

Haiti and to the Bahamas. I met with the governments of each of those nations on a variety of topics, not the least of which was the interdiction of the drugs. We increasingly see drugs coming out of Colombia, going into Venezuela and being transported by air out of Venezuela—including from remote parts of southern Venezuela as well as northern Venezuela. They then fly to destinations where the cocaine is dropped and repackaged into smaller packages to be shipped, destined for Europe and the United States.

The increase in the number of flights from 2003 to 2006 is incredible. A map showing lines that indicate the number of flights—they are solid going from Venezuela to the Dominican Republic and to Haiti. The flights have increased enormously, while at the same time the number of drugs transported by sea has diminished. Our Coast Guard is out there. I was with the Coast Guard. They have been fairly successful in interdicting at sea. So as a result, the drug smugglers are using small airplanes flying from Venezuela to the island of Hispaniola, Haiti and the Dominican Republic, where they are sending the drugs to be shipped on to additional destinations.

I spoke at length with President Preval, the President of Haiti, about this problem. President Preval made reference to a 1998 agreement in which the Government of Haiti and the United States pledged to cooperate and, indeed, that cooperation has occurred. And it has occurred on those shipments coming by sea.

But the Government of the United States cannot interdict an airplane unless we shoot them down, and we are not going to do that. So when these flights come into Haiti or the Dominican Republic they either land or drop their cargo of cocaine. That is where the local government, the local authorities, have to be able and willing to make the arrest. Of course this is difficult, in a country such as Haiti that can hardly keep its head above water, as it is trying to with a new government. I must say, that certainly has my support and I believe that President Preval is doing a good job, and is making some progress.

In addition, I spoke at length with the Prime Minister and with the director general of the Haitian National Police. I am very impressed with Director General Andresol. He is an impressive fellow. He has set out a plan to vet all 7,000 members of the Haitian National Police, and he started the vetting process with the top person—himself. He has started the vetting of the police, and he is going to continue to try to get out the graft and corruption. If he is successful, then I believe you will see that the Haitian National Police have the ability to make the arrest when drugs are dropped or transshipped through Haiti. I hope the same thing is going to be done in the Dominican Republic.

Now, in the midst of all this, further to the north, as you get into the Baha-

mas and the Turks and Caicos, we have been enormously successful since the late 1980s in the interdiction of the drugs. The DEA, working with other law enforcement agencies, working with the Coast Guard, working with the Defense Department, and working with the governments of the countries—and the one that I particularly concentrated on this time after Haiti was the Bahamas—they have been very successful. They have helicopters stationed in the area, the Coast Guard at Andros Island in the Bahamas. The Army stationed helicopters at Greater Exuma Island, next to the town of Georgetown in the middle of the Bahamas, and at the southern end of the Bahamas where a the Coast Guard has another station with helicopters.

Well, the Army, being strapped for helicopters, announced the plan that it was going to remove the helicopters. So we went to work. Our Ambassador to the Bahamas, John Rood, brought it to my attention. Several other Members of Congress got involved, and as a result of this an interagency meeting occurred in which it was agreed that although the Army would pull the helicopters out probably by this October, they would still pay for the station for the next 5 years. And we worked it out to get new helicopters that would be transferred to DEA—the Drug Enforcement Administration. Therefore all of that area of the Bahamas in the middle, between Andros to the north and to the west, the island of Exuma in the middle, and further south the to the Coast Guard helicopters—all of that area in the middle would not be blind.

On Sunday I went out there and flew with both the Army and the Coast Guard to see their operation and to be briefed on the details. I was briefed on a live chase that occurred at the time, as well as visiting some of our troops. And I will just tell you what patriotic Americans these are. They are down there for 4 months without their families. They had just gotten home after a year's deployment in Iraq. They are going to be able to go back home in another month and be at home for 2, 3 months, and then they are going back to Iraq. This is the kind of dedication that we have in our Armed Forces.

Well, fortunately, it looks as if we are going to be able to retain new helicopters for this operation so that we will not be blind. But it is going to mean the continued cooperation between the Government of the Bahamas and the United States, building on a history of considerable cooperation. It also means that we need continued, increased progress with President Preval of Haiti and President Fernandez of the Dominican Republic.

Haiti has so many needs. Haiti has desperate needs in health care, desperate needs in infrastructure, desperate needs in education. One little thing we did in a step in the right direction—and many Senators here co-sponsored the bill—I along with them—is called the HOPE legislation. It will

allow textiles from outside to be brought into Haiti, where then value is added by making them into garments. It is estimated that 30,000 jobs will be provided. That is out of hundreds of thousands of people who do not have jobs. But it is a step in the right direction.

I want to give credit to former Senator Mike DeWine of Ohio, who was the sponsor of a bill called HERO and also the sponsor of the legislation that passed called HOPE. He has a heart for Haiti and has been there many times. So the fruits of his long labors and the fruits of the labors of others of us in this Chamber have finally come to fruition to give them another ray of hope.

I am impressed with President Preval. I do believe that he is honest and on the right course. I am also a realist and recognize that there is corruption all around him in his Government. That is one of the main chores that he has in rooting out corruption, so that he can get that Government on the right path, so that they can start restoring some of the services to a people in desperate need. The Haitian people are remarkable. They are so ingenious and industrious and entrepreneurial, with a positive, optimistic outlook. They have just been shackled under years of exceptional poverty.

So, finally, the United States stepped forward with the HOPE legislation. Finally, the United States is getting increased cooperation from the now Government of Haiti, and it is exceptionally important in the future that cooperation continues. It is so important not only because of Haiti, but it is important because it is our children who are on the receiving end of all of the drugs coming out of South America.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, on Martin Luther King Day, we celebrated a man and honored his legacy. It is an opportunity to recognize the movement he inspired and carry it forward with renewed energy. I consider his work and his words, striving to give them both new life.

