

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that on Tuesday, March 11, when the Senate resumes consideration of S. Con. Res. 70, the concurrent resolution on the budget, there be debate only, with no amendments in order, until the Senate recesses for the party conference meetings, and that the recess time on Tuesday be charged equally against each side. We will recess at 12:30 and come back at 2:15.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that we now proceed to a period of morning business with Senators allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING FOR THE ELDERLY

Mr. KOHL. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about S. 2736, Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly Act of 2008 introduced with my colleague Senator CHARLES SCHUMER. The HUD section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly Program is the only program that provides capital grants to nonprofit community organizations for the development of supportive housing and rental assistance exclusively for low-income seniors. This program provides supportive services coupled with housing to allow seniors to remain safely in their homes and age in place. Access to supportive services reduces the occurrence of costly nursing home stays and helps save both seniors and the Federal Government money.

There are over 300,000 seniors living in 6,000 section 202 developments across the country. Unfortunately, the program is far from meeting the growing demand. Approximately 730,000 additional senior housing units will be needed by 2020 to address the future housing needs of low-income seniors. Currently, there are 10 seniors vying for each unit that becomes available. This leaves many seniors waiting years before finding a home. To complicate matters, we are losing older section 202 properties in exchange for high priced condominiums and apartments. As a result, many seniors currently participating in the program could end up homeless.

Congress should act now to plan appropriately for the increased demand that will exist for housing in the com-

ing years and ensure that seniors can find safe, affordable housing. Accordingly, I am pleased to join Senator SCHUMER in introducing the section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly Act of 2008. Our legislation would help promote the construction of new senior housing facilities as well as preserve and improve upon existing facilities. The legislation would also support the conversion of existing facilities into assisted living facilities that provide a wide variety of additional supportive health and social services. Under current law, these processes are time consuming, bureaucratic, and far too often require waivers and special permission from HUD to complete. This legislation also provides priority consideration for our homeless seniors seeking a place to call their own. With this legislation, we hope to reduce current impediments and increase the availability of affordable and supportive housing for our nation's most vulnerable seniors.

I want to thank the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging as well as the Wisconsin Association of Homes and Services for the Aging for being champions of this legislation and for working with us to develop a comprehensive bill that will help meet the growing need for senior housing in this Nation.

Senior citizens deserve to have housing that will help them maintain their independence. They do not deserve to end up homeless with nowhere to turn because they are stuck on long waiting lists. This Nation must do a better job at helping Americans have a place to call home during their golden years. I hope my colleagues will join me in my effort to do so.

ANDEAN TRADE PREFERENCE ACT

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, on February 28, 2008 we ratified the Andean Trade Preference Act, ATPA. Historically, these preferences have been decisive in encouraging both development and liberalization in a key region. Renewing them is an important step in our relations with the region, but we should also be realistic, and sophisticated, in our expectations for what these preferences can accomplish. As we look at where each of the four Andean nations stands today, we see that they are at very different stages of development, politically and economically, so the preferences will impact each country differently.

Peru has made commendable strides in its economic liberalization process while remaining a trustworthy counterpart on many nontrade matters. Earlier this year we cemented our relationship through ratification of a Free Trade Agreement, FTA. As we go through the FTA implementation process, preferences are still necessary to minimize disruption to current commercial flows between the United States and Peru.

Colombia has made outstanding progress politically and economically.

During the past 6 years, Colombia's economic growth, one of the fastest in Latin America, has helped usher in a new era of unprecedented stability for that country—kidnappings, once rampant, have dropped sharply, down nearly 90 percent since 1999; and the once sky-high murder rate has plummeted to its lowest in almost 20 years. The FTA signed between our two countries includes environmental standards as well as worker protections and safeguards similar to the trade pact with Peru, which enjoyed bipartisan support.

Colombia's own private sector unions have endorsed the agreement. An extension on the Andean Trade Preference Act is crucial given that the Colombia FTA has not been ratified by the Congress, and would help leverage our considerable aid commitment, ensuring Colombia remains on its path to becoming a secure and prosperous nation.

Our trade preferences for Bolivia and Ecuador are important because both countries have elected leaders whose record and rhetoric cast serious doubt on their commitment to market-based economic policies. For this reason, it is important for the United States to maintain a strong relationship with the constructive forces in these countries. We want to encourage those who are working for economic liberalization and reforms that promote foreign investment and the creation of jobs. We want to support those who are pursuing policies that will improve social and economic development in health and education and advance the welfare for the less fortunate. It is in these countries where the effect of greater, and not lesser, engagement will yield the highest long term benefits.

The ability to benefit from trade preferences is difficult in an environment in which the rule of law is coming under severe attack. Both countries are facing challenges on this front, with weakened justice systems that struggle to uphold the law. In this regard, an environment that supports free economic exchange and accountable governance is weakened by the inability of these governments to implement the law.

Both Bolivia and Ecuador have much to gain by focusing on strengthening and depoliticizing the rule of law. Without an improvement on the legal front in these countries, the potential for these trade preferences to serve as development tools is limited.

It is my hope that 10 months from now, when we again address the issue of preferences for the Andean countries, we will be well into the implementation of FTAs with Peru and Colombia and at the same time witnessing an improved commitment in Ecuador and Bolivia to the reforms that are essential to getting the most out of trade preference legislation.

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.

