

sense of optimism. I am so honored to be a part of this body at this historic time.

As I said, I rise in support of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which will restore protections against pay discrimination in the workplace. This bill would reestablish a fair rule for filing claims of pay discrimination based on race, national origin, gender, religion, age, or disability.

A few months ago, this bill's namesake, Lilly Ledbetter, joined me at several roundtable events in North Carolina. Her courage and determination were inspiring. She is committed to this cause even though it is too late to do anything in her own case.

In North Carolina, families are facing a serious enough challenge trying to make ends meet on a full paycheck, never mind trying to do so on a paycheck reduced by discrimination. Women in my home State make an average of 78 cents for every dollar that men make for similar jobs and responsibilities. In these tough economic times—when families are being forced to choose between putting food on the table and filling a prescription; can no longer afford the payments on their house, their own small part of the American dream; are being forced to dip into their savings to help pay their bills—why would anyone find it acceptable for women to make less than men or white workers to make more than African Americans or someone to be discriminated against based on national origin, religion, or disability? Why would we allow it to be more difficult for working families instead of less?

When someone is discriminated against in the workplace or anywhere else, surely they feel the impact of that discrimination for longer than 180 days. This bill would restore a reasonable time limit for filing pay discrimination claims, reestablishing the longstanding rule currently applied by 9 courts of appeals and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in pay discrimination cases before this unfortunate Supreme Court decision in May 2007.

Importantly, this bill does not hold employers responsible for decades and decades of back pay. Current law limits back pay awards to 2 years before the worker filed the claim. This bill does not change that. It is limited to 2 years of back pay. When discrimination in the workplace results in a lower wage for those discriminated against, the people responsible should be held accountable. This bill helps them to do that. It does not place an undue burden on employers, nor does it open them up to decades-old litigation. It simply says, for all of the legal jargon, that it is not acceptable for women to make less than men on the same job with the same qualifications and with the same performance. In 2009, that is not too much to ask.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

EDUCATION BEGINS AT HOME ACT

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, our families are struggling in the worst economy since the Great Depression. It is a difficult time for many who do not have jobs or who have seen their savings shrink or are in danger of losing their homes. We are working very hard on many fronts to try to get the economy going again.

During this time, I think it is important we not lose sight of our long-term priorities. We have to build a better safety net for our children and families. We must think about the long-term educational prospects and tools for success our children need, regardless of the economy.

Today, I highlight two bills that address educational needs of children.

First, research tells us that the first months and years of life are critical in laying the foundation for later success in school and social interaction. As a matter of fact, some people say that half of a child's learning intelligence is developed by 3 years old. For too long, we have thought those wonderful little people under 3 were just to be loved and ignored in terms of education. Much of the time is spent in the home, and parents are the most influential part of a child's life. It is my view that they must be the child's best first teacher. During these early moments, with the parents and other family members, children establish their social, emotional and intellectual health that will continue to grow throughout their lives. Enhancing these early critical moments further enhances the later years of a child's education.

You know, the key to education is exciting their curiosity. If you can make a child curious, then you can begin to teach them because you can respond to what their curiosity seeks. I think it makes sense to equip the parents with the skills they need to help maximize the child's health and development. This is exactly what a program that I have worked on in Missouri does. It is called Parents as Teachers—or PAT—and that is precisely what it focuses on. It focuses on primarily those first 3 years of life, when half the learning intelligence, when the socialization and interaction are developing, and when the curiosity is excited.

The curriculum of PAT is designed to build a foundation for later learning, to provide early detection of developmental delays, as well as health, vision, and hearing problems, to prevent child abuse and neglect and to increase a child's school readiness and success.

Actually, we found that detecting those early childhood developmental delays probably saves more money in avoiding special education or remedial education needs later on. The way we finally got the bill passed in the Missouri General Assembly was when a commission I had set up as Governor studied ways to lessen child abuse. They came back and said: You know, the best thing you can do is to equip a parent with the tools to deal with a child's frustration and keep them from pushing you to the point where you are abusive.

My Bond theorem is that if you have a 2-year-old child and that child isn't driving you nuts on a regular basis, either, A, you are not normal or, B, the child is not normal. Parents as Teachers gives the parent a means of dealing with those frustrating and challenging times.

Twenty-five years ago, I pushed the Early Childhood Education Act through the Missouri General Assembly and signed it into law. It was my second term and I had to fight for 4 years to get the bill passed, but it mandates that Parents as Teachers be offered in every school district in the State. In other words, to every family; whether they were going to home school their children, whether they had their children at parochial or private school or in a public school.

That was 4 long years of work, and I don't know that I have ever had a more satisfying 4-year-long battle with that success. I was on a mission because the year I started pushing it was the year my son was born. I was anxious to be a new father and shared the same feelings of anxiety and confusion many new parents still feel today. I had bought a new car before my son arrived, and it came with a handbook. We took Sam home from the hospital, and they told us to use a car seat and gave us diapers. Well, children's schooling is a key component of a child's success in school, and that is why we began working on it.

PAT made a positive difference in my family, through sleepless nights, teething, and learning the ABCs. My son was probably one of the first to benefit from the Parents as Teachers materials and books, but countless others have benefited since. And after I passed it, I found that parents would stop me on the street or in my office and say: You would not believe what I learned when the parent educator came to visit us. Every time it was something new and different and it gave the parents a feeling of power that they could deal with the opportunities this new child gave them.

