

service to their communities, we must renew the assault weapons ban before it expires on September 13.

But there is much more that we need to do to make communities and cops safer in America. In particular, we must check the rampant gang violence that plagues our city streets and, increasingly, our suburbs and rural communities.

Gang violence used to be a local problem, demanding local solutions. But over the last 12 years, since I have been in the Senate, I have seen this problem spread from isolated neighborhoods to communities across this country.

Gangs have become more sophisticated and more violent criminal enterprises. What were once loosely-organized groups centered around dealing drugs within a particular neighborhood are now complex criminal organizations whose activities include weapons trafficking, gambling, smuggling, robbery, and, of course, homicide.

In 2002, over half of the 1,228 homicides committed in Los Angeles County were gang-related. Similarly, over half of the 499 murders committed in the city of Los Angeles during 2003 were the result of gang violence.

The reach of gangs, however, extends far beyond Southern California.

In fact, Los Angeles serves as a "source city" whose gang members migrate to other communities across the country and set up new criminal entities. One such operation, the L.A.-based 18th Street Gang, is known to have initiated gang activities all over California, in Southwest border and Pacific Northwest states, and in East Coast states including New Jersey and New York.

Today's gangs are more sophisticated, more violent, and more numerous than they were 12 years ago. And that is why we need a strong federal response.

I have introduced legislation with Senator HATCH that will give law enforcement and local communities the tools to deal with gang violence.

Our legislation: Creates new federal crimes to enable prosecutors to target violent gang members; makes changes to current law to allow for effective prosecution for violent street gang crimes; authorizes \$650 million for law enforcement and community groups for suppression, prevention, and intervention programs.

This bill gives us an opportunity to do something about the gang violence that beleaguers our communities and endangers our cops. We owe it to these fine officers who were killed so viciously to do what we can to prevent more violence by gangs.

If we fail to act on both these measures, I am sad to say that I will be back here before long telling the story of some other fine law enforcement officer who is patrolling the streets of one of our communities right now. We must do everything possible to prevent these killings from happening over and over again.

MARCH FOR WOMEN'S LIVES

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last Sunday, April 25, the March for Women's Lives took place here in Washington. Its organizers estimated that more than a million men, women, and children from more than 57 countries gathered under the banner of reproductive rights, health, and justice for all women. Participants called on Congress and the administration not only to protect the right to choose but also to protect and promote family planning, maternal and child health care, and the empowerment of women in the United States and abroad.

An op-ed by Werner Fornos, president of the Population Institute, appeared that same day in the Chicago Sun-Times. The piece was entitled "March is About More than Abortion," and it explained that the marchers' concerns went beyond the issue of abortion to include concerns about HIV/AIDS prevention, family planning, the President's imposition of a global gag rule on family planning providers, and the administration's refusal to release funds to the United Nations Population Fund to reduce the number of unintended pregnancies that can lead to abortion.

I ask unanimous consent that Mr. Fornos' article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Chicago Sun-Times, Apr. 25, 2004]

MARCH IS ABOUT MORE THAN ABORTION (By Werner Fornos)

Passing a barbershop window in Juneau, Alaska, the other day, I spotted a placard inviting locals to join a rally in Washington, D.C., today that could have significant implications for the November presidential and congressional elections.

If people from as far away as our country's northwestern-most state converge upon the nation's capital in sufficient numbers—say, a quarter of a million and upwards—it might be time for President Bush and his political guru, Karl Rove, to unbutton their collars and reach for the hyperventilation bags. The performance of the Bush administration on women's rights may be judged more by the turnout for this event than by any poll or survey.

The purpose of the March for Women's Lives is to deliver to our national leaders a strong, unequivocal message of support for reproductive health and rights and justice for all women.

There are concerns well beyond those of hard-core feminists that Bush administration policies are unduly influenced by right-wing religious zealots and the Vatican, who oppose modern contraceptives as well as abortion.

Much of this rising tide of reaction emanates from pro-choice advocates infuriated by the refusal of the White House and a Republican majority in Congress to acknowledge federal law pronouncing abortion as a matter between a woman, her conscience and her physician. But the march is about more than the termination of pregnancies.

For example, a fact sheet about condoms was removed from the National Institutes of Health Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site and replaced with a document emphasizing condom failure and the effectiveness of abstinence.

