

life in those countries, we hope there is improvement for them. We hope, as they come back to America and then find it necessary to travel abroad again for any number of purposes, that the treatment for their disabilities will be there and, hopefully, of the same quality. We need to be advocates of this convention, advocates for our veterans and for other Americans who have disabilities.

So for these reasons, Mr. President, I am grateful to the majority leader for bringing this legislation to the floor at this time. We are very hopeful that at least the bipartisan debate we had in our committee and the strong vote for ratification will find at least some resonance in this overall debate in the Senate.

It has been a privilege on my part to work with our leader and to have had an excellent set of hearings and to have enjoyed the comments of our veterans. There are many in this body who have served this country in the military services. They have distinguished records. I had only a modest 3 years and 4 months of Active Duty after volunteering for the Navy, but that was sufficient for me to learn what was important for those with whom I was serving and those in veterans organizations, such as the American Legion, headquartered in Indianapolis, IN, about what is vital to the quality of life for those constituents.

So I am hopeful we will have success in this effort tonight.

I yield the floor.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Indiana, not just for his comments now but for his many years of leadership on these issues and for his wonderful partnership in all of this. I will have more to say about that as the days go on, but we are going to miss his vision and wisdom over the course of the years.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum and ask that the time be equally divided under the quorum call. I would hope colleagues would come to the floor and use the time as they desire.

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

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. LUGAR. I would like to recognize Senator VITTER on our side.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

DETENTION OF ELTON "MARK" MCCABE

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I rise to note grave concern on behalf of a constituent of mine and his family. Elton "Mark" McCabe, a businessman from Slidell, LA, has been held against his will in the custody of South Sudanese officials since October 14—for several weeks now, going on a month, through Thanksgiving.

Mark McCabe was in Africa, South Sudan, with business partners pursuing business opportunities, doing everything by the book, legally, ethically, and apparently, for reasons we don't yet fully understand, business competitors or business enemies of his had some sway with South Sudanese officials in a particular portion of the government with the security force, and he was taken into custody. He was charged with vague, very serious crimes and has been held against his will for these many weeks. I won't go into all the details, but it has been a long torturous experience.

I have been on the phone constantly, virtually every day, with State Department officials, with the South Sudanese Ambassador to the United States, with others, trying to demand basic due process and basic justice.

Things have gotten a little better in the last week, and a few days ago there was a hearing before a judge regarding these trumped-up charges. When the prosecution had basically no facts and no evidence to present, the judge virtually laughed in their face with regard to this lack of a case. Nonetheless, the prosecution asked for 3 more days to get its house in order, to get its notes in order, possibly just to try to save face by dropping these trumped-up charges against Mr. McCabe rather than having them thrown out against their will by the judge. We hope that is the case, we pray that is the case, but we don't know yet.

The next hearing before this same judge is going to be this Thursday. So I come to the Senate floor to urge that judge and the South Sudanese Government to do the right thing, to do justice and immediately release Mark McCabe, who, again, has been held against his will, with no evidence, with no meaningful charges against him, since October 14.

I want to repeat what I said directly to the South Sudanese Ambassador to the United States. For many years we have built a strong, positive, bilateral relationship, but that relationship depends on appropriate trust between the parties and appropriate action. And we are looking at this case very seriously. We are looking at this case as a test of their judicial system, as a test of their appropriate intentions. If this completely unjustified detention continues, I vow that I will personally make sure there are consequences and repercussions to that relationship because there should be. They have violated basic fundamental legal and human rights of U.S. citizens.

I am hopeful based on what happened in South Sudan a few days ago, but, to quote President Ronald Reagan, trust but verify. And we are going to verify one way or the other come Thursday. The matter is very simple: Even though Mark McCabe has been held against his will for weeks and weeks, finally, at this late date, we fully expect this sorry state of affairs to end on Thursday. And if these trumped-up,

frivolous charges continue, if he continues to be held against his will, I promise I will make those statements to the South Sudanese Ambassador ring true. I promise I will follow up and take action because this is absolutely outrageous.

I know we all join to pray for justice, to pray for Mr. McCabe's safekeeping. He has a serious heart condition. Indications are that he actually suffered a mild heart attack while in the custody of South Sudanese officials. So we pray for him, and we very much expect and look forward to his quick return to his home in the United States.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. SHAHEEN). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, I rise to support the ratification of the U.N. Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities or, as it is known, the CRPD.

First, I wish to thank Chairman KERRY of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for his diligence and for his leadership on this issue. He has carried it through the committee; he has brought it to the floor. In fact, I was reminded earlier today, we were both on the committee back in the 1980s when we first started working on the Americans with Disabilities Act under the tutelage, really, of Senator Lowell Weicker, who remains a great friend to this day and is still a great leader on the issues of people with disabilities. So we go back that far working together on these issues.

I thank Senator KERRY for his great leadership in bringing us to this point and, hopefully, the point being that we are going to ratify this wonderful treaty.

I thank Senator LUGAR again for all of his efforts through so many years on so many different issues, and on this issue especially, going back to the beginning of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If I might divert from this just for one brief moment to thank Senator LUGAR for his leadership in making the world safer by getting rid of nuclear weapons in the Soviet Union. What a singular effort that has been. Senator LUGAR has done much to make the world a better place for us and for our kids and grandkids. So I salute him for his wonderful leadership in that area.

Senator MCCAIN, of course, was here and worked with us on the Americans with Disabilities Act back in 1989 and 1990. He was very much involved in it; Senator DURBIN, Senator BARRASSO, Senator MORAN, Senator UDALL, and

Senator COONS, I guess all of whom worked very hard to secure the ratification of this important convention.

