

and prosperous. Decades of research and experience prove that women are more likely to invest their income in food, clean water, education, and health care for their children, creating a positive cycle of change that lifts entire families, communities and nations out of poverty. Simply put, when women succeed, we all do.

If we ignore these realities, the results will undoubtedly be negative. The statistics are staggering. A World Bank report confirms that societies that discriminate on the basis of gender pay the cost of greater poverty, slower economic growth, weaker governance, and a lower living standard of their people.

In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, less than 2 out of 10 women have a job with a regular income and lower economic risk. GNP per capita is far lower in countries where females are significantly less well educated than men. Also in sub-Saharan Africa, inequality between men and women in education and employment suppressed annual per capita growth between 1960 and 1992 by 0.8 percentage points per year. This is significant, as a boost of 0.8 percentage points per year would have doubled economic growth over that time period.

But when women's voices are fully included in societies and economies, the reverse is true. According to UNICEF, when women hold decision-making power, "they see to it that their children eat well, receive adequate medical care and finish school. Women who have access to meaningful, income-producing work are more likely to increase their families' standards of living, leading children out of poverty."

The World Bank states that, at the macroeconomic level, there is evidence that removing gender disparities spurs growth. According to one estimate, growth rates in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East and North Africa would have been 30–45 percent higher had these regions closed the gender gaps during the school years as fast as East Asia did between 1960 and 1992.

The economic growth that can result from gender equality is exemplified by Eugenia Akuete. Eugenia grew up in Ghana surrounded by poverty and started making products from shea butter because she was looking for a way to earn money to help supplement her family's income. At first the market was difficult—she was only producing a small amount, she lacked necessary business and technical training and it was hard to get the shea butter soaps and lotions to U.S. customers. She eventually received training that focused on women's entrepreneurship.

Now she is earning a steady income and teaching other women to do the same by producing and selling shea butter. She has 10 employees, most of whom are women, who she pays above than the government minimum and going market rate. She also now employs 300 women in northern Ghana

who gather nuts for the factory to convert into shea butter. Stressing that they are all connected to each other, she explained that it is in her best interest that everyone produce the best quality possible—so that all communities benefit.

When asked what she would like to tell Americans, Eugenia said that what women like her need most are tools so that they can help each other and themselves. "Yes, we need help," she said, "[but] we are also responsible to other people so that we'll have a multiplying effect. I don't believe in freebies: part of the package of responsibility is that if you are helped you in turn have the responsibility to help someone else."

As we in Congress and in the administration are moving forward with the vital process to revamp our foreign assistance, we have an opportunity to make women's empowerment a central focus of U.S. foreign policy. With these unprecedented plans as a backdrop, we should remember Eugenia when we are thinking of ways to maximize our foreign aid dollars. Because of the obvious multiplier effect, one of the best ways to do that is to ensure that women are empowered. Women's success always benefits more than one person.

While we should reflect on progress that women have made in pushing for greater rights and equal opportunities, we must be conscious we still have much to do in working towards greater global gender equality. As a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I am committed to continuing to work with my colleagues to put women at the center of U.S. foreign assistance and to marshal all the resources necessary to achieve this goal.

ALASKAN OLYMPIANS

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, from February 12 to February 28, Americans were united in cheering on some of our Nation's most elite athletes as they competed at the 22nd Winter Olympics in Vancouver. I commend all of our athletes for their exemplary performance and thank the coaches, the team leaders and the U.S. Olympic staff. With such a talented group of people working together, it is no surprise that the United States won a record breaking 37 medals. Americans watched with an extraordinary sense of pride as our flag was raised and our anthem played, and our fellow countrymen and women competed and won on an international stage. I am especially proud of the seven Alaskans that contributed their talent to their country and competed at these Winter Olympics.

Holly Brooks, the coach turned athlete, participated in her first ever Winter Olympics this year. Holly quickly became a beloved member of the Alaskan community after moving there from Seattle. Her work as a coach at Alaska Pacific University and subsequent Olympic success has been an in-

spiration to many of Alaska's young skiers. I know that Holly received an outpouring of support during her run up to qualifying for the Olympics from many of her fellow athletes and Alaskans led by her husband who made hundreds of "Go Holly" stickers for her supporters to wear. I wish Holly luck in her further competitions and hope that she will continue to be a great role model for the young people of Alaska.

