

I have worked to increase funding for professional, educational, and cultural exchanges, and for programs focusing on environmental protection and the rule of law. I have seen the benefits to American and Chinese students who participate in these programs, including from the Vermont Law School.

China has an extraordinary history and culture. Its people have suffered many hardships, including devastating wars and famines. Many still toil from dawn until dusk to survive, but China has made extraordinary progress in the 30 years since my first trip there.

The Chinese people want the best for their families and their country, as Americans do. They also want a government that is less corrupt and more open and accountable.

China wants to be treated like a great power, but the Chinese Government cannot expect to be respected as a world leader just because of China's large population and its economic and military prowess. Not as long as it crushes peaceful dissent and, in Tibet, destroys the culture of a unique people who are admired throughout the world.

Other governments of countries where Tibetans have rallied peacefully in support of those back home should also stop the arrests and detentions and use of excessive force.

This is particularly so in Nepal, where not long ago tens of thousands of Nepalese people took to the streets in demonstrations which led to the restoration of multi-party government. Those who are in power in Nepal today, because of the people's brave defiance of a corrupt, abusive king, should be respecting the Tibetans' rights of assembly, of association and expression.

Speaker PELOSI, who visited the Dalai Lama recently, said it well when she called the crisis in Tibet a matter of conscience for the world.

But just as I believe our collective conscience must be steadfast in support of the Tibetan people and their spiritual leader, so should we reaffirm that we recognize this is a conflict the Chinese and Tibetans must solve themselves.

I believe a solution is possible that meets the needs and aspirations of both peoples. But after 6 years of talks that have achieved nothing, it is clear that a new approach is needed. Repression is not the answer. Confrontation is not the answer.

There are creative, visionary people on both sides who can learn from these events and pursue a new way forward. Those of us half a world away who care about Tibet and China should encourage that.

Unfortunately, rather than reach out directly to the Dalai Lama, the Chinese authorities are already tightening their control of Tibet. Apparently they have concluded that the lesson of this latest uprising is to increase the repression and claim that everything is back to normal.

Their idea of what is "normal" in Tibet is not the answer. If that is the

path they take, it is only a matter of time before the next eruption of violence. And in the meantime, China will further jeopardize the Olympics and do more damage to its international reputation.

Nobody wants that. We want closer, cooperative relations with China.

Mr. President, let us hope that years from now, the 29th Summer Olympic Games will be remembered not for the violent images of recent weeks, and not for a hardening of positions, but as the catalyst for a new political dialogue that brought about a lasting agreement on Tibet's future.

IRAQI REFUGEES RESETTLE IN VERMONT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, at a time when we are all concerned with the fate of Iraqi refugees and the need to help as many of them as possible resettle in safe havens, I ask unanimous consent that a March 24, 2008, article in the Brattleboro Reformer entitled "Difficult Choices: Son's Birth Deepens Couple's Concern Over Future," be printed in the RECORD.

This article illustrates what Vermonters are doing to help two Iraqi refugees, Revan Hedo and Aseel Pola, who recently gave birth to Brattleboro, Vermont's first Iraqi-American citizen, Matthew. As Vermonters and other Americans open their hearts, their homes, and their wallets to try to alleviate the suffering of Iraqis who have been forced to flee their homeland to escape the violence, it is an important reminder that no matter how one may feel about this war, there is a humanitarian dimension that requires everyone's attention. I am proud that Vermonters are doing their part.

We all hope that some day Iraq will be safe enough for those who want to return home to do so. But there are some 2 million Iraqi refugees stranded in Jordan, Syria, and other countries, and millions more displaced inside Iraq. Only a tiny fraction of those who need and deserve our help have received U.S. visas. This is unconscionable. I urge the White House to expedite the processing for resettlement of Iraqis whose lives are threatened because they had the courage to serve as translators, drivers, and provide other services to the United States. These people risked their lives for us, and they have every reason to expect that we will not abandon them.

I ask unanimous consent that the article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Reformer, Mar. 24, 2008.]

DIFFICULT CHOICES—SON'S BIRTH DEEPENS COUPLE'S CONCERN OVER FUTURE

(By Bob Audette)

BRATTLEBORO.—One year ago today, Iraqi natives Revan Hedo and Aseel Pola were married in their home country.

Ten days ago, Aseel gave birth to a baby boy, Matthew, the first Iraqi-American born

in Brattleboro. His birth heralded a new chapter in the lives of Hedo and Pola, a Catholic couple with family in Iraq but no safe home to return to.

