

well. It may be because my grandfather, my great-grandfather, and my great-great-grandfather were all sheriffs of Ouachita County.

Hot Spring Sheriff Ron Ball told me that in his county the COPS Program has enabled him to direct more time and resources to curbing domestic violence.

He knows that if his department doesn't do a better job of protecting the abused, they have nowhere else to turn.

And these law enforcement officers all know and have all told me that if we let these drastic COPS funding cuts stand, rural America will suffer.

The list of law enforcement officials opposed to these cuts is long, but the opposition is not only limited to law enforcement. There are many mayors, community activists, and school administrators who also realize the importance of this program; school administrators like Dr. Benny Gooden.

Dr. Gooden is the superintendent of schools in Fort Smith, AR. He oversees 26 schools with 12,500 students. Dr. Gooden knows how successful the COPS in Schools program has been. He knows that COPS is an asset to this community and to his schools. The presence of friendly, approachable police officers, known as School Resource Officers, on their campuses and in their neighborhoods has had a calming effect on Fort Smith schools.

Since the implementation of the COPS program in Fort Smith schools, Dr. Gooden has witnessed a decline in violent incidents. Over the past few years suspensions have decreased by 65 percent. Expulsions have been reduced by 80 percent. The drop-out rate has been cut in half.

When talking about the positive effect of the COPS in Schools program, Dr. Gooden calls it a powerful relationship; a win-win for both the schools and the community. Because the police officers are in the community and in the schools and are connected to the students and their families, officers can better identify and proactively defuse any potential problems there may be.

Often times problems that are found in schools begin in the neighborhood and in the home. Police officers in Fort Smith recognize this and are in a better position to resolve such problems.

Dr. Gooden has also witnessed, firsthand, the affirmative impact of this program on a child's educational experience. The officers interact with students. Some officers have offices in the schools. They are invited to school activities. These officers do not just show up when there is trouble, they are positive role models for Fort Smith's children and are involved in their lives. They spend time with students and in the community when there is no trouble and that presence, can make all the difference.

These positive results are not limited to Fort Smith nor are they only appreciated by the administrators. As Ar-

kansas Attorney General, I spent a lot of time in schools talking to our young people, and move importantly listening. Over and over the students told me how much they liked having School Resource Officers on campus. It made them feel safer, it provided a needed role model and it oftentimes provided an adult they could talk to. It showed our children that their community cared about them and gave them a much better perspective on law enforcement.

We must also not forget the importance of these police officers as an integral part of our homeland defense and as first responders in the case of terrorist attacks. September 11 changed a lot of things for our country. It woke us to the need of genuine partnerships that involve all segments of our communities, and all levels of government. We all have a role in keeping our community safe, and overall when we talk about homeland security, we need to give serious thought to our law enforcement needs.

Unfortunately, we saw how September 11 strained the resources, and the budgets, of many towns and cities. The administration's law enforcement budget does not help that problem. Our civilian authorities must be able to respond to whatever may confront them in the future, but how can they properly respond, when they are given a budget that cuts deep into their existence? The irony is that I have heard Secretary Ridge speak many times about how important local law enforcement agencies are to homeland security, but at the very moment when our Nation needs them most, we are drastically cutting assistance to them.

The Federal Government must ensure that local governments are given the resources to complete their task and that we share the responsibilities for homeland security wisely and fairly. I know that Democrats and Republicans alike agree with this. I know Secretary Ridge agrees with this. I know that President Bush agrees with this.

President Bush said on February 20 regarding the 2003 omnibus appropriations that he was concerned that the Congress had failed to provide over \$1 billion in funds for State and local law enforcement and emergency personnel. He went on to lament that the shortfall for homeland security first responder programs was more than \$2.2 billion.

For the record, I share President Bush's concern, but shortchanging our local law enforcement efforts by underfunding the critical, popular and effective COPS program is not the answer. I take a line from Chief Taft of the Malvern Police Department put it best when he said: "Doing away with the COPS Program, when we are so concerned with homeland security is the wrong thing to do." I could not agree more.