Callan Chythlook-Sifsof is the first Alaska Native to be selected to the U.S. National Ski and Snowboard Team and the first to make an Olympic Team. Growing up in a small rural village on the coast of the Bering Sea, Callan learned to board on the mountains surrounding her home. In 2006, at age 17, she earned a position on the U.S. snowboard team and a bronze medal in her first World Cup Boardercross in Japan. She also received a bronze medal at the start of the 2009 season in the South America Continental Cup. Callan continues to quickly excel and is currently ranked No. 2 in the U.S. and No. 14 in the world in Ladies' Boardercross. I hope she continues to compete for many years to come and hopefully we will see her in 2014 in Sochi.

Jay Hakkinen is a familiar name in Alaska where he has been a professional biathlete for over 13 years and just finished his fourth Winter Olympics. Jay is one of the most accomplished U.S. biathletes in Olympic history and his 10th-place finish in the 20 Kilometer Individual at the 2006 Torino Games previously served as the benchmark for the U.S. in an individual event. Jay has shown his perseverance and persistence throughout his illustrious career as a biathlete. I know this is not the last we have heard of Jay and wish him luck as he finishes out the World Cup season.

Jeremy Teela surpassed Jay's benchmark this Olympic Games with his 9th place finish in the Men's 10 Kilometer Sprint. The 34-year-old biathlete from Anchorage is a three-time consecutive Olympian. However, his service to his country goes beyond his athletic talent as Jeremy is a sergeant in the U.S. Army National Guard. As one of five soldier athletes competing in the Olympics, Jeremy and his other servicemembers remind us of the sacrifices that many young Americans have made in service to their country. Jeremy previously earned the bronze medal in the Men's 20 Kilometer in last year's World Cup and I hope he has similar success this year.

Kikkan Randal, the 27-year-old cross country skier from Anchorage, competed in her third consecutive Winter Olympic Games where she had her best-ever finish in the Women's 30 Kilometer Classic—finishing 24th. A former resident of Salt Lake City, UT, she moved at an early age to Anchorage with her family. She is also the niece of former Olympic cross country-skiers, Betsy Haines and Chris Haines, and

in 2007 she became the first American woman to ever win a cross-country World Cup Title.

During his second consecutive Winter Olympic Games, James Southam competed in three events, including the 50 Kilometer Classic where he achieved a personal best finishing in 28th place. James was born and raised in Anchorage and participates in training along with Holly Brooks and Kikkan Randall at the Alaska Pacific University Ski Center. The APU Ski Center was a vital source of support for these Olympic athletes and kept many Alaskans informed of their progress through their facebook page. James, Holly, and Kikkan are a tremendous inspiration for the other skiers at APU and I look forward to hearing of more of their successes over the years.

Our Olympic Silver medalist Kerry Weiland, from Palmer, is a fierce defender on the ice. Her intensity has earned her the nickname Kamikaze Kerry, because she has the ability to take out two players with one hit. Not only did Kerry's defense help lead the U.S. to a Silver medal, but the U.S. Women's Hockey team outscored their opponents 40-2 leading up to the gold-medal game. Kerry is also a dominant force on the U.S. National Team where she was a member of the 2008 Gold Medal World Championship team. She is also the founder and instructor of the Weiland Hockey Development in Ontario where she teaches young women the fundamentals of hockey, inspiring a new generation of female athletes.

I want to thank again all the U.S. Olympic athletes for all of their hard work and dedication. It is difficult to comprehend the high degree of training and commitment required to compete in the Olympic Games and we have watched in awe as they have inspired us with their achievements. As Alaskans, we are exceptionally proud of these individuals. We regard our athletes as role models in many ways, and the sportsmanship that all our American Olympians displayed during these games exemplified some of our Nation's most important values. Our athletes were humble in victory and gracious in defeat, and made all Americans proud. I thank these individuals for being such great ambassadors for Alaska and for America.

STRATEGIC ARMS REDUCTION TREATY

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I thank you for the opportunity to speak today in support of our administration's efforts to negotiate a follow-on agreement to the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, START. Our negotiating team in Vienna is currently working with the Russian delegation to finalize this agreement, and I look forward to reviewing the treaty when it is submitted to the Senate.

