

children or other dependent family members, such as elderly parents who require care, designate a caregiver for their dependents. This person will act in the deployed personnel's place to provide care for these family members during the period of deployment. The caregiver could be a spouse, parent, sibling, or other responsible adult who is capable of caring for, and willing to care for, the dependents in question.

The Jeffords-Feingold amendment would create two programs to provide additional leave options for persons who have been designated as caregivers. The first program would require the Office of Personnel Management, OPM, to create a program under which Federal employees who are designated as caregivers could use accrued annual or sick leave, leave bank benefits, and other leave available to them under title 5 for purposes directly relating to or resulting from their designation as a caregiver.

This amendment would also encourage the Secretary of Labor to establish a voluntary program under which private sector companies would create similar programs for their employees and to solicit participation from private sector companies. I commend the many employers around the country for their understanding and support when an employee or a family member of an employee is called to active duty, and I hope that companies in Wisconsin and around the country will participate in this voluntary program.

In addition, our amendment would require the Government Accountability Office to report to Congress with an evaluation of both the OPM program and the voluntary Department of Labor program. It is my hope that this evaluation will demonstrate the utility of such a leave program for designated caregivers and that these pilot programs could then be expanded to the designated caregivers of additional deployed military personnel.

This amendment builds on a measure that I introduced last year, S. 798, the Military Families Leave Act. That bill would provide a similar benefit to military families by allowing eligible employees whose spouses, parents, sons, or daughters are military personnel who are serving on or called to active duty in support of a contingency operation to use their Family and Medical Leave Act, or FMLA, benefits for issues directly relating to or resulting from that deployment. These instances could include preparation for deployment or additional responsibilities that family members take on as a result of a loved one's deployment, such as child care. I also introduced this bill during the 108th Congress.

Let me be clear, that the Jeffords-Feingold amendment does not amend the FMLA in any way. In fact, FMLA benefits are specifically exempted from the types of leave that can be used by designated caregivers for purposes directly related to or resulting from their caregiver responsibilities. While I

believe that the FMLA could serve as the basis for providing additional leave opportunities for designated caregivers, opposition in some quarters to the original FMLA makes this a difficult proposition. I am proud to have been a cosponsor of this landmark law, and I believe that the FMLA continues to provide much needed assistance to millions of workers around the country as they seek to care for their own serious health condition or that of a family member or as they welcome the birth or adoption of a child. I will continue to support this law and efforts to ensure that the vital benefits that it provides are not eroded.

The Military Family Support Act is endorsed by the National Guard Association of the United States, NGAUS, the National Military Family Association, NMFA, the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States, EANGUS, the Military Officers Association of America, MOAA, and the National Partnership for Women and Families.

I thank the Senator from Vermont, Mr. JEFFORDS, for his work on this important measure, and I thank the chairman and ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee for agreeing to accept this amendment.

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, I rise in support of this amendment to the 2007 Defense authorization bill which I cosponsored with my esteemed colleague from California, Senator BARBARA BOXER. I also thank my other colleagues who have joined us in cosponsoring this amendment.

It is my strong belief that all prisoners of war who die in captivity should be eligible for the Purple Heart, regardless of the cause of death, for they all will have paid the ultimate price. Approximately 17,000 prisoners of war—including fine servicemembers from my own great State of Maine—have died while in captivity since December 7, 1941—the start of World War II. More than 8,100 Korean war servicemen—46 from Maine—and more than 1,800 Americans—14 from Maine—remain unaccounted for from Vietnam.

In rightful honor of all our prisoners of war, I am proud to be co-offering this amendment to the DOD authorization bill that would bestow the Purple Heart upon those Americans who perished while held captive as a result of starvation, disease, or maltreatment. Currently, only prisoners of war who die during their imprisonment of wounds inflicted by an instrument of war—such as a gunshot wound or intentional poisoning—are eligible for posthumous Purple Heart recognition. Those who die of starvation, disease, or other causes during captivity are not.

How can we say that anyone who dies at the hands of our enemy doesn't deserve this mark of respect and honor from a grateful nation—whether they make the ultimate sacrifice on the battlefield or behind barbed wire? They fought for America and died at the hands of our enemy—what more do we

need to know and what more could they have given than their very lives? They and their families have earned this honor.

The intent of this amendment is to correct this injustice by requiring the President, our Commander in Chief, to review the current circumstances establishing eligibility for the Purple Heart and advise Congress on modifications to the criteria for the Purple Heart award, which I strongly believe should take into account such inhuman war tactics as the deliberate withholding of medical treatment for injury or disease by enemy forces.

Last month, the House Armed Services Committee adopted their version of the Honor Our Fallen Prisoners of War Act—which had 216 cosponsors—during committee markup of the Defense authorization bill. The Honor Our Fallen Prisoners of War Act has been endorsed by a number of prominent military and veterans organizations, including the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Korean War Veterans Association, National League of POW/MIA Families, and the Tiger Survivors.

The posthumous awarding of the Purple Heart Award to members of the armed services who died while in captivity or died due to injury or illness incurred while in captivity would be of only some comfort to the next of kin of these fine service men and women. I sincerely hope that the Senate Armed Service Committee will follow suit by taking similar action as the House and adopt this legislation.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. TALENT. Mr. President, on behalf of the majority leader, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

#### RELIGIOUS FREEDOM DAY

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, yesterday, my colleague and friend, Senator SANTORUM, hosted a bipartisan, bicameral event to evaluate the status of religious freedom in America and around the world. I thank Senator SANTORUM for his passionate commitment to the cause of religious liberty, as well as my colleagues NORM COLEMAN and SAM BROWNBACK for their participation.

Religious freedom is the bedrock of our founding principles. Indeed, it is the very first clause of the first amendment of the U.S. Constitution:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

As George Washington wrote in his letter to the United Baptist Chamber of Virginia, May of 1789: “Every man, conducting himself as a good citizen,