

the following 11 years, Mena dramatically increased fundraising efforts, allowing the Lincoln Park Zoo to expand at an unprecedented rate.

Mena transitioned to Chicago's Zoological Society, working with the Brookfield Zoo in 1991, where she assumed the role as Vice President for Development. It was during this time, that Mena achieved one of her most significant long-term accomplishments. Mena helped secure additional bonding authority for the Forest Preserve District so that it could address its capital maintenance needs, as well as the needs of the Brookfield Zoo and Chicago Botanic Gardens. The Forest Preserve District's holdings—and those of the Brookfield Zoo and Chicago Botanic Garden—have significantly improved through the use of these bond funds.

In 2003, she became the Vice President of Government Affairs and Strategic Initiatives, directing the Zoo's local, State, and Federal government communications and solicitation programs. Mena worked closely with Zoo staff to help the Forest Preserve District better serve Cook County residents through special outreach programs, including tours for senior groups, family pass programs at area libraries, and information on Brookfield Zoo job fairs and lecture series.

One of Mena's signature achievements was raising funds for the Hamill Family Play Zoo, an award-winning play area for children age 8 and under that has served as a model for many zoos across the country.

A few years ago, Mena was diagnosed with breast cancer. In the midst of a personal health crisis and in addition to pursuing traditional therapies, Mena thought about all of the women in her life—daughter, granddaughters, friends, colleagues—and enrolled in an NIH-funded study at Loyola University in Chicago, examining the effects of meditation on immune cells in breast cancer patients. That is what makes Mena special. She is always optimistic, always strong, and always looking to help others. I am happy to say that Mena's cancer is in remission. She is a survivor. She is also an inspiration.

To say that Mena is "retiring" somehow doesn't seem quite right. It would be more accurate to say that she is redirecting her energies. I have no doubt that Mena will remain involved in her community and committed to the many causes in which she believes so deeply. I know she is excited to spend more time with her family, especially her four grandchildren. Mena will enjoy having more free time to spend hiking, picnicking and exploring the lands of the Forest Preserve District she treasures so dearly. And if you know Mena, you also know that she enjoys a good, spirited political debate. I can only imagine how retirement will foster that passion.

It is with a sense of gratitude that I wish Mena Boulanger well as she prepares to retire from the Chicago Zoo-

logical Society and moves on to the next chapter in her life. Mena has created a lasting impact on the lives of thousands through her work and volunteerism in the Chicagoland region. Anyone that has visited either the Lincoln Park Zoo or Brookfield Zoo since 1980 has benefited from Mena's efforts and generosity.

I wish Mena Boulanger the best in her retirement and thank her for caring for the Midwest flora and fauna she embraced some 35 years ago.

HONORING DOMINIC AND BRENDA RANDAZZO

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise today to honor two constituents, Dominic and Brenda Randazzo, who have spent much of their lives giving back to their community.

Dominic and Brenda are a remarkable couple. Through 45 years of marriage, three children and seven grandchildren, they have maintained an unyielding spirit of giving back.

They were honored recently as the 2008 Servant Leaders of the Year by Provena St. Mary's Foundation in Kankakee, IL.

Provena St. Mary's Hospital has a special meaning for Dominic and Brenda. It is where they were both born.

For many years, both Dominic and Brenda have been among the hospital's most loyal supporters. Dominic has served as lead fundraiser for the hospital's annual Black Tie Gala for more than 8 years.

Last year, Dominic asked Brenda if she could lend some helpful suggestions for an auction benefitting the hospital. Brenda wound up chairing the auction and raised generous contributions.

Dominic grew up in Kankakee, IL and after he graduated from college, spent nearly 2 years in the United States Army, including time in Germany. After his years in the service, Dominic went to work for Armour Pharmaceutical in 1960 where he met his lovely wife, Brenda.

Two years ago, Dominic retired as the manager of community and government relations for Aventis Behring. This job combined Dominic's two favorite passions, community and legislation.

Brenda grew up in Chebanse, IL, with dreams of becoming a flight attendant or an interior designer. After working at Armour Pharmaceutical and meeting Dominic, Brenda joined Albanese Development, a company that designs, builds, and decorates hotels. Brenda's caring nature helped her excel in the hospitality industry, ultimately being named General Manager of Year in 2000 by the American Hotel and Lodging Administration.

