

bring our men and women home. It is my belief this is the best and most responsible policy for America—a policy that seeks to protect our national security while meeting our fiduciary responsibilities, and serving the interests of the service men and women and their families who have sacrificed so much on behalf of a grateful Nation. It is time. It is time.

With that, I yield the floor.

WORLD REFUGEE DAY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, this year, we celebrate the 60th anniversary of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. I am pleased that today, June 20, the international community is celebrating World Refugee Day, an important opportunity to recognize the continuing plight of the millions of refugees around the world who deserve our protection.

It is also a moment to celebrate the accomplishments of refugees who have been resettled and are building new lives in the countries that welcomed them.

The theme of World Refugee Day 2011 is “Real People, Real Needs.” This theme reminds us that each individual refugee has a story to tell. Every refugee has experienced persecution, causing him or her to flee a home, a community, and a nation, because the circumstances are so dire that flight is the only option. Conflicts around the world are displacing persons, such that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees now counts over 43 million persons who have been forced from their homes, which include refugees, internally displaced, and stateless persons. For many of the world’s 15.4 million refugees, resettlement is the only hope they have of rebuilding a stable life and home.

The United States has long been committed to resettling refugees, but our resettlement program was strengthened by the enactment of the 1980 Refugee Act. Over the past 30 years, more than 2.6 million refugees and asylum seekers have found safety in the United States. And since 1989, almost 5,600 refugees have been resettled in my home State of Vermont. We are fortunate to have the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program, with its decades of experience and award-winning volunteer program, leading this effort. Over the last 5 years, many of these new Vermonters have come from Bhutan, Burma, and the Congo. Their culture is enriching my historically Anglo Saxon and French Canadian State.

Throughout this challenging time, I have remained proud of the role that our Nation plays in protecting refugees abroad and in helping many resettle in the United States. In a time of tight budgets, I was pleased to be able to protect funding for refugee assistance and resettlement programs in the fiscal year 2011 appropriations continuing resolution, when many other programs were cut.

The United States is a leader in international refugee protection. I am proud of that commitment and will work to ensure our government maintains this strong financial and political support. There is more that we can do, however.

I regret that the United States is not in full compliance with its obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention. Changes to the law and a handful of court opinions issued in recent years have eroded protections for some of the most vulnerable asylum seekers.

Last week, I reintroduced the Refugee Protection Act, S. 1202, to restore the legal foundation of the United States for protection of refugees and asylum seekers. The Refugee Protection Act will correct serious shortcomings in current law, such as the overly broad definition of material support for terrorist groups.

The Refugee Protection Act does not diminish the rigor of security and background checks of incoming refugees, but it recognizes that the current law sweeps in a large number of persons who were victims of persecution at the hands of terrorist organizations, not supporters of those terrorist groups.

The Refugee Protection Act also repeals the 1-year filing deadline for asylum seekers in the United States. This deadline was unnecessary when it was added to the law in 1996 and remains unnecessary now.

Under court decisions interpreting our law, certain groups of asylum seekers can face improperly high barriers to protection. For example, the Board of Immigration Appeals has required seekers who base a claim on persecution of their social group to show that the group is “socially visible.” This requirement is not a part of the statute or implementing regulations. Moreover, it is unnecessarily onerous for certain groups who take great pains to conceal their membership in the social group. For example, lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered individuals from certain countries may have to hide their identity to avoid physical attacks or extreme social isolation. Women from certain cultures must conceal that they have not been forcibly circumcised or face the threat that tribal leaders will subject them to this violent and dangerous practice.

Our law grants asylum to those who have experienced persecution or have a well-founded fear of future persecution. Therefore, courts should not require these individuals to risk serious harm by exposing their membership in the persecuted social group in the home nation. Social visibility may be a factor in some cases, but must not be a baseline requirement to prevail on an asylum claim.

I thank Senators LEVIN, AKAKA, and DURBIN for their support of the Refugee Protection Act of 2011. I also thank Representative ZOE LOFGREN for introducing a companion bill, H.R. 2185, in the House of Representatives.

I hope that on World Refugee Day others will join us in helping to reform our domestic laws to help the victims of persecution worldwide.

LUKAS ROBERT CORWIN

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, as we discuss and debate the future of medical care for all citizens in our Nation, it is appropriate to take a few moments to salute heroes who make a truly life saving difference.

