact, it used to be if you had committed a crime, any type of crime, the military wouldn't take you. You had to have a high school education and you certainly couldn't be a member of a gang. They are so desperate for military members because of this war we are involved in in Iraq, they are taking just about anybody. There are no background checks with these new recruits.

We have to make it clear that crimes of hate in our military will not be tolerated, and this amendment does just that. It strengthens the Defense authorization bill by sending a clear message that such crimes will be punished to the fullest extent of the law.

Is there a better place to have this amendment than on the Defense bill? I think not. We have had it on it before. If we have our military around the world fighting terror—and that is what they are doing—shouldn't we be able to protect our own troops from the terror? Shouldn't we be able to protect our own people in this country against being terrorized because of their sexual orientation? the color of their skin? their religion? The answer, of course, is we should be able to do that. They should be able to be protected.

We have to make it clear that crimes of hate in our military will not be tolerated. I repeat that. As we hold ourselves up as a model for the ideals of equality, tolerance, and mutual understanding abroad, we have a special responsibility to combat hate-motivated violence right here at home. Our troops are on the front lines of Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere fighting against evil and hate. We owe it to them to uphold these same principles at home.

The Matthew Shepherd Act was introduced this spring at a ceremony attended by his parents, Judy and Dennis. I hope that tomorrow we will honor the memory of this young man by passing this important legislation which is named after him.

We all remember the brutal killing of James Byrd a few years ago, in Texas. This young man, at nighttime, was walking down a street in his own hometown when he was seen by some white men. They beat him severely, tied him to the back of their car, and dragged him through the streets until he was dead.

We need only look to the recent events in Jena, LA, to see for all the progress, racial tensions continue across our country. This legislation honors the commitment to justice that is woven deep within the fabric of our Nation.

I certainly urge all of our colleagues to join me in voting for this matter in the morning. It is important. It is the least we can do for Matthew Shepard and his family.

THE DREAM ACT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I was disappointed earlier this year when the

comprehensive immigration reform was not passed. On two separate occasions, as Republicans filibustered the legislation to its legislative death, we tried to move this to conference on comprehensive immigration reform, and it was filibustered both times. We had knowledge there were not enough Republican votes to pass it. The last time we got 12 Republican Senators.

Part of that vital legislation was something we called the DREAM Act. This legislation's advocates have moved very hard. The primary advocate for this, and its primary sponsor, has been Senator RICHARD DURBIN of Illinois. He has worked tirelessly in his efforts to pass the DREAM Act. He has spoken within the Senate on many occasions, both here on the Senate floor, in the committee, and in press conferences we have had regarding immigration. I have never known Senator DURBIN to feel more strongly about anything than this, and we have been together for 5 years.

The DREAM Act recognizes that children should not be penalized for the actions of their parents. Many of these youth come to America very young. Many do not even remember their country of origin because they were too young when they left, nor do they speak the language of their home country. They think of themselves as Americans.

Many of these children are so desperate to be able to go to school. Only children who come to the United States when they were 15 years old or younger and have been in the United States for at least 5 years can apply under the DREAM Act. They would have to meet certain criteria, including earning a high school diploma, demonstrated good moral character, and passing criminal and security clearances. That is what the DREAM Act requires. To qualify for permanent status you must go to college or serve in the military for at least 2 years.

I have met star students in Nevada, for lack of a better description, who had qualified for the DREAM Act. With it their future is limitless. Without it, their future is very limited. Their future is diminished, of course, if they can't go to school.

Many of the children this bill would help are extremely talented and have graduated in the top of their classes, yet cannot go to a State school. What a waste it is to make it more difficult for them to go to college or prohibit them from getting jobs where they could be making meaningful contributions to their communities and to our country. What good does it do anybody to prevent these young people from having a future? Is gang membership better? Is a minimum wage job for life better? Is a life of crime better?

I hoped we would be able to offer this legislation as an amendment to the pending legislation, the Defense Authorization Act, but we have been unable to do that. Enacting the DREAM Act will give more of our children an opportunity to succeed.

