

Program to reserve a portion of their R&D funds for award to small business. Such agencies include the Department of Agriculture, Department of Commerce, Department of Defense, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and National Science Foundation.

Following submission of proposals, agencies make SBIR awards based on small business qualification, degree of innovation, technical merit, and future market potential. Small businesses that receive awards or grants then begin a three-phase program. Phase I is the startup phase, awarding up to \$100,000 for approximately 6 months support exploration of the technical merit or feasibility of an idea or technology. Phase II awards of up to \$750,000, for as many as 2 years, expanding Phase I results. During this time, the R&D work is performed and the developer evaluates commercialization potential. Only Phase I award winners are considered for Phase II. Phase III is the period during which Phase II innovation moves from the laboratory into the marketplace. The small business must find funding in the private sector or other non-SBIR federal agency funding.

In 1997, Senator BURNS and I cosponsored legislation and Congress established the SBIR Rural Outreach Program to increase the SBIR participation of small businesses located in the states that receive the fewest SBIR awards. The program is limited to funding activities which encourage small firms in those states to participate in the SBIR Rural Outreach Program. The Outreach Program is targeted toward the 25 under-represented jurisdictions in the SBIR program in an effort to provide a secure funding mechanism to states so that they could develop an effective five-year effort to assist small businesses to take advantage of the SBIR program.

As you may know, western small businesses have some special impediments to overcome. The SBIR Rural Outreach Program provides an excellent funding opportunity for individuals and small businesses that have a passion to explore, develop and commercialize their innovative ideas. This is especially true in rural states like Wyoming. The Wyoming small business community is one of the cornerstones of our state's economy. Wyoming is the smallest state, with a large number of small businesses. The SBIR Rural Outreach Program is one way for Wyoming's small businesses to access federal funding.

Rural states need technology-based businesses that the SBIR program nurtures. The SBIR Rural Outreach Program is one of the few opportunities for Wyoming's small businesses to access federal R&D funding. I believe more innovative and aggressive approaches are needed to help rural states achieve greater participation in this, especially at those agencies that have proved difficult for small businesses to access.

There are several outreach activities that have been effective in helping small businesses in rural states compete successfully in the SBIR Rural Outreach Program. For example, the Wyoming SBIR Initiative outreach efforts have led to substantial gains in both the number of proposals submitted, the quality of proposals submitted, and the number selected for award. For example, Wyoming received one Phase I award in 1994. Wyoming, however, received 8 Phase I awards by 1995 and has received a total of 43 Phase I awards by 2000. To date, Wyoming has received approximately \$9 million since 1987 for both Phase I and II awards, but there is still more that should be done to assist small businesses in the West.

I want to share the dramatic impact that SBIR awards have made on one Wyoming company—Wyoming Sawmills, Incorporated. The company's first Phase I SBIR award was from U.S. Department of Agriculture in May 1997, and it won the follow-on Phase II program in September 1998. The project aims to convert low-grade lumber into construction quality lumber through an innovative laminating technique. Wyoming Sawmills will begin commercial sales of the new product in 1999, and it already has captured related R&D funding based on this SBIR project. In January 1999, the company won a National Science Foundation Phase I award on another laminated wood product concept.

Another success story is CC Technology. CC Technology, a Laramie-based small business, has been notified of a \$400,000 SBIR Phase II grant award from the National Science Foundation, NSF. During Phase I, the business did research on measuring cyanide levels in gold mining leach pads. For Phase II, a team consisting of CC Technology, Detection Limit, and Aspect Consultant Group has been built to monitor cyanide at both the mining solution levels and at trace levels for environmental compliance.

I want to express a special thank you to Chris Busch, from Senator BURNS' home state of Montana and who coordinated SBIR efforts in Wyoming for the past five years. Chris Busch did a remarkable job working with people in Wyoming to raise the awareness and participation of small businesses in the SBIR program. Working with small businesses, public organizations, and others in Wyoming and nationwide, Chris got people involved, helped them through the grant management process, and guided them in market development and commercialization. His commitment to small business development has created a network of people in Wyoming that is excited and knowledgeable about SBIR. Chris has helped to plant the seeds of economic diversity in communities that really need it. Chris' activities and commitment of this program are making SBIR work.

