

It is a shame that some consider it "the best we can do" to avoid massively expanding a "temporary" government program. I believe we can do better; we can hold people to their word and say enough is enough.

LEBANON

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, every so often a defining moment arrives, capable of dramatically altering the future of a Nation and its people. The country of Lebanon, which will hold its Presidential elections as soon as November 21, is on the brink of one of these moments.

Lebanon is a country whose vision for a socially rich, prosperous, and democratic future could serve as a model for what we hope to see in the Middle East region. Yet in spite of the courageous and unwavering will of the Lebanese people, extremist forces led by Syria, Iran, and terrorist groups—primarily Hezbollah—conspire to undermine the democratic majority in Lebanon and remake the country in their own oppressive image.

Ever since Lebanon's Cedar Revolution in 2005, when a third of the Lebanese people flooded the streets in peaceful protest against Syria's foreign domination, Lebanon has struggled to remain on the path to peace and democracy.

The cultural and media capital of the Arab world, Lebanon is comprised of a uniquely rich social and religious fabric where Christians, Sunnis, and Shias live in relative harmony. Polling data from Lebanon indicates that the majority of the Lebanese people desire an independent and stable country, free from Syrian and Iranian influence. They want the militias, including Hezbollah, disarmed, and they want an international tribunal to investigate the assassinations of Rafiq Hariri and other members of their Parliament.

On November 21, the Lebanese Parliament is scheduled to meet to elect the country's next President, an event which will serve as a harbinger for the future of independence and democracy in the Middle East. The stakes could not be higher—a fact that has not been lost on Syria and Iran and that certainly must not be lost on us.

Desperate to regain its lost foothold in Lebanon, Syria has adopted the macabre strategy of systematically assassinating members of the March 14th parliamentary majority, the embodiment of the Cedar Revolution's ideals. This tactic is designed to ensure the election of a President sympathetic to Syrian hegemony. As the election date approaches, Lebanon's prodemocracy members of Parliament have been forced to enter complete seclusion in Beirut's Phoenicia Hotel. They cannot go outside, or even look out of windows, for fear of a sniper's bullet.

If we are committed to ensuring a free and democratic future for the Middle East, safe from terror and extremism, we must not remain silent or

passive about the need to ensure that the constitutional Presidential election process in Lebanon remains untainted by foreign meddling and coercion by terrorist groups like Hezbollah. We must be unequivocally clear in our support for our March 14 allies in Lebanon.

I commend Secretary of State Rice for her recent statement that "any candidate for president or any president [of Lebanon] needs to be committed to Lebanon's sovereignty and independence, needs to be committed to resolutions that Lebanon has signed on to . . . and needs to be committed to carrying on the tribunal." I also strongly agree when she says that "the March 14 majority should not be put in a position of having to accept either extra-constitutional measures or measures that would undermine the program that they stand for."

In light of the precarious situation in Lebanon, we must ensure that the United States will not support anything less than the untainted election of a constitutionally legitimate President in Lebanon.

We must make clear to the regimes in Syria and Iran, in no uncertain terms, that the United States will not support a puppet President that seeks to thwart the will of the Lebanese people, nor will the United States remain silent in the face of the spread of militant Islamic extremism.

We must not allow Lebanon to be dragged back into chaos and war. Lebanon's enemies should understand that we are fully dedicated to Lebanon's future as a model for independent and sovereign democracy in the Middle East. We cannot abandon the Lebanese people and our shared ideals at this critical moment. The stakes are simply too high—for Lebanon, for the Middle East, and for us.

TODAY'S ARMS RACE

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, the danger involved in combating crime in our Nation is escalating. Police departments across the country are being forced into a dangerous arms race with criminals and gangs. Increasingly confronted with assault rifles capable of firing up to 600 rounds per minute, law enforcement officers have been forced to carry military-style arms in order to counter such criminal firearm supremacy.

Recently, tensions have increased throughout south Florida's police departments after three Miami-Dade police officers were wounded and another killed by a man using an assault weapon. In a recent interview with CNN, Sergeant Laurie Pfeil, who supervises a sheriff's road patrol in Palm Beach County, stated that, "It's not nice we have to arm ourselves like the soldiers in Iraq. We are like soldiers. It is a war."

Over 60 police officers have been gunned down so far this year in the United States. According to Robert

Tessaro, the associate director for law enforcement relations for the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, we are currently on pace to set an alltime high. "We're having more than one officer shot and killed a week. It's just outrageous that officers are being targeted. It's something all Americans should be outraged about." Like many others, he lays the blame for this increase on the expiration of the assault weapons ban.

"It's different now. It's shootings on a weekly basis. Ten years ago, that just didn't happen. They don't get out and run from us anymore. They stop, and they're shooting at us," Sergeant Pfeil went on to say. "They don't have .38s anymore. They have AK-47s . . . They have automatic weapons now."

Miami Chief of Police John Timoney said he began noticing a significant increase in the use of automatic weapons used in crimes dating from the time the assault weapons ban was permitted to lapse. This increase includes an 18 percent increase last year and 20 percent increase this year.

The 1994 assault weapons ban prohibited the sale of 19 of the highest powered and most lethal firearms produced. Additionally, it 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.

I voted to establish the assault weapons ban, and 10 years later 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 protect Americans from assault weapons like the one used in the attack on the Miami-Dade police officers. As a result, police officers across the country are being forced to counter previously banned military-style assault weapons.

This Congress, as in previous ones, I will once again cosponsor the reinstating the assault weapons ban. Congress must take up and pass this piece of sensible gun safety legislation to aid our law enforcement agencies and to help prevent such tragedies from occurring in the future.

(At the request of Mr. REID, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

17TH ANNUAL COVENANT HOUSE CANDLELIGHT VIGIL FOR HOME- LESS YOUTH

• Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, on November 15, 2007, Covenant House will mark their 17th annual Candlelight Vigil for Homeless Youth. This Vigil will bring together individuals from