

are basic preparedness grants to States, and the failure to fund them would significantly undermine national preparedness efforts.

I am pleased that the budget resolution before us rejects those proposed cuts and funds SHSGP at its current level of \$950 million, which also happens to be the level we authorized in the Implementing the 9/11 Commission Recommendations Act of 2007, which for the first time set forth statutory requirements for the grants' allocation and use.

The budget resolution also rejects proposed cuts to other vital grant programs including grants to firefighters, for emergency management, and for port and transit security. All of these important programs are restored to fiscal year 2008 levels, adjusted for inflation, in the pending budget resolution, and I thank the Budget Committee for that.

On the critical matter of interoperable communications, the Budget Committee has done better still—increasing funding for the interoperable emergency communications grant program, IECGP, from \$50 million this year to \$200 million in fiscal year 2009. State homeland security directors recently identified the development of interoperable communications as their top priority, and it is a complex problem that will be resolved only through strong—Federal leadership, coordination at all levels of government, and a substantial commitment of dedicated funding. This grant program, which was authorized in the recent 9/11 Act, will help achieve this critical goal.

I also want to thank the Budget Committee for providing funds to begin building a new DHS headquarters at the St. Elizabeths West Campus. We cannot expect DHS to succeed at its many challenging missions without the fundamental management tools that are taken for granted by much smaller organizations. Today, DHS is spread throughout 70 buildings across the national capital region making communication, coordination, and cooperation between DHS components a significant challenge. A unified headquarters, which would bring together many of the Department's components into a single facility and allow employees to work more efficiently and interactively. I believe it is a critical cornerstone of the efforts to improve management at the Department of Homeland Security.

I am concerned, however, that the budget resolution does not provide enough to continue reforms underway to strengthen and rebuild FEMA, which is why Senator COLLINS and I are offering this amendment today, to increase FEMA's operations, management and administration account by \$141 million.

Following Hurricane Katrina, the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee conducted an extensive bipartisan investigation into the failed response at all levels of govern-

ment, especially and including FEMA's response. We found that FEMA was woefully unprepared—and in fact had never been prepared—to deal with a catastrophe on the magnitude of Hurricane Katrina, lacking essential capabilities and resources. Our committee subsequently made significant recommendations to strengthen FEMA's capabilities and resources. Congress implemented many of those recommendations in the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act, which was intended to recreate FEMA into a stronger, more robust agency that would, for the first time, be equipped to prepare for and respond to a true catastrophe. The legislation also reunited the agency's preparedness and response functions; strengthened FEMA's regional offices and emergency response teams; and fortified its emergency planning and preparedness responsibilities.

Last year, FEMA received a much needed funding increase, enabling it to take the essential first step in the long process of rebuilding. While the budget resolution would sustain FEMA operations at current levels, it does not include the increases needed for it to continue strengthening its core capabilities. Our amendment proposes an additional \$141 million to fully fund the Administration's requested increase to pay for modernizing the agency's IT systems; strengthening and expanding key teams and other personnel that handle disaster operations, logistics and other vital capabilities; and converting certain temporary disaster support employees to permanent staff, which should help provide a more stable and professional workforce for this program. The cost of the amendment would be offset by reductions in a government-wide, general account.

The President's request does not provide enough to strengthen these core FEMA capabilities, and I would readily support a larger increase. But at a minimum, we should all be able to agree on the administration's proposed figure to correct the significant deficiencies we witnessed during the response to Hurricane Katrina. Therefore, Senator COLLINS and I are offering this amendment to ensure that FEMA continues its transformation into the agency envisioned by the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act, which is an agency prepared to respond to the many potential catastrophes—from natural disasters to manmade terrorists acts—that we face today. Without additional funds, significant deficiencies exposed by Hurricane Katrina will persist and FEMA simply will not be able to protect the American people the way we want it to.

I ask my Senate colleagues to join me in supporting this amendment to improve our homeland security.