While Matthew is guaranteed a life in the United States by right of his birth, his parents may one day have to return to the Middle East—with or without their son—when their visas expire.

"My son is a U.S. citizen," said Hedo, proudly.

Hedo, now 29, first came to the United States in 2004 on a Fulbright scholarship with which he earned a master's degree in comparative literature and simultaneous translation from the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. He returned to Iraq in 2006 and married Pola. In August 2007, he and his new wife returned to the states, so he could earn a master's in the Art of Education at the School for International Training Graduate Institute.

As an Iraqi, he served as an interpreter for U.S. forces, translating for high-ranking officials such as L. Paul Bremer, Gen. John Abizaid and England Foreign Secretary Jack Straw. One reason for renewing his visa was because living in Iraq had become too dangerous for him and his new wife.

"My life was in jeopardy," he said. "Everyone knew I had been to the United States and had been working for U.S. military forces."

Francis Bailey, an associate professor at UMass, who befriended Hedo during his two years in Amherst, offered the couple a place to live rent free. Bailey was teaching at SIT and offered to sponsor the couple's stay in the United States.

"I was frustrated with the decision to invade Iraq," said Bailey. Giving Hedo and Pola a place to live was "an opportunity to make an individual difference," said Bailey. "This was my choice."

Because of the danger to him, his wife and their new son, returning to Iraq is out of the question, but barring some miracle, they can't legally remain in the United States after their visas expire. Even having a son with American citizenship doesn't guarantee the couple can stay here.

Financially, things have also been difficult for the couple.

Pola, a microbiologist, doesn't work, and Hedo's visa only allows him to work 10 hours a week in SIT's library, not nearly enough money to pay for the daily necessities, never mind the bill at Brattleboro Memorial Hospital for the birth of their son. While Hedo has insurance through SIT, Pola has no coverage.

The congregation at St. Michael's Catholic Church on Walnut Street has been essential in helping the couple keep their heads above water as has the international community on the campus of SIT.

"Our friends at SIT showed us the spirit of diversity, the respect of other cultures and hospitality," said Hedo, adding, "The neighbors are wonderful. They've really supported us, especially emotionally."

"The town is very nice and beautiful," said Pola. "People are really friendly."

Her biggest hope for her son is that he grows up in a family with both a mother and a father. Pola's father spent several years as a prisoner of war during the Iraq-Iran War of the 1980s. In 2001, when she was 19, he was shot dead on his front steps by minions of Saddam Hussein.

One day, they hope to return to Iraq, but right now they consider their trip to the United States "a one-way ticket," said Hedo. "We can't go back."

"We want to be able to live in peace (in Iraq)," he said. "To be respected no matter what our beliefs are. We would love to live in an environment with a lot of tolerance, just like Brattleboro."

Pola has two simple wishes.

"I want to hear that my family is living in peace, not in war, worried all the time, and to have the hope of seeing them."

Hedo and Pola have also received support from their friends, Noah and Natalie Baker Merrill.

"It's very important in these times for Americans to get to know Iraqis and see them as their neighbors," said Noah Baker Merrill, a founder of Direct Aid International, which helps Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan.

Baker Merrill and his wife met Hedo and Pola through SIT, where Natalie is a student advocate.

The United States has done a disgraceful job in helping the refugees, said Baker Merrill, accepting only 1,800 of the 2 to 2.5 million who have fled Iraq.

Nearly 100,000 Iraqis have been allowed to settle in Sweden, but the majority live in refugee camps in Jordan and Syria. Resettlement in a different country is not the answer, said Baker Merrill. Making Iraq a safe country that Iraqis can return to is the answer.

"The overwhelming majority just desperately want to be able to go home."

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I rise today to add my voice of support for the first-ever World Autism Awareness Day, a day that is sorely needed. In 2006 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC, estimated that 1 in 166 children were diagnosed with autism. Today the CDC estimates that number to be 1 in 150. In fact, 67 children are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder per day; a new case is diagnosed almost every 20 minutes.

Like many of my colleagues, I have had the opportunity to spend time with children with autism and their families, from Connecticut and around the Nation. Autism is a complex neurological disorder, which manifests itself differently in each individual but occurs in all racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups. It is a lifelong condition that affects not only the individual with the disability, but impacts the entire family, often requiring intensive levels of support and intervention.

There are so many unanswered questions about autism. The first step in answering them is for us to come together as a society and recognize the many challenges autism presents in the U.S. and throughout the world. It is my hope that today everyone will take a moment to consider autism and the millions of individuals and families struggling with this developmental disability.

