

less is unworthy of the people we represent, and that is why I oppose this effort launched today by my Republican colleagues.

THE MATTHEW SHEPARD ACT

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I wish to speak about the need for hate crimes legislation. Each Congress, Senator KENNEDY and I introduce hate crimes legislation that would strengthen and add new categories to current hate crimes law, sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society. Likewise, each Congress I have come to the floor to highlight a separate hate crime that has occurred in our country.

On the afternoon of December 4, 2007, 30-year-old Gilbert Aguilar was walking to a friend's house in Yucaipa, CA, when he was accosted by four Caucasian men. According to a witness, one of the men called Aguilar a racial slur, and after a brief exchange of words Aguilar continued on his way. Later that night, Aguilar and two friends, Joshua Morales and Ryan Couture, passed by the area where the confrontation had taken place. The four were still there waiting for Aguilar. According to a witness, one of the men in Aguilar's group threw a punch at one of the Caucasian men, provoking Christopher Fulmer to pull out a gun. A witness says Fulmer fired two or three rounds, hitting Couture in the arm and fatally wounding Morales. Fulmer, who has a swastika tattooed on his chest, will stand trial on counts of murder, attempted murder, and a hate crime.

I believe that the Government's first duty is to defend its citizens, to defend them against the harms that come out of hate. Federal laws intended to protect individuals from heinous and violent crimes motivated by hate are woefully inadequate. This legislation would better equip the Government to fulfill its most important obligation by protecting new groups of people as well as better protecting citizens already covered under deficient laws. I believe that by passing this legislation and changing current law, we can change hearts and minds as well.

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK WEEK

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to publicly recognize School Social Work Week, which is taking place March 2-8, 2008. This important week honors school social workers, who play a vital role in the development of our young students.

My wife Barbara was a school social worker for more than 18 years, so I understand the critical importance of the services they provide to children, families, and schools. Not only do school social workers provide family and student counseling, crisis intervention, family advocacy, truancy prevention, assistance with basic needs, and com-

munity referrals for long-term needs, but they also assist already overwhelmed and underfunded schools in finding ways to assist their "at risk" students. The presence of school social workers has helped increase attendance rates, academic performance, appropriate behavior, and parental involvement.

I believe the best way we can honor school social workers is by providing them with the resources they need to accomplish their jobs and serve our students. Children often must seek help at school for problems they are experiencing personally, as well as at home. Experts note that early identification and intervention can be beneficial in helping distressed young people cope with and handle the problems in their lives. Without school social workers and the wonderful services they provide, far too many children's needs would remain unaddressed.

For these reasons and countless others, proudly I stand today and applaud the wonderful work of these dedicated individuals. I am pleased that their tireless efforts are being publicly celebrated. It is with great honor that I share their impressive commitment to helping and educating our youth with my colleagues.

RECORD CORRECTION

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, in yesterday's speech on the executive branch stonewalling of congressional oversight, I erroneously referred to two Egyptian nationals charged with terrorism as former students at Florida State University. In fact, they are former students at the University of South Florida.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF ALT.CONSULTING

• Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, I wish to recognize a nonprofit organization that has been making a difference in the lives of Mid-South and Delta small business men and women for the last 10 years, alt.Consulting. Founded in 1998, alt.Consulting has been providing small business owners and entrepreneurs with the tools and advice needed to build their businesses and provide jobs in a region of the country in need of a boost.

When one reads their mission statement, you quickly gets a sense of what makes alt.Consulting different. It reads as follows:

alt.Consulting works with local business owners and entrepreneurs in rural Delta and minority communities to examine, diagnose, start and rebuild businesses. We provide tailored support, skill building, and access to capital to enhance business performance leading to growth and self-defined success.

We act on our ethical and social principles, empowering entrepreneurs to overcome racial, gender, socioeconomic and geographic barriers. We believe this leads to vibrant, entrepreneur friendly and just communities.

Through its comprehensive, affordable assistance to small businesses, alt.Consulting raises the standard of living by enabling profitability for new and growing businesses and preventing business failures. We demonstrate the contributions of healthy small businesses to growing communities with more jobs, wealth building opportunities and a stronger tax base.

With offices in Pine Bluff, AR, and Memphis, TN, alt.Consulting has gone into some of the most impoverished communities in Arkansas, Mississippi, and Tennessee and provided the support and assistance needed to get businesses off the ground. The average poverty rate in their target market is a staggering 24 percent. Average unemployment is 8 percent. Even more daunting is that less than 13 percent of the population has a bachelor's degree in the areas they work.

Due to their methodology, though, alt.Consulting has been making a big difference in the Mid-South and the Delta since its inception. In 2006, 195 businesses received one-on-one assistance. As a result, alt.Consulting was responsible for 75 new jobs in a region of the country that had been experiencing negative growth. Moreover, 10 businesses on the verge of failure were saved which protected 700 existing jobs. The sales growth of companies they assisted resulted in \$12.7 million in new economic activity. And their technical assistance resulted in \$430,000 in SBA community express loans to 39 businesses. This gave those existing businesses the working capital to grow and reach new customers.

alt.Consulting is also working with selected communities to train business specialists to replicate their services at the local level. Thanks to support from U.S. Department of Agriculture, the rural community development initiative program, and the Enterprise Corporation of the Delta, they have launched new, nonprofit microenterprise programs to provide continuous resources to rural communities throughout the Mid-South.

One such effort, the Pine Bluff Entrepreneurship Collaborative, was started in June 2006 and was comprised of 47 community leaders. Their goals were to create an equity pool to start and expand businesses, identify local resources for small businesses, make health insurance affordable for small businesses, and develop marketing and training workshops.

Youth is also a major focus for alt.Consulting. Recognizing that youth entrepreneurship builds a lifetime of opportunities, alt.Consulting works with partners to help "at-risk" youth start and build their own small businesses. Through one-on-one mentoring and assistance, alt.Consulting has worked to turn their young ideas into a reality.

As a native of Helena, AR, who grew up in the heart of the Delta, I am proud of the impact that alt.Consulting is making in communities throughout my State. They serve as an example of what we can do when we focus on what