

I want to speak today about one such family, and I want to tell Senators how a mother from Orange County, CA, Mary Leigh Blek, chose to honor her son's memory by becoming a leader in the fight against violence.

On June 29, 1994, Mary Leigh Blek experienced every mother's nightmare—a 3 a.m. phone call from the police, telling that her beloved son Matthew had been shot and killed. Matthew Blek was walking his date home that night when three teenagers on a violent rampage shot him twice in the head.

The weapon used in that terrible crime was a junk gun, probably manufactured in southern California. Congress has prohibited the importation of these cheap, poor quality, and easily concealable firearms, but has allowed their domestic manufacture to soar unchecked.

For the past year, Mary Leigh Blek and her husband Charles have been on a crusade to stop the proliferation of these junk guns. "Silence is consent," she says, and Mary Leigh Blek has been anything but silent. She has become a tireless organizer in the anti-gun-violence movement—making speeches, attending rallies, and most recently testifying before a Committee of the California Legislature.

Mary Leigh Blek is determined to spare other mothers the pain that ripped her family apart. When I introduced the Junk Gun Violence Protection Act, a bill that would apply the same standards to domestically produced handguns as are currently applied to imports, Mary Leigh Blek was there. Once again, she told the story of how her son was slain and why these poor quality, easily concealable handguns should not be on the streets. I know it is hard for her to keep talking about this tragedy, and I admire her courage and the sense of public service that motivates her to keep up the fight.

This Mother's Day, I will think of Mary Leigh Blek. It is my hope that by next Mother's Day, the kind of gun that killed her son Matthew will no longer be out on the streets. ●

AIDS EDUCATION

● Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I rise today to commend the students and faculty at Cresskill High School in my State for proposing a weeklong focus on HIV/AIDS, from May 27 to June 2, 1996.

It's true that this is one of many spotlights that have been trained on this epidemic; and it's true that there have been many seminars and educational forums designed to inform the public about the devastation this disease causes and the medical and other support services available to sustain individuals and families living with HIV/AIDS.

But the fact is that despite statistics clearly demonstrating that AIDS is no respecter of racial, religious, ethnic, or economic lines, most people prefer to

think it can't happen to them. The idea for this particular AIDS Education Week in New Jersey came from Jessica Pomerantz, a student at Cresskill High School, a suburban school in an area where families are not faced with problems of the inner cities. Jessica felt the need to talk about this precisely because she sensed that her fellow classmates were like most people—they believed they would never be the ones to get the AIDS virus. The fact is, as she says, AIDS is an equal opportunity killer. The fact is this AIDS education week is very significant.

AIDS has become a defining facet of modern life: The 80,000 Americans reported with AIDS in 1994 alone represented one-fifth the total number of cases ever reported in the United States; AIDS infects one of every 92 young American men ages 27 to 39; it's the leading cause of death among all 25-44 year olds and the fourth leading cause of death among all women.

In New Jersey, some 50,000 people are infected with the HIV virus. We're fifth in the United States in reported AIDS cases, third in pediatric AIDS cases. Women represent 26 percent of all reported AIDS cases in New Jersey, the highest proportion of women with AIDS in the entire country. And women are the fastest-growing group of people with HIV/AIDS.

Last December, the eighth observance of World AIDS' Day took as its theme, "Shared Rights, Shared Responsibilities." Jessica and her fellow students at Cresskill High School have taken that message to heart. They understand the stake they have in this fight. They know they shouldn't and they cannot ignore it for the sake of their own future and the future of generations all over the world. "We must protect our future," they say, "by taking responsibility for our actions if we are to accomplish our goals."

Mr. President, I'm tremendously proud of these young people from New Jersey. I ask my colleagues to join me today in wishing them continued success. ●

MEDICARE REIMBURSEMENTS FOR TREATMENT OF SOME MEDICARE-ELIGIBLE VETERANS

● Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I'm pleased and honored to announce my intention to introduce legislation in the coming days which I believe will demonstrate the cost effectiveness and feasibility of Medicare reimbursement to the Department of Veterans Affairs [VA] for treatment of some medicare-eligible veterans at VA health care facilities.