As the chairman of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions and as the lead Senate author of the Americans with Disabilities Act, I want the United States to become a party to this convention so we can apply the expertise we have developed under the ADA and help the rest of the world remove barriers to full participation and to honor the human rights of citizens with disabilities. One of my greatest joys in the Senate has been my work with so many Senators on the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

The ADA stands for a simple proposition: that disability is a natural part of the human experience and that all people with disabilities have an inherent right to make choices to pursue meaningful careers and to participate fully in all aspects of society. So thanks to the ADA, our country is a more welcoming place not just for people with a variety of disabilities but for everyone.

Twenty-two years ago, on July 26, 1990, President Bush gathered hundreds of Americans with disabilities on the White House lawn for the ADA signing ceremony, and here is what he said. It is wonderful.

This historic act is the world's first comprehensive declaration of equality for people with disabilities—the first. Its passage has made the United States the international leader on this human rights issue.

Well, thanks to the ADA and other U.S. laws, America is showing the rest of the world how to honor the basic human rights of children and adults with disabilities, how to integrate them into society, how to remove barriers to their full participation in activities that most Americans just take for granted.

Our support for disability rights inspired a global movement that led the United Nations to adopt the CRPD. In fact, I might just add parenthetically that after the Americans with Disabilities Act was adopted, we had people from many countries come here. I can think of, first, Russia. Then it was Greece, Ireland, Great Britain, as well as a number of people from other countries who came here to learn what we had done and then to pick it up and move forward in their own countries. Our legal framework influenced the substance of the convention and is informing its implementation in the 125 countries, I think, that have ratified it along with the European Union.

My staff was involved in 2002 when the U.N. first broached this subject of coming up with a convention and, in turn, provided to them the substance of the Americans with Disabilities Act, its history, its provisions, and what had been done from its adoption in 1990 until 2002 and the changes that it had brought about in our own country. So, really, I think the Americans with Disabilities Act informed and laid the

basis for what the U.N. began to do in 2002 and completed in 2006.

So, again, I am very grateful for the leadership of Senator KERRY, Senator McCain, as well as Senator Dole, who I know is not able to be with us right now, but I thank them for all of their support for the ratification of the CRPD. I also appreciate that former President George H.W. Bush, his White House Counsel Boyden Gray, Attorney General Dick Thornburg, former Congressman Steve Bartlett, and Tony Coelho have all been actively supporting this ratification.

I am also grateful for the support from the U.S. business community, including, clearly, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the Information Technology Industry Council for ratification of this treaty. Because of their experience with the ADA, American businesses have developed expertise they can apply in the global marketplace in a way that gives them a competitive advantage. If we are a party to the convention, the U.S.-based companies with this expertise will be on much more solid footing when they are seeking to help other countries write and implement domestic legislation consistent with the convention and consistent with U.S. standards for accessibility and equal opportunity.

Like the Americans with Disabilities Act, the CRPD enjoys widespread support in the disability, civil rights, business, veterans, and faith-based communities. I could be off a little bit, but as of the writing of this statement we have letters of support from more than 250 American disability organizations, 21 veterans service organizations—and I caught some of the comments made by our distinguished chairman, Senator KERRY, in talking about veterans and our wounded warriors as they travel around the world and being able to access in other parts of the world what they can access here in America; a very good point—and 26 faith organizations also in support of the CRPD. These entities all realize the critical importance of America's position as a global leader on disability rights. They want our country to have a seat at the table and to share that expertise as the States Parties to the Convention work to implement it around the world.

I might add here, under the convention a committee will be established to assist and to help other countries in implementing and changing their laws and conforming. If we are a party to this, we get a seat at the table. If we are not a party to it, we will not have a seat at the table. Why shouldn't we have a seat at the table? We have been the world leaders. So by ratifying this convention, the United States will be reaffirming our commitment to our citizens with disabilities. Americans with disabilities should be able to live and travel, study and work abroad with the same freedoms and access they enjoy here in this country. Again, as other countries that have been signatories to this treaty grapple with how to

change their systems and to make their systems more accessible, we can be at the table helping them to implement this treaty and to learn from our experience.

The administration has submitted reservations, understandings, and declarations that make clear that U.S. ratification will not require any change in U.S. law and will have no fiscal impact. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee has modified these reservations, understandings, and declarations to address concerns that were raised in the committee markup.

Although U.S. ratification of the CRPD will not require changes in U.S. law and will not have a fiscal impact, I think it is very clear that U.S. ratification will have a clear moral impact. It will send a signal to the rest of the world that it is not OK to leave a baby with Down Syndrome on the side of the road to die, it is not OK to warehouse adults with intellectual and psychiatric disabilities in institutions, chained to the bars of a cell, when their only "crime" is having a disability, it is not OK to refuse to educate children because they are blind, deaf, or use a wheelchair, it is not OK to prevent disabled people from voting, getting married, owning property, or having children, it is not OK to rebuild infrastructures in Iraq or Afghanistan or Haiti or other war-torn or disaster-stricken areas without improving the accessibility of the infrastructure at the same time.

Former President Reagan frequently talked about America as a city on a hill, a shining example for the world of a nation that ensures opportunity and freedom for all its people. Thanks to our country's success in implementing the ADA, advancing that law's great goals of full inclusion and full participation, America, indeed, has become a shining city on a hill for people with disabilities around the globe. By ratifying the CRPD, we can affirm our leadership in this field. We can give renewed impetus to those striving to emulate us. We can give them that renewed impetus by our example and by sitting down with them and working with them only if we are a signatory to this treaty.

Again, you think about American exceptionalism. We are a pretty exceptional country, when you think about it, in many ways. We are not just exceptional because we have the most tanks and guns and bombs and things such as that, but we are exceptional in what we have done in terms of civil rights and human rights and to include all in our family—our family being our citizenship. We took great strides. America has always been evolving as a country to expand civil rights and human rights, and one of the latest, of course, was to extend those rights to people with disabilities in our society, making sure people with disabilities had all the rights and opportunities that anyone enjoys in our society.

