

are a billionaire, the President is all there for you. If you are one of the wealthiest families in America, in this budget the President has brought forth today, you are going to get huge tax breaks. Let me cite one example of how preposterous this scenario is.

One of the wealthiest families in America is the Walton family. The Walton family, as I think most people know, owns Wal-Mart. This one family is worth, it is estimated, a combined \$82 billion. There are a number of sons and daughters, but combined they are worth about \$82 billion—one family. Incredible as it may sound, under the President's proposal of completely eliminating the estate tax, that one family would receive over \$30 billion in tax breaks.

So here we are. If you are old and can't afford to heat your home, we are going to cut the program that keeps you warm. If you are sick and you have no health insurance, we are going to cut the program that gives you access to a doctor. If you are living in a home where you are losing all kinds of heat through poor insulation, we are not going to help you. If you are a veteran who has served your country, we are going to raise fees for you to get into a VA hospital or a clinic. But if you are one of the wealthiest families in America, we are going to give you \$30 billion in tax breaks.

I say this without glee, but President Bush will probably go down in history as one of the least popular Presidents this country has ever had. And you don't need to know anything more to understand why that is so. A President who would give hundreds of billions in tax breaks to millionaires and billionaires and then cut back on the needs of working families, senior citizens, and veterans is not a President who is representing the vast majority of our people. I will do everything that I can as a member of the Budget Committee to not only make sure President Bush's budget is not implemented, but I will work with my colleagues to fashion a budget that begins to address the real needs of the American people.

There is great disenchantment in this country about what is going on here in Washington, but I also note there is great hope out there. There is a belief that if we come together as a people, if we remember where we came from, if we are prepared to uphold the values that have made us a great country, if we are willing to stand up to the powerful special interests who have so much influence over what goes on in this institution—if we can do those things—not only can we once again create a great middle class, not only can we once again protect the most vulnerable people in our society, but perhaps, more importantly, we can once again give the American people a faith in their Government that they presently lack. That is something we must do.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

Mr. AKAKA. Madam President, I am pleased to support the Senate's bipar-

tisan legislation designed to stimulate the economy and benefit working families, assist seniors and veterans, provide some relief for the unemployed, and encourage business and energy investments. I know that there are numerous families throughout the Nation who have found themselves working harder and having less discretionary income due to increases in living expenses such as gasoline and food costs. In my home state of Hawaii where the cost of living is already high, especially due to housing, families are struggling. They, like the rest of the Nation, have been hit hard by the decline in the economy. While Hawaii's unemployment is not as high as in other parts of the Nation, it is not uncommon for individuals in Hawaii to work two or three jobs just to provide their families with food and shelter and to have multiple generations living under the same roof in order to save money.

One of the key provisions of the Senate's economic stimulus package is to put money in the hands of low-income and middle-class individuals and families by offering a rebate of \$500 per individual and \$1000 per couple, plus \$300 for every child under the age of 17. For the many families in this Nation struggling to make ends meet, these rebates will help ease the financial pressures they are currently facing. Far too often, due to the downturn in our Nation's economy, families are finding that they simply cannot afford important, basic needs. Consequently, they are forced to make very difficult decisions and even more difficult sacrifices. More and more Americans are relying on high-interest credit cards, not to buy luxuries but just to provide daily necessities. The rebates included in the Senate package will help families pay down those bills and provide much needed financial relief.

The Senate Finance Committee's package also improves upon the House-passed bill by extending these rebates to senior citizens and disabled veterans. As chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs, I am strongly supportive of provisions in this bill that improve the House version of the bill by including hundreds of thousands of disabled vets in the stimulus package. It is vitally important that we ensure that our Nation's wounded warriors and their families who have sacrificed so much are given the assistance they need. I am pleased to support the extension of benefits in the Senate Finance bill to 20 million senior citizens living on Social Security. For many low-income senior citizens, whose sole income is their monthly Social Security check, a rebate check could provide much needed relief in addition to providing further stimulus to the country's economy.

