not only blocking an economic boost for the State and additional revenues for local governments but also blocking the projects' environmental benefits since they would create habitats critical for wildlife management. Well respected environmental groups such as the Society for Protection of New Hampshire Forests, Appalachian Mountain Club, and Audubon Society have come out against this legal challenge, and I support their efforts to maintain the consensus approach underlying the 2005 Forest Management Plan.

The White Mountain National Forest can and should be accessible to a wide variety of users, and we have a carefully crafted plan to accommodate them. It is unfortunate that a few groups who had their chance to provide input during the planning process are resorting to litigation to take apart the 2005 Forest Management Plan. Of course, the Forest Service must follow the law and carry out certain environmental reviews, and I defer to the courts to resolve these legal questions. However, I strongly believe that this lawsuit runs counter to New Hampshire's interests and undermines the good will among our State's major stakeholders which has been critical for advancing sound environmental policies. I therefore hope that this legal challenge is resolved as soon as possible and that we can all support the Forest Service's management of the White Mountain National Forest, including its proposed timber harvesting projects.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, unfortunately, history will record February 2008 as a month in which contained six separate high-profile multiple murders by firearms occurred across the country. These shootings occurred in places normally considered safe, including Northern Illinois University, Louisiana Technical College, and a city council meeting inside Kirkwood City Hall. It appears there are few places where the dangers of gun violence can not reach. However, there are some actions we can take to help change this epidemic of gun violence.

In 1993, President Clinton signed the Brady bill into law. This law requires a waiting period for handgun sales until records are available to instantly check criminal background of prospective gun purchasers. After the National Instant Check System, NICS, became operational in 1998, the Justice Department maintained background check records on approved purchases for 6 months to ensure that felons and other prohibited buyers were not mistakenly approved. Under the Bush administration, however, Attorney General John Ashcroft sought to require the destruction of the records of approved purchasers within 24 hours. In July 2002, the Government Accountability Office, GAO, issued a report on the potential effects of next-day destruction of NICS background check records. They concluded that destroying these records within 24 hours would prevent the government from auditing the NICS system to ensure its accuracy and ''would have public safety implications.'' Despite these GAO warnings, Attorney General Ashcroft decided to implement the 24-hour record destruction provision.

The Brady bill only requires background checks for sales by licensed gun dealers. It does not require them for transfers between unlicensed persons. Approximately 40 percent of all gun sales involve those transfers, such as at gun shows. Only 6 States require background checks on all firearm sales. According to the ATF, almost one-third of trafficked guns are acquired at gun shows and flea markets. These gatherings present the perfect opportunity for unlicensed sellers to offer large numbers of guns for sale with no questions asked. Those who would not pass a background check in a licensed gun store are able to purchase as many guns as they wish at gun shows.

In 1994, President Clinton signed legislation into law that banned the production of certain semiautomatic assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition magazines. Among the banned items was a list of 19 specific weapons as well as a number of other weapons incorporating certain design characteristics such as pistol grips, folding stocks, bayonet mounts, and flash suppressors. The 1994 assault weapons ban prohibited the manufacture of semiautomatic weapons that incorporate at least two of these military features and accept a detachable magazine. In 2004, when the assault weapons ban expired, despite the overwhelming support of the law enforcement community, the ongoing threat of terrorism, and bipartisan support in the Senate. Sadly, the tragedies at both Virginia Tech and Northern Illinois University were inflicted by someone using previously banned high capacity ammunition magazines.

On average, 32 people are murdered in this country by firearms every day. By instituting such simple changes in current law, addressing the gun show loophole and passing a new assault weapons ban, we could help reduce the likelihood of such tragedies occurring.

21ST CENTURY COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTERS INITIATIVE

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, today I express my support for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers, 21st CCLC, initiative, the only Federal funding source dedicated to supporting successful afterschool programs around the country. This program is critical to our children's and our economy's success.

For many American families, it is necessary for both parents to work outside the home, and these families face true challenges in finding affordable childcare services. This is a problem not only for parents of infants and toddlers too young to go to school, but also for parents of school-age children who would otherwise be left unsupervised in those critical hours between the end of the schoolday and the end of the workday. In Maryland, 25 percent of children in grades K–12 are responsible for taking care of themselves after school. Studies show that millions of children around our Nation are left on their own after school to devastating effects.