Senator DURBIN and all who care about this matter should know that we will move to proceed to this matter before we leave here. I am going to do my utmost to do it by November 16. This is important legislation. We have a commitment to the young people to do this. It was part of the comprehensive immigration reform. It was a key part of comprehensive immigration reform. It was there that Senator DURBIN began talking about it—some would think incessantly—but he talked about it all the time, and he still feels strongly about this.

I send a message to him tonight and all who care about this legislation, we are going to try to move to this legislation. We should have been able to do it on this bill. We are going to be unable to do it, but we are going to move forward on this legislation as I have outlined.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SERGEANT EDMUND J. JEFFERS

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, today I wish to reflect on the life of SGT Edmund Jeffers, who died last Wednesday in a vehicle accident in Taqqadum, Iraq. Sergeant Jeffers served in the 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry, 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division. At the age of 23 he was on his second tour of duty in Iraq.

Eddie Jeffers grew up in Daleville, AL, just south of Fort Rucker. The son of a master sergeant, he learned the value of military service early in life. He enlisted in the Army Reserve in 2002 after his graduation, feeling the call of duty after the events of September 11.

Those who knew Sergeant Jeffers describe him as a man of conviction, principle, and faith. His Christian values, his father recounts, guided his work as a soldier. They strengthened his resolve to defeat those who commit evils against innocents, and they kept alive his hope for a future of freedom and security for Iraqis. He saw the threat of terrorism as the struggle of his generation, a long war that will require sacrifice and commitment from all Americans.

Sergeant Jeffers, like so many soldiers before him, documented his experiences in war with pen and paper. He kept a journal in Iraq, posted updates for his friends and family online, and shared some of his writings with the world. He was eloquent and sharp. One of his essays, entitled "Hope Rides Alone," has circulated widely on the internet, and newspapers have reprinted portions in recent days.

In the essay, Eddie worried that the political debate at home was weakening our resolve to achieve success in Iraq and was driving a wedge between the country and the military.

He noted that this war is being fought on the backs of our men and women in uniform, while the "American people have not been asked to sacrifice anything. Unless you are in the military or the family member of a

servicemember, it's life as usual . . . the war doesn't affect you. But it affects us."

The political debate here in Washington, Sergeant Jeffers argued, has become a national preoccupation that is distracting our focus from our goals in Iraq. As Sergeant Jeffers notes, there is strong disagreement in this country about the course we should take in Iraq. Our soldiers, too, have many different opinions. Much of this debate is necessary and healthy for a democracy, but, as Sergeant Jeffers cautions, the discussion should neither distract us from our efforts to protect national security nor lessen our commitment to helping secure a better future for Iraqis.

In the end, Iraqis "want what everyone else wants in life: safety, security, somewhere to call home," Sergeant Jeffers wrote. "They want a country that is safe to raise their children in."

General MacArthur once said that it is "the soldier, above all other people, who prays for peace, for he must suffer and bear the deepest scars of war." This was true for Eddie. Amid the chaos and violence in Iraq, Sergeant Jeffers never lost sight of the simple aspirations and the basic humanity that bind the vast majority of Iraqis.

I admire Sergeant Jeffers' life and service, all the more for his courage to share his thoughts with the world. His writings are powerful and challenge us to better account for the costs of freedom and for the sacrifices that all Americans should be prepared to make on its behalf.

One cannot adequately honor Eddie Jeffers' service and sacrifice. His actions need no praise to be commendable, and his writings stand alone with the force of his convictions. We are humbled by his life and saddened by his loss.

To Eddie's wife Stephanie, and to his parents Tina and David, my thoughts and prayers are with you. I know of no words that can lessen the pain that you feel, but I hope that one day you will find comfort in knowing that Eddie's sacrifice will never be forgotten. He challenges us to do better by our soldiers, to never let "hope walk alone." His voice is heard, and his country is grateful. He will endure in our hearts and our prayers.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO PEGGY EWING WAXTER

• Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, today I commemorate the life of Peggy Ewing Waxter, a woman who worked tirelessly to promote positive social change and civil rights. Mrs. Waxter passed away last Tuesday, September 18, 2007, at the age of 103. The State of Maryland and our Nation have lost a remarkable woman.

In the 1930s, Mrs. Waxter helped found the Waxter Center for Seniors in