

because this involves the death of a police officer, and they have to leave very soon. So I apologize to my friend. We were supposed to get the first half hour of morning business, but we understand and acknowledge the tragedy in the State of Alaska.

Mr. President, on behalf of Senator DASCHLE, I extend 5 minutes of our morning business time to Senator KOHL, 15 minutes to Senator CORZINE, and 10 minutes to Senator BOXER.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I thank the distinguished deputy minority leader. The family of our lost officer is in attendance, and I did wish to speak at this time.

#### TRIBUTE TO OFFICER JOHN WATSON

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I was deeply saddened last Christmas evening to learn that Alaska had lost a true hero. Officer John Watson, an 18-year veteran of the police force, was the Kenai Police Department's longest-serving officer. He served with distinction, earning numerous commendations and citations throughout his career. He was a dedicated public servant, taken from us in the line of duty. He will be missed by his family, friends, and the community he served.

The stories I have heard since his passing have demonstrated his strength of character and his impact on the community.

Nearly 2,000 peace officers, emergency personnel, State officials, and community members remembered Officer Watson at a service held in his honor. I think John's pastor said it best when he remembered Officer Watson as someone who "throughout his life walked the talk, protecting and serving."

Officer Watson is the first Kenai police officer to be taken from us in the line of duty. Understandably, our community has been stunned by this loss. But it is my hope we can reflect upon John's life and renew our commitment to the causes he defined and that defined him: particularly, his dedication to public service and his willingness to help his fellow citizens. That will be a most fitting tribute to the life he spent protecting others, if we remember him in that way.

I extend my deepest sympathies to John's wife Kathy, his daughter, and six stepchildren. They have been, and will continue to be, in our thoughts and prayers, and in all Alaskans' prayers, since he has passed.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Alaska.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, this evening, in a candlelight vigil at the National Law Enforcement Officers' Memorial on Judiciary Square, thousands of law enforcement officers from all corners of our Nation will

come together. Many will be accompanied by their spouses, some by their children. Law enforcement is truly a family business.

Tonight, we will come together to honor 362 heroes whose names were inscribed on that marble wall last month. These heroes are law enforcement officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty. Mr. President, 145 of those officers lost their lives just last year.

I rise this morning to pay tribute to the men and women whose names are inscribed on that wall. I rise to lend my support to their survivors and to their colleagues.

The 362 individuals we will honor tonight were each distinct individuals. Together, they represent all of the diversity that is America. Together, they shared a commitment to service that is central to the tradition of American law enforcement.

This commitment to service means spending Christmas Day in the patrol car instead of with family. It means working on your spouse's birthday, checking on the welfare of others.

The officer's name is John Patrick Watson. On Christmas Day, 2003, he went to work, leaving behind his beloved wife Kathy on her birthday, to do the job he loved, which was protecting the people of Kenai, AK. That had been his job for 18 years.

That Christmas night, answering a call for a "welfare check," Officer Watson would become the first member of the Kenai Police Department to lose his life in the line of duty.

Officer Watson was shot to death with his own weapon, allegedly by the individual on whose welfare he was checking.

The individuals who will be remembered this evening at the memorial are regarded as heroes, not for the way they died but for the way they lived. So let us not dwell on how Officer Watson lost his life but on the way he lived it.

During the memorial services in the city of Kenai, Chief Chuck Kopp recounted another call, 3 years earlier, which began with the words: "My name is Officer Watson and I am here to help."

Officer Watson was responding to aid a woman who almost died from a sleeping pill overdose. The woman, writing after Officer Watson's tragic death, stated that she did not remember much of what had occurred that night, but the peace she felt as his unshaken voice reached her is something she will never forget.

The woman whose life Officer Watson saved, ironically, never had an opportunity to thank him during his lifetime. In a letter that was read during Officer Watson's memorial service, the woman wrote:

Please know that with every breath I take, I thank you. . . . I will make every day count. Your time and energy were not wasted.

I never had the opportunity to meet Officer John Watson. It is troubling to

me that in spite of his many good works, only in death have his many contributions been recognized on the Senate floor.

So to Kathy, to John's children, and to the members of his family in Michigan, I say that John Watson's time and energy were certainly not wasted. He trained nearly every member of the Kenai Police Department. He was a pillar of the community, devoted to his church and to God, a bear of a man with a smile for everyone.

John Watson was an Alaskan by choice rather than by birth, but he will remain forever in our hearts as a true Alaskan hero. For in valor, there is hope.

I thank the Presiding Officer and yield the floor.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Wisconsin is recognized for 5 minutes under the previous order.

#### COVER THE UNINSURED WEEK

Mr. KOHL. Mr. President, today I rise to address the growing problem of the uninsured in America. This week is Cover the Uninsured Week. It is not only appropriate but necessary that we take this time to acknowledge the tragedy of American families living without health insurance, and often, as a result, without adequate health care. Solving this problem is going to take a lot more than talk; it is going to take decisive action by the Congress and, very importantly, by the administration.

The number of Americans without health insurance continues to grow. In 2002, 15 percent of our population—over 43 million Americans—were uninsured. Since the year 2000, 3.8 million more Americans have become uninsured. While Wisconsin is doing better than the national average, we still had nearly 474,000 people uninsured in 2002—almost 10 percent of our population.

More than half of the nonelderly uninsured are full-time workers or their spouses and children. It makes no sense to blame this staggering figure just on business. Good businesspeople want to provide health insurance to their employees. They know the value of a workforce that is receiving necessary preventive health care. They know the bottom-line productivity losses that occur when workers have to struggle with the costs of a serious illness in their families, and they are, in great part, family members themselves, often relying on the same insurance coverages as their employees, never wanting to see someone they work with suffer because they cannot afford adequate health care.

Businesses want to offer solid, affordable health insurance to their employees, but it is getting harder to find every year.

As premiums increase at double-digit rates every year, employers are forced to drop coverage or pass on more costs to their workers in the form of higher cost sharing, deductibles, and copays.