

Certification isn't a guarantee of superior care, said Ralph Sacco, chairman of the American Stroke Association's Stroke Advisory Committee and chairman of neurology at the Miller School of Medicine at the University of Miami. But it's an indicator that the hospital has the infrastructure in place—and the commitment—to deliver high-quality treatment, he and Schwamm agreed.

What should you do if you think you or a loved one are having a stroke?

The keys to a good outcome, Schwamm said, are knowing the warning signs, calling 911 immediately and getting to a primary stroke center.

He and others say they hope that every state adopts a system to require transport to those centers. It could be a lifesaving trip.

FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE VIRGINIA TECH TRAGEDY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, tomorrow, April 16, 2008, marks the first anniversary of the horrific incident at Virginia Tech that resulted in the tragic deaths of 32 students and faculty members and serious injuries to many other innocent victims. Our hearts go out to the victims' families as they mourn their loved ones who tragically lost their lives before their time. Our sympathies also go out to the survivors of this terrible incident, as well as the entire Virginia Tech community, whose resilient spirit and courage in the face of tragedy over the past year have been truly remarkable.

We cannot reverse the senseless violence of one year ago, nor can we repair all of the damage that the heinous acts of one very disturbed young man caused for an entire community. But one thing we can do to honor the victims and their families is ensure that our schools, colleges, and universities have the support and resources they need to protect our children.

Regrettably, 1 year after the tragic events at Virginia Tech, little has been done at the national level to address the dangers our students continue to face. Over the past 12 months, we have continued to see threatening conduct and, too often, deadly acts of violence involving students of all ages. Only yesterday we learned that several colleges were shut down as officials assessed graffiti messages threatening violence on campus. School lockdowns are becoming all too common in our communities.

A string of tragedies in just 1 week's time this past February reminded us once again that our students face more than merely threatening violent conduct. Between February 8 and February 14, at least four incidents at schools and colleges resulted in death or serious injury to students of all ages.

On February 8, a female student killed two other students, and then herself, inside a classroom on the campus of Louisiana Technical College in Baton Rouge. Three days later, a student at Mitchell High School in Memphis, TN, was left in critical condition after a violent incident in the school's cafeteria. A day later, a 15-year-old boy

at E.O. Green Junior High in Oxnard, CA, was critically wounded by a classmate. He was later declared brain dead.

Then, on February 14, tragedy struck at Northern Illinois University. A former student opened fire in a geology class, killing 5 students and wounding 16, before killing himself. As hundreds of mourners remembered one of the Northern Illinois University victims at a funeral service, more than 1,000 Virginia Tech students—many of the same students who will grieve tomorrow for their lost friends, classmates, and professors—gathered in solidarity for a candlelight vigil in Blacksburg, VA.

Eight months ago, the Senate Judiciary Committee took a step to make our schools and college campuses safer when it reported the School Safety and Law Enforcement Improvement Act of 2007, S. 2084. Regrettably, the Senate has failed to take up and pass that bill to improve school safety. The 1-year anniversary of the Virginia Tech incident reminds us why this comprehensive legislation should be considered and passed without further delay.

In originating the bill more than 8 months ago, the Judiciary Committee showed deference to Gov. Tim Kaine and the task forces at work in Virginia and sought to complement their work and recommendations. Working with several Senators, including Senators BOXER, REED, SPECTER, FEINGOLD, SCHUMER, and DURBIN, the committee originated this bill and reported it at the start of the 2007 academic year in the hope that Congress would adopt these critical school safety improvements last fall. We worked hard to get it done.

The incidents at E.O. Green Junior High, Mitchell High School, Louisiana Technical College, and Northern Illinois University are just a few of the tragic events that have claimed lives or resulted in serious injuries to students since the Virginia Tech tragedy. In the time since this bill was reported out of the Judiciary Committee, we have seen tragic deaths at Delaware State University and the University of Memphis and grievous injuries sustained by students and teachers at SuccessTech Academy in Cleveland, OH. And there have been numerous lockdowns nationwide as a result of threatening conduct in our schools, including recent lockdowns at Fern Creek High School in Louisville, KY, and St. Peter's College in Jersey City, NY.