MORNING BUSINESS

BIRTHDAY TRIBUTE TO GENE SEGERBLOM

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it is my great pleasure to extend the best wishes of the United States Senate to Genevieve "Gene" Segerblom on the occasion of her 90th birthday.

Born, raised and educated in Nevada, Gene is one of our State's most treasured citizens. She served the public as a nurturing teacher, a Boulder City councilwoman, and a State assemblywoman. Throughout her career, she has been a tireless leader in the fields of historic preservation, sustainable development, cultural affairs, and ethical government practices.

Those familiar only with Gene's family tree might assume that a political career was her destiny. After all, she followed in the footsteps of her mother, Hazel Bell Wines, and her grandfather, William J. Bell, both of whom served in the State legislature. But anyone who knows Gene sees her not as a politician, but as a mother, wife and teacher who took her passion and wisdom into the realm of public service.

A few of the things I treasure are paintings I own, painted by Gene's husband Cliff. He was one of Nevada's all-time great painters. Cliff was also a judge of quality, serving the people of Boulder City and other places where he was called upon to render justice.

Gene's son Tick Segerblom is now serving with distinction as a Nevada State assemblyman.

Gene Segerblom has enriched countless lives, including mine. Landra and I are proud to call her a friend, and I wish her health, happiness, and joy as she celebrates this milestone birthday.

THE MATTHEW SHEPARD ACT

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I wish 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 morning of February 23, 2008, Melbourne Brunner and his partner were eating at the Floridian restaurant in Fort Lauderdale, FL, when they were verbally and physically assaulted. According to Brunner, a man at the restaurant began calling the couple antigay slurs, threatening to break their necks and kill them. After a few moments of suffering the man's insults, Brunner and his partner decided to leave. When Brunner attempted to enter his car, the man came from behind him, blocked his path, and struck Brunner in the face, causing him to hit his head on the pavement. The assailant then reportedly walked back to his

car, covered up the license plate with his shirt so that his tags would not be identified, and sped away. The owner of the Floridian restaurant is offering a \$5,000 reward for any information leading to the capture of this suspect. Brunner was treated at a local hospital for severe bruising around his eyes.

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.

RECIDIVISM REDUCTION AND SECOND CHANCE ACT OF 2007

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I rise today to thank my colleagues for passing yesterday by unanimous consent the Recidivism Reduction and Second Chance Act of 2007, which I introduced in March of last year. I am delighted that my colleagues, Senators SPECTER, BROWNBACK, and LEAHY, and I were able to bring Democrats and Republicans together to support this very important piece of legislation.

The bill aims to reduce the rate of recidivism by improving the transition of offenders from prison back into the community. Preventing recidivism is not only the right thing to do, it makes our communities safer and it saves us money.

Today, we have over 2 million individuals in our Federal and State prisons and millions more in local jails. Our Federal and State prisons will release nearly 650,000 of these offenders back into our communities this year. A staggering two-thirds of released State prisoners will be rearrested for a felony or serious misdemeanor within 3 years of release.

It is not difficult to see why. These ex-offenders face a number of difficult challenges upon release. The unemployment rate among former inmates is as high as 60 percent; 15 to 27 percent of prisoners expect to go to homeless shelters upon release; and 57 percent of Federal and 70 percent of State inmates used drugs regularly before prison. This addiction and dependency often continues during incarceration.

Unless we address these problems, these individuals will commit hundreds of thousands of serious crimes after their release, and our communities will bear the human and economic cost. If we are going to reduce recidivism and crime, we simply have to make concerted, common-sense efforts now to help ex-offenders successfully reenter and reintegrate into their communities.

The Recidivism Reduction and Second Chance Act of 2007 confronts head-

on the dire situation of prisoners reentering our communities with insufficient monitoring, little or no job skills, inadequate drug treatment, insufficient housing, lack of basic physical and mental health services, and deficient basic life skills. Through commonsense and cost-effective measures, the bill offers a second chance for ex-offenders, and the children and families that depend on them, and it strengthens our communities and ensures safe neighborhoods.