In addition to the rebates included in the Finance Committee package, another important provision is the extension of unemployment benefits. I know

that for many workers who have found themselves out of jobs due to layoffs or business failures, unemployment benefits provide a much-needed bridge to get them over the immediate economic financial crises until they can find employment. Providing an additional 13 weeks of unemployment benefits for individuals who have been caught in the economic downturn and another 13 weeks of benefits for workers in states with high rates of unemployment will go a long way toward providing the support they need as they look for new jobs in this difficult economic environment.

I am also supportive of provisions in the Senate economic stimulus package that will encourage businesses to invest. Increasing the carryback period for net operating losses from 2 to 5 years, for example, will benefit the housing industry by allowing builders to avoid selling land and houses at greatly reduced prices and enable less costly financing. In addition, provisions to extend renewable energy and energy efficiency tax cuts for a year will help boost the economy by generating new employment opportunities. Given the growing demand for energy coupled with rising prices, it is critical to America's economy that we provide incentives to invest in clean energy production.

As the Senate considers this bill, I will continue to work to ensure that the economic stimulus package passed by Congress is structured to help hard-working men and women who find it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. We must see that a broad segment of the population, including the unemployed, senior citizens, and disabled veterans, receives assistance and that business and environmental investment is encouraged. I ask my Senate colleagues to join me in supporting the Senate version of the economic stimulus package.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO AMBASSADOR JAMES W. SPAIN

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I remember being on the Senate floor on September 12, 2001. That was the day after the horrendous attack on our Nation. It was the only time in my 33 years here that I can remember the public galleries being closed. There was an unprecedented amount of security around the Capitol. But every Senator came onto the floor of the Senate that day. We wanted to indicate to the world that this symbol of democracy would not close. I especially remember

that the closed visitors galleries, however, contained two people: former Ambassador James Spain and my wife Marcelle.

This memory, and so many more, came back to me in January of this year when Ambassador Spain's son Stephen informed me that my dear friend Jim had died on January 2 in Wilmington, NC.

It is hard to think of anyone in public life I have met during my years as a Senator who is as memorable as Jim Spain. He has touched me with his dignity, his sense of humanity, and his honesty as no one else could. He was the truest of public servants—one who cared for his country and those his position influenced actually more than he cared for himself.

I first met Jim decades ago when he was the Ambassador to Turkey and I visited him in Ankara. Even though Turkey was under military rule at that time, he invited people from across the political spectrum to meet with the two of us at his residence. It was there I saw the abilities of one of the finest Ambassadors to ever represent our great country as he brought these sometimes adversaries together to talk in what he called his "game room" or play room.

Turkey was under a dusk-to-dawn curfew at that time, but I had to leave in the middle of the night to get back to the United States. Jim arranged for a military escort to take me and to open the airport so that my military plane I was using could leave. I still remember "His Excellency," as so many of the Turks called him, waving goodbye from his front door in his pajamas, his bathrobe, and his slippers about 2 a.m.

We kept in close touch when he returned to Washington, through his ambassadorship in Sri Lanka and later retirement. He and Marcelle and I once sat up talking half the night when he was a guest in our house. After every one of these meetings, I would tell others that I felt I had been with a close member of my own family and my conscience had been touched in a very special and very helpful way.

I wish every member of the Foreign Service could read Ambassador Spain's book entitled "In Those Days." I was privileged to write, along with John Kenneth Galbraith and Father Andrew Greeley, a cover blurb for that book. In my blurb I said:

From boyhood glimpses of a strutting Al Capone, to post-war Japan, a stint with the CIA, and a fascinating foreign service career—this is a life worth living. History is shaped by extraordinary people like Ambassador Spain. His Irish eloquence makes the difficult look easy while his humanity touches your soul.

Another wrote:

Jim Spain's contribution in assisting CIA Director Allen Dulles to make President Eisenhower get the pronunciation of Prime Minister Nehru's first name right during the latter's official visit to Washington is a typical foreign service moment. "Heady stuff for a 28-year-old," noted Jim Spain.

