In Stockton, CA, in 1989, when drifter Patrick Purdy walked into a schoolyard with an AK–47 and killed 5, wounding 30 others.

In Long Island, NY, in 1993, when a gunman killed 6 and wounded 19 others on a commuter train—he was only brought down when he finally stopped to reload.

In Pearl, MS, in 1997 when two students were killed.

In Paducah, KY, in 1998 when three students were killed.

In Jonesboro, AR, in 1998 when five were killed, and ten more wounded.

In Springfield, OR, in 1998 when two were killed, and 22 wounded.

In Atlanta, GA, in 1999 when a troubled day trader killed his wife, two children and several people trading stocks.

At a Granada Hills, CA Jewish Community Center when a gunman wounded three and killed one.

At a Fort Worth, TX Baptist church where seven were killed and seven more wounded at a teen church event, all by a man with two guns and 9 high capacity clips, with a capacity of 15 rounds each.

And the list goes on, and on.

Just last week, I spoke at the funeral of San Francisco Police Officer Isaac Espinoza, who was shot and killed by a gang member armed with an AK–47 and a 30-round clip. Officer Espinoza took three shots in his back as a gunman fired 15 rounds in just seconds, giving Officer Espinoza and his partner, who was also shot, no time to seek refuge.

Officer Espinoza was a bright young star in the San Francisco Police Department, and he had a promising future and loving family. Now, that future is gone. His wife Renata is without a husband. His beautiful three-year-old girl Isabella is without a father.

These are the real consequences of assault weapons. This is not a political debate about a theoretical issue. This is about the death, and tragedy, and loss.

That is why Senator WARNER, Senator SCHUMER and I are seeking to pass legislation to reauthorize the federal assault weapons ban for another 10 years, before it expires on September 13 of this year.

This amendment received 52 votes in this body just last month, but the NRA scuttled the underlying gun immunity bill rather than allow the assault weapons bill to pass.

As a result, we are running out of time. The ban expires on September 13th of this year. We cannot afford to let these weapons back on our streets. We owe the American people more than that. It is just that simple.

This should really be an easy issue.

After all, this amendment already passed the Senate once.

The President has said many times that he supports the current law, and supports renewing the current law.

Every major law enforcement organization in the country supports renewing the ban, as do countless civic organizations, including: Fraternal Order of Police, National League of Cities, United States Conference of Mayors, National Association of Counties, International Association of Chiefs of Police, International Brotherhood of Police Officers, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, National Education Association, NAACP, and the American Bar Association.

And the list goes on, and on.

More than three-fourths of the American people, and two-thirds of gun owners, support renewing the ban.

In a poll conducted by Mark Penn and Associates October 1–6 of last year: 77 percent of all likely voters supported renewing the assault weapons ban; Only 21 percent opposed renewal; 72 percent of Republicans supported renewing the ban, as did 71 percent of those describing themselves as ''conservatives''; 66 percent of gun owners supported renewal, and only 32 percent of gun owners opposed it.

So one might wonder, why don't we just pass the ban by unanimous consent, get it through the House and have it signed into law tomorrow?

But an interesting dynamic is at work here. An interesting dynamic that relates to one, very powerful interest group that has violated the trust of its members and has used threats, distortions and bullying tactics to fight against common sense gun control at every level, and at all costs.

That group, of course, is the National Rifle Association.

But it is my hope that in the coming weeks, this body will stand up to the NRA and instead listen to the President of the United States, who supports the ban.

Listen to law enforcement all across the nation who know that this ban makes sense, and saves lives.

Listen to the studies that show that crime with assault weapons of all kinds has decreased by 50 to 66 percent since the ban took effect almost ten years ago.

A 1999 National Institute of Justice Study found that crime gun traces of assault weapons fell 20 percent in just the first year following enactment of the ban, from 4,0777 traces in 1994 to just 3,268 in 1995.

Murder rates that year dropped 6.7 percent below what they had been projected to be before the ban, once researchers had isolated for other factors.

Murders of police officers with assault weapons also dropped from about 16 percent of gun murders of police in 1994 and early 1995 to 0 percent in the latter half of 1995 and 1996.