Much is made of the word "hero." Before September 11, to pick up a maga-

zine or to put on the television, hero was synonymous with professional athletes, movie stars, or musicians. But September 11 reminded us that real heroes are right in our own backyard. While everyone was rushing out of the World Trade Center, EMT, firefighters and police officers were rushing in. That is the definition of "hero."

Local law enforcement officers protect our communities, our homes and our families from the threat of violent crime. Simply put, they stand up for justice. I believe we must do more to stand up for them. They need funding to do their jobs properly and deliver the same quality service that our citizens expect and deserve, whether they live in New York City, or Des Arc, AR.

During the upcoming budget debate, I will support increasing funding for the COPS program and other law enforcement programs. I would urge my colleagues to do the same. I also plan to be a proud co-sponsor of Senator JOE BIDEN's legislation to reauthorize the COPS program.

We need to build on what we know works and develop initiatives that respond to the law enforcement needs of our communities. The COPS program works and deserves adequate funding. These communities who benefit from this program deserve it as well.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GRAMHAM of South Carolina). The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I rise to congratulate the Senator from Arkansas on what I believe is his first speech on the floor of the Senate since his election. It is a privilege to serve with him, the Senator from South Carolina, and the Senator from New Hampshire in the new class of Senators in the 108th Congress.

It is appropriate that the Senator would choose for his subject law enforcement because of his distinguished career as the chief law enforcement officer of Arkansas and having had members of the law enforcement community in his family for many years. He comes to the floor with a record of distinguished service from a distinguished family whose father is a close friend of many who have served in the Senate with distinction for many years.

My colleagues and I congratulate him on his first speech. We look forward to many years of service with him.

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I thank the distinguished Senator from Tennessee for his kind words and express to him once again, as I have done privately and personally, I look forward to working with him on the issues that are so important to him, whether they be education or whatever they may be. It is an honor to serve with him.

LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2001

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the need for hate

crimes legislation. In the last Congress Senator KENNEDY and I introduced the Local Law Enforcement Act, a bill that would add new categories to current hate crimes law, sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society.

I would like to describe a terrible crime that occurred July 6, 2001 in Grand Junction, CO. Eric Valdez, 19, was stabbed to death by Sjon Elmgreen, 19, after leaving a grocery store. The incident began when Elmgreen's fiancée called him to say that two Hispanic teens had just been flirting with her at the grocery store. She later told police that the teens had not been rude or threatening in the store. Nonetheless, Elmgreen and his roommate walked from their home to confront the teens. Elmgreen's fiancée told police that the confrontation turned into a fist fight, during which Elmgreen yelled racial epithets. After the fight, Elmgreen stabbed Valdez.

I believe that government's first duty is to defend its citizens, to defend them against the harms that come out of hate. The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act is a symbol that can become substance. I believe that by passing this legislation and changing current law, we can change hearts and minds as well.

DISCHARGE OF GAY LINGUISTS FROM THE MILITARY

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I wish to speak on the military's recent discharge of several linguists who are critically needed in our Nation's fight against terrorism but who, in the military's eyes, are unfit for the job because of their sexual orientation. The military's treatment of these individuals is not only a grave injustice to these talented men and women who have bravely volunteered to defend our Nation, but it poses a serious threat to our Nation's preparedness.

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, our Nation's security agencies and all branches of the military recognized that they must increase the recruitment and training of linguists who can speak and interpret languages such as Arabic, Farsi, Korean, Mandarin Chinese, and Russian. Understanding these languages is critical to ensuring our Nation's security. Those who are able to communicate in these languages can translate communications that may be made by terrorists or others intent on doing us harm. In fact, a large portion of the intelligence information retrieved by the U.S. security agencies currently cannot be translated, hindering the ability of the Federal Government to protect our country.