The School Safety and Law Enforcement Improvement Act would address the problem of violence in our schools in several ways. The bill authorizes Federal assistance for programs to improve the safety and security of our schools and institutions of higher education, provides equitable benefits to law enforcement serving those institutions, including bulletproof vests, and funds pilot programs to develop cutting-edge prevention and intervention programs for our schools. The bill also clarifies and strengthens two existing

statutes—the Terrorist Hoax Improvements Act and the Law Enforcement Officers Safety Act—which are designed to improve public safety.

Specifically, the bill would improve the safety and security of students both at the elementary and secondary school level and on college and university campuses. The K-12 improvements are drawn from a bill that Senator BOXER introduced right after the Virginia Tech tragedy, and I want to thank Senator BOXER for her hard work on this issue. The improvements include increased funding for much needed infrastructure changes to improve security as well as the establishment of hotlines and tip-lines, which will enable students to report potentially dangerous situations to school administrators before they occur.

To address the new realities of campus safety in the wake of Virginia Tech and more recent college incidents, the bill also creates a matching grant program for campus safety and security to be administered out of the COPS Office of the Department of Justice.

The grant program would allow institutions of higher education to apply, for the first time, directly for Federal funds to make school safety and security improvements. The program is authorized to be appropriated at \$50 million for the next 2 fiscal years. While this amounts to just \$3 per student each year, it will enable schools to more effectively respond to dangerous situations on campus.

The bill would also make sworn law enforcement officers who work for private institutions of higher education and rail carriers eligible for death and disability benefits and for funds administered under the Byrne Grant Program and the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Program. Providing this equitable treatment is in the best interest of our Nation's educators and students and will serve to place the support of the Federal Government behind the dedicated law enforcement officers who serve and protect private colleges and universities nationwide. The leadership of Senator JACK REED has been vital in this area.

The bill also helps law enforcement by making improvements to the Law Enforcement Officers Safety Act of 2003, LEOSA. These amendments to existing law will streamline the system by which qualified retired and active officers can be certified under LEOSA. It serves us all when we permit qualified officers, with a demonstrated commitment to law enforcement and no adverse employment history, to protect themselves, their families, and their fellow citizens wherever those officers may be.

The bill focuses on prevention as well, by incorporating the PRECAUTION Act at the request of Senators FEINGOLD and SPECTER. This provision authorizes grants to develop prevention and intervention programs for our schools.

Finally, the bill incorporates the Terrorist Hoax Improvements Act of

2007, at the request of Senator KENNEDY.

The Virginia Tech Review Panel—a body commissioned by Governor Kaine to study the Virginia Tech tragedy—has issued its findings based on a 4-month investigation of the incident and its aftermath. This bill would adopt a number of recommendations from the Review Panel aimed at improving school safety.

We must not miss this opportunity to implement these initiatives nationwide and to take concrete steps to ensure the safety of our kids. The Senate should move forward and act. I hope those who are holding up this legislation will reconsider their position today as we prepare to remember and to honor those who so tragically lost their lives, and those who had their lives changed forever, in the most deadly incident on a college campus in our Nation's history.

The Senate should move forward to invest in the safety of our students and to better support law enforcement officers across the country by considering and passing the School Safety and Law Enforcement Improvement Act of 2007.

CAPITAL AREA DISTRICT LIBRARY 10TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, since the first library society was formed in Detroit in 1817, libraries have played a central role in the cultural and economic development of the people of Michigan. Nearly 200 years after that first foray into book-sharing, libraries have spread across our State. Today I would like to take a moment to recognize the Capital Area District Library in Ingham County, which is celebrating a decade of enriching the Lansing area, and in doing so has continued the long history of libraries making important contributions to our State.

The Capital Area District Library system plays a significant role in the early stages of learning for children in Lansing, and provides important resources for continuing education for adults. The 13 libraries and the book mobile are places where all are welcome to access and pursue a wealth of information. Patrons can work on their own, in organized programs, or with the assistance of the highly effective library staff, who are focused on promoting learning and enjoyment.

The resources available through the Capital Area District Library also play a critical role in economic development. Considering that more than half of all American households do not have computers or Internet access, the Capital Area District Library resources are more important than ever to connect our citizens to technology and information in this rapidly changing world.