A recent study released by the Brady Center shows that the proportion of assault weapons used in crimes fell from a high of 6.15 percent in the year before the ban, to just 2.57 percent by 2001. This is a 58 percent decrease in just 8 years, and includes not only the banned guns, but copycat guns, as well.

The analysis in this study was performed by Gerald Nunziato, who for 8 years served as the Special Agent in Charge of ATF's National Tracing Center. So this is not some fly-by-night study. This is by the one person who perhaps knows what these numbers mean better than anybody.

This follows a statistical analysis by the Department of Justice indicating that banned assault weapons used in crime fell by an even greater percentage—almost 66 percent—between 1995 and 2001.

The bottom line is that this ban has worked.

If we let these guns back on the streets, we open the door to more and more killings.

If we let these guns back on the streets, we tell Steve Sposato, whose wife Jody was killed in the 101 California shooting more than ten years ago, that we have forgotten his pain.

If we let these guns back on the streets, we send an invitation to terrorists to come to America and arm themselves, as recommended in an Al Qaeda training manual. Is now the time to do this?

If we let these guns back on the streets, we ignore ten years of success.

What is the argument for letting these banned guns back on the streets?

Who is clamoring for newly manufactured AK–47s?

Who is clamoring for new TEC–9s?

These are guns that are never used for hunting. They are not used for self defense, and if they are it is more likely that they will kill innocents than intruders.

These guns—and everyone knows it—have but one purpose, and that purpose is to kill other human beings. Why would we want to open the floodgates again and let them back on our streets? There is simply no good reason.

So in the coming weeks I will again offer my amendment to extend the assault weapons ban, and I urge the President to come forward and ''put his money where his mouth is'' in terms of helping us get this legislation passed.

The families of the students killed at Columbine five years ago, Officer Espinoza's wife, and so many other victims fo gun violence demand that we act.

NOMINATION OF EPA DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR STEPHEN JOHNSON

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, on March 10, I announced my intention to object to any unanimous consent request for the Senate to take up the nomination of Stephen Johnson to be Deputy Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, EPA. I did this because I had been trying to obtain information concerning EPA's decision to become involved with the City of Portland combined sewer overflow program since last August. Despite numerous requests, EPA failed to answer my questions and failed to provide me with the documents I had requested, with the exception of a limited number of documents that EPA

would have to provide to any requester under the Freedom of Information Act, FOIA.

Today, I am releasing my hold on Mr. Steve Johnson to acknowledge that EPA has made a good faith effort to provide documents on the Portland sewer situation since I placed a hold on his nomination. Although I am lifting my hold on Mr. Johnson, I remain troubled by EPA's policy for withholding documents from Members of the Senate and the Environment and Public Works Committee, in particular. I believe the EPA position on this critical issue is contrary to the law and the controlling court decisions. I have also voiced my concern that EPA policy would mean the end of Congressional oversight. I believe that Senators should not be forced to place holds on nominees in order to obtain documents they need to conduct their oversight duties as members of the committee with primary responsibility for oversight of EPA.

I will lift my hold on Mr. Johnson's nomination today to acknowledge recent EPA efforts to respond to my requests. I will also be monitoring EPA cooperation in responding to my requests for information in the future. And if EPA again tries to stonewall as it did to my requests for information on the Portland sewers, I will put a hold on other EPA nominations if that is what it takes to get the agency's attention and cooperation.

OFFICER ISAAC ANTHONY ESPINOZA

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I have just returned from San Francisco, a city whose heart has been broken by the tragic shooting death of a brave young police officer. On April 10, Isaac Espinoza was killed in the line of duty at the age of 29.

Officer Espinoza died doing the duty he loved: protecting the community from gang violence. He had volunteered to work as a plain clothes officer in the gang suppression unit of Bayview Police Station, where he served with distinction for 7 of his 8 years on the San Francisco police force.

Officer Espinoza was well known and liked in the Bayview neighborhood. Residents trusted him, and they appreciated his efforts to defuse violence and get guns off the streets. His outstanding work was recognized by the Police Department, which honored him with a Silver Medal of Valor and a Purple Heart as well as a Police Commission commendation.

Isaac Espinoza was also a loving husband, father, and son. My heart goes out to his wife, daughter, and family. I want them to know that the entire community shares their grief. All San Francisco feels the loss of Isaac's death, just as we all appreciate the gift of his life and work.