Provena St. Mary's is only one of many community organizations to which the Randazzos give so generously of their time and talents.

Dominic also spends countless hours with the United Way of Kankakee County. In 2004, he chaired that organi-

zation's Leadership Giving Campaign and broke its previous fundraising record. For his efforts, he was honored with the Ken Cote Award, better known as the Mr. United Way Award.

For more than 15 years, Dominic organized the Hemophilia Foundation of Illinois' annual Walk-and-Bike-a-thon.

Throughout her career in hotel management, Brenda, too, has always found time to help others. On Halloween, Brenda invited Easter Seals to bring children to trick-or-treat at the hotel. She also mentored low-income women—helping them obtain jobs at her hotels and access to public transportation. And she is a stalwart supporter of both the Arthritis Foundation and the Rotary Club in Bourbonnais, IL.

Their motivation for their service is simple and inspiring. Dominic and Brenda Randazzo both say that they have been blessed, and they want to share their blessings with others.

We are all enriched by the good works and fine example of caring citizens such as the Randazzos. I congratulate both Dominic and Brenda on their well-deserved honor and thank them for their many years of selfless giving to others.

GUNS AND CHILDREN

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, often when we talk about combating gun violence, we discuss preventing criminal access to dangerous firearms. However, we must also focus our attention on the unsupervised access to firearms by our children and teenagers. While firearms in the hand of criminals pose a significant threat to society, many of the fatal firearm incidences in our country occur when children and teens discover loaded and unsecured firearms in their own homes. Over the years, suicides and accidental shootings have claimed the lives of thousands of young people. Sadly, many of these tragedies could have been prevented through commonsense gun legislation.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 1.69 million children in the United States live in households with unlocked and loaded firearms. Tragically, firearms kill an average of nearly eight children and teenagers a day. What's more, the Children's Defense Fund estimates that at least four times this number are injured in nonfatal shootings.

Many parents believe that simply educating their children about the dangers firearms can pose is enough to keep them safe. Unfortunately, this is simply not the case. A study conducted by the Harvard School of Public Health, involving 201 families who have guns in their homes, found that 39 percent of the parents who stated their children did not know the storage location of their firearms were contradicted by their children. In addition, 22 percent of the parents who believed their children had not handled their

guns were contradicted by their children. The study concluded that although many parents had warned their children about gun safety, there was still a significant possibility that they were misinformed about their children's actions with their guns.

Common sense tells us that when guns are secured, the risk of children injuring or killing themselves or others with a gun is significantly reduced. By passing legislation that would require that all handguns sold by a dealer come with a child safety device, such as a lock, a lock box, or technology built into the gun itself, we could significantly decrease the possibility of a child misusing a firearm. I urge my colleagues to take up and pass such sensible gun safety legislation.

REMEMBERING SEAN KENNEDY

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today in remembrance of a young man whose life was cut short because of a tragic crime—a hate crime. I came to the Senate floor, 1 year ago today, to speak about a vicious attack that killed Sean Kennedy on May 16, 2007. He was just 20 years old. As I have done countless times in the past, I have again come to the floor to highlight the needless deaths of hate crimes' victims and the need to enact Federal hate crimes legislation.

Recently, I had the opportunity to speak to Sean Kennedy's mother Elke Kennedy. I had heard that Elke had read about her son in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD and was grateful that someone had recognized his death and understood the need for hate crimes legislation. For every victim of a hate crime, many more family members and friends are impacted by the tragic loss. While I know the pain of losing a son, I can only imagine the grief Elke must have felt when someone took the life of her son simply for who he was. As a nation, what do we say to Elke and other family members who have lost a loved one to a hate crime? What salve do we have to offer them for their pain? I believe we could start by passing Federal hate crimes legislation to demonstrate our national commitment to ending bias-motivated crimes.

No parent should have to fear for their child's safety because of their sexual orientation and because our laws do not adequately protect them. It is the Government's first duty to defend its citizens, to defend them against the harms that come out of hate. Federal and State laws intended to protect individuals from heinous and violent crimes motivated by hate are woefully inadequate. Sean's death is an unfortunate reminder of this fact.