According to a study released by the U.S. General Accounting Office in January 2002, the Army is facing a serious shortfall of linguists in five of the six languages it categorizes as most critical—Arabic, Korean, Mandarin Chinese, Farsi, and Russian. The Army has

met only 50 percent of its need for linguists who speak Arabic, 63 percent of its need for Korean speakers, 62 percent of its need for Mandarin Chinese speakers, 32 percent of its need for Farsi speakers, and 63 percent of its need for Russian speakers. This leads to a 44 percent total shortfall in translators and interpreters for 5 of the 6 critical languages. Furthermore, the Army only has 75 percent of the cryptology linguists needed who speak Korean and Mandarin Chinese, and has a 13 percent shortfall of Army Human Intelligence Collectors in five of the languages found to be of critical importance. Spanish is the only language for which the Army has met its linguist needs.

Although the military faces a crisis in the linguistics field, linguists with a high level of proficiency in languages determined critical by the military and security agencies have continued to be discharged from the Armed Forces simply because they are gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

In 1993, the military instituted a plan known as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue, Don't Harass," known more commonly as the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. The basic premise of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy is that, while military leaders know that gays, lesbians, and bisexuals have always played an important part in America's military, homosexual members of the military are not allowed to be asked about or to tell anyone about their sexual orientation. Furthermore, the Department of Defense generally cannot conduct investigations regarding the sexual orientation of service members, and the Armed Forces has a policy that does not tolerate harassment of anyone based on perceived or actual homosexuality.

The "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy has been, by most accounts, a failure. Homosexual military personnel continue to be harassed within all the branches of the Armed Forces. In fact, according to the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, SDLN, an advocacy organization dedicated to aiding gay, lesbian, and bisexual service members who face discrimination in the armed services, in 2001 the armed services fired more than 1,250 gay, lesbian, and bisexual Americans B more than any other year since 1987. Furthermore, since the initiation of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, more than 7,800 American service members have lost their jobs because of anti-gay sentiment.

Not only does the "Don't Ask Don't Tell" policy needlessly discriminate against courageous Americans, it also wastes millions in taxpayer dollars. For example, according to SLDN, the government spent \$36 million to replace gays, lesbians, and bisexuals who were discharged from the military in 2001. Even more staggering is the fact that the government has spent over \$234 million to train replacements for homosexual service members since the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy was en-

acted in 1993. Thus, instead of using those millions of dollars on fighting terrorism, the military is spending it to replace linguists that they already have in their ranks.

Not only does the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy waste time, money and linguistic skill, it also initiates discrimination against those who simply want to serve their country. One of these Americans is Alastair Gamble. He had been in training in Arabic for only a few months at the Defense Language Institute when the terrorist attacks of September 11 occurred. After the attacks, he decided that his skills were needed more than ever. He continued his studies and soon was able to converse about military operations, economics, and politics in Arabic. He, however, would not be able to serve his country. Why? Because he was caught one night in his partner's room after hours. Though Gamble admits that he broke the military's policy, he states that many heterosexual couples also broke this same rule on that same night. The heterosexual couples, however, were only reprimanded. In stark contrast, Gamble's infraction led to a search of his room where military officials found evidence that led to the discovery of a relationship with another officer who was studying Korean at the time. Soon both Gamble and his partner were dismissed from the Army, and the American people were denied the service of two young men who were learning badly needed language skills.

Gamble and his partner are not alone. From October 2001 through December 2002, seven other linguists specializing in critical languages were also discharged after telling superiors that they were gay.

Gamble and the eight other linguists should not be treated this way. It is past time for the U.S. military to modernize its attitudes toward soldiers' sexual orientation. It is time for the U.S. military to recognize the contributions of gay, lesbian, and bisexual military officers and enlisted personnel by allowing them to serve in the Armed Forces without fear and prejudice. Currently, security organizations within the United States allow for open service—most notably, the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency. These openly gay men and women serve our country well. In fact, they sometimes serve along-side military men and women who cannot discuss their sexual orientation.

Not only do United States intelligence agencies allow for open service, but many other nations allow open service as well. Some of our closest allies—Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Australia, the Czech Republic, Sweden, Canada, Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain, Denmark, Norway, Luxembourg, Iceland and Italy—allow open service in their military. In fact, the United States and Turkey are the only two NATO countries that do not allow open military service for gay men.