

Second, the bill would require disclosure of gender-specific health information that is already being reported to the Federal Government. We already have many agencies that are collecting the information based on gender, but they don't disseminate or analyze the gender differences. This bill would release that information so it could be studied and important health trends in women could be detected.

Lastly, the bill would authorize the expansion of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's WISEWOMAN program. WISEWOMAN is the acronym for the Well-Integrated Screening and Evaluation For Women Across the Nation program. The WISEWOMAN program provides free heart disease and stroke screening to low-income, uninsured women. But the program currently is limited to 14 States. In the State of Alaska, we are fortunate to have two WISEWOMAN program sites, and these programs screen for high blood pressure, cholesterol, and glucose in Native Alaskan women, and they have been providing invaluable counseling on diet and exercise. One program in Alaska has successfully screened 1,437 Native Alaskan women and has provided them with culturally appropriate intervention programs that have truly produced life-saving results.

Heart disease, stroke, and other cardiovascular diseases cost Americans more than any other disease—an estimated \$403 billion in 2006, including more than \$250 billion in direct medical costs. We as a Nation can control these costs. Prevention through early detection is the most cost-effective way to combat the disease.

A few days ago we celebrated Valentine's Day, and we saw images of hearts then and we are still seeing them around now. We shouldn't forget that the heart is more than a symbol—it is a vital organ that can't be taken for granted. Coronary disease can be treated effectively, and sometimes even prevented. It does not have to be the No. 1 cause of death in women, and that is why I encourage my colleagues to support the HEART for Women Act.

COMMONSENSE GUN SAFETY LAWS SAVE LIVES

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, an analysis by the Violence Policy Center, VPC, of the most recent data available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC, revealed that the national per capita death rate from guns was 10.36 people per 100,000 in 2003. In addition, 10 States had per capita gun death rates of more than 15 gun deaths per 100,000 people. Not coincidentally, the States with the highest per capita gun death rates also have some of the most lax gun safety laws in the country. This is further evidence that commonsense gun safety laws do save lives.

Each year the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence produces a "Gun

Violence Report Card" in which it assigns individual States a grade on their gun safety laws of A through F. In its analysis, the Brady campaign evaluates State gun safety laws on factors such as: whether it is illegal for a child to possess a gun without supervision; whether it is illegal to sell a gun to a child; whether gun owners are held responsible for leaving loaded guns easily accessible to children; whether guns are required to have child-safety locks, loaded-chamber indicators and other childproof designs; whether cities and counties have authority to enact local gun safety laws; whether background checks are required at gun shows and between private parties; and, whether it is legal to carry concealed handguns in public.

When the analysis of the CDC gun death data for 2003 is compared with the Brady campaign's report card for the same year, we find that the States with the lowest rates of gun deaths also received the highest grades from the Brady campaign. In fact, four of the five States with the lowest gun death rates received an "A-," the highest grade awarded by the Brady campaign that year, and the fifth received a "B-." These five States had an average rate of 3.81 gun deaths per 100,000 people, less than half of the national average. Conversely, four of the five States with the highest rates of gun deaths received an "F," while the fifth received a "D-." These five States had an average rate of 17.9 gun deaths per 100,000 people.

According to the Brady campaign, none of the top 15 States with the highest rates of gun deaths have laws requiring background checks on guns purchased at gun shows or from private sellers. Under current Federal law, when an individual buys a firearm from a licensed dealer, there are requirements for a background check to ensure that the purchaser is not prohibited by law from purchasing or possessing a firearm. However, this is not the case for all gun purchases. For example, when an individual wants to buy a firearm from a private citizen who is not a licensed gun dealer, there is no Federal requirement that the seller ensure that the purchaser is not in a prohibited category. This creates a loophole in the Federal law, providing prohibited purchasers, including convicted criminals, with potential easy access to dangerous firearms. Fortunately, some States, including the five with the lowest rates of gun deaths, have enacted laws to help close this loophole.

Congress should work to enact national gun safety standards, including mandatory background checks on all gun sales, to help reduce the high rate of gun deaths across the country. The States who have already enacted commonsense gun safety legislation have shown that their laws make a difference and we should follow their lead.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President, Thomas Jefferson called religious freedom the "first freedom." As founder and leader over the last 3 years of the Congressional Working Group on Religious Freedom, I wanted to take this opportunity to pay tribute to this pivotal liberty. Last month, President Bush also recognized this important freedom by declaring "Religious Freedom Day," observed on January 16.

Americans are among the most religious peoples on Earth and are of many faith traditions. Nearly 80 percent of Americans state they pray regularly. Within a few blocks of this Capitol, there are churches, meeting houses, synagogues, mosques, temples, and house of worship of every variety.

The free exercise of religion is a hallmark of our Nation. It is the reason many of our ancestors came here. It is the reason we are able to live peacefully together as a religiously diverse people. Cherished by the American people as the most precious of those rights given by God, religious freedom has been given the pride of place in our Constitution, in the first clause of the first amendment of the Bill of Rights.

Freedom of thought, conscience, and religious belief, as Jefferson and the American Founders recognized, is the prerequisite for the exercise of other basic human rights. Freedom of speech, press, and assembly depend on a free conscience. No basic freedom can be secure where religious freedom is denied.

But these rights do not just belong to Americans. They are universal; they belong to every person in this world. No one, from the worst dictator to the most powerful government, can take away the right for a person to believe as he or she wishes. However, the expression of this belief is too often repressed through the imposition of persecution and death.

Since the Nazi Holocaust against the Jewish people, the principle of religious freedom has gained recognition in foreign policy. The right to religious freedom found worldwide acceptance in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to which many nations have agreed. "Everyone," the declaration asserts, "has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion." As the declaration makes explicit, "this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."

The declaration's article 18 thus provides for the acceptance of religious pluralism; the freedom to convert to another faith; the right to express unorthodox beliefs in one's individual capacity; the right, not only to worship in private or behind the walls of a building but to express one's faith in society. These are powerful concepts that challenge many societies, including at times our own.

For example, I have introduced the Workplace Religious Freedom Act, a