The United States and Russia maintain over 90 percent of the world's ap-

proximately 23,000 nuclear weapons. Each of these weapons has the capacity to destroy an entire city; collectively, they can destroy the world. The mere existence of these weapons creates the risk of a nuclear accident, unauthorized use, and theft by a terrorist group. The size and structure of the American and Russian nuclear arsenals reflect an antiquated Cold War mindset that we must move beyond.

It is in the national security interest of the United States to reach an agreement with Russia to reduce the number of nuclear weapons and ensure that strong verification and transparency measures remain in effect. This is the core purpose and focus of the START follow-on agreement.

The START follow-on agreement is an important component of our efforts to work with Russia and other international partners to collectively address the dangers posed by nuclear weapons. These dangers include the vulnerability of nuclear material to theft by terrorists, as well as the risk of nuclear proliferation by other countries.

Ratification of a START follow-on agreement would also be a clear signal that the United States is upholding our obligations under the nonproliferation treaty. It would reaffirm our leadership on nonproliferation issues and demonstrate, as the President has advocated, that we are serious about moving towards a world without nuclear weapons while maintaining a reliable deterrent for so long as it is needed. We cannot afford to miss this opportunity; without a demonstrated effort to fulfilling our nonproliferation responsibilities through a new START agreement, it will be increasingly difficult for the U.S. to secure the international support needed to address the urgent security threats posed by the spread of nuclear weapons.

The Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States concluded that "terrorist use of a nuclear weapon against the United States or its friends and allies is more likely than deliberate use by a state." Our priority, therefore, should be to work together with Russia to reduce the size and vulnerability of our nuclear arsenals, and ensure that proper security and surveillance safeguards are in place.

Unfortunately, today Russia continues to possess huge stores of nuclear materials that are inadequately secured and which, if stolen by terrorists, could be used to destroy an American city. The size of our own nuclear arsenal is also unsustainable, both from a security and cost perspective, and should be tailored to the new 21st century threats we face.

The reductions required by the START follow-on agreement will not adversely affect our national security. The United States could pursue much deeper reductions in the size of our arsenal and still have more weapons than we would ever need. In fact, it is pre-

cisely the size of our nuclear arsenal and complex that makes them vulnerable to exploitation by terrorists. There is no longer any compelling national security reason to maintain or expand the size of our nuclear stockpile.

Nor is there any reason to continue to develop new nuclear weapon technologies or warheads. Our brightest experts have concluded that we no longer need new nuclear weapons in order to maintain a credible deterrent. A recent report from the independent JASON Defense Advisory Group concluded that, as a result of our nuclear laboratories' successful life-extension programs, the lifetimes of our nuclear warheads can be extended for decades.

I am encouraged that efforts to negotiate a START follow-on agreement have bipartisan support among national security experts. Notably, the bipartisan Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States, headed by former Defense Secretaries William Perry and James Schlesinger, endorsed a follow-on agreement to START. Similarly, Secretary Perry joined with former Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Sam Nunn and former Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger and George Shultz to pen an op-ed in the Wall Street Journal calling for the extension of the key provisions of START and further reductions in our nuclear stockpile.

In conclusion, I commend the administration for its efforts to reinvigorate the nonproliferation regime by negotiating a follow-on to the START treaty. We must act now to address the spread of nuclear weapons and materials, which is one of the gravest dangers facing the United States. In a time of terrorism and of rising international concern about Iran's nuclear program, international cooperation remains key to preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction. The START follow-on agreement is an essential step towards that goal, and towards a world without nuclear weapons.

HAWAII'S TSUNAMI RESPONSE

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, today I would like to commend the people of Hawaii for their quick response to the tsunami caused by the earthquake in Chile.

On Saturday, February 27, 2010, an 8.8 magnitude earthquake off the coast of Chile generated a tsunami throughout the Pacific. A tsunami warning was issued for Hawaii, the Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, and the Marshall and Solomon Islands. Additionally, a tsunami advisory was issued for the west coast of the United States and Alaska.

My staff and I monitored the situation closely, and were in contact with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA, and the Hawaii State Civil Defense. FEMA was monitoring the situation in Hawaii and the other