

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements related to the resolution be printed in the RECORD.

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

The concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 378) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

RECOGNIZING THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MINORITY AIDS INITIATIVE

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H. Con. Res. 426, which was received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the concurrent resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 426) recognizing the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Minority AIDS Initiative.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the concurrent resolution.

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. I ask unanimous consent the concurrent resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate, and any statements be printed in the RECORD.

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

The concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 426) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

REDUCING MATERNAL MORTALITY

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. Res. 616 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 616) reducing maternal mortality both at home and abroad.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. I ask unanimous consent the Lincoln amendment to the resolution, which is at the desk, be agreed to, the resolution as amended be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate, and any statements be printed in the RECORD.

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

The amendment (No. 5694) was agreed to, as follows:

On page 3, line 4, strike "greater" and insert "more effective".

On page 3, lines 6 and 7, strike "maternal health as a human right" and insert "that the right to access quality and affordable health care is essential to improving maternal health".

The resolution (S. Res. 616), as amended, was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, as amended, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 616

Whereas more than 536,000 women die during pregnancy and childbirth every year which is one every minute;

Whereas in 15 percent of all pregnancies, the complications are life-threatening;

Whereas girls under 15 are 5 times more likely to die in childbirth than women in their 20s;

Whereas nearly all these deaths are preventable;

Whereas survival rates greatly depend upon the distance and time a woman must travel to get skilled emergency medical care;

Whereas care by skilled birth attendants, nurses, midwives, or doctors during pregnancy and childbirth, including emergency services, and care for mothers and newborns is essential;

Whereas the poorer the household, the greater the risk of maternal death, and 99 percent of maternal deaths occur in developing countries;

Whereas newborns whose mothers die of any cause are 3 to 10 times more likely to die within 2 years than those whose mothers survive;

Whereas more than 1,000,000 children are left motherless and vulnerable every year;

Whereas young girls are often pulled from school and required to fill their lost mother's roles;

Whereas a mother's death lowers family income and productivity which affects the entire community;

Whereas in countries with similar levels of economic development, maternal mortality is highest where women's status is lowest;

Whereas the United States ranks 41st among 171 countries in the latest UN list ranking maternal mortality;

Whereas the overall United States maternal mortality ratio is now 11 deaths per 100,000 live births, one of the highest rates among industrialized nations;

Whereas United States maternal deaths have remained roughly stable since 1982 and have not declined significantly since then;

Whereas the Centers for Disease Control estimates that the true level of United States maternal deaths may be 1.3 to 3 times higher than the reported rate; and

Whereas ethnic and racial disparities in maternal mortality rates persist and in the United States maternal mortality among black women is almost four times the rate among non-Hispanic white women: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) makes a stronger commitment to reducing maternal mortality both at home and abroad through more effective financial investment and participation in global initiatives; and

(2) recognizes that the right to access quality and affordable health care is essential to improving maternal health.

PRESERVATION OF RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL SITES

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 705, which was submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 705) expressing the sense of the Senate on the commitment of the United States to the preservation of religious and cultural sites.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 705) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 705

Whereas the Senate is committed to protecting and preserving the cultural heritage of all national, religious, and ethnic groups, including cemeteries and other sacred sites of those groups in the United States and abroad;

Whereas the Holocaust annihilated much of the Jewish population of Europe, and in many countries in Europe, no Jewish people were left to care for the communal properties that represent a historic culture in the area and constitute an integral part of the Jewish religion;

Whereas the Holocaust and 45 years of atheistic, Communist governments in Eastern Europe created a critical need that led to the establishment of the United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad under section 1303 of the International Security and Development Cooperation Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 469j);

Whereas the United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad is tasked with identifying and reporting on cemeteries, monuments, and historic buildings in Eastern and Central Europe that are associated with the heritage of United States citizens and obtaining assurances from the governments in those regions that those properties will be protected and preserved;

Whereas many of those properties continue to be endangered and governments and communities continue to face fundamental and compelling challenges in the preservation of those properties;

Whereas experts within Lithuania and from around the world believe that the cemetery located in the Snipiskes area of Vilnius, Lithuania, is an historic Jewish cemetery and is sacred ground;

Whereas, in 2005, municipal authorities in Vilnius, Lithuania, approved the construction of an apartment building at the outer edge of that Jewish cemetery;

Whereas that cemetery dates to the 15th century and is known by scholars in Lithuania and around the world as the first Jewish cemetery in Vilnius;

Whereas it is believed that, before the Government closed the cemetery in the early 1800s, more than 50,000 Jews were buried there;

Whereas, in December 2006, several months after experts and groups from around the world expressed grave concern about the desecration of the Snipiskes cemetery, the Prime Minister of Lithuania established a working group to define the cemetery's borders and to consider how to memorialize it;

Whereas, in 2007, before the conclusion of the working group, authorities of the Government of Lithuania approved additional construction on the disputed ground;

Whereas, in May 2007, the working group, consisting of historians, scientists, and rabbis from Lithuania and around the world, called for a halt in construction activity until completion of a site study to be undertaken using ground-penetrating radar;

Whereas, on September 3, 2008, a group commissioned by the Government of Lithuania to study the area using the ground-penetrating radar concluded that the boundaries of the cemetery included the disputed apartment buildings;

Whereas the Ministry of Culture of Lithuania released a statement dismissing the study as inconclusive;

Whereas the fact that the Government of Lithuania has allowed construction to take place at the Jewish cemetery located in the Snipiskes area of Vilnius, Lithuania, and that desecration of sacred sites continues into the 21st century, is an affront to the international Jewish community, the people of the United States, and everyone who values religious freedom and ethnic diversity around the world;

Whereas the United States and Lithuania signed the Agreement on the Protection and Preservation of Certain Cultural Properties on October 15, 2002;