Even today I cannot pronounce former Prime Minister Nehru's first name correctly. I cannot think of the number of times when traveling with Ambassador Spain he whispered in my ear to make sure I got the names correct.

In the end, it was his humanity that touched us all. It was as though his great intelligence and ability was only the pedestal to allow the humanity to shine through.

Tissa Jayatilaka—and I do wish Ambassador Spain was here to make sure I come anywhere close to pronouncing this name correctly—wrote:

News reached us over the weekend past that Jim Spain's time on earth had run out. Heaven knows this world of ours cannot afford to do without human beings of his caliber and yet there is only so much that an individual can do for humanity before he, too, moves unto the dusty descend.

Ambassador Spain was one of the most decent, gentle, caring, and perceptive human beings I have known to-date.

He was unfailingly generous and kind to his fellow-companions on this bittersweet journey on earth that we travel on for a while. It was indeed a privilege to have worked with him briefly and shared a long and fruitful friendship with him thereafter.

I first came to know him during my days in The Colombo Plan Bureau in the 1980s. He had arrived in Colombo some time in 1985 to head the U.S. Mission here. Until then, Sri Lanka was the only South Asian country he had not lived in before.

He was to make up for this in the years ahead, when in 1989, consequent to his retirement from the U.S. foreign service, he made Sri Lanka his home.

This decision of Ambassador Spain was all the more remarkable because the last several years of the 80s was a period when most Sri Lankans were seeking to run away from their land of birth.

Jim Spain not only stayed behind, but also did a great deal discreetly to assist this beleaguered country of ours to save itself from self-destruction.

This person goes on to write:

... It was several years later that I came to know that only a couple of years prior to his coming to Colombo that Ambassador Spain himself had suffered a monumental personal loss.

Consequent to a memorable family reunion after some years during Thanksgiving 1983 at a resort in West Virginia, Jim Spain, his wife Edith and daughter Sikandra bade farewell to their sons and brothers Patrick, William and Stephen and began to wend their way through country roads back to Washington.

Near Leesburg, Virginia, their light fiberglass car was hit by a huge old station wagon going 85 miles per hour, driven by a local football player who was not wearing the glasses his license prescribed. He was not even scratched, but the Spains had to be evacuated to the Washington Hospital Trauma Center by helicopter.

By next morning, Sikandra was dead, Edith was clinging to life in an intensive-care unit and Jim was immobilized with a variety of fractures and bruises.

A few weeks later, Edith died.

With the help of his sons and his strong spirituality, Jim Spain bore his irreparable loss with fortitude.

I read all that into the RECORD so my colleagues would know what a man he was.

I have lost a good friend. Marcelle and I send our condolences to his sons

Patrick, Stephen, and William; their wives, Barbara, Beth, and Anu; to his grandchildren Jeanne, James, Aidan, Katherine, and Rachel; and to all within his family.

For my part, I know I have gained more from knowing him than I could ever say.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD Ambassador Spain's biography.

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

Ambassador Spain was born in 1926 in Chicago, Illinois, where he attended St. Brendan's Parochial School and Quigley Seminary where his classmates included priest/author Andrew Greeley and "Vatican Banker" Paul Marcinkus. He received a masters degree from the University of Chicago and a PhD from Columbia University.

Ambassador Spain served in World War II, for a time serving on General Douglas MacArthur's staff as a photographer in occupied Japan. He entered the Foreign Service in 1951, and spent the entirety of his career in government service. His assignments took him to Pakistan, Turkey, Tanzania, the UN, and Sri Lanka.

His first post was as Vice Consul in Karachi in 1951. Following that he returned to the U.S. where he lived, mostly in Washington, DC, until 1969. He was appointed as Charge d'Affaires to Pakistan in 1969, Consul General in Istanbul from 1970-1972, Deputy Chief of Mission in Ankara (1972-1974), Ambassador to Tanzania (1975-1979) and Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations under Andrew Young briefly in 1979, Ambassador to Turkey from 1980-1981, and finally as Ambassador to Sri Lanka from 1985-1988. He retired as a Career Minister in the Foreign Service and remained in Sri Lanka until 2006, when he returned to the United States. He has been living in Wilmington, NC since then.

