

THE MATTHEW SHEPARD ACT

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the need for hate crimes legislation. Each Congress, Senator KENNEDY and I introduce hate crimes legislation that would strengthen and add new categories to current hate crimes law, sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society. Likewise, each Congress I have come to the floor to highlight a separate hate crime that has occurred in our country.

In the early morning hours of February 15, 2008, a young man and his friend were passing through Temple University's campus in Philadelphia, PA, when they found themselves in a physical fight with four Temple students. According to reports, the two non-Temple students were standing in front of a traditionally Jewish fraternity house when they were accosted by the four attackers. One of the four allegedly asked the two visitors if they were Jewish. When they replied that they were not, one of the Temple students evidently began to yell, "We hate Jews! We hate Jews!" According to police, one of the two victims was seriously injured and suffered a broken nose and fractured right eye socket. Temple released a letter characterizing the incident as a hate crime. The attackers have been suspended pending a University Disciplinary Committee hearing, while Philadelphia police are pursuing criminal charges and have issued warrants for the suspects' arrest.

I believe that the Government's first duty is to defend its citizens, to defend them against the harms that come out of hate. Federal laws intended to protect individuals from heinous and violent crimes motivated by hate are woefully inadequate. This legislation would better equip the Government to fulfill its most important obligation by protecting new groups of people as well as better protecting citizens already covered under deficient laws. I believe that by passing this legislation and changing current law, we can change hearts and minds as well.

INDIAN HEALTH CARE
IMPROVEMENT ACT

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I regret having missed the final vote for the Indian Health Care Improvement Act of 2007. I support the passage of this bill and would have voted in the affirmative.

It has been over 15 years since the Indian Health Care Improvement Act has been reauthorized. It is critical to strengthen the provision of care, through the Indian Health Service, IHS, to American Indian and Alaska Native populations, who suffer from significant health disparities compared to the general U.S. population, including a life expectancy that is 2.4 years lower, and significantly higher death rates from tuberculosis, alcoholism, diabetes, suicide, and infant mortality.

The Indian Health Service derives its authorities from the Indian Health Care Improvement Act and its mission is to improve the health status of American Indians and Alaskan Natives by constructing, maintaining, and managing health care delivery and sanitation systems through a network of 49 hospitals, 6,500 IHS, tribal, and private contract facilities. The IHS provides ambulatory, emergency, dental, and preventative health services to 58 percent of the 3.3 million American Indians and Alaska Natives; however, it is confronting these challenges with significant health care workforce shortages. Anywhere from 12 to 32 percent of positions for dentists, nurses, optometrists, physicians, and pharmacists, among other health professionals, are currently vacant. Thus, the passage of this legislation is critical to strengthening the IHS and providing critical services to American Indians and Alaskan Natives.

Specifically, the reauthorization will improve the recruitment and retention of health providers in the IHS, provide support for American Indians and Alaska Natives to enter the health professions, provide funds for the construction of health and sanitation facilities, expand Medicare, Medicaid, and CHIP reimbursement and enrollment to all American Indians and Native Alaskans health programs, eliminate Medicare and CHIP cost-sharing and premiums for American Indians and Native Alaskans served by tribal health programs, improve IHS information systems, billing, and patient care and training, mandate that the Departments of the Interior and Health and Human Services design a comprehensive approach to behavioral health assessment, treatment, and prevention services, establish a National Bi-Partisan Commission on Indian Health Care to study the delivery of services to American Indians and Native Alaskans, require an annual report to Congress on the enrollment and health status of American Indians and Native Alaskans served by Federal health programs, reauthorize the Indian Health Care Improvement Fund to support health promotion and disease prevention programs, cancer screenings, epidemiological and health services research, and catastrophic healthcare, and modernize health care delivery for American Indian and Native Alaskan seniors requiring long-term care, hospice, home/community-based care, and assisted living.

I commend the work of both the Senate Indian Affairs and Finance Committees and, most importantly, Senators DORGAN and MURKOWSKI for their leadership and commitment to this bill.

HONORING THE 4TH BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM, 1ST CAVALRY DIVISION

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the outstanding

service of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, as they complete their service in Iraq and return to their loving families.

