

extraordinary—milestone in the lives of two very special members of our Senate family.

On May 29, 1937—66 years and one week ago today—ROBERT CARLYLE BYRD and Erma Ora James were married.

The Senate was not in session on their actual anniversary, so I come to the floor today—one week later—to congratulate Senator and Mrs. Byrd on their remarkable achievement.

ROBERT and Erma Byrd both grew up in the hardscrabble coal country of West Virginia. They were high school sweethearts.

Of all of Senator BYRD's tremendous achievements—and there are many—I suspect the two that mean the most to him are convincing Erma James to marry him in the first place—and staying married to her all these years.

I have heard Senator BYRD say often that he could not do this job were it not for his wife's love and support. In his words: "She is not only my wife, but also my best counselor. She has been a strong pillar of support in all my endeavors."

The Byrds' marriage has brought them two wonderful daughters: Mona Byrd Fatemi and Marjorie Byrd Moore.

They have also been blessed with six grandchildren and three great-granddaughters.

After Mrs. Byrd and their family, the Senate and the Constitution, one of the things that Senator BYRD loves best—as we all know—is history—especially ancient history. So I think he may appreciate this thought from Homer:

There is nothing more admirable than two people who see eye-to-eye keeping house as man and wife, confounding their enemies, and delighting their friends.

For 66 years, ROBERT and Erma Byrd have done for more than delight their friends.

Together, they have created a full and rich life. They have raised a family. And they have served the people of West Virginia, and America, well. We wish them many more years of happiness together.

#### LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2003

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the need for hate crimes legislation. On May 1, 2003, Senator KENNEDY and I introduced the Local Law Enforcement Act, a bill that would add new categories to current hate crimes law, sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society.

I would like to describe a terrible crime that occurred on March 21, 2003. In Burbank, IL, an explosion caused by a powerful fireworks-type device damaged the 1989 Ford Econoline van of a Palestinian Muslim family and shook doors and windows of neighboring homes. The blast shattered the vehicle's windows and blew open the vehicle's door. The man who committed the crime is being held on bond and is

being charged with arson, criminal property damage, and committing 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 is a symbol that can become substance. I believe that by passing this legislation and changing current law, we can change hearts and minds as well.

#### NATIONAL HUNGER AWARENESS DAY

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, the only problem I have with National Hunger Awareness Day is that it should be every day. Across the Nation, 33 million of our fellow citizens are living in poverty and they deserve our help.

In recent weeks, Congress has been focused on giving hundreds of billions of dollars in new tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans, yet we leave the cupboard bare for millions of parents and low-income families. This week, as we debate the energy bill, we are listening carefully to the concerns of big corporations like Halliburton, Exxon, and Entergy, but not nearly carefully enough to the concerns of all those who need our help the most.

It is a national scandal and disgrace that for so many millions of Americans, hunger is an issue today and every day. Since the year 2000, poverty and unemployment have been on the rise, while wages and income continue to fall. Hardworking parents have been forced to make impossible choices between feeding their children and paying the rent and medical expenses. These are choices no parent should have to make.

No child should go hungry. But every night, 13 million children go to sleep not knowing where or when they will get their next meal. As hunger and malnutrition continue, children are more likely to be absent from school to have behavioral problems, and to have trouble learning to read or do math. They are less likely to be friends with other children or learn from their surroundings, and more likely to miss school because of illness.

Clearly, we have to move to end child hunger. This year, Congress will reauthorize the Child Nutrition Act. The Act includes important initiatives, such as school breakfasts and school lunches, and food programs for summer school, after school, and childcare.

Studies demonstrate that at-risk, school-age children depend on school-based breakfasts and lunches for more than half of their daily meals. In the reauthorization, we must work to see that every child eligible for subsidized programs actually receives these important meals. Schools must be reimbursed for the actual costs of providing nutritionally balanced meals. We also need these programs to provide additional resources, encourage nutrition

education, and to pay school employees a living wage.

We have a choice. Congress can continue to lavish more and more tax breaks on the wealthiest individuals and companies in the Nation, or we can invest in food for hungry children. The answer should be obvious to us all. We can and must ensure that no child is allowed to go hungry.

#### OKLAHOMA LOSS IN OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, over the past few months we've seen the fall of Saddam Hussein's brutal regime coupled with the dawning of a new day for the Iraqi people.

With major military combat operations in Iraq over and the security of our homeland bolstered, America and her allies are turning our efforts toward helping the Iraqi people build a free society.

Like many Americans, I was thrilled and heartened by the dramatic images of U.S. troops helping Iraqi citizens tear down statues and paintings of Saddam Hussein. The Iraqi people needed our help, our tanks, our troops, and our commitment to topple Saddam Hussein.

For the first time in their lives, many Iraqis are tasting freedom, and like people everywhere, they think it's wonderful. I'm proud of our military and America's commitment to make the people of the Middle East more free and secure.

Our military men and women surely face more difficult days in Iraq, and the Iraqi people will be tested by the responsibilities that come with freedom. The thugs who propped up the previous regime and outside forces with goals of their own will seek to cause problems, stir up trouble and initiate violence. Freedom is messy—nowhere more so than in a country that has just shaken off a brutal dictatorship.

But the journey towards a democratic Iraq has now been embarked upon. Like so many nations before it, Iraq now endures the growing pains common to a fledgling democracy. The uncertainty of today's Iraq, I am hopeful, will soon give way to the promise of a better future for the Iraqi people. And as we move closer to this goal, we must remember those who sacrificed for this noble cause.

Today, I rise to honor a man who made the ultimate sacrifice one can make for his country and the cause of freedom.

Specialist Jose A. Perez III was killed last week when his convoy was ambushed near Baghdad. Perez's convoy received fire from a rocket-propelled grenade while on a main supply route.

This San Diego, TX, native was stationed in Fort Sill. He came from a family with a proud military tradition who knows all too well the pain of losing a loved one. His uncle, Baldemar