

To highlight a few of the great contributions of HELP of Southern Nevada, let me tell you about the Community Alternative Sentencing programs and the Youth Center. The Community Alternative Sentencing Program offers hope to individuals facing incarceration and other sanctions. In lieu of these penalties, individuals give their times and services to aiding non-profits in community service. In addition to the productive and illuminating experience this program offers its participants, it saves taxpayers the cost of incarceration, and directly increases the capacity of nonprofits to help in the community. The HELP of southern Nevada Youth Center provides training and assistance to Southern Nevada's youth to prevent homelessness and equip young people for success. Many are matched with volunteer mentors from the community, who work help them get the most out of classes they take at the center which help them develop work and personal skills. These programs only scratch the surface of HELP's vast offerings.

It brings me great joy to see Nevadans working so hard to make meaningful and lasting influences in our community. Over the course of four decades HELP and its devoted staff and volunteers have exemplified the ideals of selflessness and public service. I know that the hundreds of thousands of individuals whose lives have been touched by the work of HELP would share in my desire to express our gratitude. Furthermore, I would like to congratulate HELP. The positive changes they have made amongst the lives of individuals and within the community are truly remarkable achievements. I am grateful and honored to recognize the 40th anniversary of HELP of Southern Nevada today.

BIG OIL

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, the explosion on the Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico was a tragedy for the workers killed and their families. It has also become an economic disaster for the people of the gulf coast and an unparalleled environmental disaster for our Nation. As we work to stop and clean up the spill, we also need to end the coziness between big oil and the Federal agencies that regulate the industry. That chummy relationship has shielded big oil from being held accountable for years, and it is high time we make sure that government is cracking down on, not cozying up to, the oil companies.

As I discussed a few days ago at a Judiciary Committee hearing examining liability issues related to the BP oil-spill, Congress should take action right away to deter wrongdoing and encourage the kind of responsible, careful drilling we need. One way to do that is to eliminate big oil's liability cap for natural resources and economic damage caused by oilspills, such as the loss of travel and tourism revenue that

businesses across the gulf are experiencing. I am a cosponsor of Senator MENENDEZ's legislation to do just that. The oilspill in the gulf has made it painfully clear that this liability cap is far too low. The existing \$75 million liability cap is less than 1 day's worth of profits for BP, which earned almost \$6 billion in profits in the first quarter of this year.

But that must be just the beginning of a comprehensive effort to change the way government approaches big oil. For far too long, the oil industry has gotten special treatment, in large part because it is one of the wealthiest, most powerful special interests in Washington. The oil and gas industry gave \$35 million in political donations in the last Presidential election cycle, and \$¼ billion in donations over the last 20 years. One of the reasons I have worked to curb the influence of money in politics for so many years is because of the undue influence of big oil.

Those donations have contributed to the oil industry's access to Congress and to the agencies that are supposed to regulate oil exploration and production. It is no coincidence that the oil industry has received unjustified tax breaks and other favorable treatment for years. That has to change, and we can start by getting rid of taxpayer-funded giveaways for the oil and gas industry, as I have proposed in my Control Spending Now Act, legislation to cut the deficit by about \$½ trillion over 10 years. Part of that bill would end a taxpayer subsidy for the processing of oil company permits. I also support efforts to repeal over \$35 billion in oil and gas tax breaks targeted by President Obama for elimination. As we seek to rein in record deficits, it is time to end these unjustified giveaways to an industry that doesn't need taxpayer support.

Congress must also make sure that regulators aren't simply acting as rubberstamps for whatever the oil industry wants. Unfortunately, too often the Federal Government ends up listening more to the powerful industries it is supposed to be regulating than to the consumers it is supposed to be protecting. Whether it is Wall Street or big oil that is calling the shots, the result is rarely good for my constituents in Wisconsin.

Another critical way to hold big oil accountable is to pass my "Use It or Lose It" legislation to ensure oil companies are diligently exploring the Federal leases they currently have, and not sitting on those leases in an effort to drive up gas prices. We should also restore the Clean Water Act, CWA, to its full strength. The CWA is the main statute used to prosecute polluters who dump oil into waters of the United States, and it is never been more important to ensure that polluters are held accountable for the damage they do to our economy and our environment.