He was the author of numerous books, including *In Those Days*, *American Diplomacy in Turkey*, *The Way of the Pathans*, *Pathans of the Latter Day*, and a series of novels featuring Dodo Dillon. He contributed articles on foreign affairs to a variety of publications.

Ambassador Spain lived a distinguished life of service to his country and dedication to his friends and family. He was a remarkably able diplomat who drew on his own odyssey from an impoverished youth on the South Side of Chicago—the son of a streetcar conductor and a seamstress who were Irish immigrants—to attending receptions with Presidents and Prime Ministers to inspire those around him to seek the best for themselves and their country. He met adversity with strength, rudeness with grace, and challenges with enthusiasm. He played pivotal roles in maintaining and strengthening the United States alliance with Turkey, in bringing about a peaceful transition to majority rule in Zimbabwe, and strengthening the United States' relations with all the countries of the subcontinent. He was most proud not of the headlines that he had a part in, but of the headlines that never had to be written, thanks to his work defusing tensions between nations.

One of his earliest memories of Chicago was being taken by his father to watch Al Capone walk through City Hall. His glimpse of the legendary gangster impressed many, among them Jawarlalal Nehru, the first prime minister of India, who once held up a reception line just to hear about it.

James W. Spain, 81, died on January 2, 2008 of natural causes in Wilmington, NC.

He was very pleased to have outlived Sen. Jesse Helms of North Carolina, but sorely

disappointed not to have lived to see the next Democrat in the White House.

He was preceded in death by his beloved wife Edith and daughter Sikandra. He is survived by his sons, Patrick, Stephen and William and his grandchildren, Jeanne, James, Aidan, Katherine, and Rachel.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, the flags are at half-mast today in the village of Tinley Park, IL.

They will be lowered for 5 days, 1 day for each victim of the tragic and senseless shootings that took place last Saturday.

Five lives were cut short that morning: Carrie Chiuso, of Frankfort, IL, a social worker and counselor of high school students at Homewood-Flossmoor High School, dedicated to her community and to her family; Rhoda McFarland, of Joliet, who had served as a nurse practitioner in the U.S. Air Force and who was engaged to be married; Jennifer Bishop of South Bend, IN, a nurse who had worked for 13 years saving lives at South Bend Memorial Hospital; Connie Woolfolk, of Flossmoor, IL, a working mother, with a 16-year-old and a 10-year-old; And Sarah Szafranski, of Oak Forest, only 22 years old, a young woman who had just recently graduated from Northern Illinois University and started on a promising career.

We offer our support and our prayers to the friends and families of these victims. We mourn with them in their time of loss.

There are also reports that a sixth victim was shot in this robbery attempt and that she has survived. Our thoughts and prayers are with her and her family as well.

An investigation by law enforcement authorities is underway, and we hope that the person or persons responsible for these killings will be swiftly brought to justice.

Edward Zabrocki, the mayor of Tinley Park, said, "This is a tragedy that should not happen to any town." He is right.

After a gun-related tragedy, we often hear that now is not the time to talk about gun violence in America. But when is it time?

In America, we lose 81 people to gun violence every day—81 people a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

In 2004, the latest year for which the Centers for Disease Control has complete information, 29,569 people died from gun violence in America. That is more than twice as many people who died that year from HIV/AIDS.

And that doesn't count those who are wounded by gunfire. In 2004, 64,389 people were injured by gun violence. That is an average of 176 people every single day.

Firearm violence is at epidemic levels in this country. No matter who we are or how safe we think we are, any of us could be among the dozens of victims each day who end up on the wrong side of a gun.

We need to change the way we talk about gun violence in this country. It is time to move past the stereotypes of "gun nuts" and "gun grabbers" pitted against each other. The majority of those who own guns in this country obtained their guns legally and use them lawfully.

