

and I am judged. So is everybody else around me. I know that I've withstood my fair share of insults, and they still keep coming. And I know many people around me have it worse than I do, especially my school's own group of trench coat wearers, commonly referred to as "Goths." I'm willing to admit there are firearms in my household; I'm even proud of it. I'm not especially popular, and I could easily find out how to make bombs on the Internet. I'm sure many of the "Goths" at my school have access to the same materials. Given this information, I think that it's time I or someone else at my school went on a homicidal rampage, don't you think? I don't think so! Just because people are harassed doesn't justify a killing.

In the real world, people are harassed all the time. I think it's just life. There are mean people out there. Live with it. The killers at Columbine High School were lacking something in their personalities to do something like this. That is self-control, self-esteem and an understanding of the value of life. I think this has less to do with harassment and more with the killers themselves. If the killers had better values, this never would have happened.

Maybe firearms are to blame? I'm sure many people noticed that immediately after this incident, a series of gun-control laws were proposed, including a proposal to raise the age limit to own a handgun from 18 to 21. Do people really think that if the handgun age limit was higher, this incident would have never happened?

I hate to say it, but welcome to politics. In the world today, what people want to see is action. It has to be quick, it has to be cheap and it has to keep them from being responsible. Politicians realize this, so immediately they come up with a "solution" that fits these criteria. It doesn't have to work; the people just have to think it does. So what happens? Well, they scream, "Guns are the problem!" and we all lose more rights.

The truth is, if somebody wants to kill someone with a firearm laws banning guns aren't going to stop them. A lot of guns used in robberies and murders are stolen. Well, if we got rid of the runs in the world, then we would have a solution, right! Nope, people would use other homemade weapons, bombs, knives, etc.

A gun is a tool, not a weapon. It is a tool for hunting, recreation and protection. It can be a historical piece, it can be a keepsake, it can represent something. Guns are not to blame for the Columbine High School incident.

By now you might be asking yourself what is to blame. Unfortunately, it's a problem not many people want to face. It starts at the home. It starts with a lack of discipline, a lack of love, and a lack of values. I'm sure that if the parents of the boys involved in this shooting incident has been more involved with their kids, this incident would have never occurred.

The parents are not completely to blame. Today's violent televised society illustrates this violence as a normal everyday thing. This makes it difficult to draw the line between right and wrong. These things, added together, resulted in the final problem: The boys responsible for this shooting. In the end, it is they who are responsible.

So, what can be done to prevent another tragedy like this one? To all the parents who are reading this talk to your kid! Even though you may not want to and your kids may act like they don't want to talk to you, just their knowing you're willing to talk often helps. Spend time with them, draw

them to activities that keep them busy and feeling wanted such as sports, church, even target shooting! If parents teach their kids how to use and respect a firearm, they'll be less likely to abuse it than if their parents avoid telling them about guns.

To all of the kids and teens reading this: talk to your parents. They can be a valuable source of information and can help you when you feel there is no one else to turn.

Other things you can do include complimenting people instead of insulting them, always remembering that you are important, having good friends, and reporting to authorities if anyone you know makes dangerous threats against you or anyone else. By doing this we might be able to prevent another incident like the one that occurred at Columbine High School. I hope that everyone reading this will pray for the families affected by the shooting and take my advice to heart.

RECOGNITION OF SERVICE TO THE SENATE

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, it is with some sadness but also with some pride, that I stand before the Senate today to recognize Austin Smythe—a longstanding and highly respected member of the Senate Budget Committee staff. After nearly 15½ years of service to the Senate and the Congress, Austin will begin employment in the private sector at the end of this week.

Those who know Austin in this Chamber, know he is a Senator's dream staffer. Austin is dedicated, loyal, intelligent, and above all else possessing integrity beyond reproach. He came to the Senate Budget Committee in December 1983, as the committee's energy budget expert. Over the years, he gradually took on more responsibilities to where today, as he leaves the Senate, he is my staff director's right-hand man on issues related to the budget act, process reform issues, and the often arcane world of budget score keeping.

He has been instrumental in the passage of many a budget resolution and reconciliation bills over these last many years. He has also taken the lead on helping to reform the process by his work on the Federal Credit Reform Act of 1990, the Unfunded Mandates Control Act of 1995, and the Line Item Veto Act of 1996—that unfortunately was ruled unconstitutional. He has been my key budget committee staffer on my quest to get Congress to change its appropriation and budget process into a biennial system—that work, I promise you Austin, will continue.

Along the way, Austin was able to find the time to get married and start a family. It is his wife, Katie, and his two young girls that have borne the real burden of Austin's dedicated service to the Senate and his country.

The American public is unaware of the role staff play in helping us elected officials "to do the right thing." Sometimes even with good staff, we get it wrong, and of course, when it doesn't

come out right we blame our staff. But if the legislation advances public policy in an affirmative way, we will take the credit for success. In truth, of course, it is to staff like Austin Smythe, who work under very difficult circumstances, long hours, and sleepless nights, that we—and indeed the country—all owe a tremendous debt of gratitude. For without Austin's dedication, and staff like him, the things we have gotten right would never have happened.

I wish Austin and his family the best. And on behalf of all the Budget Committee members, the committee staff, and indeed the entire Senate, thank you Austin for a job well done. We all will miss you.

KIDNAPPING OF SENATOR CORDOBA IN COLOMBIA

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I rise today to express my deep concern over the kidnapping of Colombian Senator Piedad Córdoba de Castro. Senator Córdoba was abducted on May 21 by paramilitary forces under the command of Carlos Castaño. I urge the Government of Colombia to take all appropriate measures to obtain her safe release and to bring those responsible for this kidnapping to justice.

Senator Córdoba, as President of the Colombian Senate's Human Rights Commission, is a strong voice in Colombia for the promotion of human rights. She has also been a leader in efforts to bring peace to Colombia after fifty years of political violence. Senator Córdoba's role as a leading advocate of human rights and peace makes this crime particularly shocking.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has also condemned the kidnapping of Senator Córdoba and has urged the Colombian authorities to do everything possible to obtain her release. Secretary-General Annan called Senator Córdoba "a firm supporter of peace" who had "performed invaluable work towards the achievement of fundamental rights and freedom".

It is extremely disturbing to see that paramilitary forces and guerrilla groups involved in Colombia's internal conflict continue to resort to kidnapping as a means of political pressure. This violent action against a prominent human rights advocate emphasizes the importance of the efforts of President Pastrana to eliminate all links between the Colombian Government and the paramilitaries.

I urge the Government of Colombia to take all necessary and appropriate measures to break these links, obtain Senator Córdoba's release, and bring to justice those responsible for her kidnapping.