Congress has the responsibility to look ahead and do what it takes to pre-

vent a disaster like the one in the gulf from happening again. We have to come at this issue from all sides to make sure that BP is held accountable for the current spill, that we work to prevent future spills with proper regulations, and that we upend the culture that provides tax breaks and special treatment for big oil in the first place. Working to stop and clean up the spill in the gulf is not enough. Congress has to clean up the cozy Washington culture that favors big corporations over the needs of American people, and over the protection of our economy and our air and water.

GUINEA

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, Guinea is a fragile, resource-rich state in West Africa that has been plagued by political uncertainty since the death of its longtime President, Lansana Conté, in December 2008. Much of this upheaval can be attributed to the fact that the President, in his 25 long years of rule, left little room for governance reform. His autocratic legacy included abusive security forces, a collapsed economy, a divided civil society, and a squabbling opposition. As a result, there was no clear successor and no viable path forward. President Conté's commitment to democracy was cosmetic, at best, and easily trumped by his dictatorial tendencies and unwillingness to relinquish power.

As many Guinea watchers expected, the day after President Conté, died, a military junta calling itself the National Council for Democracy and Development, CNDD, seized power and dissolved the constitution and legislature. Given the deteriorated state of governance and widespread impunity, the junta was initially hailed by many as a safeguard against the endemic problems of corruption, insecurity, and rampant drug trafficking—all of which contribute to the lack of legitimate governance. Furthermore, the fact that the CNDD appointed a civilian prime minister and promised to hold Presidential and legislative elections gave many Guineans hope that the country was on the verge of a legitimate political transition.

But those elections were repeatedly postponed, despite repeated claims by the junta that a transition to civilian rule would occur. As the months passed, a number of signs, including the appointment of military officers to key government posts, indicated that CNDD was in fact not planning to relinquish power and was certainly not ready—or willing—to oversee an election process.

In fact, over the next few months the CNDD sought to tighten its hold on power severely, including an attempt in September 2009 by security forces to brutally crush a peaceful, prodemocracy rally. I joined many in the international community at that time in condemning such blatant and violent repression. A U.N. Commission was

sent to investigate the atrocities while the CNDD crackdown cast a dark shadow on Guinea's prospects for peace and stability.

During this period, I was pleased to see the Obama administration engage proactively to help reverse Guinea's political crisis—particularly in the aftermath of the shooting of CNDD leader Captain Dadis Camara. In those fragile moments of uncertainty, the consistent diplomacy undertaken by our senior officials played an important role. Working with key regional actors and organizations, the State Department helped to broker an important political agreement, known as the Ouagadougou Declaration, which was widely welcomed as an end to the protracted political vacuum that had existed. The signing of this agreement ushered in a transitional united government that, while imperfect, has been actively supported by the Obama administration.

Unquestionably Guinea remains on delicate ground but the upcoming Presidential elections scheduled for June 27 create an opportunity for Guinea—and our bilateral relationship—to progress forward. Undoubtedly the process will be chaotic and messy, but there is a good chance we could see this beleaguered country bounce back from decades of mismanagement. Of course, in order for Guinea to truly progress, these elections must be the beginning of serious and sustained reform—a process which must also include accountability for the abuses committed in September 2009. Elections are only one component of the democratic process, but still they are a significant one and may give the people of Guinea their long deserved chance to finally turn the page on their troubled political history.

While there are plenty of factors that could lead to another election postponement including the will of the transitional government and the capacity and efficiency of the election commission, I remain optimistic that this will not occur. Certainly there are real challenges to fostering democracy given Guinea's history, but the recent commitment from the Acting President and Chief of the Army to remain neutral and ensure the elections are free, credible, and transparent should not go without notice. I have long said that promoting and supporting democratic institutions should be a key tenet of our engagement with Africa, as institution building is essential to Africa's stability and its prosperity. In the case of Guinea—a nation that has great potential to flourish and thrive—credible elections are an important first step on the road to better governance.

TRIBUTE TO RON GETTELFINGER

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, leaders demonstrate their talent and character not when life is easy but at times of crisis. During the greatest crisis in the

history of the American auto industry, that industry's workers and the communities in which they live have benefited enormously from the leadership of a quiet Kentuckian whose devotion to working families cannot be overstated.