A gallant police officer is gone, but he will not be forgotten. We can and must carry on his work by giving community police officers and other first responders the resources they need to bring peace and safety to our Nation's streets and neighborhoods.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, due to a previous obligation, I was unable to vote on the conference report to H.R. 3108, the Pension Funding Equity Act of 2004. If I had been present, I would have voted in support of the conference report. I appreciate the work done on this conference report by my colleagues, Senators GRASSLEY, GREGG, MCCONNELL, BAUCUS, and KENNEDY. As others have mentioned before, this legislation is very important to many businesses and their employees suffering from the recent economic downturn and in need of pension relief that the act will provide.

While the act will help millions of employees who are covered under this measure, I am concerned that approximately 9.7 million Americans who belong to multi-employer pension plans, many of them in the construction industry, who are facing the same problems as employees covered by other pension plans, will not be receiving this relief. In January, when the Senate overwhelmingly passed H.R. 3108, we agreed that our pension laws should affect not just single-employer plans but also multi-employer plans. We thought including multi-employers was fair and just. Unfortunately, in conference, there were some that agreed with the Bush administration that multi-employer plans should only receive partial relief. Some would say that the relief will be four percent, others will say it is even less than that. All I know is that millions of hard-working Americans, who report to work just as any other employee, will not receive this relief.

However, with the April 15 deadline where many employers were facing an inflated contribution to their pension plans and the administration's threat of a veto if the final bill included multi-employer relief, I could not penalize approximately 35 million Americans who are covered by single-employer defined benefit plans. The low 30-year Treasury bond interest rates and the unpredictable stock market have adversely affected many companies that contribute to these defined benefit plans. Again, while I believe these conditions affected not just single-employer plans, but also multi-employer plans, I could not jeopardize the 35 million Americans who could have lost their pensions if this important legislation were not enacted into law.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

HONORING ERIN SMALLEY: A REMARKABLE YOUNG WRITER

● Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, today I rise to honor a fine young Iowan, Erin Smalley of Johnston. Erin is a seventh-grade student at Johnston Middle School. Erin wrote the following essay for a school-wide contest for American Education Week on the topic ''Great public schools for every child—America's promise.'' Erin's eloquent and inspiring words remind us of the importance of education in America. I would like to take a moment to share with you what Erin Smalley wrote in her essay, A Passion for Education.

William Butler Yeats, an Irish poet who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1923, once said, ''Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.'' He made an excellent point, but reading through is quote just once will not make the meaning sink in. I am going to break it down to make it more easily understood.

The first part of Yeats' quote states, ''Education is not the filling of a pail.'' I believe it means this: Education is not just putting information and knowledge into someone's mind. You can't dump fact, after fact, after fact onto someone because it will just go in one ear and out the other. Putting a lot of information into someone's head is just like filling a pail with a lot of water. It will probably just sit there, but it won't sink in. That is why education means something more.

The rest of the quote says: ''. . . but the lighting of a fire.'' I believe this means that education is all about enlightening students and making them wonder. To light their fire is to make them want to learn more, to build a passion for what they are being taught. When they have an interest, then they will go for it. When kids are given an education, and they discover a passion for something important to them, then they will go higher and higher and never give up, until they reach their dreams. When the light goes on, that's when they start to discover and learn. That's when education is most important, because then it will hopefully become a turning point in their life.

Everyone should get to go to a free school to learn freely and learn new things. I want every kid to be able to have a passion for something, and be able to have the chance to go for their dreams. I want every kid to get the chance, because it's not fair if only some do. I hope that having an education will light all of the flames, and not just fill up the pails.●

CENTRAL COLLEGE SESQUICENTENNIAL

● Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, last fall, Central College kicked off a year of festivities to celebrate its sesquicentennial. Founded in 1853 by a determined group of immigrants from the Netherlands, Central College has grown in size and stature during the last century and a half, but remains grounded in the tradition and faith of its founders. This weekend, the celebration continues with the Happy Birthday Dear Central Gala.

Currently affiliated with the Reformed Church in America, the college was originally created through the efforts of the Baptists of Iowa. The Iowa Baptist Society worked to establish an ''institution of liberal and sacred learning'' in the early days of our State. An enterprising, open-minded Pella resident, Dominie Scholte, believed in the