

work to combat global HIV/AIDS. I have traveled to Africa to see up close the devastation this international pandemic has caused, and I continue to be active on this important and urgent issue. I commend all the men and women volunteers who selflessly work to better communities around the world.

On March 1, 2005, as the Peace Corps celebrates its 44th anniversary, its work is particularly relevant to the challenges before our country and our world today. It is so important for Americans to become involved in world affairs, especially through programs such as the Peace Corps. Former Secretary of State Colin Powell and his successor Condoleezza Rice both acknowledge that Americans must make a serious investment in reaching across borders and turning around growing anti-American sentiments abroad. I am constantly impressed by Peace Corps volunteers who devote themselves to personally bridging the gap between people of our country and those beyond our borders, proving by their work our country's commitment to positive changes and mutual understanding. These volunteers amplify the effects of their service when they share their Peace Corps stories and experiences with people back home—with family and friends, in corresponding with classrooms, or in recruiting new volunteers to carry the Peace Corps mission forward.

I congratulate Peace Corps and its volunteers for 44 years of effective and admirable service, and I urge all of my colleagues to continue to work to support this unique and inspiring organization.

TRIBUTE TO THE TUSKEGEE AIRMEN

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, today, with a great sense of honor and respect, I rise to pay tribute to the Tuskegee Airmen, both for their bravery while fighting for our country's freedom in World War II and for their contributions in creating an integrated U.S. Air Force.

Like many of the heroes of World War II, these brave men left their families at home to fight overseas for the principles of freedom and democracy. Unlike most of their colleagues, these great airmen also fought an enemy of racism and prejudice at home. Thankfully, on both fronts, they were victorious. I am proud to stand today to recognize this great accomplishment, honor their service, and thank them for their dedication to racial equality in the U.S. armed services.

For decades, our military denied African Americans the opportunity to serve in leadership positions in the armed services. Although willing to serve a country that did not yet fully recognize their own civil rights, these men were systematically denied the benefit of skilled training in preparation for war. It was thought that they

lacked the qualifications for combat duty or the ability to use sophisticated equipment. In 1941, under pressure from civil rights organizations, the Army Air Force set up a training program in Alabama to experiment with training African Americans as military pilots. The training for this program took place at the Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, AL, the famous school founded by Booker T. Washington on July 4, 1881.

There was doubt among many in the military that African Americans were up to the task, but the Tuskegee Airmen proved them all wrong. Fighter pilots, navigators, bombardiers, and maintenance staffs were successfully trained to be members of the 332nd Fighter Group. The airmen were under the able command of COL Benjamin Davis, Jr., and the highly motivated group flew successful missions over Sicily, the Mediterranean, and North Africa.

By the end of the war, 992 men had graduated from the pilot training programs at Tuskegee, and 450 had seen combat overseas. The Tuskegee Airmen were awarded numerous high honors, including Distinguished Flying Crosses, Legions of Merit, Silver Stars, Purple Hearts, the Croix de Guerre, and the Red Star of Yugoslavia. In all their combat, they never lost a bomber to enemy fighters. A Distinguished Unit Citation was awarded to the 332nd Fighter Group for "outstanding performance and extraordinary heroism" in 1945. By the end of the war, the Airmen had overcome segregation and racial prejudice to become one of the most highly respected fighter groups of World War II.

We must never forget the spirit and dedication of these great patriots. Today, as our Air Force is playing such an important role in the global war on terrorism, the ideas and principles that the Tuskegee Airmen represent remain of the utmost importance. With this in mind, I stand today in support of S. Con. Res. 11, a resolution that Mr. SHELBY and I have submitted to express the sense of Congress that the U.S. Air Force should continue to honor and learn from the great example set by the Tuskegee Airmen. I ask my fellow Senators to support this resolution, and I urge the U.S. Air Force to continue to take note of this important part of its storied history.

CENTRAL INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. President, I am pleased today to recognize the success of the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association as they tip off their 60th Men's Basketball Tournament this week.

The Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association, CIAA, is an athletic conference consisting of 12 historically African-American institutions of higher education, including: Bowie State University, Elizabeth City State Univer-

sity, Fayetteville State University, Johnson C. Smith University, Livingstone College, North Carolina Central University, St. Augustine's College, St. Paul's College, Shaw University, Virginia State University, Virginia Union University and Winston-Salem State University.

Established in 1912, the CIAA is the Nation's oldest black athletic conference, rich in history and heritage. The conference is entering its 85th year of athletic competition in which they have reaped continued success and recognition on the field and the court. The CIAA is a premiere member of the National Collegiate Athletic Association, NCAA, Division II and the reputation of their athletic programs, in conjunction with the academic success of their athletes, is a proud legacy for the conference.

The CIAA basketball tournament began humbly in Washington, DC in 1946 and has grown into one of the largest, most prestigious and long-tenured sporting traditions in America, particularly in the South. Started by a group of visionaries led by legendary coach John McClendon, the tournament has come to showcase dynamic basketball that has produced the likes of past NBA stars Earl Monroe, Bobby Dandridge, Charles Oakley, Rick Mahorn and current NBA star Ronald Murray of the Seattle Supersonics. The weeklong affair draws a host of national celebrities and dignitaries for a variety of activities and events. The tournament festivities serve as a sort of homecoming for students, fans and alumni of the conference. In 2004, the tournament drew over 100,000 fans to Raleigh, NC, making it the third largest basketball tournament in the nation, regardless of division.

As a former collegiate athlete, I understand the difficulties faced by institutions of higher education in planning and supporting athletic tournaments. I congratulate the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association on its rich and sustained history of superb college athletics. The celebration of this 60th Anniversary Basketball Tournament represents a remarkable achievement for those who have worked tirelessly over the past decades to ensure its longevity. I wish the conference and its annual tournament continued success.

WILLIE McCARTER

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to take a few moments today to acknowledge the work and leadership of Willie McCarter who has served for the past 15 years as chairman of the International Fund for Ireland, IFI.

The IFI was conceived by my old friend Tip O'Neill who secured the original funding in 1986. Willie McCarter became involved with the fund in 1989 and became chairman in 1992. Under his tenure, the fund flourished and became an integral economic tool that helped bring peace and understanding in Northern Ireland.