There are two very important reasons I intend to introduce and press for passage of this legislation which I would like to briefly outline. First, reforming veterans' health care is one of my top priorities. I strongly believe that if we don't reform the archaic and arcane rules governing veterans access to VA medical care, it will be impos-

sible for the VA to provide America's veterans with 21st Century health care. To accomplish this, the VA must be authorized to receive Medicare reimbursements for treatment of some Medicare-eligible veterans. Two different proposals prepared by major veterans service organizations (VSO's) provide that the VA be authorized to receive Medicare reimbursement for treating Medicare-eligible veterans. The GAO, however, has questioned both the feasibility and cost of providing Medicare reimbursement to the VA. While I lean toward the VSO's view that Medicare reimbursement would be both feasible and cost-effective, the only way to prove this is by means of a demonstration project that will determine both the feasibility and cost effectiveness of Medicare subvention. That is precisely what my legislation will authorize.

Second, I believe that because the VA is facing and will likely continue to face severe funding constraints that will reduce its capabilities to provide access to quality health care, the VA will be under strong pressures to deny health care to Medicare-eligible veterans who are not in the mandatory category for outpatient or inpatient treatment. For many years VA medical costs have lagged behind medical cost inflation and under the budget resolution adopted by Congress last year the VA medical care budget would be frozen for 7 years, lagging behind overall inflation and probably even further behind medical cost inflation. As a consequence, the VA may be compelled to ration care, with veterans 65 and over one of the groups likely to be affected. Even before the VA was faced with a flat health care budget, many of its facilities were compelled to resort to rationing. Despite the bold and imaginative efforts of Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jesse Brown and his Under Secretary for Health Ken Kizer to modernize, streamline and decentralize VA health care, a flat VA health care budget for 7 years can only lead to more extensive rationing of health care for veterans. This will further fray our solemn contract with the men and women who selflessly defended our country.

Mr. President, the bill I am planning to introduce is intended to ensure that our aging veterans population is not denied access to VA health care at a time when they need it most. Improving and safeguarding health care for our country's veterans should be a priority issue for my colleagues on both sides of the aisle. I hope all of my colleagues will carefully review my bill after it is introduced and will carefully consider supporting it. ●

ORDERS FOR MONDAY, MAY 13, 1996

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today it stand adjournment until 12 noon on Monday,

May 13; further, that immediately following the prayer the Journal of proceedings be deemed approved to date, that no resolutions come over under the rule, that the call of the calendar be dispensed with, the morning hour be deemed to have expired, and there then be a period of morning business until the hour of 3:30 p.m. with Senators allowed to speak for up to 5 minutes each.

I further ask that Senator DASCHLE, or his designee, be in control of the time between 12:30 and 2 p.m., and that Senator COVERDELL, or his designee, be in the control of the time between the hours of 2, and 3:30 p.m.; and, further, that immediately following morning business the Senate resume consideration of H.R. 2937, the White House Travel Office legislation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PROGRAM

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, the Senate will resume consideration of the White House Travel Office bill and the pending gas tax repeal issue on Monday.

There will be no further votes during today's session. The Senate will not be in session on Friday of this week, and no rollcall votes will occur during Monday's session of the Senate, although the Senate will be in session on Monday.

Senators are expected to debate the gas tax repeal issue throughout the day on Monday. And, as a reminder, a cloture motion was filed on the pending amendment.

And, therefore, I ask unanimous consent that the cloture vote occur on the Dole amendment at 2:15 p.m. on Tuesday, May 14, and the mandatory quorum under rule XXII be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I now ask that the Senate stand in adjournment under the previous order following the remarks of the distinguished Senator from Massachusetts.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I thank the Senator for permitting us to address the Senate for just a few moments at this time.