"The arc of the moral universe is long," King said, "but it bends towards justice." As a national community, we must never rest in the pursuit of that justice. We must always demand that our community leaders and elected officials pursue their work with compassion and integrity. This year, as we commemorate Dr. King's bold vision and great spirit, our Nation stands at a critical point along that arc.

The American people called for a new direction and a new tone in Washington, DC. They put the politics of polarization aside and asked their representatives in Washington to focus instead on the issues that matter most. Too many hard-working Americans are struggling just to get by today. It is time to expand opportunity for all and ensure everyone has a real shot at the American dream.

The best guarantee of a good, secure job in today's increasingly competitive world is a quality education. But not everyone has that opportunity. I know what it is like to have a tough time affording college: With the help of Federal Pell grants, I was the first in my family to graduate from college. Today, a college education costs a small fortune, yet it is harder than ever to find help.

Since 2001, tuition has increased by over 30 percent at the average 4-year public school. Over the same period, family incomes have increased less than 6 percent. As the cost of college continues to rise and family incomes stagnate, more and more students are qualifying for Pell grants and other Federal student aid programs. We can't let a college education become a privilege just for the wealthy. We must ensure that families and students can afford college, regardless of their financial resources.

That is why in the Senate, I am fighting to increase the maximum Pell grant to \$5,100—an amount that actually keeps pace with costs. That is also why, on the first day of the 110th session of Congress earlier this month, I introduced legislation to permanently increase the amount that families can save annually for college and take as a tax deduction.

On the same day, in that same spirit, I introduced other legislation to encourage employees to set aside money for their education costs and to encourage employers to provide matching funds through lifelong learning accounts. It is about investing in a more competitive America, a growing economy, and our common future. We are creating a better world for our businesses, our State, and most importantly our workers.

The policies we choose to support reflect our priorities as a nation. When the middle-class gets squeezed from every side, it may be easiest to relent, accept the status quo, or give in to frustration. But we have a responsibility to fight back and to fight for something better. That is what Martin Luther King may have called infinite hope. We can honor King by coming together and making that promise a reality.

TRIBUTE TO CRAIG C. MELLO, PH.D.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, on December 10, in Stockholm, Sweden, the Nobel Prize in Medicine for 2006 was awarded to Dr. Craig C. Mello of the University of Massachusetts Medical School for his revolutionary discovery of the gene-silencing process called RNA interference.

RNAi, as it is called, is a fundamental mechanism for controlling the flow of genetic information. Dr. Mello's discovery is universally considered to be one of the most significant biomedical discoveries of the past decade, and it has opened up extraordinary op-

portunities for the development of new therapies for cancer, heart disease, illnesses, and many other conditions.

Dr. Mello is a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator and the Blais University Chair in Molecular Medicine at UMass Medical School. His research and its international recognition by the Nobel Committee have brought great honor and pride to our city, Commonwealth, and Nation.

Dr. Mello received his B.S. from Brown University in 1982 and his Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1990. He served as a postdoctoral fellow at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle, WA, and joined the faculty of UMass in 1994.

I join Dr. Mello's many friends and colleagues in congratulating him for his landmark discovery, and I wish him well in the years to come.

TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM K. PHILLIPS

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize William K. Phillips, the longtime Director for the Small Business Administration's New Hampshire district office. Since 1981, Bill has led the agency through economic booms and slumps while demonstrating a sharp commitment to the business community in this state. On March 2 of this year, Bill will be retiring. His leadership will be missed, and I want to offer him my deepest thanks for not only the advice he has given me throughout the years but for everything he has done to make this State a better place to live.

Because of his unique professional resume, there are few people in the region who better understand the critical role small businesses play in a healthy economy and who know what entrepreneurs need to expand and thrive. Bill founded Benchmark Industries, a leader in resistance welding technology. He worked as senior vice-president of the Bank of New Hampshire, was the president of the former Londonderry Bank and Trust, and served on the board of directors of First NH Banks, which is now Citizens Bank of New Hampshire.

For the past two and half decades, Bill has been directing the SBA's operations in New Hampshire. It was in this role he made his name as a champion for small businesses. His dedication was most obvious during the banking and real estate crisis our State experienced during the early 1990s. Fortunately, Bill and his team at the SBA were here to meet this difficult challenge. Using their expertise and resources, the New Hampshire SBA under Bill Phillips relieved much of the anxiety business and homeowners were feeling and helped the State recover. New Hampshire today is a great place to work and start a company, and Bill can certainly feel proud of his role in strengthening our state's excellent reputation.

The definition of a vibrant economy goes beyond just a bunch of numbers

and figures on a graph. What it really means is that people are working, improving the communities in which they live, building wealth, providing a better quality of life for their families and, in some cases, realizing life long dreams. Bill has been successful because he knows this and has always remembered that people, not statistics, are what matter. His experience and insights have served him well in the position of district director but, more importantly, they have benefitted New Hampshire. There are many businesses here, both small and large, which can be described as success stories because Bill took an interest in their future. Thank you, Bill. You have earned a long and healthy retirement.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Ms. Evans, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations and a withdrawal which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bill was read the second time, and placed on the calendar:

S. 287. A bill to prohibit the use of funds for an escalation of United States military forces in Iraq above the numbers existing as of January 9, 2007.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-303. A communication from the Chairman and CEO, Farm Credit Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Disclosure and Reporting" (RIN3052-AC11) received on January 11, 2007; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-304. A communication from the Regulatory Analyst, Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Fees for Rice Inspection Services" (RIN0580-AA92) received on January 11, 2007; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-305. A communication from the Under Secretary of Agriculture (Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services), transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program" (RIN0584-AD35) received on January 11, 2007; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.