The Matthew Shepard Act 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 lessen the very

impact of hate on our society. Moreover, for parents like Elke Kennedy and Judy Shepard, Matthew's mother, it will finally prove that their sons' deaths were not in vain.

REFORMING THE FEDERAL HIRING PROCESS

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I would like to speak today about the broken hiring process in the Federal Government and the need to recruit and retain the next generation of Federal employees.

The Federal Government is the largest employer in the United States, but every day talented people interested in Federal service are turned away at the door. Too many Federal agencies have built entry barriers for younger workers, invested too little in human resources professionals, done too little to recruit the right candidates, and invented an evaluation process that discourages qualified candidates. As a result, high-quality candidates are abandoning the Federal Government. The Federal Government has become the employer of the most persistent.

This problem was forcibly brought home at a hearing on May, 8, 2008, of the Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia entitled "From Candidates to Change Makers: Recruiting the Next Generation of Federal Employees," which I chair. The subcommittee heard testimony from the Office of Personnel Management, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the Merit Systems Protection Board, the Government Accountability Office, Federal employee unions, think tanks, a human resources consulting firm, and an expert in New Media marketing.

The Government Accountability Office's testimony pointed out the broad failures of agencies to address these issues and stated, "Studies by us and others have pointed to such problems as passive recruitment strategies, unclear job vacancy announcements, and imprecise candidate assessment tools. These problems put the Federal Government at a competitive disadvantage when acquiring talent."

The Office of Personnel Management OPM is supposed to be the leader in the Federal Government on personnel and human capital practices, but not enough is being done. OPM's answer is to offer a legislative proposal that would have the Federal Government rehire retired employees on a part-time or limited-time basis. This demonstrates a clear lack of focus on attracting the next generation of Federal workers and working to retain the current employees. OPM estimates that 30 percent of the Federal workforce—approximately 600,000 employees—will retire in the next 5 years. Rehiring former employees does not address the changing culture of job seekers.

Mr. Dan Solomon, the chief executive office of the marketing firm Virilion,

addressed the issue of developing recruitment strategies that are friendly to 25- to 35-year-old. Mr. Solomon laid out the challenge before Federal agencies in recruiting the next generation testifying, "younger people are a difficult group to reach and engage . . . bottom line: people looking for jobs are online and the government needs to be there to attract the best."

Reports and surveys from the Merit Systems Protection Board MSPB, the Partnership for Public Service, and the Council for Excellence in Government demonstrate that young people strongly desire to work in public service. Agencies need to meet young people where they are, and developing recruitment strategies, using online resources and streamlining the hiring process are essential to attracting the next generation of Federal employees. In the private sector, employers post jobs through many online venues and only require a resume and cover letter. Applying to the Federal Government should be accessible and easy.

There were many good suggestions made to improve the process. I believe that if OPM forced agencies to adopt those recommendations improvements would be made. For example, MSPB offered four sound recommendations that could significantly improve agencies' efforts if adopted. First, agencies should manage hiring as a critical business process, and not an administrative function that is relegated to the human resources staff. Second, agencies should evaluate their own internal hiring practices to identify barriers to high-quality, timely, and cost-effective hiring decisions. Third, employ rigorous assessment strategies that emphasize selection quality, not just cost and speed. Finally, agencies should implement sound marketing practices and better recruitment strategies, improve their vacancy announcements, and communicate more effectively with applicants.

Agencies can do this. The problem is not Congress. Since 2002, Congress has given agencies the flexibilities they need. Agencies no longer must rely on the rule of three or selecting only from the top three candidates who apply; they can use category ratings; and they can get direct hire authority from OPM. However, in many cases Federal agencies are not using these authorities. Neither is the competitive process the problem. The notion that merit system principles and veterans preference are barriers to hiring is wrong. These are good management practices that ensure agencies select qualified candidates and do not use discriminatory practices.

OPM has not done enough to force agencies to streamline their hiring processes and appeal to the next generation of employees. OPM developed the 45-day hiring model and Hiring Tool Kit to reduce the hiring time at agencies to 45 days and streamline internal processes. However, these have not reduced the number of complaints