It seems to me that this is the kind of exceptionalism we ought to be promoting around the globe. We ought to be proud. We should be proud of what we have done as a country in this regard. We should not be afraid—not be afraid—to join in a convention to extend to the rest of the world what we have done here, basically, and to be helpful in making sure that other countries can also attain that kind of a standard that does not exclude anyone because of a disability from their society.

I know there were some who were not part of the bipartisan vote to support ratification in the committee. I understand that. But my hope is that in the intervening time, in the course of Senate debate, we will have addressed any remaining concerns, move forward with a strong bipartisan vote to provide our advice and consent, and pass the resolution supporting U.S. ratification of the CRPD with overwhelming bipartisan support.

When we voted on the ADA in 1990, it was a vote where only 6 people in the Senate voted against it—91 to 6. It was a historic law. My hope is we can achieve the same kind of strong bipartisan statement of support for the human rights of 1 billion people with disabilities around the world.

As to those of us who travel a lot around the world—maybe I see it more because of my involvement in this issue—I cannot begin to describe how often it is people come up and ask us how we can help, help them change so that people with disabilities can have more access, be more involved. Many times I have been to countries where someone comes up and may not know of my involvement in this issue, but through the course of conversation—maybe it is someone in business, maybe it is someone in government, in education—they mention this: They mention accessibility because they have a brother, a sister, a friend, someone who has a disability, and they talk about how easy it is for them in America to get around, to move around, to go to school, to do business, and they would hope that maybe their country could do the same. It happens a lot. Here we are, we have the opportunity to be a key player in this global effort.

It was important for us as a country for the first 10 to 20 years to focus on our own internal problems in terms of advancing the cause of people with disabilities, when you think about all the changes that have come about in the last 22 years. And now we take a lot of it for granted in terms of accessibility, mobility, education, health care, job accessibility. It is just not unusual any longer to walk into a business and see someone with a physical disability or an intellectual disability working there. We kind of do not even think about it much anymore. We do not think about kids with disabilities mainstreamed in schools.

I remember when our oldest daughter was in grade school and IDEA was just

coming into force and effect, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and a child with a disability was integrated into the classroom. There was this big hue and cry from a lot of the parents about: Oh, this kid was going to be disruptive. And how are the other kids going to learn?

Well, we got through that. Now we have a whole generation, what I call the ADA generation, kids who were mainstreamed in school, and kids without disabilities do not think anything about being their friends, going to a ball game with them, going to the theater with them, working alongside them. So we have this whole new generation where you do not think about it any longer. It is a normal aspect of life.

That is not so in other countries. In other countries, it is still, quite frankly, a sign of disgrace when a family has a child with a disability. Well, it is time to get over that. By being a country signing on to this, we can help them in so many ways. It is not just kids or young people with physical disabilities; it is people with intellectual disabilities. For how long have we looked down on people with Down Syndrome, for example, and said: Well, they cannot do anything? We segregate them in society. We send them to special schools. We give them occupations that do not challenge them. Now we have broken that down. Now so many people with intellectual disabilities, we find, can do a lot of things, and they can be challenged. And, yes, they can do competitive employment. They do not need sheltered workshops. They can be in competitive employment, with just a little support and a little training.

So many things have changed for the better in this country. It would be a shame—be a shame—if all this good we have done through all sectors of society—the business community, government, transportation, education; all these things we have done to make sure people with disabilities are not discriminated against and they have full opportunities, all the opportunities that anyone else has in our society—it would be a shame to say that somehow we are not going to support a convention, an international convention that basically takes what we have done and says: Here, world, this is what we should be doing globally.

To have 125 countries already signed up to it, and here we are—those who took the leadership in this area, everyone from the White House to, as I say, the Chamber of Commerce, that was supportive of the ADA, the business community that worked so hard on this—it would be a shame if we did not ratify this and become players in this and have a seat at the table to help the rest of the world attain what we have attained in this country.

Again, I thank Senator KERRY and Senator LUGAR, and so many others, Senator MCCAIN and others—I am probably forgetting to mention someone—

but so many people who have worked so hard to bring this issue to this point.

I have to believe—yes, I know there are some Senators who have some problems, and I do not question anyone's motives or anything like that. I think some people do have, maybe, some concerns about this. Hopefully, through the amending process, we can allay those concerns. I hope we get resounding—resounding—support for the ratification of this treaty and show the world that we are proud of what we have done, and we want to join with the rest of the world in making sure they too can advance and progress and have the same kind of support and accessibility and opportunity for people with disabilities as we have had in America.

Again, I thank my colleague and my classmate and my longtime friend Senator KERRY for his leadership on this issue, and I hope we have a resounding, overwhelming vote, just as we did for the Americans with Disabilities Act 22 years ago.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KERRY. Madam President, I thank the Senator from Iowa and I want to comment quickly before I yield the floor to the Senator from Minnesota. I also have a unanimous consent request.

I heard the Senator pay appropriate tribute to Senator LUGAR for his accomplishments in terms of making the world safer. I say to my friend, without any question whatsoever in reserve that the accomplishment of the ADA is one of those singular moments in the career of any U.S. Senator and it made the world better here at home, and a lot of other places if we get this done. The Senator from Iowa helped set that gold standard, so I thank him for that and for the pleasure—there are only three of us left from our class, so it is good to stand up with him today, and I appreciate it enormously.

I ask unanimous consent that the time for debate only on the treaty be extended until 6:30 p.m., with the time equally divided as provided under the previous order; further, that at 6:30 p.m., the majority leader be recognized.

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

I yield to the Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. I rise to discuss the importance of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. I wish to thank Senator KERRY and Senator LUGAR for their outstanding leadership on this important treaty, as well as Senator HARKIN, my neighbor to the south, for all he has done for people with disabilities.

For many years I have served on the advisory board of Pacer, which is one of the Nation's greatest organizations for parents of kids with disabilities, and saw firsthand what so many families go through every day, the incredible courage and the love they show for

their children and the inspiration so many people with disabilities bring to our country.