I am so proud of the brave servicemembers of the 4-1 Cavalry who have sacrificed so much to keep our Nation safe. I also appreciate the commitment of their family members, who have borne a heavy burden to advance the cause of liberty. All of them deserve our sincere appreciation and gratitude.

Since September 11, 2001, our Nation has been at war with terrorists who are determined to kill innocent Americans and destroy freedom around the world. We cannot let that happen. Our country has the greatest capacity and will to fight for freedom. If freedom dies in America, it will die throughout the world. I have no doubt we will win this war because our Nation is blessed to have heroes like the courageous men and women of the 4-1 Cavalry.

The 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division command team, consists of COL Stephen Twitty and CSM Stephan Frennier. The brigade combat team is a relatively new unit that activated on October 18, 2005, at Fort Bliss, TX. The subordinate units consist of the 1st Battalion, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment, 5th Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, and the 27 Brigade Support Battalion.

The 4th Brigade Combat Team received orders to deploy to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in July of 2006. Upon completion of mission readiness exercises and a rotation at the national training center, the 4-1 Cavalry began to deploy in September of 2006.

By their first anniversary, the 4-1 Cavalry arrived in Ninewa Province, the second largest province in Iraq. The 2-12 Cavalry deployed to Baghdad to augment the 1st Infantry Division.

The brigade headquarters was based in Mosul, Ninewa's provincial capital, which is the site of the biblical city of Ninewa. The province, slightly larger than the State of Maryland, is in the extreme northern part of Iraq. It borders Syria to the west and is comprised of Sunni Arabs, Shia Arabs, Turkmen, and Christians. The mission of the 4-1 Cavalry was to build capable Iraqi security forces, to conduct counterinsurgency operations in order to neutralize anti-Iraqi forces and to transition responsibility for defeating the insurgency to the Iraqi security forces, and the provincial government. They performed that mission superbly.

Despite being subjected to IEDs, VBIEDs, and small arms fire, the members of the 4-1 Cavalry did an outstanding job protecting the people of Ninewa Province. Due to their professionalism and courage, attacks in the province went from 15 to 18 per day in December of 2006 to 7 to 9 attacks per day by September of 2007. In conjunction with their Iraqi counterparts, they

also found several tons of military grade weapons and IED-making material and detained over 1,500 insurgents. Altogether, they overcame numerous challenges, and through courage and dedication, they succeeded beyond anyone's expectations. They have much to be proud of.

On February 27, 2008, the city of El Paso will hold a parade to honor the brave men and women of the 4-1 Cavalry. Our Nation is a better place because of their service and sacrifice on behalf of a noble cause. We can never forget them or their family members. We honor their struggles and successes in that mission.

It is with sincere gratitude that I recognize them today.

NATIONAL PEACE CORPS WEEK

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I rise today to commemorate National Peace Corps Week and to honor more than 190,000 Peace Corps Volunteers from both my home State of New Mexico and across the Nation. Each year these courageous men and women embark on a 2 year journey to help develop the societies of 139 countries around the world.

Almost 47 years ago, then Senator John F. Kennedy challenged students at the University of Michigan to serve their country by peaceably living and working to develop another country. Over the years, volunteers have made significant and lasting contributions around the world by educating people on basic health issues, performing youth outreach, developing businesses, and offering assistance to small farmers to increase food production.

Today, over 8,000 volunteers are serving in the communities of 74 countries. Many Peace Corps volunteers from New Mexico are currently posted in Bolivia, Ecuador, and Honduras. Volunteers range in age from 25 to 80, with varying levels of education including individuals with undergraduate and graduate degrees. Additionally, the Peace Corps offers programs that support academic studies once a term of service has concluded, which allows many volunteers to further their education after their self-sacrificing service.

The experience volunteers take back with them from their host countries helps shape the course of their lives. Lifelong connections and friendships span these gaps of distance, and volunteers have the satisfaction of not only a job well done, but also of the positive image they created for our Nation.

Throughout this week of celebration, I encourage Americans to ask themselves, "What can I do for my country?"