ACTIONS OF THE SENATE

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I wanted to just correct the record with regard to the suggestion of the Senator from Mississippi about actions that were taken by those of us who favor having an up-or-down vote on the minimum wage and the action that was necessary to try to keep the issue of

the minimum wage before the U.S. Senate because, as the record shows very clearly, we have demonstrated a majority support for increasing the minimum wage as an amendment on legislation earlier this year, and at the time that the Senate voted by 55 votes, Republicans and Democrats, to increase the minimum wage. Our Republican majority leader made a motion to recommit the pending legislation, sending it back to the committee and having it returned to the floor without that amendment that was pending which would have effectively denied us any further debate or discussion of the minimum wage. And, before that action was processed, I filed a cloture motion on the minimum wage to at least assure that the Senate would have an opportunity to vote on the minimum wage issue and which we have been denied the opportunity to do.

The Senator from Mississippi can continue to talk about the various procedures, processes, and actions that can be used by the Republican leadership to avoid this institution taking a vote up or down on the minimum wage, which they have been successful in doing. But I do not think there is an American today that does not understand that it has been the Republican leadership position in the House of Representatives and the Senate of the United States that is frustrating the overwhelming sentiment of the people of this country—in all regions of the country and among all ages of the country—that believe that fairness and decency ought to permit the Senate of the United States and the House of Representatives to vote on a modest increase for those men and women who work 40 hours a week, 52 weeks of the year, to try to provide for themselves and their families.

That is not favored by the majority leadership. That is opposed by the Republican leadership, and the Senator from Mississippi, as outlined earlier, which may be of interest to I do not know who at this hour of the day here in the Senate, about various procedures that are utilized to deny us that opportunity. But I can tell you that there are families that are gathered around the kitchen table at this moment at 6:30 at night, and there are the mothers of children that are gathered there at the kitchen table at this very moment that are wondering how they are going to pay the utility bill, or the emergency room bill, or the rent, or food on the table, or the clothing for their children. That is happening now. And, if they could afford a television and watch what is happening on the floor of the U.S. Senate, they have to ask, "Why? Why is the Republican leadership demanding or forbidding the opportunity to have an up-or-down vote on this measure one more day, one more day?"

They denied it yesterday, denied it the day before, denied it the day before that, denied it last week, and denied it

in the weeks before, in spite of the fact that the majority leader has voted for an increase in the minimum wage four times, voted against it eight times, but voted for it on four different occasions, and in spite of the fact that Republican Presidents Eisenhower, Bush, and Nixon have all supported an increase in the minimum wage. So, it is an interesting perhaps story about the procedural steps which have been taken by various Senators to deny an increase in the minimum wage.

But, Mr. President, there is no doubt in the minds of the American people about what is taking place here in the U.S. Senate; Republican leadership denying working families on the bottom rung of the economic ladder the opportunity to have a living wage, a living wage for themselves and for their families, and that is wrong. No parliamentary procedure is going to change that fundamental fact.

Now, Mr. President, in recent days a number of commentators have pointed out that the Senate seems to be in the doldrums, "D-o-l-e-d-r-u-m-s." I believe the normal spelling leaves out the "e"—d-o-l-d-r-u-m-s. I thought it might be worth listening to some of the dictionary definitions for that word.

The Random House Dictionary of the English Language defines it this way:

A state of inactivity or stagnation;
A belt of calms and light baffling winds;

Or, three:

A dull, listless, depressed move; low spirits.

The Oxford English Dictionary refers to the doldrums this way:

A vessel almost becalmed, her sails flapping about in every direction.

It goes on to call it:

A region of unbearable calm broken occasionally by violent squalls.

The American Heritage Dictionary defines it this way:

Ocean regions near the equator characterized by calms, or light winds, and the calms characteristic of;

Or, second:

The calms characteristic of these areas;

Or, third:

A period of inactivity, listlessness, or depression probably influenced in form by the word "tantrum."

That seems to fit the Senate precisely. First our Republican friends have a tantrum over the Democratic efforts to raise the minimum wage. Then our Republican friends go into the doldrums.

The American people look to the Congress for action on the minimum wage, and all they see are cloture motions, quorum calls, and procedural gymnastics to avoid taking action.

I say end the gridlock, end the deadlock, end the doldrums. The way for Senator DOLE to find his way out of the doldrums is clear: Raise the minimum wage.

Finally, Mr. President, on one other matter that was raised by my friend from Mississippi about cloture motions; and there will be those that will