Researchers at Johns Hopkins University have concluded that two-thirds of the achievement gap between lower and higher income youth can be explained by unequal access to out-of-school activities, especially during the summer months. This unequal access creates a gap that begins in elementary school and accumulates over the years. It results in unequal placements in college preparatory tracks and increases the chance that children from low-income families will drop out of high school.

The hours between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. are the peak hours for juvenile crime and experimentation with drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, and sex. Teens who do not participate in afterschool programs are nearly three times more likely to skip classes than teens who do participate. They are also three times more likely to engage in risky and self-destructive behaviors.

Parents who have difficulty securing reliable afterschool care miss an average of 8 days of work per year, and studies have shown that decreased worker productivity related to parental concerns about afterschool care costs businesses up to $300 billion each year.

Recognizing the benefits of quality afterschool activities, Congress created the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative, which provides states with grant money to facilitate their efforts to provide children with quality afterschool social, academic, and other enrichment activities. The program's results have been dramatic.

In the 2004–2005 school year, 59 percent of regular attendees attained Federal proficiency levels or better in reading and language arts and 54 percent of regular attendees attained Federal proficiency levels or better in math. Teachers reported that a majority of participating students improved in every category of behavior. The categories with the highest percentages of student improvement were academic performance, completing homework to the teacher's satisfaction, class participation, and turning in homework on time.

A study conducted in Maryland's Anne Arundel County school district revealed that CCLC participants missed fewer days in school and achieved higher proficiency ratings in reading and math. Also, teachers perceived increases in students' overall achievement in school and their confidence in learning. Children attending

23 or more days of Maryland's After School Opportunity Fund Program showed greater gains on such measures as commitment to education and academic performance, and a reduction in delinquency.

According to a 2005 Manhattan Institute study, only one-third of American high school graduates are prepared for college. Our students are falling further behind in math, science, engineering, and other areas critical for success in the 21st century economy. The hours between 3 and 6 p.m. do not need to be peak hours for juvenile crime and dangerous experimentation. The afterschool hours can be and must be a time when our kids learn new skills, develop relationships with caring adults, and prepare for the future.

One program in Marriotsville, MD, is doing just that. In a reversal of roles, tech savvy students at Marriotts Ridge High School offer afterschool instruction in Photoshop, game design, Web design, Microsoft Office, and other programs to members of the community. The principal has raved about walking down his school's halls and seeing his students conduct workshops for individuals ranging from middle-schoolers through senior citizens. How impressive that these students are given the opportunity to master this technology and then develop the confidence and leadership necessary to teach it to others. What a benefit to these students and to that Maryland community!

So I was extremely disappointed, as were many of my colleagues, to see that President Bush's fiscal year 2009 budget proposal cuts funding for 21st Century Community Learning Centers by $300 million next year. If his proposal were enacted, 300,000 students nationwide would lose access to afterschool programs. Maryland alone would lose one-third of its funding, which would translate to a loss of services for 5,000 children.

The President also wants to turn the grant program into a voucher program. Currently, States review programs in a thorough, competitive process and award multi-year funding to the best proposals. These long-term grants allow programs to plan, grow, develop partnerships, and hire quality staff. Parents are able to choose among various programs for their children. By contrast, a voucher program would give the money to parents rather than the States, eliminating the funding stability that is so critical to developing high-quality programs.

The President's proposal is unwise in two respects. In the short term, it would eliminate many parents' access to afterschool care. In the long term, it would undermine the quality of those programs that survive. David Kass, the president of a national nonprofit anticrime organization called Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, has said, ''Law enforcement leaders across the country agree: this [proposal] threatens public safety.''

Mr. President, I hope that my colleagues will reject the administration's proposal and continue to support the 21st Century Community Learning Centers.

JOHN SHATTUCK ON RESTORING THE RULE OF LAW IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I welcome this opportunity to commend to my colleagues a very thoughtful and informational article in the current issue of the American Prospect by former Assistant Secretary of State and Ambassador to the Czech Republic, John Shattuck, who currently serves as CEO of the Kennedy Library Foundation.

In his article, ''Healing Our Self-Inflicted Wounds,'' Mr. Shattuck makes the point that in the past few years America has seriously wounded itself in the eyes of the wider world by failing to live up to our highest ideals. Our policies have made it more difficult to enlist the support of our traditional allies in accomplishing our foreign policy goals and have emboldened those who do not share our goals to work harder to undermine them.