No one is suggesting that condom failure should be ignored, or that there is anything wrong with promoting abstinence. The fact remains, however, that the condom, in addition to being a method of preventing unintended pregnancy, is the most effective defense against HIV/AIDS for sexually active individuals.

In a world where 10 more people are infected with HIV every minute, where half of the 40 million people already infected are women, where HIV/AIDS is the leading cause of death among African-American women ages 25 to 34 and the seventh leading cause of death for white American women that age, it is patently inexcusable to omit the condom option from what should be the nation's most trusted source of medical information.

To explain the removal of the condom fact sheet, the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy offered the flimsy excuse that the CDC "routinely takes information off its Web site and replaces it with more up-to-date information." Updating the Web site is understandable, expunging the role of the condom in preventing HIV is simply indefensible.

If the Bush administration routinely ignores the reproductive rights and health of women in the United States, it is hardly surprising that respected international family planning nongovernmental organizations give the White House and U.S. congressional leadership low marks on their concern for poor women around the world.

Within an hour or two after taking the oath of office, President Bush signed the global gag rule, a policy to deny U.S. funds to overseas family planning organizations that provide, perform or counsel women on abortion. In the United States, this would be a flagrant violation of the First Amendment right to freedom of speech. But the Bush administration, while robustly promoting democratization worldwide, does not hesitate to penalize the world's poorest women by withholding this right from family planning providers overseas.

Then, too, the White House remains adamant in its refusal to release a \$34 million appropriation by Congress to the United Nations Population Fund, the largest multilateral provider of family planning and reproductive health services to women in more than 140 developing countries.

Ironically, the combined impact of the Bush administration's global gag rule and its refusal to release the congressional appropriation for the U.N. agency has led to thousands of abortions resulting from pregnancies to poor women worldwide who have been denied access to family planning information, education and supplies.

There is ample evidence that the availability of condoms and other medically approved family planning methods already has prevented substantially more abortions than the Bush administration's policies have, can, or could. The women who will march in Washington today understand the calculus of reproductive health and family planning denial, even if many of our national leaders do not.

Werner Fornos is president of the Population Institute and the 2003 United Nations Population laureate.

HONORING FORMATION OF GLASS CAUCUS

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, one of the many strengths of the Senate community is our diverse workforce. It is that diversity that contributes to a more informed and representative government.

The promise of our Nation lies in its promise to every one of its citizens that they will be judged by the quality of their work, the depth of their potential and the strength of their intellect and character. Anything less undermines the very principles of fairness we uphold and it diminishes not just those who are discriminated against, but the professional communities in which they live and work the Senate included.

Recently, several Senate employees announced that they have formed an informal, non-partisan group called Gays, Lesbians and Allies Senate Staff, GLASS, Caucus. The caucus is open to all Senate staff and is the first ever for gay and lesbian Senate staff and their allies. It is designed to raise awareness of issues affecting the gay and lesbian community and increase visibility; and promote the welfare and dignity of gay and lesbian Senate employees by providing a safe environment for social interaction and professional development.

The GLASS caucus held its inaugural reception last night. I was honored to attend and congratulate the members on their organization's formation. This was an historic moment for the Senate and special recognition must be given to four of the founding members of the caucus for a job well done: Mat Young, Lynden Armstrong, John Fossum and Jeffrey Levensaler.

Gay and lesbian Americans want the same civil rights that are extended to other Americans—nothing more, nothing less. We must build a community here in the Senate and across the Nation of mutual respect, tolerance, and freedom. This new staff caucus will make many valuable contributions in that regard.

I wish this group well and hope that it will prove to be a valuable addition to the Senate community.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

SMALL BUSINESS PERSONS OF THE YEAR 2004

• Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I rise today to commemorate the importance of small business as the foundation of the U.S. economy and to congratulate Michael and Michele Robuck, co-owners of the Alaska Mint based in Anchorage, AK, who today have been named the Small Business Persons of the Year for 2004 by the U.S. Small Business Administration, SBA.

According to the Small Business Development Center of Alaska, 97 percent of all businesses in Alaska are defined as small businesses. Eighty-five percent of all new jobs in Alaska are created by businesses with fewer than 20 employees. Small businesses have created the majority of the new jobs created in the last few years on a nationwide basis. So the importance of small businesses to the Nation's and to the Alaskan economies is obvious.