In closing, SBIR programs work for small businesses in rural states, espe-

cially Wyoming. Fortunately, we have several dedicated westerners in the Congress who have committed their time and legislative efforts to expand the successes of SBIR to all parts of the country. It is my hope that my colleagues will see the importance of this particular government program that is truly assisting small businesses nationwide. I look forward to continued bipartisan efforts to benefit our nation's small businesses by strongly supporting the SBIR Rural Outreach Program.

REAUTHORIZATION OF THE STATE AGRICULTURAL MEDIATION PROGRAM

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr President, I rise today to applaud Senate adoption of legislation I introduced to re-authorize and expand a popular program which provides mediation services between agricultural producers and the various credit and United States Department of Agriculture agencies who family farmers and ranchers work with to maintain their farming and ranching operations.

On June 15, 2000, I introduced S. 2741, legislation to re-authorize, expand, and clarify the state agricultural mediation program. Nine Senators cosponsored this legislation, including Senators DASCHLE, ROBERTS, CONRAD, GRASSLEY, KERREY, CRAIG, HARKIN, DORGAN, and LEVIN. I thank these colleagues for their bipartisan support for my bill, which was included as part of the Grain Standards Act adopted by the Senate earlier this week.

Extension of this mediation program was adopted with wide bipartisan support in the Senate as part of the Grain Standards Act Reauthorization. The present state agricultural mediation law was set to expire this year, but our reauthorization extends it through 2005.

This step was significant because family farmers and ranchers in my state of South Dakota and all across this country continue to suffer from a depressed rural economy and rock-bottom commodity prices. Agriculture is the backbone of our economy, and we must not fail to provide support to our family farmers and ranchers who are coping with these difficult times.

During the 1980's farm crisis, Congress approved federal funds and participation in a state-by-state operated farm mediation program. Authorized in the Agricultural Credit Act of 1987, this mediation program helps farmers and ranchers, and their creditors, in resolving credit disputes in a confidential and non-adversarial setting, which is outside the traditional process of litigation, appeals, bankruptcy, and foreclosure. The mediators are neutral facilitators and they do not make decisions for the disputing parties.

Each year Congress provides funding for state mediation, and these funds are matched with state funds to carry out the mediation program. Currently,

twenty-five states participate in this mediation program, including Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, New Jersey, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

I am pleased we were able to clarify and expand the scope of mediation in this reauthorization. With the support and direction of the Coalition of Agricultural Mediation Programs (CAMP), mediation now clearly can aim to resolve disputes such as wetland determinations, grazing issues, and USDA farm program matters, in addition to the traditional credit role of mediation. CAMP represents the individuals and entities across the nation who administer the state agricultural mediation programs, and I thank that organization for their leadership on this issue.

I want to specifically offer my thanks and gratitude to Linda Hodgin, Director of Mediation and Ag Counseling, with the South Dakota Department of Agriculture. Linda's knowledge, input, and ability to work with CAMP enabled Congress to enact the mediation reauthorization this year. Under her direction in the last two years, around 500 family farmers and ranchers in South Dakota have benefitted from the services of mediation and counseling. The mediators and counselors who work with Linda in South Dakota are to be commended for their time and commitment to family farm agriculture.

We live in a day and age where nearly every farmer and rancher must secure financing from some source in order to take care of production costs associated with agricultural production. This mediation program allows agricultural producers to settle their credit and farm program disputes in a fair way without digging themselves into legal debt. I wish to thank my colleagues who supported this important initiative.

VICTIMS OF GUN VIOLENCE

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, it has been more than a year since the Columbine tragedy, but still this Republican Congress refuses to act on sensible gun legislation.

Since Columbine, thousands of Americans have been killed by gunfire. Until we act, Democrats in the Senate will read the names of some of those who have lost their lives to gun violence in the past year, and we will continue to do so every day that the Senate is in session.

In the name of those who died, we will continue this fight. Following are the names of some of the people who were killed by gunfire one year ago today.