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

(At the request of Mr. REID, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

UNITED STATES ARMY'S RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

• Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, I am proud to recognize a truly successful program that, over the past decade, has made important contributions to improving quality of life for our soldiers and their families. Now entering its 10th year, the Residential Communities Initiative, or RCI, has brought together members of the private real estate community and the Army to build new family housing, and upgrade and modernize existing family housing, on flagship Army bases all across the country.

Back in 1996, the Army faced the enormous and costly challenge of replacing and renovating its aging and substandard family housing. Too many soldiers and their families were living in inadequate housing. According to the Army itself, roughly 70 percent of housing needed replacement or renovation at an estimated cost of \$7 billion. It was clear that action had to be taken, and in 1996, Congress established the framework for what would become the Residential Communities Initiative when it authorized the Military Housing Privatization Initiative.

Under the MHPI umbrella, the Residential Communities Initiative was presented in 1999 as one significant component of the Army's plan to address this challenge of overhauling inadequate family housing. Thanks in large part to the visionary leadership and hard work of my friends, Congressman CHET EDWARDS of Texas and then-Assistant Secretary of the Army for Installations, Logistics and Environment Mahlon Apgar, RCI successfully navigated both the Pentagon bureaucracy and a maze of congressional commitments to come to fruition.

Congressman EDWARDS's advocacy of RCI was particularly important and is just one example of his many successful efforts to improve quality of life for our troops and veterans. Congressman EDWARDS works on these critical issues as cochairman of both the House Army Caucus and the USO Congressional Caucus. Most recently, in 2007, as chairman of the Military Construction and Veterans' Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee, Congressman EDWARDS authored the largest VA budget increase in the VA's 77-year history.

Indeed, both Congressman EDWARDS and Secretary Apgar should be proud of what their efforts have since spawned. RCI has made, or will be making, its way to 45 different Army installations all across the United States, from Fort Lewis in Washington State to Fort Hood in Texas to Fort Drum and Fort Hamilton in my home State of New York. At each of these bases, RCI has helped to provide our soldiers and their families with the kind of modern, quality housing choices that they deserve. In less than 10 years, more than 86,000 houses have been transferred to public-private partnerships under RCI, and thousands of Army families have already benefited from renovation and new construction completed under RCI.

This initiative has not only been good for our soldiers and their families but also for American taxpayers. In the last decade, more than \$10 billion of new private capital has been invested under the RCI program, compared with roughly \$1 billion in government equity. In other words, RCI has produced a ten-fold return on our public investment.

With so many of our brave servicemembers serving the Nation in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere around the world, it is our responsibility to ensure that they and their families have all of the support that they need and deserve here at home. This not only includes the best health care available but also modern, clean, and comfortable housing choices. I invite my fellow Senators from both sides of the aisle to join me in applauding the Residential Communities Initiative and its early champions, CHET EDWARDS and Mahlon Apgar, for doing so much to enhance quality of life for our Army families. •

HONORING FALLEN HEROES

• Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I rise to acknowledge the sacrifice of our young men and women in the Armed Forces. Yesterday, I was fortunate enough to meet my friend, Albert Carey Caswell, a respected member of the Capitol Guide Service staff, in the Halls of the Capitol. He has written a poem in honor of Army SGT Jeff Mersman from my hometown of Parker, KS. Sergeant Mersman died in Afghanistan while on his fourth tour of duty with the 2nd Battalion, 503rd, Airborne Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team. I ask to have printed in the RECORD Mr. Caswell's poem in memory of SGT Jeff Mersman and all those heroes like him who gave their lives so valiantly for our country.

We owe them a debt which can never be repaid.

The poem follows:

WHO WILL GO?

Who Will Go?
And who will live, and who will die? And not ask why! a Mother cries, as her sweet child has died. . . Who will go? A Mother cries!

Who will lead?
So that we all can so live in peace. Who will die, and who will bleed?

Who will go, so that we all can so succeed?
Who will serve?

Who will hear that call, that cry. . . those most solemn words?

Who will bring a better world? Who will go?
Out into the face of hell, with but their magnificent flags unfurled!

So our children can awake. . .
In a better world, with but smiles in their hearts and souls. . . as their first steps they so take!

Who will go?

Who will leave, their loved ones behind so?

With brothers and sisters in arms, together bonding into such an angelic glow. . .

Who will go?

Who will leave all that they so love?