To paraphrase Minnesota's own "happy warrior," Hubert Humphrey, the moral test of a government isn't just how it treats the young, the healthy, and the able bodied, it is also how it treats the sick, the elderly, and the disabled—those in need of a little extra support.

That may be the moral test of a government, but I believe it is also the moral test of a people and the moral test of a country. Today, I call on all my colleagues to vote to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for two simple reasons. First of all, ratifying this treaty is about protecting the rights of U.S. citizens who are living with disabilities overseas.

Right now, thousands of Americans with disabilities, including our men and women in uniform, live, work, study, and travel abroad. I believe these Americans deserve the same rights and protections they would enjoy if they were living in the United States. This treaty is about ensuring those rights and protections.

Second, ratifying this treaty is about advancing a core moral value we all share as Americans, the idea that all people are created equal and that we are all endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights. Our country has long led the world as a beacon for equality and human dignity. This treaty would elevate our role in promoting human rights around the globe.

These are American values, but they are especially near and dear to my heart as a Senator from Minnesota, where we have a long and proud tradition of working to ensure that people with disabilities have access to the same basic resources and opportunities as everyone else. After all, it was the Minnesota Ramp Project that introduced a new American model for building statewide standardized wheelchair ramps.

We are the State that sent Paul Wellstone to the Senate, where he fought long and hard for mental health parity, something that finally passed in the Senate and was signed into law after he died—but it was signed into law. We are home to some of the most innovative centers for the disabled in the country, including Pacer, that I already mentioned, the Courage Center, and ARC.

We even have one of the most accessible baseball stadiums in the country. We are looking forward to a better season for the Twins next year, and we are so proud of our new stadium and how accessible it is for people with disabilities. In many foreign countries, not even schools and hospitals can meet these standards for people with disabilities. When a person is not even able to get an education or access to health care they need because of a disability, that is a very big problem.

Even more troubling is the fact that some foreign countries lack laws for

protecting the disabled against discrimination, meaning they have no recourse after being denied a job or an education or the use of public services. Remember, these inequities do not just affect foreign citizens, they affect Americans who are living in those countries.

So this is what is at stake: protecting our own citizens when they travel to other countries and extending the values of equality and justice we so cherish in our own country. It is important to note that ratifying this treaty will not require any changes to U.S. law, nor will it impact American sovereignty, nor will it incur costs to taxpayers.

It has been endorsed by every major disabled person's rights organization, every major veteran's service organization, the Chamber of Commerce, and several Republican and Democratic administrations. Protecting the rights of the most vulnerable among us is not a partisan issue. It is an issue of decency and an issue of dignity. I believe it is an issue we must all stand behind as Americans.

I urge my colleagues to ratify this treaty and move us forward in advancing the rights of disabled people around the world.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KERRY. Madam President, I wanted to thank the Senator from Minnesota so much for taking time to come over. I know she did not intend to earlier, but she cares about the issue and took the time to come and share her thoughts with us. We are very appreciative. We obviously hope the Twins do whatever they want, second only to the Red Sox in the future.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, before us for advice and consent is the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the CRPD. I support the treaty and urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support it.

In America, I do not believe anyone considers someone with a disability to have any less rights or protections than people without disabilities. I would suggest this reality is partly due to our values but also due to bipartisan efforts to codify in law that persons with disabilities are afforded equal access and protection from discrimination.

Over 22 years ago members of both parties came together to pass the Americans with Disabilities Act. It is not only the law of the land but it is the template for the CRPD in countries around the world that are moving to

update their laws. Both the ADA and the ADA amendments of 2008 were passed with wide bipartisan margins. They are examples that from time to time we can engage in a bipartisan effort in this body.

In many countries accessibility to public spaces is not available to persons with disabilities. They are still discriminated against or cast aside in societies across the globe. Horrifically, infanticide occurs in many countries where children are born with disabilities. Protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, all persons, is not a political issue, it is a human issue.

Regardless of where in the world a disabled person strives to live a normal, independent life, where basic rights and accessibilities are available, disability rights and protections have always been a bipartisan issue. Ratifying this treaty should be no different.

Senator DURBIN and I and Senator KERRY began months ago—with Senator HARKIN, Senator LUGAR, many others. We had been discussing months ago how we could work together in a bipartisan manner and build support for ratification of the treaty.

As I mentioned, we have worked closely with Senators MORAN, BARRASSO, COONS, TOM UDALL, HARKIN, and others. I wish to thank them for their support and efforts to get us to this point. Senator KERRY deserves special recognition for scheduling a Foreign Relations Committee hearing and a markup that favorably reported the measure out of the committee. I also wish to thank the majority leader for scheduling this treaty for consideration today.

I think my colleagues should appreciate that this treaty is supported by over 300 disability organizations, at least 21 U.S. military veterans service organizations, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and many other organizations. It is not an accident that literally every veterans organization in this country supports this treaty because it is our veterans, many of whom are coming home as we speak, who will live and travel abroad and will benefit from this treaty.

As I have been traveling around the world where conflict is ever present, I have seen that so many people will benefit from the principles embodied in the treaty. So I would argue this effort is probably more important today in the world than it has been in the past. Another strong supporter of this treaty is one of my closest friends and heroes, Bob Dole. As you know, Bob has dedicated nearly his entire life to this country, through his military service and, following that, many years in public service.

He has dedicated the past several months to encourage support in the Senate for this treaty. Earlier, I read a statement from Bob. I would like to mention some parts of the statement. I will point out rather poignantly he says:

It was an exceptional group I joined during World War II, which no one joins by personal

choice. It is a group that neither respects or discriminates by age, sex, wealth, education, skin color, religious beliefs, political party, power, prestige. That group, Americans with disabilities, has grown in size ever since. So, therefore, has the importance of maintaining access for people with disabilities to mainstream American life, whether it is access to a job, an education, or registering to vote.

