

15,000 people contract HIV every day, the majority of them young people.

The Foreign Operations conference report provides \$800 million for an increase—a much needed increase—in the Global AIDS Program. It is a positive step in our effort to fight and defeat this pandemic. It should have been done 2 months ago. We should not have to wait another 2 months. The crisis is simply too pressing.

Unfortunately, the Republican leadership and the House Appropriations Committee would have us wait. There are a lot of controversial items in this huge omnibus, but let's be clear: The Foreign Operations conference report and the increased AIDS funding is certainly not one of them. Foreign Operations was signed by every single conferee. It was minutes from being filed. Unfortunately, some Republicans intervened and demanded that it be rolled into the larger bill.

Why? Because they wanted increased leverage on the omnibus and the controversial policy provisions, provisions that go against the will of bipartisan majorities in both Houses of Congress.

So let's be clear. The reason they insisted on this was to hold increased AIDS funding hostage to these special interest giveaways. In a season of disappointments, that is especially disappointing. So I am very deeply disappointed that by unanimous consent we could not take up a bill that had passed unanimously in conference, signed by all the conferees, recognizing that 8,000 people who die every day will not get the kind of attention, the resources, the commitment, and the response they so desperately need.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

ARMY CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER
BRIAN VAN DUSEN

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I rise to remember a native of Columbus, OH, a brave man who sacrificed his life to save another, that of a little Iraqi girl who had been severely injured in an explosion near the Tigris River. That man is Army CWO Brian Van Dusen. On May 9, 2003, Brian, age 39, and fellow soldiers, CWO Hans Gukeisen from Lead, SD, and CPL Richard Carl from King Hill, ID, were killed when their air medical helicopter crashed after that little girl had been safely carried away in a separate aircraft.

These three men were selfless. They were courageous. They understood how precious human freedom is and how precious human life is. At a memorial service for them at Fort Carson, CO, Chaplain James Ellison said: Our last act can demonstrate our life's purpose.

Indeed, Brian Van Dusen's purpose was to preserve and protect freedom for his children and his family, for us and our families, and, yes, for that little girl in Iraq and her family. He gave his last full measure of devotion so that a little girl whom he did not know, a lit-

tle girl living in a land far away from his own children, could grow up and live her life in freedom with a future filled with hope and opportunity.

Brian Van Dusen had been flying military helicopters for 19 years. He was stationed with the 571st Air Ambulance Medical Company in Fort Carson. In fact, he voluntarily deferred a post in Germany so that he would be deployed with his own company to Iraq. He chose to go to Iraq because he believed in saving lives, and he believed in what we were doing. He wanted to go.

He did, in fact, save lives. He also wanted to bring hope to the Iraqi people, especially the children. He also wanted to serve our country.

When he left for Iraq, Brian filled his duffle bag full of lollipops that he would give to the children in Iraq. Not only did he give all of those lollipops away but he wrote letters home asking his wife to send even more.

Brian Van Dusen cared. His friends and family say he had a gentle manner; that he was a family man, a loving husband to his wife Bridgette and devoted father to his younger children Angel and Joseph and to his older children Joshua and Kelly. Bridgette described him as a selfless man and a wonderful father.

From Iraq, he took the time to write home regularly to send his love and make sure Angel and Joseph were learning to ride their mini-motorcycles. "Make sure mommy takes you riding," he wrote. He loved his children and his family with all of his heart.

Brian Van Dusen also loved NASCAR and was an avid hunter. He cherished the deer hunting trips he took with his older brother David. As David so eloquently said after Brian's death:

You just can't take anything for granted. I'm going to miss him. He was a good brother and a great father. God bless him—wherever he is.

Brian Van Dusen was a man of great devotion. He was devoted to his wife. He was devoted to his children. He was devoted to our Nation. He gave of himself in every way. He served selflessly with compassion, courage, and strength. Clare Booth Luce once said that courage is the ladder on which all other virtues mount. Without question, CWO Brian Van Dusen's courage created a ladder with rungs of great virtue. He is an American hero who will live on in our hearts and minds forever.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

URGING PASSAGE OF FISCAL
YEAR 2004 OMNIBUS APPROPRIATIONS
BILL

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, yesterday the House passed the fiscal year 2004 omnibus appropriations bill by a bipartisan vote. Republicans and Democrats alike joined in adopting this bill. I had hoped today the Senate could be given the opportunity to pass

this bill which would fund a variety of programs critical to the American people and indeed the world.

That does not seem possible now, but the consequences of delay on this bill are real and the dangers are great. Many people will be affected by this delay. One of the bills included in the omnibus appropriations bill is the foreign operations budget. That measure includes increases in funds to combat the world's growing AIDS epidemic. With the support of Democrats and Republicans alike, \$2.4 billion was added to this bill to combat AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria around the world. This money would be used to buy life-giving medicines to treat people suffering with AIDS. It will help save the lives of mothers, fathers, and their children afflicted by this deadly disease of AIDS.

If they have to wait another month or two, will it make a difference? Unfortunately, the stark answer is yes.

Bono, the founder of Data, a worldwide humanitarian group, has urged us to pass this bill now. He knows better than most of us what a delay will mean to the people on the ground who wait patiently for our help. Can they wait another month or two? Probably not.

Closer to home, there are others who will suffer if this measure is delayed. Our conferees provided an increase of \$38 million to provide more AIDS drugs domestically through the AIDS drug assistance program at the Health and Human Services Department.

Our Nation's veterans will be among groups hit hardest by a delay on this bill.

Again, on a bipartisan basis, the Senate led the way in providing additional funds to make sure America's veterans will get the medical treatment they were promised. In my own State of Alaska, some veterans have had to wait months for a basic doctor's appointment. Unfortunately, the veterans in Alaska are not alone. The waiting lists for veterans around the country, from Arizona to West Virginia, North Dakota to Florida, are on the rise. As veterans return from Iraq, the demand for medical care will increase even more. Coupled with the 1 percent attrition rate for VA doctors per month—I repeat that, a 1 percent attrition rate in VA doctors per month—the waiting periods for veterans will only get longer with this delay.

Likewise, without the additional money provided in the bill, 48 community-based outpatient clinics will be in jeopardy. Since the VA is forced to operate under the lower funding level provided in the continuing resolution, those clinics cannot open. In addition, pharmacy costs are going up for our Nation's veterans. In 2003, drug costs rose by a whopping 11 percent. The VA is incurring increased demands for prescriptions every month. To cover the high cost of drugs, the VA has been forced to cut other high-priority medical programs. They are forced by this