On the night of February 22, 2008, 17-year-old Simmie Lewis Williams, Jr., was gunned down in his hometown of Fort Lauderdale, FL. The shooting occurred on a stretch of road known by police to be frequented by transvestites. Simmie, openly gay, had been dressed as a woman the night of his murder. He was known for being soft-spoken and kind. Witnesses say that Simmie became engaged in a heated argument with two men dressed in dark clothing before the shots were fired. Simmie's mother buried her son a week later. The funeral was, in part, paid for by members of the local gay community. Police are considering the murder as a bias-motivated crime.

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.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

CONGRATULATING JOSHUA KORS

• Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate Joshua Kors on winning the George Polk Award for magazine reporting and his selection as a finalist for Harvard's Goldsmith Prize for Investigative Reporting.

I am grateful for the work Mr. Kors has done on behalf of our troops and for the leadership he has demonstrated in his relentless pursuit of the facts.

America counts on its investigative reporters to expose corruption, mismanagement and abuse, particularly in government. Mr. Kors' work brought to light the military's appalling misuse of administrative discharges for many of our combat-wounded soldiers.

Mr. Kors' profile of the difficulties SPC Jon Town encountered after returning from Iraq showed all of us in troubling detail the devastating impact of the Pentagon's policy on one soldier and his family—a story which is repeated in the lives of too many others similarly discharged.

With the lives and livelihoods of these wounded warriors on the line, Mr. Kors' reporting has clearly made a difference already.

It is now up to Congress to ensure that the Department of Defense treats our soldiers fairly. Our troops have courageously put themselves in harm's way and it is incumbent upon our government to ensure that they receive the best possible care when they return.

Many of us on Capitol Hill have pledged to continue to fight to eliminate the misuse of personality discharges through all legislative and administrative means at our disposal.

I thank Mr. Kors for his outstanding work and congratulate him on his accomplishments.●

HONORING KELLY BUCKLAND

• Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, our outlook on life and the effect we have on others is largely dependent upon how we respond to our life experiences. We can choose to make a difference in our world, or sit back and let others blaze trails. As I get older, I am more and more convinced that these choices have little to do with our physical capabilities or the circumstances of our upbringing. I meet people who have overcome seemingly monumental challenges and live to make a difference in the lives of others. In the same manner, I meet those with observably few challenges who are content to sit on the sidelines. A most remarkable example of someone who has responded to the circumstances and events in his life by choosing to make a difference in the lives of others is Idahoan Kelly Buckland, president of the National Council for Independent Living and an extraordinary advocate for people with disabilities.

Kelly grew up on a farm outside of Rexburg, ID. When he was 15, he became a quadriplegic as a result of a diving accident. Kelly has recalled that, upon returning home after a year of hospitalization, he became deeply depressed. But with the encouragement of his parents who, among other things, rigged up farm equipment so that Kelly could continue doing what he had done before the accident, Kelly began to recover from his depression. Recalling the people that helped him and others during his hospitalization, Kelly made a choice that would change his life and the lives of many others over the years: he chose to use his many gifts and talents to help those in need.

Kelly obtained a bachelor's degree in social work from Boise State University. He graduated summa cum laude with a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling from Drake University. He was exposed to the legislative process early in his career and realized that he had an interest and a gift for public policy. In the 1980s, Kelly was instrumental in the initial effort to install curb cuts in the city sidewalks in Burley, ID, to help with wheelchair accessibility. Kelly's advocacy then turned to the State, where he was able to help change Idaho State law to provide pro-

tections for parents with disabilities. Idaho State law now prohibits the removal of a child from a home or the denial of visitations solely because of a parent's disability. Idaho was the first State in the Nation to pass equal child custody rights for parents with disabilities in all areas of child custody.

As the executive director of the Idaho State Independent Living Council, Kelly made it his priority to fight for equal rights and equal protection under the law for those with disabilities, especially in areas of fair housing and healthcare. His outreach and advocacy has gone beyond just the State level as well—Kelly has testified before Congress on issues facing individuals with disabilities in his capacity as president of the National Independent Living Council.

Kelly has received several local and national awards. In 2000, he received the University of Idaho's President's Medallion. Kelly was honored with the 2005 Hewlett-Packard Company Award for Distinguished Leadership in Human Rights and, in 2007, Kelly was honored at the Kennedy Center with induction into the Spinal Cord Injury Hall of Fame for significant contributions to quality of life and advancements toward a better future for all individuals with spinal cord injury or disease.

One of Kelly's profound strengths is unique ability to perceive and appreciate the position of others, and to help others understand his point of view in a respectful, honest manner. He is highly skilled at helping those who may perceive themselves in opposition to one another reach a place where they can meet and find a common middle ground. Despite his many accomplishments, Kelly is exceedingly humble, preferring to give credit to others for many of the successes in which he's been instrumental. He has observed that we all have something we perceive as a hindrance to our own success, but it is our responsibility to acknowledge perceived limitations and move forward rather than devote time and energy in focusing on what we think our particular limitations prevent us from doing.

Kelly has devoted his time and energy to ensuring that those who have experienced legal, occupational and personal difficulties as a result of their disabilities have a voice in changing our laws to ensure true independence for all. His own words echo his convictions: "I want to insure that no one need be institutionalized because there are inadequate community services. I want freedom to be a reality for everyone."

Kelly Buckland is a voice of compassion, inspiration and reason and it is my distinct honor to recognize him today.●

RECOGNIZING VICTORIA WILLIAMS

• Mr. KOHL. Mr. President, I would like to take this time to recognize and congratulate Ms. Victoria Williams of