June 3, 2011, was a very special day for me and my wife Charlene. We received the joyous news that a great-grandson, Lukas Robert Corwin, had been born in Riley Hospital for Children, Indianapolis, IN. I was privileged to visit Lukas early in the morning on the next day and to congratulate his proud parents, Jonathan and Christie Corwin.

At that time, we had been informed that Lukas would require heart surgery in a few weeks and would probably remain in the hospital until the date of surgery. Suddenly, just 2 weeks after his birth, it was apparent that Lukas could barely breathe and that his heart rate had dropped into the 40s. His evening nurse performed oral care. Dr. Turrentine determined that the surgery must occur immediately and we prayed as Jonathan and Christie accompanied Lukas to the surgical area with the support of Ariana, Christie’s favorite nurse, Chrissy, Lukas’ evening nurse, Andrew, a medical student, Abby, another nurse, and Dr. Turrentine.

These remarkable medical heroes for the next few hours performed miraculous procedures that brought the ordeal of Lukas to a very successful conclusion. I salute all of the life saving procedures and the gifted persons who were able to use them so well in truly saving the life of a beautiful little boy. Our prayers are now with Lukas, his parents, grandparents, and the dedicated teams of life saving persons at Riley Hospital.

TRIBUTE TO GERRY COUNIHAN

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, today I wish to pay tribute to Gerry Counihan, an extraordinary man and a wonderful example for us all.

Gerry is a familiar face and a friend to the Members of this body.

Each of us who have made the trip into this historic Capitol Building and boarded the elevator to cast a vote on this floor has been warmly welcomed or helped in some way by Gerry.

Gerry’s life has had its share of challenges.

He was born with a learning disability, but with his trademark determination and optimism he beat the odds and graduated from Franciscan University in 1988.

Gerry first came to work here on Capitol Hill in 1991, and he returned in 1997 to take a job as a tour guide.

His enthusiasm and his love of American history made him an outstanding guide and a dedicated public servant.

Gerry also helped many visitors to our Capitol cope during a time of tragedy.

He gave the first public tour of the Capitol after two police officers were killed in 1998.

In 2001, Gerry gave the first tour when the Capitol reopened following the terrorist attacks of September 11.

In my opinion, this is a testament to the dedication and the patriotism Gerry has shown during his many years of service to our country.

In May 2007, Gerry was the victim of a brutal home invasion and assault. After this senseless act of violence, he was told by his doctors that he may never walk again.

But Gerry has never taken no for an answer.

After months in the hospital and grueling rehabilitation, Gerry returned to the Capitol, eventually taking a job as an elevator operator.

Again, Gerry impressed all of us in the Senate with his dedication and his generous spirit.

Gerry will soon begin a job at the Department of Health and Human Services. I know I speak for all of us when I say that HHS is lucky to have him.

Gerry makes the Senate a brighter place, and I am truly sorry to see him go. I admire his optimism, his dedication, and especially his courage in the face of adversity.

I wish Gerry well as he moves onto this exciting new challenge.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

REMEMBERING LAURA ZISKIN

• Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, today I ask my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to Laura Ellen Ziskin, one of Hollywood's most influential film producers, activists, and philanthropists. Laura Ziskin passed away on June 12, 2011, at her home in Santa Monica, CA, after a 7-year battle with cancer. She was 61 years old.

A native of the San Fernando Valley, Laura Ziskin was born on March 3, 1950, to Mae and Jay Ziskin. In 1973, Ziskin graduated from the University of Southern California's School of Cinematic Arts and began working in the entertainment industry first as a game show writer, and then as a personal assistant to producer and director Jon Peters, with whom she would work on the 1976 Barbra Streisand remake of "A Star Is Born."

Over the next three decades, Laura Ziskin became one of the world's most successful female producers. Ziskin's fame quickly grew with her production of 1985's "Murphy's Romance," 1988's "D.O.A.," 1990's megahit "Pretty Woman," and 1991's "What About Bob?" Ziskin's films were both critically acclaimed and well received, with "As Good As It Gets," 1997, "The Thin Red Line," 1998, "Fight Club," 1999, and the recent blockbuster Spider-Man films. In 2002, Laura Ziskin would also

become the first woman to ever produce the Academy Awards—again repeating the feat in 2007.