I will not go through Bob Dole's entire statement. I would point out there are still thousands and thousands and thousands of his comrades who came home disabled in some respect—Bob, of course, in the most painful way. We all recall, with some nostalgia and appreciation, that he and our other wonderful hero Senator INOUE spent time in the same hospital following World War II going through very difficult periods of rehabilitation, a friendship that was forged there that has lasted ever since.

I can assure you there is nothing Bob Dole would want more than to be here on the floor of this Senate delivering his own speech before the Senate and urging colleagues to consider this treaty based on facts and on our values that ensure, protect, and advance the rights of persons with disabilities, whether on U.S. soil or around the globe where we can make a difference.

I received a letter today from—it is very difficult for me to pronounce his name, but I will try—from one individual, Chen Guangcheng. He is an individual who is a blind Chinese activist who recently came to the United States of America thanks to the efforts of many of the leaders in our administration, including the Secretary of State.

I wish to quote from his letter. This is an individual who is blind, who fought for human rights in his country, in China, and now, thank God, is in the United States of America. His letter says:

Dear Senators, I am writing you to personally ask for your support for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. As you know, my work on civil rights began with trying to ensure that people with disabilities in my home country of China were afforded the same rights as everyone else. The CRPD is making this idea real in significant ways around the world. Today, worldwide there are over 1 billion people with disabilities, and 80 percent of them live in developing countries. Disability rights is an issue that the world cannot afford to overlook.

When the United States enacted the Americans with Disabilities Act over twenty years ago, the idea of true equality for people with disabilities became a reality. Many nations have followed in America's footsteps and now are coming together under shared principles of equality, respect, and dignity for people with disabilities as entailed in the CRPD. The U.S.—which was instrumental in negotiating the CRPD—can continue to advance both its principles and issues of practical accessibility for its citizens and all people around the world, and by ratifying the treaty, so take its rightful place of leadership in the arena of human rights.

As I continue my studies in the United States, it is a great pleasure to now learn firsthand how the U.S. developed such a comprehensive and strong system of protection for its citizens with disabilities. I am so

hopeful that you will support ratification and allow others to benefit from these triumphs. Thank you for your leadership.

That is a very moving letter from a man who risked his very life, a man who is blind but still risked his life for the freedom of others, including rights in his country for individuals with disabilities.

There is a letter we have from former Attorney General Dick Thornburgh and White House Counsel Boyden Gray. They wrote to the Foreign Relations Committee to address issues being raised by opponents, particularly homeschool advocates who believe parental rights to homeschool or make decisions for their children will be impaired. I take it that my colleague, the Senator from Massachusetts, addressed this aspect of the concerns the homeschoolers have.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KERRY. If I might just say to my colleague, the resolution actually does address it, but I have not, so I think it would be important, if the Senator wishes to address that.

Mr. McCAIN. Here is what they wrote, the former Attorney General—I have been blessed to live and know many Attorneys General, but I think all of us on both sides of the aisle would agree that Dick Thornburgh ranks up there at the top. This is what they write concerning the issue of homeschooling:

Nothing in this treaty prevents parents from homeschooling or making decisions for their children. This treaty embraces IDEA, the ADA, and all of the disability non-discrimination legislation that has made the United States a leader on disability rights. The specific provisions on women and children state that women and children with disabilities cannot be the victims of illegal discrimination—as is the case under U.S. law. Furthermore, the CRPD recognizes and protects the important role of the family and specifically protects children from being separated from their parents on the basis of a disability. We take a back seat to no one in our defense of the rights of parents to raise their children or in our support for our federalist system of government with sovereignty at both the Federal and State levels of government.

Some opponents are also suggesting that somehow the U.S. law or existing parental rights would be impacted by supporting the treaty. Attorney General Thornburgh and White House Counsel Gray address this as well:

We understand that some are claiming that changes in U.S. law would be necessary to implement the obligations the U.S. will undertake as a result of ratifying the treaty, or that the RUDs that the Senate will approve will not have the force of law. Such claims are not correct and, quite simply, extraordinary. When the U.S. Senate attaches conditions to its consent to a treaty, they are binding on the President, and the President cannot proceed to ratify a treaty without giving them effect. The Senate has a long tradition of careful consideration and frequent adoption of limited RUDs, as is the case here. Any claims that such limited conditions do not have the force of law, or are inconsistent with the object and purpose of a treaty on disabilities that U.S. laws inspired

in the first place, is contrary to the long-held position articulated by the Senate—regardless of which party is in control (and in spite of whatever theories that may momentarily exist in academic circles).

Administrations of both parties have also uniformly held this view. In 1995 the U.S. stated that “reservations are an essential part of a State's consent to be bound. They cannot simply be erased. This reflects the fundamental principle of the law of treaties: obligation is based on consent. A State which does not consent to a treaty is not bound by that treaty. A State which expressly withholds its consent from a provision cannot be presumed, on the basis of some legal fiction, to be bound by it.”

Furthermore, the CRPD protects the critical role of the family by specifically recognizing the role of parents in raising children with disabilities, and prohibits the dissolution or separation of families because one or both of the parents are persons with disabilities. Article 23, entitled “Respect for home and family,” provides that “children with disabilities have equal rights with respect to family life,” that nations ratifying the treaty have an obligation to “undertake to provide early and comprehensive information, services, and support to children with disabilities and their families, and that “(i) in no case shall a child be separated from parents on the basis of a disability of either the child or one or both of the parents.” Finally, the CRPD will provide much-needed protection in other countries where there is no provision for birth certificates or birth registration for children with disabilities. In particular, it will help protect against the horrible practice of infanticide of children born with disabilities—a practice that can be facilitated through the denial of birth certificates or registration to disabled babies.

Every action we have ever taken on disability policy has been bipartisan. Being able to live independently is a basic human dignity we support, and it is a value we can help advance internationally by supporting this treaty.

I would like to say in closing that I thank both of my colleagues, Senator LUGAR and Senator KERRY.