The Second Chance Act provides grants for the development and implementation of comprehensive substance abuse treatment programs, academic and vocational education programs, housing and job counseling programs, and mentoring for offenders who are approaching release and who have been released. To ensure accountability, the bill requires grantees to establish performance goals and benchmarks and report the results to Congress.

The bill authorizes \$324 million over 2 years in competitive grant funding. These funds represent an investment in our future and an acknowledgement of the problem we face. We must remember that the average cost of incarcerating each prisoner exceeds \$20,000 per year, with expenditures on corrections alone having increased from \$9 billion in 1982 to \$60 billion in 2002. That is more than a 6-fold increase, and the costs keep going up.

A relatively modest investment in offender reentry efforts today is far more cost-effective than the alternative—building more prisons for these ex-offenders to return to if they can't reenter their communities and are convicted of further crimes. An ounce of prevention, as the saying goes, is worth a pound of cure.

I am proud today to witness the passage of the Recidivism Reduction and Second Chance Act, a bill that will transform offender reentry policy in this country. The safety of our neighbors, our children, and our communities depends on it. I urge the President to quickly sign this bill into law.

I would particularly like to thank Nancy Libin on my staff, Lisa Owings on Senator SPECTER's staff, LaRoche Young on Senator BROWNBACK's staff, and Noah Bookbinder on Senator LEAHY's staff, all of whom worked tirelessly to get this bill passed.

PASSAGE OF THE SECOND CHANCE ACT

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I seek recognition to comment on the passage of the Second Chance Act. I thank my colleagues Senators BROWNBACK, BIDEN, and LEAHY, who are original cosponsors of this bill, for their tireless advocacy for this long-needed legislation and my other colleagues for their support of the bill, which passed the Senate by unanimous consent.

Each year, as many as 700,000 offenders will be released from prison or jail. Unfortunately, approximately two-

thirds of those individuals will be rearrested within 3 years of their release. The consequences of such high recidivism rates are disastrous for our Nation. Each year, approximately 1.5 million Americans become victims of violent crime. The total pecuniary and non-pecuniary cost of crime has been estimated to be as much as \$2 trillion annually—or 17 percent of the gross domestic product. Much of this cost comes directly out of taxpayers' pockets—the cost of keeping a prisoner in jail is as high as \$30,000 per year. The cumulative cost to the Federal Government is approximately \$60 billion annually. High crime and recidivism rates have also proven cyclical in nature: with 2.3 million of offenders in prison and jail, nearly 2 million American children spend part of the year without their parent—a factor known to put those children at risk of later committing crimes themselves.

The likelihood that a prisoner will leave prison or jail, return to their family and community, obtain a job, and lead a productive and law-abiding life increases dramatically with increasing levels of education, job training, and substance abuse treatment. Yet, a few basic statistics demonstrate just how ill-equipped the 650,000 prisoners who will return to our neighborhoods and communities are to accomplish these basic objectives. Seventy percent of ex-offenders operate at the lowest levels of literacy. The majority struggle with drug and alcohol addiction—as many as 70 percent of prisoners were regular drug users prior to being convicted. Nearly 60 percent of ex-offenders will be unemployed a year after they are released from prison.

The Second Chance Act will help break this dangerous cycle of recidivism. The bill will encourage realistic rehabilitation by providing prisoners who seek to turn their lives around with the education, literacy training, job training, employment assistance and substance abuse treatment they need to do so. The Second Chance Act will also enhance the proven-effective prison mentoring programs through which church members and community members provide individualized mentoring to prisoners who want to turn their lives around. The Second Chance Act draws on the experiences of many governmental, community, and non-profit organizations that are operating successful reentry programs around the country. For example, Pennsylvania's Community Orientation and Reintegration project, the Boston Reentry Initiative, and the Kansas Reentry Program have shepherded the way toward achieving lasting reductions in recidivism rates through innovative approaches to job training and education, family reunification, and public safety.

The Second Chance Act that will be signed by the President represents the tireless efforts of a tremendous bipartisan coalition from both houses of Congress. I am particularly thankful for the leadership of Senator