

that can become substance. I believe that by passing this legislation, we can change hearts and minds as well.

#### REMOVAL OF THE UNITED STATES FROM THE U.N. HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Mr. LIEBERMAN. I rise to express my dismay at the Economic and Social Council's vote yesterday removing the United States from membership on the United Nations Human Rights Commission for the first time since its inception in 1946.

The United States was a founding member of this distinguished body and has been an active member since its establishment. Under the chairmanship of Eleanor Roosevelt, the U.S. was instrumental in helping to draft the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the very first work of the Commission and one that deeply reflects longstanding and treasured American values. For over 50 years, the United States has worked within the Commission to codify fundamental human rights and practices. Through the Commission we have also fought for vigorous investigations of grave breaches of human rights wherever they occurred and have raised our voice in defense of freedom on behalf of those whose own voices were silenced.

The Commission's membership has grown along with the membership in the United Nations as newly independent nations have joined the world bodies. However, the inclusion of countries with extremely poor human rights records, such as Sudan and Cuba, on the Commission is troubling. And it means that we will have to work even harder to promote universal standards so that one day all people can enjoy the freedom, liberty and equality we too often take for granted here at home.

We may never know why so many countries voted against us in the secret balloting. I am afraid, however, that it may reflect widespread dissatisfaction with what is perceived to be a go-it-alone attitude in foreign affairs by the new administration. Our friends and allies have reacted negatively to a number of President Bush's pronouncements and policies, including rejection of the Kyoto Climate Change Treaty, his opposition to the International Criminal Court, and his willingness to abandon the ABM Treaty before we have a workable missile defense plan in place. This vote clearly demonstrates that there can be unanticipated and damaging consequences to our actions on the world stage. The U.S. cannot take our friends for granted and must remain vigilant against the anti-U.S. efforts of our enemies.

The United States now becomes an observer on the U.N. Human Rights Commission but we can, indeed we must, remain actively engaged in defending human rights throughout the world. We have lost our vote but not our voice. The Commission will be

weaker without our membership and our leadership. But the real losers in yesterday's election were the oppressed, people in many parts of the world who desperately need the support of the United States and the United Nations to stop abuses of their basic rights and to bring the light of freedom into their lives.

I am terribly disappointed by the vote against U.S. membership on the Commission. However, we must not allow this vote to deter our efforts to promote and defend human rights around the world. Our commitment and leadership in advancing freedom, equality and justice for all people derives from the principles on which our Nation was founded and which continue to guide us today.

#### THE DISASTER TAX EXEMPT ACT

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, as those of us from our Nation's southern and eastern coastal areas know, living in the sunshine of summer can be a double-edged sword. As Floridians enjoy the best weather Mother Nature has to offer, we must not neglect preparations for the start of hurricane season on June 1, 2001. I am pleased to join my colleague from Florida, Senator NELSON, and my colleagues from Texas in introducing legislation that will help protect Florida from economic devastation as sunny days and warm water are accompanied by the potential for catastrophic disaster.

Our legislation amends section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code to grant tax-exempt status to State chartered, not-for-profit insurers serving markets in which commercial insurance is not available. In Florida, this legislation will assist the Florida Windstorm Underwriting Association, FWUA, and the Florida Residential Property and Casualty Joint Underwriting Association, JUA.

The Florida Windstorm Association was created in 1970. Twenty-two years later, in 1992, the legislature authorized the Joint Underwriting Association. These organizations operate as residual market mechanisms. They provide residential property and casualty insurance coverage for those residents who need, but are unable to procure, insurance through the voluntary market.

The JUA was created in direct response to \$16 billion in covered losses during Hurricane Andrew. The destructive force of Andrew rendered a number of property insurance companies insolvent. Other firms reacted to the catastrophe by withdrawing from the Florida market.

During those fortunate years when Florida is not hit by major hurricanes or other natural disasters, the FWUA and JUA take in more premiums than are paid out in claims and expenses. Florida law prevents those funds from being distributed so that needed reserves will accumulate in preparation for disasters we know will come in the future.

Unfortunately, the Internal Revenue Code penalizes Florida for this responsible, forward thinking practice. It requires that 35 percent of those funds be sent to Washington, as Federal income taxes rather than be used to accumulate reserves. Designating State chartered, non-profit insurers as tax-exempt entities will help Florida amass the necessary reserves to pay claims brought on by a catastrophe.

State law also authorizes the FWUA and the JUA to assess property insurance policyholders for losses generated by natural disasters. Tax exemption will reduce the frequency and severity of assessments levied against individual policyholders, because higher reserves will be available to cover losses.

Mr. President, though nearly a decade has passed, Hurricane Andrew is still a nightmarish memory for Floridians. The National Weather Service expects this hurricane season to be another active storm season. It is imperative that the Federal Government avoids the comfortable habit of ignoring lessons presented by Andrew and other recent catastrophes.

Similar legislation has been introduced in the House of Representatives and enjoys bipartisan support from Florida's congressional delegation.

Our legislation is extremely important to homeowners and businesses throughout Florida, all of whom are subject to assessment if reserves are not sufficient to pay claims in the event of a catastrophe. Florida remains sensitive to the perils of nature. Enactment of this legislation will permit our State to prepare for the next Hurricane Andrew while alleviating some of the economic hardship exacted on Florida property owners.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### VERMONT GRANITE MUSEUM

● Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, this week I had the pleasure of attending the raising of the old Jones Brothers granite shed in Barre, Vermont. This historic wooden building built in 1895 will be raised four feet off the ground for several months while a new foundation is poured and the building is secured. Once one of the largest granite manufacturing plants in the world, this building will soon be home to the Vermont Granite Museum, a tribute to one of Vermont's oldest and proudest industries. As the grandson of a stonemason I cannot think of a better way to honor this heritage than a world class museum and learning center in the heart of Vermont. I would like to share with my colleagues the comments of my fellow Vermonters, Edwin Granai and Marsha Davis, who spoke eloquently of this building, its history and what the museum will mean to our state.

I ask consent that the statements of Edwin Granai and Marcia Davis be printed in the RECORD.