What began as an experiment in Missouri has expanded to more than 3,000 sites in all 50 States and 8 foreign countries. Countries all over the world are investing in PAT because the results are positive and the cost is low. We have about 150,000 Missouri families—200,000 children—participating in

PAT now. I have had the anecdotal results, but scientifically we have determined, through sound research, that at age 3, PAT children are more advanced in language, social development, problem solving, and other cognitive abilities than their peers; and parents who participate in PAT are more confident about their parenting and more involved in the children's schooling, which is a key component of a child's success in school.

I can tell you also that when you talk to an elementary school educator or administrator they can tell you which children have been in the Parents as Teachers program because it is that obvious from the start. A 2008 published, peer-reviewed study of almost 8,000 Missouri children found that 82 percent of low-income children who participated in both Parents as Teachers and preschool entered kindergarten ready to learn, as compared to only 64 percent of similar children who had no involvement in either service.

At third grade, 88 percent of low-income children who participated in both Parents as Teachers and preschool received a benchmark level of performance on the Missouri Assessment Program Communication Arts test, compared to 77 percent of similar children with no involvement.

These results confirm what I know from personal experience and have heard from so many parents in PAT—it is a tremendous benefit to them and their children.

To date, more than 2 million families nationwide have received the education and support of PAT programs. These are accomplishments of which we can be proud, but we need to do more. There are more families that can and should be reached by this life-changing program, which is why I have introduced the Education Begins at Home Act with Senators MURRAY and CLINTON. This legislation will establish the first dedicated Federal funding stream to support the expansion of PAT.

Our bill has had strong bipartisan support in the past, and I expect it will continue. It would authorize \$400 million over 3 years to States to expand access to Parents as Teachers. It would provide \$50 million over 3 years to fund innovative ideas and partnerships at the local level to expand access to PAT in communities with limited English proficiency, and it would provide \$50 million over 3 years to reach more military families by expanding access to PAT in schools and community organizations that serve military families.

As a side note, we have established the program at several military facilities in Missouri where one parent is often gone overseas, and the family may not have any normal family network to help them. This brings the parents together and it also provides them some of the resources that they might get from a grandmother or an aunt or even an uncle.

Parents as Teachers builds on the principle that babies are born to learn

and that the child's parent is the first and most important teacher. PAT gives parents the tools they need to prepare children for success in school and life, and helps parents become more active participants in their child's education. I believe the expansion of Parents as Teachers is a sound investment in the future of our children and our families, and I hope my colleagues will join me in it.

VISION CARE FOR KIDS ACT

I, also, wish to add comments about another extremely important act to ensure the success of children—the Vision Care for Kids Act. Eighty percent of what kids learn in their early years is visual, but one in four children has a vision problem that can interfere with learning, and only one in three children receive any form of preventive vision care before school.

As I said, children have tremendous potential to learn and succeed, but untreated vision disorders can lead to permanent vision loss. I know that, personally, because I suffer from a permanent vision loss due to a previously undiagnosed condition which wasn't learned about until it was too late. If the condition had been discovered and treated before I entered school, I could have avoided a lifetime of vision loss—and I might have done a much better job of catching fly balls in the outfield.

The Vision Care for Kids Act, which I have reintroduced with Senator DODD, establishes a grant program to complement and encourage existing State efforts to improve children's vision care. Ensuring good vision for kids will help them see bright futures ahead of them. I invite my colleagues to join us in supporting children and families through these important bills.

For the vision care, talk with Senator DODD or me. For Parents as Teachers, talk with Senator MURRAY or me. We would love to have you on these two important bills.

I thank the Chair and I thank the staff for according me this opportunity.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

STAFF SERGEANT CHRISTOPHER G. SMITH

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today to honor the life and heroic service of SSG Christopher Smith. Staff Sergeant Smith, a member of the 4th Infantry Division at Fort Carson, died in Baghdad, Iraq, on December 24, 2008, from injuries sustained when his military vehicle overturned into a canal. He was 28 years old.

After spending 2 years at Kellogg Community College in Michigan studying for a career in sports medicine, Staff Sergeant Smith joined the Army in 2001. He served in Iraq from March 2005 to February 2006 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and returned to the country for his second deployment in September of last year. As a cannon crewmember, Staff Sergeant Smith

played an integral role operating high technology weapons systems. He distinguished himself as a strong leader within "Bulldog" Company and would lead his unit in his captain's absence. His extraordinary bravery and talent earned him more than 11 awards and commendations during his service.

Staff Sergeant Smith is remembered by those who knew him as a true patriot who always looked out for his fellow soldiers and believed strongly in his mission. He was deeply admired by his men, so much so that five members of his squadron incurred hypothermia in a dogged and heroic effort to rescue him from the canal. He was often hunting and fishing, rooting for the University of Michigan Wolverines, and grilling brisket and ribs for his friends. Most of all, he was a devoted husband and father.

Mr. President, Teddy Roosevelt famously said, "it is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat."

Staff Sergeant Smith sacrificed his life for this Nation as a man who knew that his country needed him to be "in the arena," helping others. He accepted the risks of his job with extraordinary professionalism and served with honor and a dedication to duty that was second to none. We cannot repay our debt nor replace his loss.

To Staff Sergeant Smith's mother Donna, his father Virgil, his wife Bobbi Jo, his son Adler, his brother Phillip, and all his friends and family, I know no words that can assuage the pain you must feel. I hope that in time your grief will give way to the pride you must feel for Chris for all he accomplished and for all the lives he touched. His country will always honor his legacy.

SAVING KIDS FROM DANGEROUS DRUGS ACT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I am pleased to join my colleague, Senator FEINSTEIN, in reintroducing the Saving Kids from Dangerous Drugs Act. I believe we have an ongoing moral obligation in this country to ensure our young people have every opportunity to grow up without being accosted by drug pushers at every turn, whether on TV, in the movies, or on the way to school.