I think we might think just for a moment, in conclusion, about the fact that there are various conflicts going on around the world. In Syria, we have seen 40,000 killed, and I don't know how many—100,000, 200,000 who have been wounded, many of them innocent women and children, because of the ferocity and barbaric conduct of this conflict. I don't know how many people today in China are subject to infanticide because there is not a birth certificate available. And we know that practice, not only in China but in other parts of the world—a lot of it in Asia—goes on. We live in a very troubled and turbulent world. Not only will we have the normal, usual situation—and I mean normal—there are people who are born with disabilities from time to time. I have had the honor of knowing children, as all of us have, and there are no more loving and caring people in the world than our children and our citizens who have disabilities. There are going to be a lot more because of the conflicts that are going on in various places in the world. They might deserve our special attention because they are living in countries that will have a lot less of the rule of law, a lot

less ability to care for them, particularly in the short term. Whether it be Libya, whether it be Syria, whether it be Iraq, or whether it be Afghanistan, all of these countries, we are going to have citizens who have been the victims of the violence of war. I believe the best thing we can do for them in the short term is take whatever action we can to see that they are not discriminated against, that they receive the same protections we guarantee our Americans with disabilities, and that they are afforded an opportunity to live full and beautiful lives.

Finally, I would like to say that my two friends and I have been around this place for quite a while—in the view of many, perhaps too long—but the fact is that one of the highlights of our shared experiences was on the lawn of the White House when a guy, Holmes Tuttle—remember one of the leaders of the disabilities movement, Mr. Tuttle—and others from the disabilities community were there, and the President of the United States at the time, President Herbert Walker Bush, and our beloved Bob Dole were there. It was a great moment for all of us. It was a great moment for America. It was all of us doing something, contributing in a small way to make better the lives of people who otherwise may have had great challenges in having the kinds of lives we want every American citizen to lead.

I believe that this treaty, this action is an adequate and important followup because I don't think there is anybody who denies—yes, there are problems with any legislation of the sweeping magnitude and scope of the ADA, but I don't know of anybody who doesn't believe it was a magnificent success and an enormous contribution to making the lives of our citizens with disabilities better than they otherwise would have been. So wouldn't we want that same thing to happen to everyone in the world? Wouldn't we want these children who are going through such difficult times in their lives and wouldn't we want those who have been wounded and maimed to have an opportunity for a better life? Wouldn't we want to, as Americans, be proud that we blazed the trail with the ADA in a really remarkable shift and change and an act of almost miraculous benefit to so many of our citizens, wouldn't we want that also to apply to the other citizens of the world? I think most of us would, and I think most of the American people who are paying attention to this believe that. That is why so many of our veterans organizations are in support. That is why so many in the disabilities community are in support. That is why there are so many charitable organizations that are in support.

So I again thank both of my colleagues and tell them that I certainly hope we can convince all of our colleagues that one of the nicest things we could do as a Christmas present for people around the world is to ratify this treaty.

Madam President, I yield the floor.
Mr. KERRY. Madam President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KERRY. Madam President, I wish to thank the Senator from Arizona. I thank him for his comments just now, but most importantly I really appreciate his extraordinary leadership on this issue and a lot of human rights issues, issues of conscience. He speaks with a very important voice, and I think he knows I am always happier when he is working with me than against me on any issue on the floor. I know he used to pride himself in his fight occasionally with Senator Kennedy, but he also prided himself enormously when they were able to get together and work together.

I have certainly enjoyed the many things Senator McCain and I have done together—most notably, I think, joining hands across a certain belief divide to help end the war in Vietnam, the real war that kept raging in the minds of a lot of people, and that was a 10-year journey we made together. I am certainly proud of that and grateful to him.

But I want to come back to this treaty for a moment and Senator McCain's efforts on it. I would say to my colleagues who have raised in the minority report a couple of concerns—and none of us are dismissive of those concerns—every Senator has the right to express their beliefs, but I can't think of a Senator more compelled. He has been the ranking member and chair of the Armed Services Committee and for years has been one of the leading voices on defense issues and now the defense of our Nation. Everybody knows his record in terms of personal service. I think there is no Senator who comes to the floor arguing more consistently the prerogatives of the United States of America with respect to defending our Nation and upholding the Constitution.

I would ask my colleagues who are finding some reason to doubt this treaty or to have some sense that it presents a threat to our country to take appropriate note of Senator McCain's fervent commitment to this and to the comments he made about former Attorney General Dick Thornburgh. I knew the Attorney General when he was Attorney General. I have enormous respect for him and for his career, and I think Senator McCain was 100 percent correct when he quoted him in the record as saying that nothing in this treaty will require any initiative by the United States to change a law or to reduce any capacity of our courts to uphold the Constitution of the United States. I think he did an important service in his comments with respect to that. I thank him for his contribution. Our fight is not over. We have some work to do in the next days, and I look forward to working with him.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. (Mr. CASEY). The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, I join the chairman in thanking JOHN MCCAIN for

his testimony, his courage, his eloquence, and his mention of those on our side of the aisle who have historically fought for the disabled. That is a very important fact today, and his presence, his strength and determination are very inspiring. We appreciate so much his support.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum, and ask that time be logged to both sides.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, we are in the process of considering the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The United States has led the world in creating the legal framework, building an infrastructure and designing facilities that ensure inclusion and opportunities for those living with disabilities.

This year the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, under the leadership of Chairman JOHN KERRY and ranking minority member Senator RICHARD LUGAR, celebrated the 22nd anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act by favorably reporting the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on a strong bipartisan basis. I want to personally thank Senator KERRY and Senator LUGAR for moving the treaty through the committee process. It was a hectic time—campaigns were going on—but they made a point of making certain we brought this issue forward.

A personal thanks to my friend Senator JOHN MCCAIN, who is on the Senate floor at this moment, for making this a bipartisan effort. I also want to thank Senators BARRASSO, HARKIN, TOM UDALL, MORAN, and COONS for their bipartisan support and dedication to the passage and ratification of this important treaty.