We should also make note of the great work and sacrifice of families affected by autism and the tireless advocates for autism research and treatment who have worked to make this day a reality. Among them I want to particularly note my friends Bob and Suzanne Wright who have worked with me for years to address the needs of those dealing with autism. But there is still more to be done.

At a time when the number of children and families living with autism has grown exponentially, it is important that we recognize the need to ex-

pand our federal commitment to combating this disease. Autism is the fastest growing developmental disability in the United States, yet we are not committing enough of our federal resources to developing the type of scientific breakthroughs in autism that are needed. It is time to redouble our efforts and help the thousands of families who are raising children with autism.

Among the first major steps in the Federal response to autism was in 2006 when Congress unanimously passed the Combating Autism Act, which my former colleague from Pennsylvania, Senator Rick Santorum and I authored along with the strong support of many of our colleagues including Senators KENNEDY and ENZI. This initiative represents the largest federal expansion of funding and programs for children and families with autism spectrum disorder.

We took another major step recently on the Senate floor with the unanimous passage of an amendment Senator SUSAN COLLINS and I offered to the fiscal year 2009 budget resolution that would double funding for programs dealing with autism at the CDC, the National Institutes of Health, and other health agencies. It is my hope that my colleagues will keep this momentum going by making sure this funding finds its way into the final budget resolution conference report and then through the appropriations process. The research these funds would support will help us understand more about the causes of and appropriate treatments and services for autism.

We should close no doors on promising avenues of research into the causes of autism. The Combating Autism Act and my recent amendment to the budget resolution allow all biomedical research opportunities on autism to be pursued. In fact, just today a new study of toddlers finds that there may be a link between babies born very prematurely and autism. As the author of the PREEMIE Act, along with my colleague Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER, I find this news particularly interesting. I look forward to the upcoming Surgeon General's Conference in June which was called for under the PREEMIE Act as an opportunity to further pursue this possible link between extreme prematurity and autism.

As we look to the future, we also need to find new and innovative ways to help parents and loved ones care for family members suffering from autism. That is why I have introduced S. 2741, The Disability Savings Act of 2008. This bill will encourage individuals with disabilities and their families to save money for their unique needs in tax-advantaged disability savings accounts. This money could then be drawn out as needed, to pay for services and care that are needed.

Today, on World Autism Awareness Day, I hope we in the Senate can make finding a cure for autism a top priority of the Congress and the Nation. To-

gether, we can make life a little better for those with autism and their loved ones.

IN HONOR OF BOB VALEU

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, on May 1, 2008, Bob Valeu ends his service to the U.S. Senate.

For 16 years, Bob Valeu has done an outstanding job as the director of my North Dakota Senate offices. His passion for public policy, his dedication to our State and country, and his commitment to excellence have been a hallmark of his service these past years.

Those of us who serve as Senators get attention for the work we do. But we understand that very often that attention and our accomplishments are a result of some very talented and dedicated staff who work with us to advance the interests of our State and our country. That is certainly the case with Bob Valeu's service to me and to the Senate.

Whenever an event ended, the lights were turned down, the microphone was turned off, and I had moved on to another event, Bob Valeu was usually still there solving problems and working with people to address their needs. He was that kind of State director—the type every Senator aspires to have.

Bob and I have traveled tens of thousands of miles together to every nook and cranny of our State. We have been to every kind of event imaginable: high school convocations, Main Street tours, ribbon cuttings, university commencements, lutefisk dinners, State fairs, karaoke competitions, and chili cookoffs. But beyond all of that—and even more importantly—Bob Valeu had provided wise counsel and advice over the years. And I know that even as he leaves my official staff, he will continue to be a valuable advisor and a good friend.

So I want to use this opportunity to publicly thank my friend and a very dedicated American with whom I have been privileged to serve these past 16 years.

To Bob and his wife Marge and their entire family, on behalf of the Senate, I tell you that our country is a better place because of your service. And this Senator is deeply appreciative of the many years of excellence you dedicated to the best interests of our great Nation.

COMMEMORATING THE LIFE OF DITH PRAN

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I rise today to commemorate the extraordinary life of Dith Pran, who risked his life to expose the terrors of the Khmer Rouge regime in his native Cambodia, and who later became the subject of the Oscar award-winning film, "The Killing Fields." Mr. Dith died March 30, 2008, in New Jersey, surrounded by relatives and friends. He