But we also need to recognize that every year tens of thousands of shots in this country are fired at human beings. And while some are fired lawfully in self-defense or in the line of duty, thousands of gunshots end with suicide, homicide, assault, or accidental death.

We need to reduce these violent shootings, without placing undue burdens on the legal uses of guns.

Here are some principles that should guide us:

No. 1, those who own guns have an obligation to store those guns safely.

No. 2, those who sell guns have a duty to sell them only to those who are authorized by law to purchase them. Whether you are selling at a store or a gun show, you should not turn your head the other way and ignore a buyer's background.

No. 3, those of us who make laws have a duty to balance the rights of people to own and use guns safely and legally with the need to prevent gun violence.

We have had too many funerals for Americans like Carrie Chiuso, Rhoda McFarland, Jennifer Bishop, Connie Woolfolk, and Sarah Szafranski. Too many American lives suddenly and brutally cut short. Gun violence is an epidemic in this country, and each of us needs to take seriously our responsibility to end this violence.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, I was on the floor during the debate and vote on cloture on the motion to proceed to H.R. 5140. My vote was not recorded. I would like the RECORD to reflect that, had my vote been recorded, I would have voted "aye."

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

STAFF SERGEANT ROBERT J. MILLER

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, today I give tribute to an American hero who was killed in the line of duty while conducting combat operations for Operation Enduring Freedom in Barikowt, Afghanistan. SSG Robert J. Miller was wounded by small arms fire and died from these injuries sustained on January 25, 2008. His bravery and selflessness will be remembered and honored. I extend my thoughts and prayers to his parents, Philip and Maureen Miller, and all his family and friends.

Robert Miller was born in Harrisburg, PA, and eventually found his way to the University of Iowa, where he attended his freshman year. Miller was an avid gymnast who aspired to be on the university's gymnastics team and

was an enthusiastic fan of the Hawkeyes. After a year of attending the University of Iowa, he decided to enlist in the U.S. Army in 2003. He earned a green beret from the special forces qualification course in 2005. During his years of service, he has been awarded numerous medals including the Army Commendation Medal with Valor, Army Good Conduct Medal, and Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, among others.

Staff Sergeant Miller was assigned to Company A of the 3rd Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group out of Fort Bragg, NC. He will be remembered for his courageous sacrifice and excellent work ethic. His mother Maureen said it best: "We're proud of what he did, and we loved what we did. He died a hero." I ask my colleagues here in the Senate and all Americans to remember with gratitude and appreciation a brave soldier, SSG Robert J. Miller.

SOCIAL SECURITY COLA PROTECTION ACT

Mr. JOHNSON. Madam President, shortly before our adjournment last December, I was joined by several of my Senate colleagues in introducing the Social Security COLA Protection Act of 2007. This legislation will provide seniors with much-needed relief from steadily increasing Medicare premiums and will ensure that their Social Security cost-of-living adjustment, or COLA, is available for other essential needs such as food, housing, and energy.

I want to first thank Senators BOXER, INOUE, LEAHY, MIKULSKI, MURRAY, REED, ROCKEFELLER, and SALAZAR for joining me in this effort. Representative HERSETH SANDLIN introduced the companion bill today in the House of Representatives, and I want to thank her for her leadership on this issue and other important topics to seniors in South Dakota.

Sixteen percent of South Dakotans are Medicare beneficiaries. When compared to a national average of 14 percent, it is clear that Medicare policies significantly affect my home State. Many of these retirees live on modest, fixed incomes and must pay close attention to their monthly expenses. South Dakota's senior citizens worked very hard all of their lives as farmers, small business owners, teachers, and parents. In their retirement, all they are hoping for is an opportunity to enjoy a basic level of comfort and certainty.

Unfortunately, as the cost of health care continues to rise at an alarming rate, it becomes more and more difficult for seniors to achieve this sense of security during retirement. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, the United States spent about \$2 trillion on health care in 2005, almost three times the \$696 billion spent in 1990. That \$2 trillion represents 16 percent of the gross domestic product. The rate at which our Nation's health care