Now is the time for the full Senate to affirm our Nation's leadership on disability issues by ratifying this important treaty. We should do so with the strong bipartisan support that has always characterized the efforts we have had on disabilities.

The support for this treaty is extremely broad and deep and bipartisan. It is supported by 165 disability organizations, including the U.S. International Council on Disabilities, the American Association of People with Disabilities, the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, and the National Disability Rights Network.

In addition, it is supported by 21 different veterans groups, including the Wounded Warrior Project, the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, and Veterans of Foreign Wars.

President George H.W. Bush, who signed the Americans with Disabilities Act into law, has called for ratification

of this treaty. But there has been no more passionate advocate—and I am so honored that he would consider devoting his energies and good name to our effort for ratification of the treaty—than Senator Bob Dole, a lifelong advocate for disability rights. We need to pass this treaty in a tribute to Bob Dole for his life of service to the State of Kansas and to the Nation, as well as his heroic efforts on behalf of the disabled in the Senate.

These organizations and people of different backgrounds have come together to support ratification of the treaty because they know it is critical for those living with disabilities in the United States and around the world. Thanks to the ADA and similar laws, the United States has been so successful providing opportunities, accessibility, and protection of the rights of those living with disabilities that our Nation is already in full compliance with all terms of the treaty. Before transmitting this treaty, the Obama administration conducted an exhaustive comparison of the treaty's requirements to current U.S. law. Here is what they found: The United States does not need to pass any new laws or regulations in order to fully meet the terms of the treaty. The fact that we have already met or exceeded the treaty's requirements is a testament to our Nation's commitment to equality and opportunity for the disabled.

But there are still important reasons to ratify this treaty. There are more than 5½ million veterans living with disabilities in the United States. They travel all over the world, often with their families. Ratifying this treaty will help move toward the day when wherever they travel they will be treated with accessibility, with the kind of respect that every person would expect to have in traveling around the world.

Ratifying this treaty will also give the United States a seat at an international table that we currently can't occupy. The United States can sit at the table on disability rights worldwide and provide guidance and expertise based on our experience and leadership. It just stands out like a sore thumb our country hasn't ratified this treaty when over 120 other nations have.

This treaty would also level the playing field for American businesses. American businesses have invested time and resources to comply with the ADA. Businesses in some countries are not required to comply with similar standards. Compliance with the treaty levels the playing field by requiring foreign businesses to meet accessibility standards similar to those of the United States. It will open new markets for new technologies when it comes to disability.

Mr. President, I know you have been a visitor at Walter Reed and Bethesda Naval Center, and you have seen our returning veterans, many who come home after losing a limb. They go through a period of the best rehabilita-

tion, and then they are brought into a laboratory with the latest technology.

A new Congresswoman from Illinois, named TAMMY DUCKWORTH—I am so proud of her election victory on November 6—lost both legs in Iraq when she was piloting a helicopter that was shot down. She was a member of the Illinois National Guard, and there was a question whether she would even survive the terrible incident where a rocket-propelled grenade was fired into the fuselage of her helicopter. She survived and has since used Walter Reed Hospital and Bethesda to make certain that she has the very best new prosthetic legs. They were good enough to carry her through a campaign successfully, and now she will be sworn in to the U.S. House of Representatives in just a few weeks.

That kind of technology is being developed for our veterans, as it should be. Ultimately, it will be available to everyone across the United States and around the world. As companies make this new technology enabling amputees a full life, this technology becomes a part of the export of the United States. So there are opportunities here for the United States, as other countries comply with the treaty and develop new prosthetics and other things for their disabled, to have some business opportunities with new and good ideas. American businesses will be able to export their expertise and their products in new markets serving the hundreds of millions of people living with disabilities around the world.

Let me tell you why it is important for us, even though our standards are good and high in helping the disabled, to worry about those with disabilities in other countries. There are estimates that 10 percent of the world's population lives with disabilities. Not only do these people courageously live each day, they live with many challenges and hurdles that could be removed with the right laws and policies that are contained in this convention.

It is hard to believe, but 90 percent of children with disabilities in developing countries never attend school. Less than 25 percent of the countries in the United Nations have passed laws to even prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability. Studies indicate that women and girls in developing countries are more likely than men to have a disability.

Unemployment is dramatically higher for those living in other countries with disabilities. This treaty will help provide the framework so countries around the world can help their own citizens with disabilities live productive, healthy lives. Just like we did by enacting the ADA 22 years ago, ratifying this treaty will send the world a message that people with disabilities deserve a level playing field.

While this treaty will ensure inclusion and access for those living with disabilities, it is also important to note what the treaty will not do. The treaty will not require the United States to

appropriate any new funding or resources to comply with its terms—not a single dollar. The treaty will not change any U.S. law or compromise U.S. sovereignty. The treaty will not lead to any new lawsuits because its terms do not create any new rights, and it cannot be enforced in any U.S. court. For families who choose to educate their children at home, the treaty will not change any of the current rights and obligations under American law. I was pleased that in the Foreign Relations Committee they adopted an amendment I worked on with Senator DEMINT, a bipartisan amendment, to further clarify this issue.

I also want to address the issue of abortion, which was raised yesterday by one of our former colleagues. Leading pro-life groups, such as the National Right to Life Committee, confirm the treaty does not promote, expand access or create any right to an abortion.

When we tried to move this treaty earlier this year, some objected on the basis the Senate shouldn't ratify a treaty during a lameduck session. Well, we did a little study. I want to note for the record that since 1970, in the last 42 years the Senate has ratified at least 19 treaties during lameduck sessions. There is no procedural or substantive justification for not ratifying this treaty which has broad bipartisan support and could mean so much to those living with disabilities.

Thanks to decades of bipartisan cooperation, our country embodies the worldwide gold standard for those living with disabilities.

In closing, I again salute Senator Bob Dole. He has been on the phone and working it, and I hope in tribute to his Senate career we will ratify this treaty.

