

2007, at the request of Senator KENNEDY.

The Virginia Tech Review Panel—a body commissioned by Governor Kaine to study the Virginia Tech tragedy—has issued its findings based on a 4-month investigation of the incident and its aftermath. This bill would adopt a number of recommendations from the Review Panel aimed at improving school safety.

We must not miss this opportunity to implement these initiatives nationwide and to take concrete steps to ensure the safety of our kids. The Senate should move forward and act. I hope those who are holding up this legislation will reconsider their position today as we prepare to remember and to honor those who so tragically lost their lives, and those who had their lives changed forever, in the most deadly incident on a college campus in our Nation's history.

The Senate should move forward to invest in the safety of our students and to better support law enforcement officers across the country by considering and passing the School Safety and Law Enforcement Improvement Act of 2007.

CAPITAL AREA DISTRICT LIBRARY 10TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, since the first library society was formed in Detroit in 1817, libraries have played a central role in the cultural and economic development of the people of Michigan. Nearly 200 years after that first foray into book-sharing, libraries have spread across our State. Today I would like to take a moment to recognize the Capital Area District Library in Ingham County, which is celebrating a decade of enriching the Lansing area, and in doing so has continued the long history of libraries making important contributions to our State.

The Capital Area District Library system plays a significant role in the early stages of learning for children in Lansing, and provides important resources for continuing education for adults. The 13 libraries and the book mobile are places where all are welcome to access and pursue a wealth of information. Patrons can work on their own, in organized programs, or with the assistance of the highly effective library staff, who are focused on promoting learning and enjoyment.

The resources available through the Capital Area District Library also play a critical role in economic development. Considering that more than half of all American households do not have computers or Internet access, the Capital Area District Library resources are more important than ever to connect our citizens to technology and information in this rapidly changing world.

Thomas Jefferson once wrote to John Adams, "I cannot live without books." Books and education were a bedrock of life for our Nation's Founding Fathers and of our democracy; books and education and new learning resources that

the Founding Fathers could not have imagined must be readily available to citizens across the country. The Capital Area District Library continues to fulfill this need in Lansing and Ingham County, and has done so for 10 years with remarkable effectiveness. I congratulate all who have worked so hard on this venture, and extend my deepest appreciation for their service to the citizens of our State.

IRS PRIVATE DEBT COLLECTION ACTIVITIES

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, today is April 15, the day when millions of Americans are hurrying to file their income tax forms to meet the midnight deadline. Many of my colleagues have spoken today about the need to make more effective and responsible use of Federal tax dollars, and I agree that we must do so. One place to start is with the IRS's own private debt collection program.

Today, the Washington Post reported that the Internal Revenue Service's use of private debt collection agencies is expected to cost taxpayers more than \$37 million this year. Throughout our Nation's history, the Federal Government had always assumed responsibility for tax collection. But in 2004, through legislation that I opposed, Congress gave the IRS authority to use private debt collection companies to collect undisputed tax debts of less than \$25,000. The companies also would receive a 25-percent commission on all receipts. Although the stated goal was to improve the efficiency of tax collections, it is clear that this plan is not working.

In fact, even before Congress adopted this approach, former IRS Commissioner Charles Rossotti estimated, in a 2002 report to the IRS Oversight Board, that if Congress were to appropriate an additional \$296 million to hire more compliance employees, the agency could collect an additional \$9.47 billion. In other words, every dollar spent on collection would net \$31. But rather than increase the number of IRS employees, Congress ignored Commissioner Rossotti's advice and instead spent scarce taxpayer funds to privatize IRS functions, with dismal results.

In March 2008, Nina Olson, the National Taxpayer Advocate, reported to Congress that the program actually is losing money. Testifying before the House Ways and Means Committee, Ms. Olson said that the IRS is losing at least \$81 million a year by using private debt collection companies. The IRS spent \$71 million to start the program and it spends \$7.65 million annually to operate it, plus on average \$4.6 million in commissions that are paid to the private collectors. Despite using aggressive tactics, the companies have collected only \$49 million, little more than half of what it has cost the IRS to implement the program. By contrast, Ms. Olson testified, and I quote, "if the

program did not exist and the IRS instead allocated \$7.65 million in appropriated funds to its automated collection system, ACS, function, the return on investment would be vastly greater. IRS data shows that the average return on investment for the ACS program is about 20:1, which would mean that an expenditure of \$7.65 million would generate annual revenue of \$153 million." Ms. Olson then recommended that the private debt collection initiative be terminated. I concur.