When Ron Gettelfinger took office as president of the United Auto Workers in 2002, I do not think anyone, and certainly not Ron, foresaw the turbulence ahead. As his 8 years as president of the UAW come to a close, it is time to congratulate and thank him for exceptional leadership in tough times.

Ron navigated those rough waters guided by two lights: a clear-eyed assessment of what was necessary to preserve America's auto industry, and the sure knowledge that millions of families depended on its preservation.

That knowledge came from Ron's days on the assembly line at Ford's Louisville assembly plant, from his days as his plant's local president, from his service as regional president for UAW members in Indiana and Kentucky, and from his time at Solidarity House in Detroit. He is a sharp, tough-minded negotiator, but underlying his talents and skills is a real emotional bond with the workers who have depended on his leadership. That bond with his members meant that when Ron Gettelfinger asked them to make sacrifices, they knew it was not because he was taking the easy way out, but because it was necessary.

The sacrifices have been great. Ron knows this better than anybody. But he also knows that in making those sacrifices, the workers of the UAW have set the stage for a renaissance in the U.S. auto industry, one that is already taking shape in the form of increased sales, more consumer confidence, and a commitment to the clean energy technologies that will shape our transportation future.

I have been proud to stand with Ron Gettelfinger in many of his battles. Members of the United Auto Workers honor the leaders who over nearly a century of progress and challenge have guided their union. I have no doubt that for generations yet to come, those workers will honor Ron's work in guiding their union through one of the most difficult periods in its history.

TRIBUTE TO NINA THOMAS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, today I express my sincere congratulations and best wishes to Nina Thomas on her retirement as registrar at Vermont Law School. Since 1976, Nina has served that institution with dedication and a devotion to its students. As Ms. Thomas ends her many years of exceptional service to Vermont Law School and its students, I wish her the very best as she enters this new chapter of her life. I thank her for her service, and I know her commitment over the years has helped to make the school the special, unique place it is today.

Nina Thomas is a native of Vermont, having attended grade school in the

same building that is now part of the Vermont Law School campus in South Royalton, VT. In 1976 she returned to be part of a fledgling institution where her care, her counsel, and her wisdom have made a difference in the lives of many law students who have passed through her office. Her dedication helped the school grow into a successful institution for legal education that is a source of pride for Vermont and Vermonsters. Her career spanned from the early days of the school's beginnings to the present, where it stands as a national leader in environmental legal thinking and learning.

As Nina Thomas enters her retirement, I hope she will take great comfort in knowing that the mark she left at Vermont Law School will be a lasting one and that her contributions are part of the school's strong foundation. I know she will be dearly missed by faculty and staff and most especially the students to whom she has given so much.

TRIBUTE TO TOM HOWARD

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I would like to pay tribute today to a man who has provided immeasurable leadership and dedication to the lives of young people and families around the State of Vermont. Tom Howard of East Montpelier. After 31 years as executive director, Tom will be retiring this month from the Washington County Youth Service Bureau/Boys & Girls Club.

Tom is a native Vermonter who, while growing up, lived in the Philippines, Panama, Germany, and throughout the United States. He served in the U.S. Army in Korea between 1963 and 1966, and earned a B.A. from Johnson State College in history and international relations in 1970. Tom went on to earn a master's degree in executive development in public service at Ball State University in 1974, and wrote his master's thesis on youthful offenders.

Appointed as executive director of the bureau in 1979, Tom has built the agency into a diverse organization with statewide impact. Under his leadership, the organization developed cutting-edge programs, like the Return House in Barre, VT—a program operated by the Washington County Youth Service Bureau for 18- to 22-year-old young men who are returning to the community after being incarcerated. In addition to his commitment to working with young people and youthful offenders, Tom has secured millions of dollars in Federal, State, and foundation grants to bring sustainable services and opportunities to youth.

We are fortunate in Vermont. I am always impressed by the high level of collaboration on behalf of Vermont's communities to solve its problems. Over the years, I have brought the Senate Judiciary Committee to Vermont several times for field hearings to explore community efforts to counter drug-related crime in rural America.