

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.

This bipartisan legislation comes in response to the recent warnings issued by the Drug Enforcement Administration, DEA, and the White House's Office of National Drug Control Policy about highly addictive and dangerous drugs being colored, packaged, and flavored in ways that appear to be designed to attract use by children. As cochairman of the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control, I can tell you that the most at-risk population for drug abuse is our young people. Research has shown time and again that if you can keep a child drug free until they turn 20, chances are very slim that they will ever try or become addicted to drugs. Unfortunately, unscrupulous drug dealers are all too aware of statistics like these and have developed new techniques and marketing gimmicks to lure in younger users. As a parent and now grandparent, this is extremely troubling.

These drug dealers are flavoring drugs with additives to make them taste like candy. For instance, some drugs that have been recovered by the DEA and local law enforcement have been flavored to taste like strawberry and are known as "Strawberry Quick." Other flavors, such as lemon, coconut, cinnamon and chocolate are clearly being used to make highly addictive drugs like meth and cocaine seem less harmful and more appealing. These flavored drugs are also being marketed in smaller amounts, making them cheaper and more accessible to children. According to an article in USA Today, at least eight States have reported instances involving candy flavored drugs, and many law enforcement officials are expecting these deadly substances to infiltrate their States in the near future.

The DEA recently arrested three men in an undercover operation in California where candy flavored cocaine was being distributed. The DEA seized at least four different flavors of cocaine along with other dangerous substances. The estimated street value of the flavored cocaine seized in this operation was \$272,400. The DEA also arrested 12 people in connection to a marijuana-laced candy and soft drink operation in 2006. The marijuana-laced candy that was seized in this operation was packaged to look like well known brand name candy bars. These drug busts further illustrate the fact that drug dealers will stop at nothing to hook a new generation on these deadly substances.

Currently, Federal law enhances the criminal penalties that apply when a person sells drugs to anyone under the age of 21. When this occurs, the Federal penalties are doubled—or tripled for a repeat offense—and a mandatory minimum of at least 1 year must also apply. However, this penalty applies only to someone who actually sells drugs to someone under 21.

The Saving Kids from Dangerous Drugs Act would expand the circumstances under which these en-

hanced penalties apply to cover the entire operation. Under our bill, the enhanced penalties that already exist would also apply to anyone who knowingly or intentionally manufactures, creates, distributes, dispenses or possesses with the intent to distribute a controlled substance that has been flavored, colored, packaged or otherwise altered in a way that is designed to make it more appealing to a person under 21 years of age. The DEA busts are prime examples of why we need this bipartisan bill to keep drug dealers from peddling their poison to our children. I am pleased that the National Narcotics Officers Association Coalition is strongly supporting this measure. This organization represents 69,000 law enforcement officers who encounter these terrible substances on a daily basis and work endlessly to keep our children and communities safe.

The fight against deadly drugs is an ongoing struggle. We must do all we can to protect the most vulnerable among us. We must send a clear message to those wishing to prey on our youth that you risk serious prison time when you target our future.

Although this bill was passed out of the Judiciary Committee unanimously last year, the Senate never passed the bill in the 110th Congress. I ask that my colleagues join us in support of this important legislation and pass the Saving Kids from Dangerous Drugs Act.

#### EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I began my career as a preschool teacher back in my home State of Washington. That background has given me valuable insight into how important early childhood education is throughout a person's life.

As a preschool teacher, I could tell from the first day which kids in my class had parents at home who read to them. At 4 years old, those kids were already ahead of their classmates because they had been introduced to words and books, and they were interested in learning.

I have been proud to work here in the Senate to support education programs like Head Start that help more kids get an equal start in school. So I rise today to talk about two bills I reintroduced this week with my colleague on the other side of the aisle, Senator BOND, as well as Senator CLINTON.

The bills—the Education Begins at Home Act and the Ready to Learn Act—are a pair designed to help prepare children for school by focusing on their learning at home and at preschool and childcare programs.

Both of these bills are based on research, and they expand on programs and efforts we already know work. They also have one component I especially like—they don't just focus on teachers—they support parents learning how to give their kids a healthy start. So I would like to spend a moment describing them.

The first—the Education Begins at Home Act—would create the first Federal stream of money to help teach parents how to care for their kids, starting at birth.

The bill would enable State and local governments to create programs that teach parents about healthy parent-child relationships, about boosting child development, about the demands and stress associated with caring for babies, about how to deal with difficult behavior, and about how to recognize postpartum depression.

Most of us here know how difficult it is to be a new parent—especially when you are under stress because of work or military service. The programs this bill would create will help prevent child abuse and teach parents about how their children grow and develop emotionally and intellectually.

I know how important the Parents as Teachers Program is to families in Washington State with young children, and I believe we need to expand on the success of this program and others around the country.

The second bill builds on the first by creating a competitive matching grant program within No Child Left Behind. It would fund high quality early childhood programs aimed at promoting school readiness for low-income children, particularly 4 year olds. And it would help reduce class sizes, increase teacher salaries, and require States to report regularly on the effectiveness of these programs.

Research shows that children who get good prekindergarten education are less likely to fall behind or need special education services—and they are more likely to graduate from high school.

To give you just one example, kids who learn the names and sounds of letters before they enter kindergarten are 20 times more likely to read simple words by the end of kindergarten. And children who don't learn the same skill before they start school often fail to catch up—ever.

In other words, the early childhood education programs—like those we fund in this bill—are a great investment that will pay off in dividends later. They save money in the long run and help kids get the best possible start in life.

As I said at the beginning of my remarks, I have been a strong supporter of early childhood education for my entire career. But given our economic crisis, investments like the ones I am talking about today are more important than ever before.

I believe that strengthening our schools and making sure our kids are prepared for tomorrow's workplace are going to be the keys to economic recovery. We need to build a workforce that is the most competitive in the world so that we can recruit and hold onto good-paying jobs. And we can't do it unless all of our children get the strongest possible start in life.