October 26, 1999:

Manuel Guilarte, 78, Miami-Dade County, FL;

Damien McFarland, 25, Gary, IN; Willie B. Nelson, 47, Atlanta, GA; Sarah Petty, 49, Atlanta, GA; Brett Pleasants, 39, Denver, CO; Brenda Ray, 31, Atlanta, GA; Tony B. Richards, 32, Memphis, TN; Fernando Rodriguez, 25, Detroit, MI; Comer Sistrunk, Jr., 61, Cincinnati, OH;

Ronald Turchi, 61, Philadelphia, PA; Tony Unk, Houston, TX; Michael Washington, 16, Baltimore, MD; and

Deric West, 18, Oakland, CA.

One of the victims of gun violence I mentioned, 31-year-old Brenda Ray of Atlanta, was shot and killed one year ago today while walking home from her sister's house with her two children. A stranger approached Brenda, robbed her, then shot her in the chest while her six-year-old son and five-year-old daughter stood by watching.

We cannot sit back and allow such senseless gun violence to continue. The deaths of these people are a reminder to all of us that we need to enact sensible gun legislation now.

PASSAGE OF S. 3164

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I am pleased that the "Protecting Seniors from Fraud Act" passed the Senate. I was an original cosponsor of this bill, S. 3164, which Senator BAYH introduced on October 5, 2000, with Senators GRAMS and CLELAND. I have been concerned for some time that even as the general crime rate has been declining steadily over the past eight years, the rate of crime against the elderly has remained unchanged. That is why I introduced the Seniors Safety Act, S. 751, with Senators DASCHLE, KENNEDY, and TORRICELLI over a year ago.

The Protecting Seniors from Fraud Act includes one of the titles from the Seniors Safety Act. This title does two things. First, it instructs the Attorney General to conduct a study relating to crimes against seniors, so that we can develop a coherent strategy to prevent and properly punish such crimes. Second, it mandates the inclusion of seniors in the National Crime Victimization Study. Both of these are important steps, and they should be made law.

The Protecting Seniors from Fraud Act also includes important proposals for addressing the problem of crimes against the elderly, especially fraud crimes. In addition to the provisions described above, this bill authorizes the Secretary of Health and Human Services to make grants to establish local programs to prevent fraud against seniors and educate them about the risk of fraud, as well as to provide information about telemarketing and sweepstakes fraud to seniors, both directly and through State Attorneys General. These are two common-sense provisions that will help seniors protect themselves against crime.

I hope that we can also take the time to consider the rest of the Seniors

Safety Act, and enact even more comprehensive protections for our seniors. The Seniors Safety Act offers a comprehensive approach that would increase law enforcement's ability to battle telemarketing, pension, and health care fraud, as well as to police nursing homes with a record of mistreating their residents. The Justice Department has said that the Seniors Safety Act would "be of assistance in a number of ways." I have urged the Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee to hold hearings on the Seniors Safety Act as long ago as October 1999, and again this past February, but my requests have not been granted. Now, as the session is coming to a close, we are out of time for hearings on this important and comprehensive proposal and significant parts of the Seniors Safety Act remain pending in the Senate Judiciary Committee as part of the unfinished business of this Congress.

Let me briefly summarize the parts of the Seniors Safety Act that the majority in the Congress declined to consider. First, the Seniors Safety Act provides additional protections to nursing home residents. Nursing homes provide an important service for our seniors—indeed, more than 40 percent of Americans turning 65 this year will need nursing home care at some point in their lives. Many nursing homes do a wonderful job with a very difficult task—this legislation simply looks to protect seniors and their families by isolating the bad providers in operation. It does this by giving federal law enforcement the authority to investigate and prosecute operators of those nursing homes that engage in a pattern of health and safety violations. This authority is all the more important given the study prepared by the Department of Health and Human Services and reported this summer in the New York Times showing that 54 percent of American nursing homes fail to meet the Department's "proposed minimum standard" for patient care. The study also showed that 92 percent of nursing homes have less staff than necessary to provide optimal care.

Second, the Seniors Safety Act helps protect seniors from telemarketing fraud, which costs billions of dollars every year. This legislation would give the Attorney General the authority to block or terminate telephone service where that service is being used to defraud seniors. If someone takes your money at gunpoint, the law says we can take away their gun. If someone uses their phone to take away your money, the law should allow us to protect other victims by taking their phone away. In addition, this proposal would establish a Better Business Bureau-style clearinghouse that would keep track of complaints made about telemarketing companies. With a simple phone call, seniors could find out whether the company trying to sell to them over the phone or over the Internet has been the subject of complaints