

workforce. Facilities located in these areas must compete for workers and patients against hospitals in neighboring MSAs with drastically higher wage indices, even when labor and health care delivery costs are virtually identical. This situation is simply not sustainable.

And these problems are only exacerbated by our Nation's ongoing nursing shortage, and the scarcity of other skilled care givers. Health care workforce shortages are particularly acute in these areas of the Commonwealth, and they have the effect of driving up the cost of health care and precipitating the need to increase wages. And although these hospitals have taken the step of increasing wages, further reductions in the wage index will make it impossible for the hospitals to retain or recruit all the caregivers that the communities require.

Other regions near the Scranton-Wilkes Barre-Hazleton MSA, including Newburgh, Allentown and Harrisburg, continue to recruit workers from its skilled workforce.

Likewise in the Sharon MSA: All of the hospitals in the Sharon MSA compete with the Youngstown, OH, MSA for nurses, pharmacists, radiology technicians, and other allied health professionals. As Senator SPECTER had mentioned, Youngstown pays nurses \$2 to \$3 more per hour than hospitals in Sharon, yet those hospitals receive the lowest area wage index in Pennsylvania.

I have been working on this unique Medicare payment problem for more than 2 years now, seeking to enact at least a temporary reclassification of several Northeastern Pennsylvania counties into the Newburgh, NY—Pennsylvania MSA; Northumberland County into the Harrisburg-Lebanon-Carlisle MSA; and Mercer County into the Youngstown-Warren, OH, MSA. As Senator SPECTER had mentioned, there are other areas around the country where glitches such as these can be found. And what we seek to do with the submission of this legislative language is to put our colleagues on notice that we are determined to work on a bipartisan basis to bring much needed relief to our negatively affected hospitals, and to do the same for other areas around the country where these circumstances have caused similar problems and merit similar response.

I have recently spoken directly with Senate Finance Committee Ranking Member GRASSLEY about this very issue, and my strong desire to achieve a legislative fix as soon as possible. I am also a strong supporter of legislation to set the rural wage index nationally at a uniform and higher rate. However, whether or not Congress considers a national solution to this area of Medicare law is unclear, and our hospitals cannot afford to wait for a national solution that may be a year or two away.

In closing, I wish to relay to our colleagues that achieving this financial

relief for these hospitals in Pennsylvania is of utmost importance to myself and Senator SPECTER. We are willing to work with our colleagues in any way in order to bring about stability in the funding of these community health care providers and to ensure that the many Medicare beneficiaries living in the Commonwealth have access to needed care.

HONORING MONTANANS FACING THE SEPTEMBER 11TH TRAGEDY

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, some time has passed since the tragic events that took place in New York, Washington, DC, and Pennsylvania. Nevertheless, I want to reflect upon the events of that day and draw attention to the tremendous good that has evolved in the face of evil. Since that time, it has become evident that the American public is the most patriotic and resilient group the world will ever see. Those who may have been strangers are now confidants, those who were acquaintances are now considered family.

During this trying time, I want both to express my heartfelt condolences to all those directly involved in this tragedy, and to commend and honor those who have devoted their soul to working to restore tranquility and normalcy to the Nation. From firehouses to schoolhouses, from New York City to San Francisco and everywhere in between, Americans have repeatedly demonstrated their capacity for compassion.

I want to begin by addressing the families of those who lost their lives on United flight 93. I cannot begin to comfort them in their grief, but I must say that they have every reason to be extremely proud of the bravery shown by those on Flight 93. Their efforts are commended by all who stand here in Congress. As Americans, we all recognize, that we owe your family a debt that cannot be repaid.

Montanans have been deeply affected by this tragedy; they have contacted me with their grief, their hope for victory, and their desire to aid in the relief effort. Tragically, Adam Larson of Choteau, MT, was an employee of Aon Corp., located on what was the 103rd floor of the World Trade Center. In the midst of the attacks, he phoned his wife Patti and told her the building was being evacuated and he was on his way to safety. He was last seen by his co-workers following them down the stairs to exit the building, a building he never escaped. Adam Larson was 37 years old, and senior vice president for Aon. Many think that because of his outwardly giving personality, he may have stopped to help someone in need. I, along with Montanans everywhere grieve with the Larson family, pray for hope, and express our sincere support in enduring a set of circumstances that is difficult to comprehend.

