

Meanwhile, in the three and a half years that expedited removal has been in operation, we already have numerous stories of valid asylum seekers who were thrown out of the country without the opportunity to convince an immigration judge that they faced persecution in their native lands. To provide just one example, "Dem," a Kosovar Albanian, was summarily removed from the U.S. after the civil war in Kosovo had already made the front pages of America's newspapers. During his interview with the INS inspector who had unreviewable discretion over his fate, he was provided with a Serbian translator who did not speak Albanian, rendering the interview a farce. Instead of being embraced as a political refugee, he was put on the next plane back to where his flight had originated. We only know about his story at all because he was dogged enough to make it back to the United States. On this second trip, he was found to have a credible fear of persecution and he is currently in the midst of the asylum process.

One of the most distressing parts of expedited removal is that there is no way for us to know how many deserving refugees have been excluded. Because secondary inspection interviews are conducted in secret, we typically only learn about mistakes when refugees manage to make it back to the United States a second time, like Dem, or when they are deported to a third country they passed through on their way to the U.S. This uncertainty should lead us to be especially wary of continuing this failed experiment.

And now we must even be concerned about the conduct of credible fear interviews. When aliens subject to expedited removal express a fear of returning to their home country, the law requires that they be referred for a credible fear hearing. If their fear is found to be legitimate, they are then allowed to make a claim for political asylum. These interviews are not designed to make judgments about legal questions, but simply to determine whether a person may have a valid asylum claim. This process failed Ms. Michel, and we must now worry that it is failing other refugees.

I am also concerned about the underlying legal issue in the case of Ms. Michel and other victims of domestic violence. Last year, the Board of Immigration Appeals denied the asylum request of a Guatemalan woman who faced likely death at the hands of her husband if she were forced to return home. In that decision, *Matter of R-A-*, the BIA decided that victims of domestic violence did not qualify as a "social group" under our asylum laws. The Attorney General currently has this very decision under review. It is my hope that she will reverse it.

Last year I sent a letter to the INS Commissioner supporting the asylum

claim of Ms. R-A. In that case, the INS did not dispute her account of horrific abuse, including her claims that her husband raped and pistol-whipped her, and beat her unconscious in front of her children. Nor did the INS dispute that law enforcement authority in her native Guatemala told her that they would not protect her from violent crimes committed against her by her husband. Based on this evidence, an immigration judge determined in 1996 that she was entitled to asylum, but the INS appealed that ruling and convinced the BIA to reverse it. That decision is currently on appeal in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, but that court has stayed its consideration of the matter pending the Attorney General's own review.

Evidence of domestic violence is sadly all too common in our asylum system. Last year, I also encouraged the INS to grant asylum to a 16-year-old girl from Mexico who sought asylum in the United States after fleeing from a father who had beaten her since she was three years old, using whips, tree branches, his fists, and a hose. Apparently, the girl attempted to intervene when her father was beating her mother. Again, local law enforcement failed to protect the girl, and she fled to the United States. As in *R-A-*, an immigration judge granted her asylum request, but the INS appealed, and the BIA reversed it.

These BIA decisions came only two years after its decision that Fauziya Kasinga—who faced female genital mutilation if forced to return to her native Togo—was protected by our asylum laws. In making this decision, the BIA found that potential victims of genital mutilation constituted a "social group." I agree with this decision, and I believe that women fearing domestic violence must certainly also so qualify. This is especially true where—as is the case for Ms. Michel and many other women—the asylum applicants come from nations where law enforcement officials often turn a blind eye to claims of domestic violence.

Of course, the problems faced by women around the world go beyond domestic violence. Another stark example of the ways in which women applicants may be insufficiently protected by our asylum laws comes from the case of Ms. A-, a Jordanian woman seeking asylum in the United States after fleeing the prospect of a so-called "honor killing" in Jordan. I wrote the Attorney General in February—along with a bipartisan group of six other Senators—to support her asylum application. Ms. A- had fallen in love with a Palestinian man who asked her to marry him. Her father forbade the marriage, however, because he was Palestinian and had a low-paying job. Ms. A- was at that point faced with the possibility that she might be pregnant and the certainty that her future husband,

whoever he might be, would know that she was no longer a virgin, a fact that would bring shame and dishonor upon her family and potentially justify her murder at her family's hands under a widely-practiced Jordanian custom. She fled to the United States and married this man.

