

Sunday and thereby coincided with the Passover festival, council further decided that Easter would be commemorated on the following Sunday. The council also declared that the calendar date of Easter would be calculated at Alexandria, in Egypt, which was the leading astronomical center of the fourth century world.

This attempt to reconcile Easter celebrations proved difficult, however, as fourth century astronomy lacked the knowledge to resolve a discrepancy between the solar and lunar years. As a result, the differences between the true astronomical year and the Julian calendar then in use continued to grow. By 387 A.D., churches in France and Egypt were celebrating Easter on dates 35 days apart. In 465 A.D., the church adopted a reformed calendar that fixed the date of Easter, but churches in what is now the United Kingdom refused to adopt the changes.

In 1582, Pope Gregory XIII reformed the Julian calendar yet again, resulting in the calendar in use in much of the West today—the Gregorian calendar. This new calendar corrected many of the difficulties in fixing the date of Easter and other important ecclesiastical dates. When Great Britain and Ireland adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1752, Easter was celebrated on the same day in the Western part of the Christian world. However, the Eastern churches did not adopt the Gregorian calendar, and celebrate Easter on different dates. Occasionally, the two churches' calculations coincide, and Easter is celebrated on the same date throughout the world. The last time that happened was in 1963.

All of these details are fascinating, at least to a longtime fan of the study of history. I find it thought-provoking to consider how the study of astronomy and the development of calendars has affected our daily lives today, as they have the daily life of so many who have come before us. But does it matter, Mr. President, when we celebrate Easter? In the long run, I think, the celebration of that momentous moment in history is far more important than precision on the day of the week. Few events in history have had a more profound impact on our lives. You do not have to be a Christian or an adherent of any particular church or faith, to recognize the impact of Christ's life upon world history, regardless of which day of the week or week of the year it took place.

Christ's message, brought home by His sacrifice at Easter time and His subsequent resurrection, changed the lives of billions of people over the years. In Matthew 28:5-6, we are told, "The angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; He has risen, just as He said.'" That much change is bound to have an effect on everyone else.

The rise of a new religion and the power and passion of its churches has changed empires, international bound-

aries, customs, and lifestyles. The Christian religion has grown and spread across the globe, sweeping old religions away.

On this Sunday, Christians observe Palm Sunday, recalling Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem with crosses made of palm leaves like those that were laid across Christ's path to welcome Him. Next Friday, Christians will commemorate Christ's sacrifice on Good Friday, when He took up His crown of thorns and carried His own cross on that long, sad, walk to be crucified. Then on April 8, church bells will ring, and sunrise services will celebrate His resurrection from the dead and His ascension into heaven with the rising sun. It is a deeply moving and uplifting period, Mr. President, and it does not matter when it happens—only that it did happen. Beautiful, blessed Easter, giving hope to us all.

Mr. President, I wish you and yours all the blessings of Easter, with all of its promise of everlasting life spent in the love of the Lord. I close with a poem by Louise Lewin Matthews, called "Easter Morn."

EASTER MORN

(By Louise Lewin Matthews)

Easter morn with lilies fair
Fills the church with perfumes rare,
As their clouds of incense rise,
Sweetest offerings to the skies.
Stately lilies pure and white
Flooding darkness with their light,
Bloom and sorrow drifts away,
On this holy hallow'd day.
Easter lilies bending low
In the golden afterglow,
Bear a message from the sod
To the heavenly towers of God.

TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL A. PARKER

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to a dedicated public servant and a true friend to the people of Kentucky, Mr. Michael A. Parker. After years of exemplary work as the program manager for the Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives Program at the Department of Defense, Mr. Parker is retiring, and I want to express to him my thanks for his service.

Mr. Parker has held the post of program manager since December 1996. In that role, he consistently worked hard toward the goal of safely and expeditiously disposing of the dangerous chemical agents stored at the Blue Grass Army Depot in Madison County, KY. The people of Madison County are living right next door to over 500 tons of the deadliest material ever conceived by man. Understandably, they would like to see these weapons disposed of as safely and quickly as possible. Mike has been a key player in working toward that goal.

Mike appreciates the unique culture at the Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives Program and understands the need to work closely with the local community to reach acceptable solutions. The people of the Madison County area are going to miss Mike, as will I.