In addition to grief, Montanans have also displayed the characteristic re-

solve that has defined us since our statehood. From Libby to Great Falls to Alzada, Montana has joined together to show patriotism and support for the American effort. Blood drives are going on at Malmstrom Air Force base in Great Falls, MT, as I speak today. Percentages of all sales in the town of Conrad, MT, are being designated for the relief effort.

I also want to point out the efforts of Burlington Elementary School in Billings. The motivation of one 3rd grade cub scout named Jim Rubich to raise pennies for the recovery of the WTC and the Pentagon has spun into a full scale effort on the part of many Montana elementary schools. Jim, in true Montana spirit, marched up to his teacher's desk with a bag full of pennies and demanded that an effort be enacted to raise pennies for the victims of this terrible attack. His message was heard loud and clear, and now what began as a penny drive, started by the innocent and unwavering patriotism of one little boy, is on pace to raise \$18,000. This is the next generation of American workers, soldiers, carriers of freedom, and already in their young life they are strong contributors. I think the promise that is displayed here speaks for itself. We must protect these young people so that they may pick up the torch when it is their time. We cannot and will not fail them. I pledge to Jimmy Rubich that 20 years from now, his great Nation, the United States of America, will still be the beacon of freedom that it is today.

THE WTO MEETING IN QATAR, TAIWAN'S ACCESSION TO THE WTO, AND TRADE PROMOTION AUTHORITY

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I rise to note that yesterday the WTO concluded its fourth ministerial meeting in Doha, Qatar.

Circumstances leading to this meeting were not auspicious. There is a war on, after all, and the Middle East is not the most comfortable place for the champions of globalization and progress.

With the global economic slowdown, protectionism is on the rise. Not exactly the best time to undertake talks to expand global trade.

Many of us remember that in 1999, the WTO met in Seattle in very difficult circumstances. The city was rocked by rioting, the participants failed to reach consensus, and the basic assumptions underlying international trade were left in tatters. In sharp contrast and against some tough odds, the WTO ministerial meeting was a great success.

The WTO initiated a new Round of international trade negotiations, setting forth an ambitious agenda by overcoming difficult objections from the EU, the developing world, and even those in this country who are less-than-appreciative of the importance of international trade.

I believe United States Trade Negotiator Robert Zoellick and his team deserves much of the credit for the success of Doha.

By skillfully engineering compromise where compromise did not appear possible, Ambassador Zoellick has helped to set the table for important gains to come in international trade.

Thanks to Ambassador Zoellick and President Bush's leadership on trade, the future for US agricultural exporters is brighter, prospects for improvement in the transparency of the WTO are better, and the commitment of all nations to help end the scourge of HIV/AIDS and other is more secure. The liberalization of international trade is back on track.

He and his staff were also instrumental in achieving the accessions of China and Taiwan at the Doha Ministerial Meeting.

I also want to highlight two important other achievements of the Doha Ministerial.

First, China acceded to the WTO. This culminates the more than 20 years of economic reform in that country, and, I think, places China squarely on the path toward greater political reforms. We should congratulate Ambassador Zoellick for his leadership on that score.

Finally, I want to say a special word of congratulation to the people of Taiwan for achieving WTO accession at Doha. Taiwan's membership in international organizations such as the WTO is an important recognition of her current and future contributions.

Taiwan is a critical member of the international community. The WTO, and other global institutions, are better off for Taiwan's membership.

Ambassador Zoellick and Assistant USTR Jeff Bader deserve special recognition for ensuring Taiwan's entry into the WTO over the potential objections of the other newest member of that organization.

This was a good week for international trade. I hope that the United States Congress will follow up on the successes of this week and provide the President with the authority he needs to negotiate new trade agreements.

We need to capitalize on the gains made at Doha, and Trade Promotion Authority for the President is the critical tool he needs to do just that.

I am hopeful that the House will act on a bill to provide the President TPA this session, and that the Finance Committee will have the opportunity to mark-up that bill for a vote on the floor before we leave for the holidays.

LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2001

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about hate crimes legislation I introduced with Senator KENNEDY in March of this year. The Local Law Enforcement Act of 2001 would add new categories to current hate crimes legislation sending a sig-

nal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society.

