THE U.S. ARMY SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS

Mr. CLELAND. Mr. President, I rise today to express my continued support for the U.S. Army School of the Americas (SOA), located at Fort Benning, Georgia. Legislation has been introduced by my colleagues both in the House and the Senate which would close the School of the Americas, and last evening the House adopted an amendment to do so. Mr. President, I rise to support the School of the Americas and the vital mission it performs in encouraging diplomacy and democracy within the militaries located in the Americas.

The School of the Americas has been a key instrument of U.S. foreign policy in Latin and Southern America for over fifty years and is the single most important instrument of our National Security Strategy of engagement in the Southern Hemisphere.

The legislation opposing the School has been accompanied by a mountain of communications alleging that this School, operated by the U.S. Army and funded by taxpayers' dollars, is the cause of horrendous human rights abuses in Central and South America. In twelve separate investigations since 1989, the Department of Defense, the Army, the GAO and others have found nothing to suggest that the School either taught or inspired Latin Americans to commit such crimes. Yet, sponsors of these measures reproduce the critics' list of atrocities allegedly committed by a small number of graduates in order to transfer responsibility for these crimes to the backs of the School and the Army rather than to the individuals themselves.

The School is, and always has been, a U.S. Army training and education institution teaching the same tactics, techniques, and procedures taught at other U.S. military schools. The very same values that the Army teaches its own soldiers. These U.S. military personnel receive the same training as all graduates of our military schools. To suggest that terrorist activities are taught to students would suggest that we in fact teach terrorist activities to all of our own military personnel. This is assuredly not the case.

The School is commanded by a U.S. Army colonel whose chain of command includes the Commanding General of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command. The School also receives oversight and direction from the Commander-in-Chief of U.S. Southern Command. The School's staff and faculty includes over 170 U.S. Army officers, noncommissioned officers, enlisted soldiers, and Department of the Army civilians. The School counts among its graduates over 1,500 U.S. military personnel including five general officers currently serving on active duty in our military.

I agree completely with critics of the School that "Human rights is not a partisan issue," and I further agree that, in the past there were indeed shortcomings in the School's fulfillment of its mission to transmit all of the values we hold dear in our country. In that regard, today, the U.S. Army School of the Americas has the U.S. Army's premier human rights training program. The program has been expanded in recent years in consultation with the International Committee of the Red Cross and Mr. Steve Schneebaum, a noted human rights attorney and a member of the School's Board of Visitors. Every student and instructor at the School receives mandatory human rights instruction and the International Committee of the Red Cross teaches human rights each year during the School's Command and General Staff and Peace Operations course. Latin American soldiers, civilians, and police received human rights instruction at the U.S. Army School of the Americas.

Latin America is currently undergoing an unparalleled transformation to democratic governance, civilian control of the military, and economic reform along free market principles. Almost every nation in Latin America has a democratically elected government. During this transition, the region's militaries have accepted structural cuts, reduced budgets, and curtailed influence in society. In many cases, their acceptance of this new reality has been encouraged and enhanced by the strategy of engagement of the U.S. and its allies in Latin America.

I ask each of you to take a careful look at the U.S. Army School of the Americas as it exists today. Look to the future. As stated by the School's critics, "The contentious politics of U.S. foreign policy in Central America in the 1980s are over." I strongly urge you to continue your support of the Army School of the Americas and the U.S. Army.

REGULATORY FAIRNESS AND OPENNESS ACT

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, I rise today to signify my support for the introduction of the Regulatory Fairness and Openness Act of 1999.

According to data compiled in the last five years, the State of Washington produces more than 230 food, feed and seed crops; ranks in the top five for the value of its agricultural commodities produced; leads the nation in the production of apples, spearmint oil, red raspberries, hops, edible peas and lentils, asparagus, sweet cherries, and \(\ldots\)