Mr. Shattuck lays out several key steps for the next President to take to repair the damage done in the past 8 years and restore America's credibility—and strength—in the world. I believe his article will be of interest to all of us in Congress.

And I ask unanimous consent that the article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From The American Prospect, Jan.–Feb. 2008]

HEALING OUR SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS—HOW THE NEXT PRESIDENT CAN RESTORE THE RULE OF LAW TO U.S. FOREIGN POLICY—AND REBUILD AMERICAN CREDIBILITY AND POWER

(By John Shattuck)

There's a remarkable paradox in the relationship today between the United States and the rest of the world. Despite economic and military assets unparalleled in history, U.S. global influence and standing have hit rock bottom.

As an economic superpower, the U.S. has a defense budget that accounts for more than 40 percent of global military spending. But this ''hard power'' does not necessarily translate into real power. National-security failures abound, from the catastrophic events in Iraq to the resurgence of terrorist networks in Afghanistan and Pakistan, from the growing threat of civil war throughout the Middle East to the deepening uncertainties of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, from the standoff with Iran to the genocide in Darfur.

The next president will have to address these crises by re-establishing America's capacity to lead. Doing so will involve working to regain international credibility and respect by reshaping American foreign policy to direct the use of power within a framework of the rule of law.

THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM

The United States may be strong economically and militarily, but the rest of the world sees it as ineffective and dangerous on the global stage. Less than a decade ago the situation was quite different. A 1999 survey published by the State Department Office of Research showed that large majorities in France (62 percent), Germany (78 percent), Indonesia (75 percent), Turkey (52 percent), among others, held favorable opinions of the U.S.

This positive climate of opinion fostered an outpouring of international support immediately following the September 11 attacks. The U.S. was able to assemble a broad coalition with U.N. approval to respond to the attacks and strike terrorist strongholds in Afghanistan.

Six years later global support for U.S. leadership has evaporated. In poll after poll, international opinion of the U.S. has turned sour. A January 2007 BBC survey found that 52 percent of the people polled in 18 countries around the world had a ''mainly negative'' view of the U.S., with only 29 percent having a ''mainly positive'' view. In nearly all the countries that had strong support for the U.S. in 1999 a big downward shift of opinion had occurred by the end of 2006. In France it was down to 39 percent, in Germany down to 37 percent, and in Indonesia down to 30 percent. A separate survey conducted in 2006 by the Pew Research Center revealed extremely hostile attitudes toward the U.S. throughout the Arab and Muslim world: Egypt polled 70 percent negative, Pakistan 73 percent, Jordan 85 percent, and Turkey 88 percent.

A major factor driving this negative global opinion is the way the U.S. has projected its power in the ''war on terror.'' Four years after the Iraq invasion, U.S. military presence in the Middle East was seen by 68 percent of those polled by the BBC ''to provoke more conflict than it prevents.'' Similarly, a poll published in April 2007 by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs showed that in 13 of 15 countries, including Argentina, France, Russia, Indonesia, India, and Australia, a majority of people agreed that ''the U.S. cannot be trusted to act responsibly in the world.''

The U.S. is now seen internationally to be a major violator of human rights. The BBC poll showed that 67 percent of those surveyed in 18 countries disapproved of the U.S. government's handling of detainees in Guantanamo. A survey conducted in June 2006 by coordinated polling organizations in Germany, Great Britain, Poland, and India found that majorities or pluralities in each country believed that the U.S. has tortured terrorist detainees and disregarded international treaties in its treatment of detainees, and that other governments are wrong to cooperate with the U.S. in the secret ''rendition'' of prisoners.

These global opinion trends have reduced the capacity of the United States to carry out its foreign policy and protect national security. The perception of a growing gap between the values the U.S. professes and the way it acts—particularly in regard to human rights and the rule of law—has eroded U.S. power and influence around the world.

In his book, Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics, Joseph Nye analyzes a nation's ''ability to get what [it] wants through attraction rather than coercion.'' Soft power derives from ''the attractiveness of a nation's culture, political ideals, and policies. When [its] policies are seen as legitimate in the eyes of others, [its] soft power is enhanced.'' Today, American political ideals have lost much of their global attraction because their appeal has been undermined by U.S. policies and actions that lack legitimacy in the eyes of the world. American foreign policy will continue to fail until the U.S. regains the international respect it has lost.

Fortunately, history shows that the capacity to lead can be restored when U.S. values and policies are generally in synch. During