I would like to describe a terrible crime that occurred Aug. 24, 1997 in Leesburg, FL. A man allegedly punched a woman in the face because of her sexual orientation. The assailant, Kevin Earl Bilbrey, 25, was charged with aggravated battery and a hate crime.

I believe that government's first duty is to defend its citizens, to defend them against the harms that come out of hate. The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act of 2001 is now a symbol that can become substance. I believe that by passing this legislation, we can change hearts and minds as well.

DIGNA OCHOA

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I rise today to express the deep sadness and anger that I and many of my Vermont constituents feel about the senseless, cold-blooded murder of one of Mexico's most respected and courageous human rights lawyers, Digna Ochoa y Placido.

On October 20, 2001, Ms. Ochoa was shot at near point blank range in her office. At her side was a note that threatened other human rights activists who have defended environmentalists, labor leaders, or other unjustly imprisoned or tortured by the Mexican army and police. A former nun, Ms. Ochoa was a role model for all human rights defenders, because of her extraordinary courage, dedication, and commitment to some of the most disadvantaged members of Mexican society.

Ms. Ochoa frequently put the people she represented ahead of her own personal safety, and was an easy target for those who represent the worst of society, who would threaten or kill the downtrodden to protect their own crimes. She had received many death threats, and in 1999 she was kidnapped twice. During one of those abductions, her kidnappers tied her to a chair, opened a gas canister, and left her to die as the fumes slowly filled the room—from which she narrowly escaped.

Digna Ochoa's death is a tragedy for all Mexicans. But it is particularly outrageous because it could have been avoided. Although it was widely known that threats and acts of violence were being carried out against her and other members of Prodh—the human rights organization where she worked—Mexican officials failed to investigate or prosecute those crimes.

It would be hard to overstate the optimism I felt when Vicente Fox was elected Mexico's President after 70 years of misrule by the PRI. This election meant that Mexico could begin to overcome years of official corruption, police brutality, injustice and poverty suffered by the fast majority of Mexico's population.

When President Fox took office, he promised to end the long history of abuses by the Mexican army and police. No one expected miracles. No one

expected him to transform those secretive, corrupt and brutal institutions overnight. But it is the Government's first duty to protect its citizens, and people did expect him to make justice a priority, get rid of the old guard, and demand accountability.

That has not happened, at least not yet, and Digna Ochoa's death has, tragically, focused attention again on this festering problem. There are undoubtedly many others who have suffered similar fates—faceless Mexican who are not widely known, who have been threatened or murdered, or who languish in prison without access to justice.

To his credit, on November 9 President Fox ordered the release from prison of two ecologists, represented by Ms. Ochoa in the past, who never should have been imprisoned in the first place. For possessing the courage to try to stop the destruction of forests where they lived, they were arrested and allegedly tortured.

The destruction of tropical forests is an urgent problem from Indonesia to Latin America, as logging companies compete for profits until the forests are completely destroyed. Often, the militaries in these countries are directly involved in these destructive, yet lucrative, schemes, and do not hesitate to kill or frame those who get in their way because they have known only impunity.

However, besides releasing these two men, the Mexican Government has done little to respond to Ms. Ochoa's death. A truth commission to examine past human rights abuses has not been established. That is presumably because it requires challenging some of the most entrenched, powerful, and dangerous forces within Mexican society. Nevertheless, President Fox made this promise, and that is what is urgently needed.

Another troubling case is the imprisonment of Brigadier General Jose Francisco Gallardo, who was convicted of corruption based on evidence that is, at best, inconclusive. Many observers feel that the main reason he is in prison and the Mexican Government continues to oppose his release is because he spoke out about abuses in the military. President Fox must deal with this case immediately.

I am convinced that President Fox is the right leader for Mexico at this critical time, and I have confidence in him and his advisors. I do not minimize the herculean tasks they face—political, economic and social reform on a national scale. But there is no way democracy can succeed in Mexico without the rule of law. And there is no better place to start than by tracking down Digna Ochoa's killers, and bringing them to justice for all to see.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that a piece written by Digna Ochoa, about her life, which was included in Kerry Kennedy Cuomo's extraordinary book "Speak Truth To Power," be printed in the RECORD.