The privatization initiative is also putting millions of Americans' personal information at risk. I do not believe that Americans want private collection agencies to have access to their sensitive, personal information that should only be reserved for the Federal Government and the qualified, trained, accountable personnel who work at the IRS.

The Ways and Means Committee recently considered legislation that would repeal the IRS's authority to use private debt collection agencies. The Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act was reported out of committee in a bipartisan vote. My distinguished colleague from North Dakota has introduced similar legislation that would prohibit the IRS from using private debt collection companies, and I am pleased to be an original cosponsor of that bill.

The private debt collection program also has generated considerable confusion among taxpayers. Under the rules of the program, collectors cannot say they are working for the IRS or that they are calling about a tax matter without first receiving proof of a taxpayer's identity. This has led to numerous complaints from consumers who have received calls from collectors, pressing them to provide Social Security numbers and other personal information without first identifying the purpose of the call. Citizens are justifiably fearful of being scammed, and so they refuse to provide the companies with any information. By any measure, this program is not working.

Mr. President, the private debt collection experiment has failed. Tax collection is a fundamental responsibility of Government, and Congress should provide the IRS with the staff and other resources needed to fulfill this responsibility, not enrich private companies at the expense of American taxpayers. Today on April 15—Tax Day—millions of Americans are rushing to file their taxes before the midnight deadline. Many are writing checks to the IRS, and so it is an appropriate time to reconsider the millions of dollars they are spending on the private debt collection program. It is time for this body to pass Senator DORGAN's bill and end this inefficient use of taxpayer dollars.

HONORING OUR MILITARY

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the courage

and selflessness of the men and women serving so bravely in America's military and, in particular, to acknowledge those from my home State of Nebraska. Last week, the testimony of GEN David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker before the Senate on the situation in Iraq reminded everyone of the personal sacrifices of the men and women and their families who are serving their country in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

The United States is engaged in a protracted war for the first time since the end of the military draft 35 years ago. The strains of this prolonged engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan are underscored by the burdens placed on our service members and their families. The voluntary nature of our military accentuates these burdens, being borne by a relative few. This present situation is unique compared to America's past military engagements. World Wars I and II and the conflicts in Korea and Vietnam relied on conscription; consequently, the effects of these wars were felt by a broad number of ordinary Americans. Today, the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have placed our soldiers and military families in an extraordinary situation.

I have visited Iraq four times and Afghanistan twice since the commencement of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom and have met with countless soldiers and their families. Each of these visits and meetings has further elevated my personal gratitude and appreciation of these men and women, and consequently, these soldiers and their families are constantly at the forefront of my thoughts. Last week, a news story described the battle of Sadr City, a district in Baghdad, Iraq, and featured a young man whom I had watched grow up in Nebraska. This news story evoked those same feelings of deep gratitude and immense pride.

The soldier featured in the story was Army CPT Logan Veath, of Chadron, NE. I had last seen Captain Veath 5 months ago at a reunion of the Big Red Battalion, the University of Nebraska's Reserve Officers' Training Corps, ROTC, unit, of which he was a member while attending our shared alma mater. I had first met Captain Veath when he was 16 years old, and we reminisced at that reunion of our past experiences together. Captain Veath was dressed in cowboy attire—because that is exactly what he is in Nebraska. In fact, I almost didn't recognize him in the news story from Iraq, as he had a Kevlar helmet on his head instead of his usual cowboy hat.

Captain Veath's entire family was also at the reunion, and they provided a brief glimpse into how a family copes with a loved one who is called upon to serve tours of duty lasting from 12 to 15 months. Captain Veath is unique in that this is his sixth tour of duty serving in Iraq or Afghanistan. Less than 1 percent of Army service members have

been deployed six times; this speaks to Captain Veath's remarkable dedication and selflessness.

