

of the Judiciary Committee. Unfortunately, the White House has returned Mr. O'Gara's nomination for confirmation. As such, I am using this opportunity to, again, remind the President of the objections that law enforcement and many Members of this body have to the policies and the leadership at the Office of National Drug Control Policy. In so doing, it is my hope that the administration will change course and develop and implement strategies that will address the drug problems facing our communities, such as the spread of methamphetamine.

More than 20 years ago I began working to create an Office of National Drug Control Policy because I believed then, as I believe now, that we needed a Cabinet-level official who would coordinate Federal drug policy and be publicly accountable for developing and implementing an effective national strategy. I believe the Office of National Drug Control Policy is an important office, and I take matters related to it very seriously.

When our current drug czar, John Walters, came for a vote before this body in 2001, I opposed his nomination because I did not believe he was the right man for the job.

Unfortunately, my fears have been borne out. During his tenure, John Walters has been reticent to acknowledge the methamphetamine problem that is plaguing small communities nationwide, preferring to focus almost exclusively on marijuana. He recommended to the President that the highly popular and highly effective High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Program, which funds drug enforcement task forces, be cut by 56 percent and relegated to the Department of Justice. And under his leadership, the Office of National Drug Control Policy has essentially walled itself off from consultation and dialogue with external drug policy experts including treatment professionals, prevention specialists, and State and local law enforcement officials.

Those are just a few of the many examples of Mr. Walters' missteps. Under him, the office operates like an ivory tower rather than the command center for our national drug control policy.

This past year, together with many of my Republican colleagues, I fought to prevent James O'Gara—a colleague of Mr. Walters since 1989—from becoming the Deputy Director for Supply Reduction. Together, they have coauthored policy articles expressing their shared drug policy views. Given the misgivings that many of us have about how Mr. Walters has run the Office of National Drug Control Policy, I would likely have a difficult time voting to give a promotion to any member of his inner circle. But that is not the only reason why many of us opposed Mr. O'Gara's nomination.

Perhaps most troubling is that Mr. O'Gara, who was nominated for a position which has authority over international drug control, foreign and do-

mestic drug intelligence, and interdiction, does not have the confidence of law enforcement.

In letters to Senator SPECTER and Senator LEAHY expressing their strong opposition to the O'Gara nomination, law enforcement has expressed its strong opposition. The National Narcotics Officers Association wrote that:

Mr. O'Gara lacks an operational understanding of a critical issue involved in supply reduction, has no operational background in supply reduction or drug control, and most importantly is not trusted by his constituents in the drug enforcement, prevention and treatment fields. All of this makes him unqualified and unable to effectively lead the coordination of supply reduction initiatives in accordance with the National Drug Control Strategy.

The letter from the HIDTA Directors states that:

Based on our collective 1,000+ years of law enforcement experience, we believe Mr. O'Gara lacks the qualifications and abilities necessary to coordinate our nation's supply reduction initiatives effectively. We believe his lack of experience and inability and/or unwillingness to collaborate with a variety of stakeholders has resulted in the formulation of three National Drug Control Strategy documents that do not provide adequate guidance to law enforcement, treatment, and prevention professionals; lack specific and measurable objectives; and insufficiently address some of the most pressing drug threats facing our country today, including methamphetamine.

By returning this nomination, it is my hope—together with many of my Republican colleagues—that the administration will reconsider and rescind this nomination.

State and local law enforcement accounts for more than 90% of drug-related arrests. During a time when assistance for State and local law enforcement has been slashed, it is essential that the leadership of the Office of National Drug Control Policy have the confidence of local officials. Mr. O'Gara lacks this support. Moreover, Mr. Walters and Mr. O'Gara have alienated State and local law enforcement, drug prevention and treatment professionals, as well as many members of Congress.

As the scourge of methamphetamine continues to ravage middle America, it is essential that the policies adopted and the personnel appointed by the administration have the confidence of the drug enforcement community. President Bush could take a huge step in this direction by rescinding the nomination of Mr. O'Gara and consulting with local law enforcement to appoint an individual who could win the bipartisan support of the Senate.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNIZING THE CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING—FRESNO

• Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing and congratulating the Center for Independent Living—Fresno for 30 years of

dedicated service empowering people with disabilities in Fresno, Kings, Madera, and Merced counties. Since opening their doors in 1976, this organization has made significant contributions to the lives of the Central Valley's disabled community and their family members.

For the past three decades, the Center for Independent Living—Fresno has been a respected leader in advocating for people with disabilities to live independent lives. They strongly uphold the principle that everyone should be afforded the opportunity to thrive and live independently in their own communities. The dedicated staff of the Center of Independent Living—Fresno work tirelessly to ensure that those who are in need of their support are treated with the respect and dignity that all people deserve. Through the center, thousands of people have learned invaluable tools to help them become self-advocates and lead productive lives.

I congratulate the Center for Independent Living—Fresno on its 30th anniversary and wish its staff and supporters even greater success as they continue to provide important services to people with disabilities. You are not only a tremendous asset for your clients, but you perform a great service for the Central Valley community.●

RESTORATION OF THE COLONIAL THEATER IN PITTSFIELD, MA

• Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, last week, an excellent article in the New York Times of August 29 detailed the renaissance of Pittsfield, MA, which has adopted a bold economic revitalization strategy centered on the arts and historic preservation involving the restoration of the popular Colonial Theater of a century ago. Pittsfield mayor James Ruberto and the entire Pittsfield community came together behind this bold vision, which received major encouragement a decade ago when the theater was included as part of First Lady and now Senator HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON's highly effective Save America's Treasures tour.

The Colonial Theater certainly qualified as an American Treasure. The restored theater reopened on August 29 to wide acclaim, and I am proud of all that the mayor and the community have accomplished. This recognition of their efforts is eminently well-deserved, and I believe all of our colleagues in Congress will be interested in Pittsfield's extraordinary achievement. I commend Mayor Ruberto and the people of Pittsfield for a job well done, and I ask that the article be printed in the RECORD.

The article follows.

[From The New York Times, Aug. 29, 2006]
A CITY PLOTS ITS FUTURE BY REACHING INTO THE PAST

(By Hubert B. Herring)

Arts-minded visitors to the Berkshire Hills in western Massachusetts may think of Pittsfield as little more than an urban speed