

this Chamber as Peace Corps veterans. My good friend and colleague from West Virginia, Senator JAY ROCKEFELLER had worked for the Peace Corps in Washington, DC, where he served as the operations director for its largest overseas program in the Philippines. Members of my staff, like Zach Pusch, and even the mothers of members of my staff, like Mrs. Dorothy Corbin, have served in the Peace Corps. I have heard all of them, on a number of occasions, discuss how their lives and careers were enhanced by their service in the Peace Corps. Their experience in the Peace Corps inspired them to persevere in making this world a better and safer place in which to live, work, and raise families, long after they had left the program.

It is through the Peace Corps that the dreams and the policies of the great and beloved President John F. Kennedy live on.

On this 46th Anniversary of the Peace Corps, and in celebration of National Peace Corps Week, I want to congratulate everyone and anyone ever involved in this unique organization for your service to our country. And, I want to commend you for your efforts in promoting freedom around the world.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. BROWBACK. Mr. President, I regret that on February 28, I was unable to vote on certain provisions of S.4, the Improving America's Security Act of 2007. I wish to address these votes so that the people of the great State of Kansas, who elected me to serve them as U.S. Senator, may know my position.

Regarding vote No. 54, on the Inouye amendment No. 285, I would not have voted in favor of this amendment. My vote would not have altered the result of the final vote.

Regarding vote No. 55, on the DeMint amendment No. 279 as modified, I would have voted in favor of this amendment. My vote would not have altered the result of the final vote.

TOMB OF THE UNKNOWNNS

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, this Sunday, March 4, will mark the 86th anniversary of the enactment of a measure which established the Tomb of the Unknowns, honoring those members of the U.S. Armed Forces who fell in battle but who were not able to be identified, those "known but to God."

By its very nature, war takes life. Parents lose children, children lose parents, and with each passing this country loses a son or daughter that makes this Nation what it is, great. No funeral or ceremony can stop the pain that cuts deep into the families of servicemembers who have been killed in action. But for the families of servicemembers missing in action, the cutting pain of loss remains an open wound.

At the end of the First World War, this country asked itself questions related to those American soldiers who were unknown or missing in action. Where would those families come to pray, to grieve? Where would the rest of us go to ponder how it is we should honor them?

Eighty-six years ago, Members of Congress, standing in the Capitol where we stand today, sought to respond to those questions. Eighty-six years later, the Tomb of the Unknowns stands honored and guarded. Since 1937, Tomb Guards of the 3rd U.S. Infantry have safeguarded those buried in the tomb, every minute of every day, never failing. They epitomize our Nation's commitment to honor all of America's unknown and missing soldiers.

On this occasion, choosing to reflect on the Tomb of the Unknowns and what it means would be of value to us all. We should think of the the families of the missing, the spirits of the unknown soldiers, and of the Tomb Guards, who honor them. For myself, I extend heartfelt feelings my prayers for the families, my deepest gratitude to those unknown soldiers, honored by us all, though "known but to God," and my respect to those entrusted to guard the tomb.

ASSAULT WEAPONS PROTECTION

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, in 1994, I voted for the assault weapons ban which was enacted into law, and in March 2004, I joined a bipartisan majority of the Senate in voting to extend the ban for another 10 years. Unfortunately, despite the overwhelming support of the law enforcement community, the ongoing threat of terrorism, and bipartisan support in the Senate, neither President Bush nor the Republican congressional leadership acted to help protect Americans from assault weapons. On September 13, 2004, the assault weapons ban was allowed to expire. Today, law enforcement agencies across the country have been forced to upgrade their firepower in order to counter what they describe as an increasing presence of high-powered weapons on the streets.

According to an article last week in USA Today, Scott Knight, chairman of the Firearms Committee of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, revealed that an informal survey of approximately 20 police departments showed that since 2004, all of the agencies have been forced to either add weapons to their officers' units or replace existing weaponry with military-style arms. "This (weapons upgrade) is being done with an eye to the absolute knowledge that more higher-caliber weapons are on the street since the expiration of the ban," Knight explained.

The 1994 assault weapons ban prohibited the sale of 19 of the highest powered and most lethal firearms produced. It also prohibited the sale of semiautomatic weapons that incorporated a detachable magazine and two

or more specific military features. These features included folding telescoping stocks, threaded muzzles or flash suppressors, protruding pistol grips, bayonet mounts, barrel shrouds, or grenade launchers.

Ron Stucker, criminal investigations chief of the Orange County Sheriff's Department in Florida, stated that over the past 2 years his department has been arming many of its deputies with assault weapons. These deputies are now "frequently" encountering dangerous assault weapons even during routine traffic stops.

In Houston, homicides rose 25 percent in 2006 over the previous year. Police Chief Harold Hurtt acknowledged the AK-47 assault rifle has become the "weapon of choice" for major drug dealers, warring gangs and immigrant smugglers. "The reality on the street is that many of these weapons are readily available," according to Hurtt, whose department has also been consistently upgrading its weaponry with assault style arms.

It is clear that allowing the 1994 assault weapons ban to lapse has contributed to the dangerous and deadly consequences so many of us feared. Over the past 2 years criminals have been permitted easier access to weapons that simply have no place on our streets. I urge my colleagues to enact a commonsense ban on assault weapons.

LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT HATE CRIMES PREVENTION ACT

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, it is with a heavy heart that I report that a victim of a hate crime in the city of Detroit died 10 days after the brutal incident.

Andrew Anthos was an extraordinary citizen with a passion for community service. During the last 20 years, Mr. Anthos repeatedly traveled by bus from Detroit to Lansing with a singular purpose, to urge the Michigan capital's dome be illuminated in red, white and blue, to honor his country.

Mr. Anthos wrote me last year to inform me of his efforts. As he put it, he wanted Michigan to be "the first State to inaugurate this patriotic tribute to its loyal citizens." He had support from many in the State, and had hoped for dedication lighting during Michigan Week, which will occur in May of this year, when Michigan would celebrate its 170th anniversary as our 26th State.

On the evening of February 13, 2007, Mr. Anthos was riding a bus home from the Detroit Public Library. A passenger on the bus yelled at him and asked if he was gay. The man then followed him off the bus, where Mr. Anthos was helping a wheelchair bound friend off of the bus. The assailant then struck Anthos in the back with a metal pipe, leaving him critically injured, lying in the snow.

The man left, without any effort to rob Mr. Anthos. This clearly was a hate crime, where Anthos was targeted because of his sexual orientation. Mr.