and to strengthen private property ownership in rural communities.

I understand why Senator REID offered this amendment. Mexico is important to the United States, and it deserves our attention. But I voted against this amendment. Let me explain why.

A better way to improve Mexico's economy, including its rural economy, is not through foreign assistance from the United States, but through trade. As recently noted by the Ambassador of Mexico to the United States, Mexico has been transformed in recent years through trade liberalization, and in particular through the NAFTA.

Mexico's exports to the world grew from $50 billion to $160 billion between 1993 and 2001. Total trade between the United States and Mexico increased from $88 billion to $250 billion between 1993 and 2002.

Mexico's agricultural producers have shared in the benefits of NAFTA. Between 1993 and 2001, Mexican agricultural exports to the United States rose by almost 97 percent. Some 78 percent of all Mexican agricultural exports are shipped to the United States, and the United States is by far Mexico's largest agricultural export destination.

While well intentioned, increased foreign aid from the United States, such as through Senator REID'S amendment, will make little difference to the Mexican economy. Clearly, Mexico's leaders recognize that the best means of achieving a healthier Mexican economy, including Mexico's rural economy, is through continued strong trade ties with the United States.

Regardless, some of these same leaders seem to be losing interest in maintaining strong trade relations between our countries. They are doing this by attempting unilaterally to renegotiate agricultural provisions of the NAFTA.

Mexico has imposed, or threatened to impose, restrictions on the importation of a variety of U.S. agricultural products. These products include pork, beef, corn, and high fructose corn syrup, all of which are major Iowa commodities. I spoke on this situation just last month on the Senate floor, so I will not go into the specifics on Mexico's trade restrictions on these commodities.

Given barriers imposed by Mexico on U.S. agricultural products, now is clearly not the proper time to increase foreign aid to Mexico. Mexico's trade policies are harming farmers in Iowa and other states. Providing more foreign aid to Mexico sends the wrong signal. I realize that Senator REID's amendment to increase foreign aid has already passed the Senate. But until such time as Mexico's agricultural trade barriers are removed, I urge Senators to keep them in mind when voting on any future legislation involving foreign aid for Mexico.

At the same time, I hope that Mexico will realize that by not abiding by its NAFTA commitments, and by thus threatening its trade relations with the United States, it is doing little to improve the lives of rural Mexicans.

In fact, any reduction in trade between our two countries would likely lead to increased economic hardship in Mexico. Such a situation would benefit neither Mexico nor the United States.

Once again, as I did last month, I urge officials in Mexico to consider the effects that Mexico's barriers to imports of U.S. agricultural products are having on overall trade relations between the United States and Mexico. Mexicans, including those living in rural areas, have much more to gain from closer economic ties to the United States than from increased foreign aid.

LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2003

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the need for hate crimes legislation. On May 1, 2003, Senator KENNEDY and I introduced the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement 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 in Medford, OR. On January 30, 2003, three Oregon National Guardsmen beat a homeless man then attacked a Medford motel owner whom they believed was an Arab. One of the men committed suicide after the attack and the other two pled guilty to hate-related charges.

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.

FAMILY FARMER BANKRUPTCY PROTECTION, H.R. 2465

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I am pleased that the Senate is finally considering legislation to renew family farmer bankruptcy protection, which expired on July 1.

More than a month ago, on June 23, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 2465 by an overwhelming vote of 379–3. This legislation will retroactively renew and extend family farmer bankruptcy protection until January 1, 2004. Senator FEINGOLD, Senator GRASSLEY and I have been urging for weeks that the Senate majority leadership bring up this House-passed bill to retroactively renew Chapter 12 of the Bankruptcy Code.

Senator GRASSLEY and I introduced S. 1323, the companion bill to this legislation to temporarily extend these protections that our farmers have come to rely upon. But this is just a short term fix. We need to stop playing politics and permanently reauthorize the Chapter 12 family farmer protections.

Too many family farmers have been left in legal limbo in bankruptcy courts across the country because Chapter 12 of the Bankruptcy Code is still a temporary measure. This is the sixth time that Congress must act to restore or extend basic bankruptcy safeguards for family farmers because Chapter 12 is still a temporary provision despite its first passage into law in 1986. Our family farmers do not deserve these lapses in bankruptcy law that could mean the difference between foreclosure and farming.

In 2000 and 2001, for example, the Senate—then as now controlled by the other party—failed to take up a House-passed bill to retroactively renew Chapter 12. As a result, family farmers lost Chapter 12 bankruptcy protection for 8 months. Another lapse of Chapter 12 lasted more than 6 months in the previous Congress. At the end of June, Chapter 12 lapsed once again. Enough is enough. It is time for Congress to make Chapter 12 a permanent part of the Bankruptcy Code to provide a stable safety net for our nation's family farmers.

Last year, I strongly supported former Senator Carnahan's bipartisan amendment to make Chapter 12 permanent as part of the Senate-passed farm bill. The Senate unanimously approved the Carnahan amendment by a 93–0 vote. Unfortunately, the House majority objected to including the Carnahan amendment in the farm bill conference report and agreed to an extension of Chapter 12 only through the end of 2002. Thus, at the tail end of the last Congress, we had to pass yet another six-month extension of basic bankruptcy protection for family farmers.

In the bipartisan bankruptcy reform conference, we again tried to make Chapter 12 permanent and update and expand its coverage. During our conference negotiations, we adopted most of the Senate-passed provisions, including those authored by Senator GRASSLEY to make Chapter 12 permanent and those authored by Senator FEINGOLD to strengthen Chapter 12 to help our family farmers with the difficulties they face.

Unfortunately, the House majority again scuttled our bipartisan efforts by failing to pass the rule to consider the bipartisan conference report on the Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act.

It is time to end this absurdity and make these bankruptcy protections permanent. Everyone agrees that Chapter 12 has worked. When this bill passed in the House, Chairman SENSENBRENNER praised Chapter 12, but then only proposed reauthorizing it for 12 months. He admitted that the only reason his bill, which we are finally passing today, did not permanently reauthorize Chapter 12 was because it is being used as leverage for the controversial larger bankruptcy reform bill. That is unfortunate.

I will continue to work hard with Senator GRASSLEY, Senator FEINGOLD and others on both sides of the aisle to pass legislation that once and for all