

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, LaRochelle 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

BROWNBACK, Senator BIDEN, and Senator LEAHY who have worked with me for years to negotiate the bill's final language. As a result of these negotiations, the grant programs in the bill are focused and streamlined, and provide for the kind of accountability we need to ensure that the programs operated under the bill meet their goal of achieving real reductions in recidivism rates. I am pleased that the bill has the support of over 200 organizations from both ends of the ideological spectrum and is supported by the Department of Justice and the Department of Labor.

I thank my colleagues for their support of this important legislation. The Second Chance Act takes an important step toward closing the revolving doors of our prisons and keeping our neighborhoods and communities safe.

I yield the floor.

TRIBUTE TO POPE AIR FORCE BASE

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I rise before you today to express my sincere appreciation for the men and women of a C-130 Hercules crew out of Pope Air Force Base, NC.

MAJ Paul Pepe, 1LT Robert Davidson, 1LT Robert Gillis, Staff Sergeant Adam Monroy, Captain Kaly Godfrey, SSgt Kyle Anderson, SSgt Charles Jones, and CPT Jessica Kehren were responsible for transporting me and three of my congressional colleagues from Baghdad, Iraq, to Amman, Jordan, the night of August 30, 2007.

Approximately 5 minutes into the flight, I looked out of my window and noticed flashes of light coming from the ground—our aircraft was taking on surface-to-air rocket fire. The C-130 Hercules crew immediately began taking evasive maneuvers to successfully defeat the three rockets fired at the aircraft.

Throughout the incident, our crew remained calm and professional. I could not have been prouder of the way they worked together to safely avoid a very dangerous situation. Our warfighters face threats in Iraq and Afghanistan every day. While I know this type of danger was not new to them, the incident enhanced my already deep appreciation for the danger they face on a daily basis.

For their actions, the crew was recently awarded the Air Mobility Command's 2007 Field of Aeronautics and Astronautics Aviator Valor Award. The award is given for a conspicuous act of courage or valor performed during aerial flight during either combat or non-combat. Without question, the C-130 Hercules crew is most deserving of this high honor.

The training and extensive preparation that our crew undoubtedly went through at Pope Air Force Base has paid dividends. These men and women performed a stellar job without showing even the slightest bit of apprehension. I know my colleagues on the flight would agree; our military is for-

tunate to have this crew serving our nation in such a fine manner.

COMMEMORATING THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF THE REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I wish today to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the death of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. April 4, 2008, marks the 40th anniversary of the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., an iconic leader of the American civil rights movement. In death, the legacy of Dr. King continues and so does his call for tolerance, justice, and equality.

April 1968 was a tragic time for the King family and for our Nation. Our cities erupted as people were overcome by rage and horror at his assassination. We all suffered in the knowledge that someone who had been an inspiration to millions had been taken from us by an assassin's bullet.

It has been 40 years since his murder, but his legacy remains with us as we continue to pursue his vision of equality, fairness, and justice. Today, we are a nation of 300 million people; a nation in which one out of three Americans is a member of a minority group. His vision is just as important and inspirational today as it was 40 years ago.

We must never forget that our diversity is one of our greatest strengths and one of our most important challenges. We must find a way to work and live together and to respect each other. Dr. King's legacy of social justice charted the path for us. As he once said: "We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools."

We have not always succeeded in achieving that goal. Dr. King's work remains unfinished as we witness a resurgence of hate crimes and injustice and inequality still exist. We must always remain vigilant against those who preach hate and intolerance and believe that it is acceptable to deny others the rights that are guaranteed under the U.S. Constitution and bill of rights.

Dr. King stood up to violence, bigotry, and intolerance in our country to ensure that all of us can live free of prejudice and hatred. Today, on the 40th anniversary of his death, it is important that we remember his sacrifice and pledge to continue his fight for greater opportunities for all.

NATIONAL EYE DONOR MONTH

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, March is National Eye Donor Month. In fact, it's the 25th anniversary of that proud tradition.

Each March since 1983, the eye donor community has gathered to celebrate the gift of sight, to honor past donors and their families, and to raise awareness about eye donation.

I want to thank those who have given this amazing gift and to encourage more Americans to become eye donors.

Eye donation is an incredible thing. Precious corneas harvested from donated eyes can restore vision that's been lost to disease or injury or infection. Most of us take our vision for granted.

We read our books, watch our children grow, and find our loved ones in a crowded room—and don't give it a second thought. But what if you lost that ability, that gift of sight—or never had it at all. An estimated 11.4 million people have severe visual problems that are not correctable by glasses.

Eighty million people suffer from potentially blinding eye disease; 1.1 million people are legally blind. But there is hope. Through the miracle of transplantation, it is possible to restore sight.

Each year, 44,000 sight-restoring corneal transplants are performed.

Eye banks like the Central Ohio Lions Eye Bank change people's lives. Shirley Jacobs knows this first hand. Shirley was living with Fuchs dystrophy, a genetic degenerative corneal disease. The disease robbed her of clear vision. It limited her independence and her ability to do her job. Then she received a corneal transplant at the Central Ohio Lions Eye Bank. Her first words after the surgery were, "This is a miracle! I can see you, I can see you!"

That is amazing. But so many more people are waiting.

In Ohio alone, 1,600 people each year could have their sight restored through corneal transplants. But there aren't enough organs available. We need to get the word out and reach people who would donate if given the choice. We must raise public awareness of the need for eye donors and the ways to sign up.

I encourage my colleagues to work with their local eye banks and the Eye Bank Association of America to promote the precious gift of eye donation. I also encourage Americans to consider designating themselves as organ donors on their driver's licenses. It is the best way to make your end-of-life wishes known and to give the gift of sight. I urge my colleagues and fellow citizens to consider becoming an eye donor. Thousands of people around the country are waiting for it.

PRESIDENT'S VETO OF THE INTELLIGENCE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, America is a great and good Nation that has been a beacon to the world on human rights. Nothing should be simpler than for a President of the United States to stand up and say, clearly, that this country does not engage in cruel and abusive interrogation practices such as waterboarding; that those practices are abhorrent and illegal. It saddens me greatly—but does not surprise me—that this President has, once again, refused to make that simple statement. By vetoing the intelligence authorization bill because of a provision that would reemphasize that waterboarding