Whereas Article 1 of the Agreement states, "Each Party will take appropriate steps to protect and preserve the cultural heritage of all national, religious or ethnic groups . . . who reside or resided in its territory and were victims of genocide in its territory during the Second World War. The term 'cultural heritage' for purposes of this Agreement means . . . cemeteries and memorials to the dead. . . .";

Whereas cemeteries are sacred sites and are established to remain undisturbed in perpetuity, and the sanctity of a cemetery is determined by the bodies buried in the cemetery; and

Whereas, while vandalism of headstones or construction of a commercial building on the site disgraces the cemetery, it does not change its sacred status: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) expresses strongly to the Government of Lithuania that the cemetery located in the Snipiskes area of Vilnius, Lithuania, which is an important part of the cultural heritage of the Jewish people, should not be further desecrated;

(2) urges the Government of Lithuania to take all the necessary steps to immediately stop and, if necessary, reverse, construction on that cemetery;

(3) reaffirms that constructive bilateral relations between Lithuania and the United States are important to the Governments and citizens of both countries; and

(4) expresses strong support for the work of the United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad and for the European countries that continue to work to preserve sacred historical sites, despite ongoing challenges.

CONGRATULATING 2008 OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC TEAMS

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Res. 704 submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 704) Congratulating the members of the United States Olympic and Paralympic Teams on their success in the 2008 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games and supporting the selection of Chicago, Illinois, as the site of the 2016 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the outstanding Olympic and Paralympic athletes from Maryland who proudly represented our country in the 2008 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games in Beijing, China.

Michael Phelps II, a swimmer from Baltimore; Katie Hoff, a swimmer from Towson; David Banks, a rower from Potomac; Jun Gao, a table tennis player from Gaithersburg; Scott Parsons, a canoe and kayak racer from Bethesda; Freddie Adu, a soccer player from Rockville; Gary Russell, Jr., a boxer from Capital Heights; Tatyana McFadden, a wheelchair racer from Clarksville; and Jessica Long, a swimmer from Baltimore, made all Marylanders proud as exemplary members of Team USA.

In particular, I especially would like to recognize the three athletes from Maryland whose exceptional performances were rewarded with Paralympic and Olympic medals.

Jessica Long won four gold medals, one silver medal, and one bronze medal in the 2008 Paralympics. Jessica not only won six medals; she set the world record in the Women's 100-Meter Freestyle event.

Perhaps more extraordinary than her performance in this year's games are the challenges she had to overcome just to get to Beijing. Jessica was born with an abnormality in her lower legs and spent her infancy at an orphanage in eastern Russia before an American couple adopted her when she was 13 months old. Five months later, she had her legs amputated in the U.S. While these obstacles may have broken the spirit of most others, they only strengthened Jessica's resolve and she is now a 15-time world record holder.

Katie Hoff also excelled in Beijing, winning one silver and two bronze medals at the XXIX Olympiad. In addition to winning the silver medal in the Women's 400-Meter Freestyle event, Katie set American records in winning the silver medal in the Women's 400-Meter Freestyle Relay event, in winning the bronze medal in the Women's 800-Meter Freestyle Relay event and in finishing fourth in the Women's 200-Meter Freestyle event.

Last, but certainly not least, is the performance of Michael Phelps—the greatest accomplishment in Olympic history, and one of the greatest athletic accomplishments of all time.

This summer, Michael Phelps set seven world records and one Olympic record while winning eight gold medals, the most ever by an individual athlete in a single Olympics. He now has

won 14 gold medals over the course of his Olympic career, also an Olympic record, and a total of 16 medals. To put this astonishing feat into perspective, Michael won more gold medals in Beijing than all but eight countries! And he won more medals in total than all but 24 countries!

Who will ever forget the incredible come-from-behind victory Michael and his teammates Garrett Weber-Gale, Cullen Jones, and Jason Lezak achieved in Men's 400-Meter Freestyle Relay event as they edged the favored French team by 8/100ths of a second? That was one of the most exciting and inspirational finishes in Olympic history. Just as exciting was Michael's finish in the Men's 200-Meter Butterfly event when a stutter stroke and lunge at the end enabled him to beat Laszlo Cseh by the width of a fingernail!

Despite the epic greatness of his achievement, Michael spoke modestly after winning his eighth gold, saying, "Records are always made to be broken no matter what they are . . . Anybody can do anything that they set their mind to." Michael proved not only to be a model of what one can achieve with hard work and determination, but also a model of the courtesy and sportsmanship upon which the Olympics were founded. He is a self-effacing young man whose enthusiasm, modesty, cheerfulness, and charm have endeared him to people around the world.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention his extraordinary mother, Debbie, and his coach, Bob Bowman. The obvious affection and respect he has for these two people indicate just how important they have been in his life.

Michael is not content to rest on his laurels. He wants to attract more kids to swimming and to teach them about pursuing their dreams, using his own life as an example. He will donate the \$1 million Olympic bonus he received from Speedo to a foundation he has created to promote water safety and youth swimming. "This is a way for me to really help grow the sport," he said in explaining why he gave the prize to the newly-created Michael Phelps Foundation.

Michael knew he wanted to spread interest in swimming but also wanted to convey a message that could apply to other activities, so he is creating a program called "Dream, Plan, Reach." It's designed to help children set goals and take daily responsibility for pursuing them. He is also helping to raise money for charity by autographing photos, USA swim caps, Sports Illustrated covers, and other collectibles in a deal with Grandstand Sports & Memorabilia, offering fans the chance to own keepsakes from the Beijing Games.

The people of Maryland are privileged to have had such an outstanding group represent us at the Olympic Games. All of these athletes sacrificed tremendously in order to reach this pinnacle of athletic success, spending countless hours in grueling and arduous training in order to wear the red,