Thomas Jefferson once wrote to John Adams, "I cannot live without books." Books and education were a bedrock of life for our Nation's Founding Fathers and of our democracy; books and education and new learning resources that

the Founding Fathers could not have imagined must be readily available to citizens across the country. The Capital Area District Library continues to fulfill this need in Lansing and Ingham County, and has done so for 10 years with remarkable effectiveness. I congratulate all who have worked so hard on this venture, and extend my deepest appreciation for their service to the citizens of our State.

IRS PRIVATE DEBT COLLECTION ACTIVITIES

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, today is April 15, the day when millions of Americans are hurrying to file their income tax forms to meet the midnight deadline. Many of my colleagues have spoken today about the need to make more effective and responsible use of Federal tax dollars, and I agree that we must do so. One place to start is with the IRS's own private debt collection program.

Today, the Washington Post reported that the Internal Revenue Service's use of private debt collection agencies is expected to cost taxpayers more than \$37 million this year. Throughout our Nation's history, the Federal Government had always assumed responsibility for tax collection. But in 2004, through legislation that I opposed, Congress gave the IRS authority to use private debt collection companies to collect undisputed tax debts of less than \$25,000. The companies also would receive a 25-percent commission on all receipts. Although the stated goal was to improve the efficiency of tax collections, it is clear that this plan is not working.

In fact, even before Congress adopted this approach, former IRS Commissioner Charles Rossotti estimated, in a 2002 report to the IRS Oversight Board, that if Congress were to appropriate an additional \$296 million to hire more compliance employees, the agency could collect an additional \$9.47 billion. In other words, every dollar spent on collection would net \$31. But rather than increase the number of IRS employees, Congress ignored Commissioner Rossotti's advice and instead spent scarce taxpayer funds to privatize IRS functions, with dismal results.

In March 2008, Nina Olson, the National Taxpayer Advocate, reported to Congress that the program actually is losing money. Testifying before the House Ways and Means Committee, Ms. Olson said that the IRS is losing at least \$81 million a year by using private debt collection companies. The IRS spent \$71 million to start the program and it spends \$7.65 million annually to operate it, plus on average \$4.6 million in commissions that are paid to the private collectors. Despite using aggressive tactics, the companies have collected only \$49 million, little more than half of what it has cost the IRS to implement the program. By contrast, Ms. Olson testified, and I quote, "if the

program did not exist and the IRS instead allocated \$7.65 million in appropriated funds to its automated collection system, ACS, function, the return on investment would be vastly greater. IRS data shows that the average return on investment for the ACS program is about 20:1, which would mean that an expenditure of \$7.65 million would generate annual revenue of \$153 million." Ms. Olson then recommended that the private debt collection initiative be terminated. I concur.

The privatization initiative is also putting millions of Americans' personal information at risk. I do not believe that Americans want private collection agencies to have access to their sensitive, personal information that should only be reserved for the Federal Government and the qualified, trained, accountable personnel who work at the IRS.

The Ways and Means Committee recently considered legislation that would repeal the IRS's authority to use private debt collection agencies. The Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act was reported out of committee in a bipartisan vote. My distinguished colleague from North Dakota has introduced similar legislation that would prohibit the IRS from using private debt collection companies, and I am pleased to be an original cosponsor of that bill.

The private debt collection program also has generated considerable confusion among taxpayers. Under the rules of the program, collectors cannot say they are working for the IRS or that they are calling about a tax matter without first receiving proof of a taxpayer's identity. This has led to numerous complaints from consumers who have received calls from collectors, pressing them to provide Social Security numbers and other personal information without first identifying the purpose of the call. Citizens are justifiably fearful of being scammed, and so they refuse to provide the companies with any information. By any measure, this program is not working.

Mr. President, the private debt collection experiment has failed. Tax collection is a fundamental responsibility of Government, and Congress should provide the IRS with the staff and other resources needed to fulfill this responsibility, not enrich private companies at the expense of American taxpayers. Today on April 15—Tax Day—millions of Americans are rushing to file their taxes before the midnight deadline. Many are writing checks to the IRS, and so it is an appropriate time to reconsider the millions of dollars they are spending on the private debt collection program. It is time for this body to pass Senator DORGAN's bill and end this inefficient use of taxpayer dollars.

HONORING OUR MILITARY

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the courage