CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—SENATE

November 19, 1999

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I am pleased to join with my colleague from South Dakota, Senator Democratic Leader Tom Daschle, as a cosponsor of the Wakpa Sica Reconciliation Place Act, which will establish the Wakpa Sica Reconciliation Place in Ft. Pierre, South Dakota. The Wakpa Sica Reconciliation Place would be an important cultural and interpretive center, and it would provide resources that are designed to promote development and job creation.

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The Reconciliation Place would also be the home of the Sioux Nation Supreme Court. This will serve to be a stable legal setting to assist in achieving greater social and economic welfare in the Indian Country. Increased legal stability will help promote business investment in the vast human resources that are situated on the reservations in my state. This will bring about more self sufficiency, and less reliance by the tribes.

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The Reconciliation Place will include a cultural center which will serve as a home for Sioux law, history, culture and arts for the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota peoples. It will also serve as a repository for Sioux historical documents, which are currently scattered throughout the West. Many native people do not have access to these documents. With the construction of this facility the native people will be able to house these documents close to home. This will allow interested parties to research their rich past.

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Notah turned pro after college and has been quickly rising in the PGA ranks. At the Nike Alumni Open this year, Notah became only the third player in history to shoot a 59 on a U.S. pro tour. He joins Al Geiberger and Chip Beck as the only players to score such a feat.

Notah has dedicated himself to providing new opportunities for young Native Americans. By working to raise money to establish golf programs at reservation schools and seeking donations of golf equipment for kids who could never afford the costly clubs, Notah is providing the tools that may lead to more great golfers with Native American roots.

In some ways, Notah Begay’s success is not surprising. He is half Navajo and half Pueblo Indian and he follows a tradition of courage and strength, exemplified by his grandfather. Notah’s grandfather, Notah Begay I, was one of the famous Code Talkers during World War II. The Code Talkers relayed sensitive information for the United States military through a code based on the Navajo language. They proved to be a critical component of the military intelligence during World War II.

Notah’s unprecedented success has shown a generation of young Americans that with hard work and dedication, any dream is achievable. The success Notah has earned is equal only to the inspiration he provides for Native American youth in his home state of New Mexico and across the country. I commend him not only for his golf success, but also for his commitment to the youth of New Mexico.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

EAST TIMOR

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I want to say a few words about a piece of legislation that is not moving this year. I want to speak about it because it deals with an extremely important topic, one that has not received the attention and commitment that it deserves from this body.

That topic is the appropriate state of U.S.-Indonesian relations today.

Mr. President, I introduced S. 1568, the East Timor Self-Determination Act of 1999, on September 8—well over two months ago. That legislation, which passed the Foreign Relations Committee on September 27 by an overwhelming vote of 17-1, was cosponsored by the Chairman of that Committee as well as many other Members of the Senate.

I took that action, in cooperation with my colleagues, because events in East and West Timor demanded it.

On August 30, well over 99% of registered voters in East Timor courageously came to the polls to express their will regarding the political status of that territory.

More than 78% of those voters marked their ballot in favor of independence.

But weeks of violence immediately followed the vote, as the Indonesian military—a military that our country has long supported—colluded with militia groups in waging a scorched earth campaign against the East Timorese people and their democratic aspirations throughout the territory.

Hundreds of thousands of people were forced to flee, and many were killed.

But for the East Timorese run out of their homes in the fray, the nightmare did not end there.

There seems to be a perception out there that all is well in Indonesia today, and that the East Timor crisis is over. Unfortunately, that is simply not true.

Last week, the Associated Press reported on the public comments of the spokesperson for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The spokesman said that many East Timorese are being forced at gunpoint to return to the camps that have been characterized by humanitarian and medical care. He said, and this is a direct quote, that “the moment an East Timorese expresses a desire to leave the camps and go home their life is in danger.” And the UNHCR spokesperson noted, in last week’s AP report, that many relief organizations have received reports of refugees being raped and beaten by militias.

Mr. President, to this day, militia members harass and intimidate East Timorese in West Timor’s refugee camps. Only about 56,000 refugees have returned home to East Timor. Approximately two hundred thousand remain, in many cases against their will, in the refugee camps of West Timor.

This day, human relief organizations do not have the access that they need to all of the refugee camps to which East Timorese fled.

Throughout all of this pain, throughout the destruction of lives and property, throughout this brutal retaliation for courageous acts of democratic expression, this Senate has been silent. We have had no floor debate and no vote. My original bill, despite being voted out of committee with only one dissenting vote, has languished on the calendar for weeks.

In response to that silence, Mr. President, I negotiated an arrangement to introduce an amendment to the bankruptcy bill addressing this issue. Squeezing this important topic into the middle of a debate on an unrelated bill was certainly not the most desirable approach, but I was determined to pursue this legislation.

The amendment I had planned to offer was considerably different from my original bill. I made significant alterations to it in order to respond to changing events and the concerns of other Senators and the Administration.