In June 1995, her sister informed her that their father had met with their nuclear family, uncles and cousins to demand that they kill A- wherever they might meet her. The State Department reported that there were more than 20 "honor killings" in Jordan in 1998, and speculated that the actual number was probably four times as high. Making matters even worse, these killings are typically punishable by only a few months' imprisonment.

Despite the very close resemblance between these facts and the facts in *Kasinga*, both an immigration judge and the BIA found that Ms. A- was ineligible for asylum. The INS has agreed to stay further proceedings in the case while the Attorney General reviews the matter.

The existence of these problems in our asylum system shows that there is still work to be done, both by this Congress and in the executive branch. I call upon the Senate to use some of the time we have remaining to address the problems in our expedited removal system, and upon the Attorney General and the INS to be vigilant that victims of rape and other forms of serious domestic abuse not be returned to their countries under expedited removal. And I renew my call to the Attorney General that we reevaluate our position on asylum eligibility for victims of severe domestic violence from nations that do not take domestic violence seriously. Finally, I encourage all of my colleagues to sign on to a letter that Senator LANDRIEU and I are circulating that would ask the Attorney General to overturn *R-A-* and reaffirm our commitment to human rights and women's rights.

#### HUD'S GUN BUYBACK PROGRAM

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, in recent months, some Members of Congress have questioned the Department of Housing and Urban Development's authority to conduct gun buyback programs under the Public and Assisted Housing Drug Elimination Act. As the author of that legislation, I rise to set the record straight.

In proposing the Public and Assisted Housing Drug Elimination Act, my intent was to make our streets safer, particularly in federally-assisted and low-income housing where the federal government has a clear responsibility to protect families. And that intent is reflected in the statutory language, 42 U.S.C. Section 11902(a), which provides that HUD is to make grants available for use in "eliminating drug-related

and violent crime." Certainly, violent crime includes all of the offenses involving guns, whether it is murder, robbery, or gang-related activity. In short, gun buybacks are an eligible activity under the Act, and HUD has acted properly in assisting housing authorities and local communities with this important effort.

Furthermore, HUD's efforts to combat gun violence have been very successful. HUD's Gun Buyback and Violence Reduction Initiative has taken about 18,500 guns off the streets in more than 70 cities, and this program has received strong support from community organizations and law enforcement.

Every year, gun violence claims an average of 30,000 lives and wounds another 100,000 people. Congress should support, and not impede, local efforts to get guns off our streets and reduce crime.

#### THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Monday, September 18, 2000, the Federal debt stood at \$5,651,871,016,617.17, five trillion, six hundred fifty-one billion, eight hundred seventy-one million, sixteen thousand, six hundred seventeen dollars and seventeen cents.

Five years ago, September 18, 1995, the Federal debt stood at \$4,963,469,000,000, four trillion, nine hundred sixty-three billion, four hundred sixty-nine million.

Ten years ago, September 18, 1990, the Federal debt stood at \$3,232,530,000,000, three trillion, two hundred thirty-two billion, five hundred thirty million.

Fifteen years ago, September 18, 1985, the Federal debt stood at \$1,823,102,000,000, one trillion, eight hundred twenty-three billion, one hundred two million.

Twenty-five years ago, September 18, 1975, the Federal debt stood at \$550,627,000,000, five hundred fifty billion, six hundred twenty-seven million which reflects a debt increase of more than \$5 trillion—\$5,101,244,016,617.17, five trillion, one hundred one billion, two hundred forty-four million, sixteen thousand, six hundred seventeen dollars and seventeen cents during the past 25 years.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

#### RECOGNITION OF MEGAN QUANN, GOLD MEDAL SWIMMER FROM PUYALLUP, WA

• Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate a remarkable young woman who hails from the great state of Washington and just recently struck gold at the Summer Olympics in Sydney, Australia.