The President's small business agenda recognizes that the role of government is not to create wealth but to create an environment where entrepreneurial endeavors can flourish and people can directly benefit from their efforts. It is well accepted that small businesses and young business are the driving force in job creation and prosperity.

Since 1963, the President has designated a week as the National Small Business Week in recognition of the small business's contributions to the country. Next month, the White House and the Small Business Administration will join in celebrating the small business people and businesses of the year.

Today, Mike and Michelle Robuck, as co-owners of the Alaska Mint, will be named as the Alaska District Small Business of the Year 2004. They were nominated by their banker, First National Bank Alaska for this award. Congratulations to Mike and Michele Robuck.

Small business winners are evaluated in Alaska by a panel of judges convened by the Alaska District Office on a variety of criteria including: staying power, growth in employees, increase in market or sales volume, response to adversity, contributions to the community, and innovation of the products they offer.

Now let me tell you about Mike and Michele Robuck, the Alaska Mint and why they deserved to be small business persons of the year for Alaska. Alaska Mint is a second generation Alaskan business that trades in many things but most important in the commodities that made Alaska—gold, silver, and platinum. Alaska Mint designs and produces medallions, coins and jewelry. The Alaska Mint is designated as the official mint of the State of Alaska, the Alaska Railroad, the White Pass and Yukon Route, the Iditarod Trail Committee, the Yukon Quest, and the Anchorage Fur Rendezvous.

Part of the wonderful story of the Alaska Mint is its very beginning. Mike Robuck started the business as a sidewalk vending cart in downtown Anchorage in 1989. He was following in his father's foot steps that had started a small family-owned jewelry store in Anchorage in 1967. Mike learned the importance of dealing with the public and the value of tourism to Alaska. It was not long after that Mike opened a store and assemble the equipment to manufacture his coins, jewelry, and collectibles. I wish I could share with each member of the Senate an example of his creativity and artistry.

With the help of the Small Business Administration and the First National Bank Alaska, Mike and Michele Robuck expanded the business and began doing business nationwide with the help of QVC network and the internet. Last year Alaska Mint released a coin to commemorate the tragic events of September 11, 2001, that within a 24-hour period sold and raised over \$50,000 for the Red Cross.

Their success is more than just the bottom line. The Robucks often assist a variety of charities and local schools. Mike and Michele help with counseling and provide jobs for two rehabilitation programs helping people to regain their place in the community.

It took 5 years since the Robucks formally formed the Alaska Mint for the business to become truly established and successful. From a one-person operation in the mid 1980s, the business now employs 10 people full time and increases to 20 during the summer tourist season. They are now a tourist destination and a place of education about the art of their work.

When the criteria for the award of the Small Business Persons of the Year are applied to the Robucks, they meet all of the standards. They shine like the coins they make. They have shown their staying power, increased the number of employees, increased their markets and sales volume, responded to challenges, shown innovation of the products they offer, and continue to contribute to the community. Mike and Michele Robuck, as a team, exemplify the qualities, the business skills, personal character, and the spirit of Alaska that warrant their being awarded the Small Business Persons of the Year Award for 2004.●

IN RECOGNITION OF SMOKEY BEAR'S 60TH BIRTHDAY

• Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I rise today to celebrate a birthday and to pay tribute to a hero and icon from my home State a New Mexican who became the renowned symbol for the Cooperative Forest Fire Prevention program. His name is Smokey Bear.

Sixty years ago this year, Smokey Bear became the voice for the Forest Service public education campaign to save American forests. Since his creation in 1944, most Americans now quickly associate the name Smokey Bear with his mantra: "Only You Can Prevent Forest Fires."

Not many know the remarkable story of Smokey Bear or that the fire prevention program is the longest running public service advertising campaign in the history of the Ad Council. In 1950, Smokey Bear became real, sadly through an unfortunate forest fire. That spring, in Lincoln County, a little black bear cub was found clinging to the side of a charred pine tree after a forest fire swept through the mountains. After being discovered, he was briefly called "Hot Foot Teddy," but was later named Smokey Bear after the Ad Council's poster bear.

Since that late spring day, that cub became the living symbol of Smokey Bear and worked to remind Americans of the importance of outdoor fire safety. It is a message whose importance has not faded since the bear was discovered on a charred New Mexico mountain.

New Mexico, along with other Western States, has experienced devastating