Proof of Mike's drive for excellence in his work lies in his numerous honors and awards. He holds the Presidential Rank Award at both the Distinguished and Meritorious levels. He also holds the Defense Department Distinguished Civilian Service Award, the Army Decoration for Exceptional Civilian Service, the Army Research and Development Achievement Award, the Army Commander's Medal, and the Army Meritorious Civilian Service Award.

Mr. President, Kentucky has been lucky to have such a friend in Michael A. Parker, and I speak for many in the Commonwealth when I say he will be missed. I ask my fellow Senators to join me in thanking Mike for his years of dedication and service and in wishing him good luck in his future endeavors.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I voted against the supplemental appropriations bill because of the provision which specifies a withdrawal date. With President Bush's statement that he will veto the bill, it will be returned to Congress so that we can negotiate with the White House to provide funding to support the troops without a withdrawal date which allows our enemies to wait us out.

I voted against the supplemental appropriations bill for the same reasons that I voted in favor of Senator COCHRAN's amendment to strike a withdrawal date, which amendment failed. The full statement of my reasons appear in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD in the proceedings on March 28, 2007, in relation to the Cochran amendment.

IRAQI TRANSLATOR LEGISLATION

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I strongly support legislation that would increase the number of visas available for Iraqi and Afghan translators.

America has a strong obligation to keep faith with the Iraqis and Afghans who have worked so bravely with us—and have often paid a terrible price for it. Translators have been the eyes and ears of our military, and they have saved American lives. They now have a target on their backs because of their service to our country, and we need to protect them by granting them safe refuge in the United States.

Under the current program, only 50 translators a year from Iraq and Afghanistan are eligible for admission to the United States. So far this year, we have already admitted 50, and 450 more are waiting for admission under the program. At the current rate, that is a 9-year backlog.

These men and women are in mortal danger every day and they should be permitted to come to the United States without delay. They have been recommended by the American military. The Department of Homeland Security agreed that they are eligible for admission to the United States. To ensure

that these courageous allies are able to come to America this year, the Lugar-Kennedy bill authorizes 500 visas a year for the current fiscal year 2007 and for the next 2 years so that this critical lifeline will continue to be available. Under the bill's provisions, persons who served as translators or interpreters either for our military or for the Department of State can qualify.

The bill is not intended to address the much broader massive refugee crisis unfolding in Iraq. Already more than 2 million Iraqis have fled the country, and nearly 2 million more have been displaced internally.

Each refugee is a personal story of courage, loyalty, heroism, and tragedy. We have a special duty to protect all of them and their loved ones who are being targeted by insurgents and sectarian death squads either because of their faith or because of their association with the United States. Obviously, we cannot take all of these refugees into America, but we have an obligation to lead an international effort to solve this dangerous crisis as well.

Legislation is essential to address this problem, and I am hopeful we can enact it soon. But it is especially urgent that we act now to protect the lives of the translators who have served us so well in Iraq and Afghanistan.

OUR CHILDREN PAY THE PRICE

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, the increase in gun violence that affects towns, cities, and rural areas across this Nation takes a particularly heavy toll on our most precious resource, our children and grandchildren. Since 1979, over 101,000 children and teenagers have been killed by firearms. This staggering figure clearly illustrates the inadequacy of Congress's efforts to address the issue of gun violence.

On March 7, 2007, in the small city of Midland, MI, a 17-year-old male shot a 17-year-old female student before turning the gun on himself, committing suicide in the young girl's high school parking lot. Reports indicate the male drove to the school to talk with the female student. After arranging to meet her in the school parking lot, he shot her four times, while her mother watched in horror. He then turned the gun on himself. The very same day, in Greenville, TX, a city of only 26,000 people, a 16-year-old student fatally shot himself inside his high school's hallway.

These are just two examples of the misery gun violence inflicts. According to data collected by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, every day, on average, nearly eight children or teens are killed by gun violence in America. In 2004, 58 preschoolers were killed by firearms. Furthermore, for every child or teen death caused by a gun, there are nearly five nonfatal injuries. According to the Journal of the American Medical Association, the average cost per gunshot

victim, excluding rehabilitation and long-term care, is \$45,000. A single year's worth of gunshot injuries adds up to approximately \$2.3 billion in lifetime medical costs, half of which is paid for by taxpayers.