On Monday, Megan Quann, a junior at Emerald Ridge High School in Puyallup, won the gold medal in the 100-meter breaststroke. Megan rallied from third place to win in a time of 1:07.05, setting a new American record.

Practicing every morning at 4:30 a.m. and swimming over 11 miles a day in preparation for the Olympics, Megan is a truly dedicated and inspiring athlete. I have learned that the City of Puyallup is already in the planning stages of welcoming their Olympic champion home with keys to the city and a plan to set aside a day on the calendar as "Megan Quann Day."

Later this week, Megan will compete again as part of the women's medley relay and will have another shot at bringing home the gold. I wish Megan luck in her next race and ask that the Senate join me in congratulating her for what she has achieved.●

#### THE NATIONAL HISTORY DAY PROGRAM

• Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to speak on and give my support to a worthy program called National History Day. National History Day is a year-long, nonprofit program in which children in grades 6-12 research and create historical projects related to a broad annual theme. This year's theme was "Turning points in History: People, Ideas, Events." Using this theme, students research their area of interest and create a project, which is then entered in an annual contest. The primary goal of the National History Day program is to revolutionize the techniques implemented in teaching and training our youth.

What I want to emphasize today is the tremendous impact this unique and valuable program has had in my home state of New Mexico. New Mexico's involvement with National History Day began three years ago, and has continued to grow and enrich the lives of New Mexico's youth. The participants in the first year were few, but to date we have had more than one thousand young New Mexicans participate in the state competition.

New Mexico students that participate in this program are given the opportunity to expand upon critical thinking and research skills, which in turn help them in all subject areas. The projects they work on give them a greater appreciation of historical events that have helped shape their own hometowns as well as their nation. This hands on approach to history is an innovative way to get students excited and genuinely interested in our great nation's history.

I know that with our support, the National History Day program will continue to grow, and I believe that this growth is essential for today's students. When students do not have an opportunity to participate in this pro-

gram, they miss out on a chance to grow and to better themselves. As Pulitzer Prize winner David McCullough states:

Knowledge of history is the precondition of political intelligence. Without history, a society shares no common memory of where it has been, of what its core values are, or what decisions in the past account for the present circumstance.

National History Day gives students an opportunity to learn of our history and its importance in their daily lives.

I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting this program.●

#### NATIONAL LIBRARY CARD SIGN-UP MONTH

• Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, today I rise to recognize September as National Library Card Sign-up Month and pay tribute to those dedicated individuals who, through their passion for books and learning, make our libraries places of great discovery.

As school begins for millions of children this month, parents and mentors are coming together to promote one of the most important school supplies, one available free to every child: a library card. With the support of the American Library Association, National Library Card Sign-up Month spotlights the wealth of resources found at our local public libraries. Libraries not only offer books, magazines, and reference materials, but many also provide CDs, videos, and Internet connections to assist children and adults meet their educational goals.

There is no better place than our libraries for bringing the world and the events that shape it—past and present—to life. Fortunately, a child doesn't need any special gadgets to experience all the library has to offer; they just need their library card. A library card can open the doors to space exploration, put a reader in the front seat with a storm chaser, transport anyone with a good imagination back thousands of years in time, and offer every imaginable point of view on every topic of interest.

Mr. President, during National Library Card Sign-up Month, I commend America's schools and libraries for providing and promoting an environment that sparks a passion in people of all ages for books and learning. And I urge parents and teachers alike to share their knowledge and passion for learning with our children by signing them up for library cards at the local public library.●

#### FORMER SAN FRANCISCO MAYOR GEORGE CHRISTOPHER

• Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, it is with sadness that I rise to inform my colleagues of the death of former San Francisco Mayor George Christopher,