

combat vehicle, what used to be called the Interim Armored Vehicle, being developed at Anniston Army Depot.

The Stryker is a new generation family of highly transportable wheeled combat vehicles capable of rapidly deploying anywhere in the world. The Stryker vehicles roll onto a C-130 aircraft and roll off ready to fight anywhere and anytime including complex and urban warfare contingencies. They are lethal, survivable and will be engaged in the War on Terrorism in the months to come.

If they were available today, Stryker vehicles would be deployed in the mountains of Afghanistan and ably assisting in the elimination of al-Qaida and other enemies of this country. They would be providing ground-based firepower and protection for our soldiers on the frontlines.

The Stryker family embodies Army Transformation. It is the foundation of the Army's Interim Brigade Combat Teams that will be the spearhead of most conflicts envisioned in the next decade. The Army intends on procuring 2,131 Strykers and this Congress must do everything it can to ensure the Army is able to deliver on its promise to our soldiers.

Let me tell you, we cannot get these vehicles in the soldiers' hands fast enough. As it is, the Army and the joint venture designing and developing the Stryker family have done an incredible job delivering the initial vehicles this past February less than a year after the start of work. I believe such a rapid delivery may be unprecedented in modern times for a military program of this scope. The Army and the Joint Venture are to be commended.

In the fiscal year 2003 defense budget, the President has requested \$812 million in procurement and \$124 million in research and development for the Stryker vehicle. I hope this Congress will fully support this request and throw its support behind a program critical to our national security today and tomorrow.

The Army recently named the vehicles Stryker in honor of two fallen enlisted soldiers who died 20 years apart but shared the same name. Both won the Medal of Honor. Specialist 4th Class Robert Stryker died in Vietnam when he threw himself onto a claymore mine as it detonated thus saving the lives of his comrades nearby. Stuart Stryker died in World War II when he led a platoon into an assault on Nazi headquarters near the end of the war. Though he was killed in the raid, three members of an American bombing crew were rescued from the building.

We should not let those who serve this great Nation down. We must support ably and strongly the Stryker combat vehicle program.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I submit this statement to explain my absence today on the rollcall vote regarding the

amendment offered by my good friend from Nevada, Senator REID. Unfortunately, I am absent for medical reasons and was unable to vote today. However, I wanted to express my support for Senator REID's amendment and had I been here, my intention to vote not to table the amendment.

Senator REID's amendment just made sense. This is a debate over energy legislation and it is logical to limit Senator FEINSTEIN's amendment to energy derivatives. If this body feels there is a need to extend the provisions in Senator FEINSTEIN's amendment to metals, which I am not convinced that we need to do, then we should take that issue up at the appropriate time and in the appropriate vehicle. For that reason, I would have voted not to table Senator REID's amendment.

DAY OF SILENCE

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, students have fallen silent in schools all across the country today to bring attention to the discrimination and harassment of our gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender, GLBT, youth.

The voices that won't be heard today belong to the participants of a national project called the Day of Silence.

The Day of Silence was conceived more than 6 years ago by Maria Pulzetti, then a student at the University of Virginia, after she wrote a paper on nonviolent protest and grassroots organizing. It encourages students to take a nine-hour pledge of silence to represent the silence that GLBT students face because of harassment, discrimination and prejudice at their schools.

Since the first-ever Day of Silence at the University of Virginia in 1996, the event has grown in size each year. This year, thousands of students will be participating from more than 1,776 middle schools, high schools, colleges and universities in 49 States, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia, including at least 136 schools in my State of California. This year's effort will easily be the largest in its history.

Instead of speaking, participants of the Day of Silence will hand out cards that explain why they have chosen not to talk. The cards read:

Please understand my reasons for not speaking today. I am participating in the Day of Silence, a national youth movement protesting the silence faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and their allies. My deliberate silence echoes that silence, which is caused by harassment, prejudice, and discrimination. I believe that ending the silence is the first step toward fighting these injustices. Think about the voices you are not hearing today. What are you going to do to end the silence?

Some participants will also be wearing t-shirts that spell out why they have chosen not to speak today. Others will wear buttons or stickers. And still others will offer ribbons to those who are not ready to take a vow of complete silence but who want to show their support.

In some cases, teachers will even join the effort by taping their lessons for the day, screening movies, or writing on the blackboard instead of speaking to their classes.

In fact, students who have organized the event in the past say that the broad participation of their friends and teachers has elevated the Day of Silence from "a bunch of gay kids complaining about discrimination" to a formidable student-led movement for civil rights.

But, regardless of which participant you ask, they all agree that they can speak loudest by not saying a word. And, even though they will be silent, their message will get across loud and clear.

I would also like to give special recognition to two California students that have helped organize this year's Day of Silence:

Sumiko Braun, 17, of Carson, CA, is the California State Organizer. She is currently a senior at the California Academy of Mathematics and Science, and is also the founder and president of her school's Gay-Straight Alliance. Although the Gay-Straight Alliance has faced much adversity, the group has remained one of the most active on the school's campus.

Nikira Hernandez, 15, of Santa Cruz, CA, is one of the National Team Co-Advisors. She currently attends Santa Cruz High School, and is a member of her school's Rainbow Alliance. Before organizing Santa Cruz High School's first Day of Silence last spring, Nikira said her school's Rainbow Alliance counted about half a dozen students as members—and they weren't very motivated. Then, when more than 200 people fell silent on their behalf last year, she couldn't believe how much her life changed. She said, "Seeing how many allies we had made me feel much more accepted at my school."

I am encouraged that these two talented and dedicated young ladies have taken the initiative to help end the silence of GLBT students that, unfortunately, has become the norm in our Nation's schools. These outstanding Californians are not only giving support to other young people who are participating in the Day of Silence effort, they are helping to make their schools and their communities more accepting in the process.

The effects of today's silence will last much longer than just one day. This experience will offer students an opportunity to think about how powerful silencing can be and to focus on how they can make their own voices stronger.

Long after this day has ended, I hope students will continue to speak out against discrimination and harassment so that everyone can feel accepted at their schools, and we can overcome the forces that impose silence on our youth.