That day was a vivid reminder of our American soldiers, who must leave their loved ones in order to serve in battles nearly 7,000 miles away from their homes. Today, I offer my most sincere appreciation and gratitude to soldiers such as Army CPT Logan Veath. We must never forget these brave men and women, who have valiantly and selflessly served their country, together with their families, who provide them with immeasurable support. Their honor in service must remain a source of inspiration for us all.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

HONORING JENNIFER JOY WILSON

• Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, today I wish to honor Jennifer Joy Wilson. For the past decade, Ms. Wilson has served first as the head of the National Stone Association, and then after the merger of two similar groups, as the president and CEO of the National Stone, Sand & Gravel Association, NSSGA. Based in Alexandria, VA, NSSGA is the world's largest mining association by product volume. Its member companies represent more than 90 percent of the crushed stone and 70 percent of the sand and gravel produced annually in the United States and approximately 118,000 working men and women in the aggregates industry. During 2006, a total of about 2.95 billion metric tons of crushed stone, sand and gravel, valued at \$21 billion, were produced and sold in the United States.

This year Ms. Wilson has been given the distinguished honor of being selected as AggMan of the Year by Aggregates Manager magazine, one of the construction aggregates industry's leading trade publications.

During her tenure, the NSSGA led an effort to improve employee safety in the aggregate industry by developing new safety procedures, called Part 46, for the U.S. Mine Safety & Health Administration, MSHA. The joint industry-labor effort produced a proposal "that would apply better to our industry and provide managers and workers with effective means to prevent accidents and fatalities." By all accounts, Part 46 has shown remarkable success in reducing employee injuries.

On February 11, 2003, an alliance between NSSGA and MSHA was announced. Signed at the NSSGA's Centennial Convention in Orlando, FL, the agreement calls for the two bodies to work closely together on the promotion of safe working conditions, the development of effective miner training programs, and the expansion of the mine safety and health outreach and communication. "For the first time ever, MSHA and an industry association have jointly agreed to adopt safety and health performance goals with objective measures," then MSHA Ad-

ministrator Dave Lauriski said during that meeting. "This alone is unprecedented . . . NSSGA is again showing its leadership."

On the environmental front, Ms. Wilson led the industry in investing in a study "righting an assumption we just didn't believe was right." Through the efforts of the association and its members, it was determined that the aggregates industry is not a major emitter of PM-10—a particular type of air pollutant. The final regulations reflected the investment by the industry in recognizing that aggregate operations are not a major source of coarse particulate matter.

Considering almost half of all crushed stone, sand and gravel produced in the United States is used for building the Nation's transportation infrastructure, Ms. Wilson has led her members in establishing a strong grassroots presence connecting the industry's workforce with their elected officials while increasing their activity on Capitol Hill. Leveraging the association's resources, Ms. Wilson has also worked closely with industry coalitions to advocate for sound and sensible transportation policies.

Ms. Wilson has also worked to raise awareness of the public, legislators, and of regulators at all levels to the immeasurably important role aggregates play in maintaining America's high quality of life. She calls this effort "romancing the stone" which includes her leadership in establishing The Rocks gallery at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History and creating a permanent endowment to support the gallery, all totaling more than \$3.1 million.

Many people have been able to take credit for industry accomplishments, but selection as AggMan of the Year denotes something not everyone can lay claim to—respect of one's peers. For this reason I stand here today to take a moment and congratulate a woman who has done so much for America and the good people in the aggregates industry all the while earning their respect. •

RECOGNIZING NORTH SEATTLE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

• Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I wish today to recognize the North Seattle Community College, in my home State of Washington, as a local leader in sustainability practices. The work of North Seattle Community College, and especially of the North Seattle Community College Sustainability Committee, has made significant contributions to raising awareness of sustainability issues in everyday life on the campus.

Created in 2005, the North Seattle Community College Sustainability Committee holds regular meetings to coordinate sustainability practices with faculty, staff, administrators, students, and interested local residents.