Laura Ziskin devoted her time and celebrity to improving the lives of others. She gave her support by serving on the boards of organizations such as the National Council of Jewish Women and Education First and was honored by many others, such as the Big Sisters of Los Angeles, the Women's Image Network Award, the Producers Guild of America, City of Hope, and her own alma mater, USC's School of Cinematic Arts. I was also proud to present her with a "Woman Making History" Award for her wonderful work.

When Ziskin was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2004, she immediately became heavily involved in creating a new model for cancer research. In 2008, she founded the nonprofit Stand Up To Cancer, SU2C, in collaboration with friends and colleagues, Katie Couric and Sherry Lansing and the Entertainment Industry Foundation, among others. Ziskin used her film production skills to be a driving force for raising funds for cancer research and support services, including by producing television specials in 2008 and 2010 that aired on major international networks.

Throughout her illness, Laura never quit either her professional or charitable work. She touched the lives of countless individuals and families who struggle with cancer by giving them hope that one day, there will be a cure. In one of her last blog postings, she urged others to take a stand. She wrote, "Take a stand—for yourself, for a loved one . . . for anyone in the fight. Let's make everyone diagnosed with cancer a survivor."

Laura Ziskin is survived by her partner, Alvin Sargent, her daughter, Julia Barry, and her son-in-law, Eli Dansky. •

FIGHTING BLINDNESS

• Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, for most people, it is a given that they are able to see the many wonderful sights the world has to offer. But in this country, more than 10 million people are affected by retinal diseases, such as retinitis pigmentosa and age-related macular degeneration, that result in blindness. These people are being robbed of their vision, plain and simple. By 2020, as the population continues to age, that number is expected to reach 15 million. These diseases might not attract much attention, but their impact on the lives of our friends, family members, and constituents is significant.

Later this month, in Baltimore, MD, the Foundation Fighting Blindness, a private nonprofit that has raised more than \$425 million in research funding, will host its national VISIONS Conference. It will gather together visually challenged people from across the United States, as well as eight other countries, along with renowned researchers committed to finding treatments and cures for these diseases and physicians providing patient care.

The Foundation will also celebrate its 40th anniversary by looking back on four decades of breakthroughs, progress, and hope in the field of retinal disease research. There is a lot to celebrate, as recent advances in research, including a number of clinical trials, have given new hope for restoring vision. Results from one breakthrough study funded in part by the Foundation Fighting Blindness show that gene therapy restored vision in patients suffering from a severe retinal disease. In fact, a 9-year-old boy who had lost his vision almost completely was able to play baseball and read the chalkboard in his class for the first time.

This life-changing work is possible thanks to the Foundation Fighting Blindness, which, through various fundraising efforts, provides the capital necessary to launch innovative, results-oriented research—the kind of research promising enough to draw funding from other sources, such as the National Eye Institute, one of the National Institutes of Health. Now, as the momentum continues to build, a partnership between the private and public sectors is crucial to eradicating blinding diseases.

I congratulate the Foundation Fighting Blindness on its 40th anniversary. With the help of this organization and the National Eye Institute, research will continue to flourish until cures are realized. •

BOWDLE, SOUTH DAKOTA

• Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota. Mr. President, today I pay tribute to the 125th anniversary of the founding of the city of Bowdle, SD. Bowdle, like many of the cities in South Dakota, was founded for its position along the railroad tracks.

Alex M. Bowdle, an employee for Chicago & Milwaukee Railroad, founded Bowdle in 1886. He chose the location for its readily available access to clean water. This water was essential for the trains to use in their boilers, and helped to keep the trains moving on schedule. The water also greatly benefited area farmers who needed it for irrigation of their crops.

Bowdle through the years has continued to be a thriving community. Their commitment to education can be seen in the graduates of the Bowdle School District. In addition city of Bowdle has many outdoor recreation options including pheasant hunting and the Bowdle Golf Club, which residents believe is one of the best courses in the State.

Bowdle's residents have a strong local community and take pride in their city. To celebrate the momentous occasion the city is planning to hold a street dance with live music, along with many other events to bring the surrounding community together to share stories and experiences of the beloved city of Bowdle.

I am proud to publicly honor Bowdle on this memorable occasion. Small