The Children's Defense Fund, in their 2007 report on gun violence, makes a number of recommendations to protect children from gun violence. Among other things, the CDF recommends parents remove guns from their homes, schools provide nonviolent conflict resolution courses for all students, and communities create positive activities for children and teenagers to reduce the influence of gangs and drugs. Congress must also take an active role. We should pass commonsense gun safety legislation, support law enforcement and community programs, and help focus media and public attention on causes and consequences of gun violence.

I am hopeful the 110th Congress will work to break the cycle of gun violence that plagues so many of our communities and our children and grandchildren.

WHITE SANDS MISSILE RANGE

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I rise today to commemorate an event that occurred 25 years ago in New Mexico.

Most of my colleagues know White Sands Missile Range, WSMR, NM, is a premier test, evaluation and research site, but WSMR's role in the 1982 landing of the Space Shuttle Columbia is less well known.

WSMR's gypsum landing strips visible from space and the excellent weather in New Mexico have made WSMR a potential Space Shuttle launch and landing site since the beginning of NASA's Space Shuttle Program. However, WSMR has never been NASA's first choice for a landing site. But in March of 1982, the preferred landing site at Edwards Air Force Base was soaked with heavy rains. Because it was unclear when the runway surface would be dry enough to support Columbia's landing, WSMR was chosen as an alternative landing site.

Commander Jack R. Lousma and pilot C. Gordon Fullerton landed the Space Shuttle Columbia on WSMR's Northrup Strip at 9:05 a.m. on Tuesday, March 30, 1982. About 4,000 individuals witnessed the landing, and another 90,000 had the opportunity to see the Space Shuttle Columbia at WSMR before its return to Kennedy Space Center. I remember this event as a day of pride for me and my fellow New Mexicans, as our home State played such a visible role in the U.S. space mission.

Today I wish to commemorate this important part of White Sands Missile Range's history and honor the men and women who were a part of the Space Shuttle Columbia's landing at WSMR. While the Space Shuttle Columbia has been the only shuttle to land at WSMR, New Mexico stands ready to serve NASA again should the need

arise. In fact, as recently as December 2006 NASA officials considered landing the Space Shuttle Discovery at WSMR because of poor conditions at Kennedy Space Center and Edwards Air Force Base. WSMR prepared for that situation, and I have full confidence that they will continue to work to support NASA and other Federal entities as needed.

CYPRUS ENERGY EXPLORATION

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, the island of Cyprus has a longstanding reputation as a place of natural beauty and rich history. It is now emerging as a potential source of energy as well. Developed responsibly, oil and gas deposits under the island's southern continental shelf could provide an alternative source of hydrocarbons at a time when many European countries are struggling to diversify their energy supplies. If this ambition is realized, Cyprus could play an important role in promoting regional energy security.

The Government of the Republic of Cyprus, ROC, is working to establish partnerships with foreign companies and countries in an effort to bring these energy resources online. This process is being needlessly complicated, however, by individuals in Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot community who are discouraging foreign partners from working with the ROC. In view of this behavior, I believe it is important to affirm the ROC's right to search for and develop resources located under Cyprus' continental shelf.

Under international law, there is no question about the legality of the Cypriot Government's activities. The legal principles at issue are codified in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, to which Cyprus is a party. The ROC has entered into agreements delineating its Exclusive Economic Zone, EEZ, with Egypt and Lebanon and the areas under consideration for development are well within these boundaries. There is simply no juridical basis to dispute Cyprus' claims or actions.

I hope that both Ankara and leaders of the Turkish Cypriot community will cease their efforts to obstruct the exploration of Cypriot waters. Strong-arm diplomacy aimed at scaring away potential Cypriot business partners will only delay the peaceful reunification of Cyprus—and with it the day when all Cypriots can benefit from the island's energy resources.

I want to reiterate my longstanding call for both Cypriot communities to push forward with the technical talks and negotiations that I believe can reunify the island. However, in doing so, I want to caution that attempts to interfere in Cyprus' legitimate energy exploration activities will only complicate negotiations to end the estrangement of the island's peoples.

The country of Cyprus has long been a key partner for the United States, and our friendship rests on the bedrock