I also want to salute a former colleague of mine from the U.S. House of Representatives, Tony Coelho. Tony was the whip of the Democratic caucus when I was first elected, and he has been an amazing advocate for the disabled throughout his public career in the House and ever since. He came to me and asked to help in this effort, and I was happy to say yes to Tony, as I did so many times when I served with him in the House.

I want to add one other person—Marca Bristo. Marca is the leading disability advocate in the city of Chicago. This wonderful young woman was tireless in her wheelchair, wheeling from office to office, begging Members and their staffs to consider voting for this treaty. If and when we pass it—and I hope that is soon—I am going to remember Marca and Tony, and certainly Senator Dole, for all the work they put into this.

When the Senate ratifies this treaty, we can be proud our coworkers, friends, family members, and courageous veterans will soon enjoy the same access and opportunity when they travel abroad that they have come to expect right here in the United States.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I 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. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I take this time to urge my colleagues to vote for the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

I have the honor of serving on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and was present during the hearings we had with regard to the ratification of the treaty. I listened to the witnesses who testified and listened to all the arguments that always have been made about treaties. I must tell you, it was overwhelmingly supportive of the ratification of the treaty.

I want to acknowledge the work of Senator LUGAR, who is on the floor. He has been a real champion on basic human rights issues and advancing it through treaties on which the United States has taken leadership. I applaud his unstinting commitment to advancing the rights of people with disabilities.

I also want to acknowledge our chairman Senator KERRY, and the work he has done in regard to this treaty; Senator HARKIN, and many others, have been involved in the United States' participation in this treaty. To put it directly, we were responsible for this treaty moving forward because the United States has been in the leadership of protecting people with disabilities. The way we treat people with disabilities is a civil rights/human rights issue.

We know the history of America was not always what it is today, and we know the struggles people with disabilities have had in getting access to services that we sometimes take for granted.

Many years ago I visited our State institution for children with developmental disabilities. I saw in one large room literally 100 children receiving no care at all, most of them not clothed. I knew we could do better in this country, and today our access to health services for people with disabilities is remarkably better.

I remember when if you had a physical disability and were confined to a wheelchair, it was basically impossible to get use of public transportation. We have changed those policies in our country, recognizing that every American has the right to basic services. I remember when it was difficult for people to get public education in traditional schools if they had disabilities. We have changed those laws in America. We have changed our public accommodation laws. We have changed our employment laws. We have led the world in saying that it is a basic right,

and people with disabilities have the same protections as every one of us.

I am proud of the progress we have made here in the United States. I was part of the Congress in 1990 that passed the Americans With Disabilities Act. I am very proud to be part of the Congress that passed that law. I remember two of our colleagues who have been in the forefront of this work: Senator Dole, whose name has been mentioned, has been one of the great leaders in this body in protecting the rights of people with disabilities, and Congressman Tony Coelho, with whom I served in the other body, the House, took on a leadership position to bring to the public attention for us to do what was right for people with disabilities.

The United States has provided international leadership. The year after we passed the Americans With Disabilities Act, my colleague in the House, Congressman STENY HOYER, took that effort in the United States internationally. In 1991, in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, we passed the Declaration on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities because of the U.S. leadership. It is now known as the Moscow Document. We have provided international aspirations to make sure that we treat people with disabilities as we would treat anyone else.

We have in America the strongest protections of any country. We have improved our laws. We have led the world in providing the right legal framework, the right policies, and the right programs so people with disabilities can gain access to all services.

The ratification of this treaty is particularly important to the United States. I say that because it further demonstrates our leadership on this issue. We have added language in this treaty; we don't have to change any laws if we ratified this treaty. We are in full compliance. There is no need for America to take any further steps. All this treaty ratification does is reaffirm America's leadership on this issue and provides protection for our citizens internationally. We made that very clear with amendments we added to this treaty during the committee markup. We don't have to change any laws. Yet it helps U.S. citizens abroad. The rights of the disabled should not end at our border. They should have the same protections when they travel to another country or when they work in another country or when they temporarily live in another country. We want to make sure American citizens are treated fairly.

A witness testified at our hearing on the ratification of this treaty about how she was in a wheelchair in another country and she was not permitted to use her wheelchair to get access to an airplane. That is wrong. This treaty will protect an American who happens to be in another country and who happens to have a disability to make sure that person can get reasonable access to transportation, reasonable access to

public accommodations, and that the person is not discriminated against because of her or his disability. This helps advance globally the basic human rights of people with disabilities. Other countries will learn from the United States. Until we ratify, we can't participate in the international discussions taking place to protect people with disabilities. Yet we have the most advanced laws. By our ratification of this treaty, we are in a position to help other countries advance the rights of people with disabilities, and that is exactly what we should be doing in America.

Our Nation was founded on the principle that we are all created equal and each of us has the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness regardless of our abilities. Ratifying this treaty is a strong act of diplomacy and a symbol of America's continued commitment to equal justice for all. The history of our Nation has been the continued expansion of rights, opportunities, and responsibilities to more and more Americans. It is in our interests and in the interests of all humankind to see that the expansion happens in other countries as well.

I urge my Senate colleagues to vote for the ratification of this treaty. It is the right vote to take for the United States. Standing up for basic human rights is right. It is right to protect our citizens when they travel internationally. I urge my colleagues to vote for ratification.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BENNET.) Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for such time as I may consume.

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

HOUSE AND SENATE ACTION

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I just wished to address two things. The first is that we are having a continuing discussion about the budget of our country and about the taxes of our country and indeed about the unfair and often upside down nature of our current Tax Code that allows people making hundreds of millions of dollars a year to pay a lower tax rate than a family who earns \$100,000 a year.

In the context of that discussion, there is one thing that I think we can do right now that would be important and helpful to the vast majority of Americans, indeed to 98 percent of American families and 97 percent of American small businesses; that is, to assure them that their taxes are not going to go up on January 1.