The State Department has urged the Belarusian authorities to mount a credible investigation into the disappearance of former Minister of Internal Affairs Yury Zakharenka. The Supreme Soviet Deputy Chairman Viktor Gonchar and his associate Anatoly Krasovsky, as well as Russian television camera Dmitry Zavadsky, are believed to have been arrested and are presently in military custody. The Supreme Soviet members Andrei Klimov and Valery Chshukin. Such an investigation, as well as the release of political prisoners, will be an essential factor in reducing the current climate of fear.

Finally, the Belarusian authorities need to work with the OSCE to facilitate the work of international and domestic observers and to help ensure that all candidates are able to organize freely, without harassment, and carry their campaigns to the people.

While it is not yet too late for the Belarusian authorities to take the steps necessary to counteract the atmosphere conducive to elections that will meet international democratic standards, time is of the essence. Free and fair presidential elections are an essential step if Belarus is to move ahead and end its self-imposed isolation. As President Bush has remarked in connection with this week’s observance of Captive Nations Week, America must remain vigilant in our support of those living under authoritarianism. The people of Belarus have that support as a foundation for preparing their campaigns to the people. These courageous women—Ludmilla Karpenko, Irina Krasovsky, Tatiana Klimova and Svetlana Zavadska—conveyed their concerns about their husbands as well as about the continuing climate of fear in Belarus.

Earlier this month, I led a delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Annual Session, where I met with Anatoly Lebedko, one of the leaders of the Belarusian democratic opposition. Belarusian presidential elections are quickly coming up—on September 9. Unfortunately, the Belarusian authorities have not made a serious commitment to abide by criteria set forth well over a year ago by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, OSCE, of which Belarus is a member. These criteria include an end of the climate of fear, equal access to the state media for all candidates, respect for freedom of assembly, as well as transparency and fairness in the registration of candidates and functioning of electoral commissions.

The Helsinki Commission, which I chair, continues to receive troubling reports concerning developments in Belarus. Indeed, the prospects for free and fair presidential elections this fall remain dim. The unbalanced composition of the regional electoral commissions is particularly disturbing given the apparent rejection by the authorities of all candidates—over 800—proposed by Belarusian democratic parties and non-governmental organizations. The Belarusian authorities need to guarantee the impartiality of the electoral commissions by ensuring that democratic parties and non-governmental organizations, NGOs, are represented meaningfully and to correct other reported violations of the electoral code.

**CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—SENATE**

July 18, 2001

It is imperative that the VA have the ability to recruit and retain nurses. Expert witnesses, like Nurses’ Organization of Veterans’ Affairs, VA, President Sarah Meyers R.N., Ph.D. of Atlanta, GA, testified at the June 14 hearing. These witnesses identified critical issues ranging from those impacting VA nurses’ ability to continue to safely care for veterans to nursing burn-out. Senator ROCKEFELLER and I have developed a comprehensive proposal to address both recruitment and retention of VA nurses.

The Nurse Recruitment and Retention Act of 2001 includes provisions for the nurse scholarship program and education debt reduction. The bill’s other needed measures to enhance retention of nurses are: Saturday premium pay for nurses and other identified health professionals, increased reemployment annuitant pay for nurses, and increased retirement compensation for nurses enrolled in the Federal Employees Retirement System, FERS, and full-time service credit in annuity computation for part-time service prior to April 7, 1986. Also proposed are reports to Congress on: (1) the use of mandatory overtime with recommendations for alternative staffing strategies and (2) the encouraged use of waivers of pay reduction for reemployed annuitants to fill needed nurse positions to enhance recruitment.

The Nurse Recruitment and Retention Act of 2001 is needed now in order for VA nurses to continue to care for this country’s veterans.

**LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2001**

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about hate crimes legislation I introduced with Senator Kennedy in March of this year. The Local law Enforcement Act of 2001 would add new categories to current hate crimes legislation sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society.

I would like to describe a terrible crime that occurred in 1998 in Boston, MA. A 27-year-old gay man was allegedly attacked and beaten when he was walking home from work by assailants who shouted anti-gay epithets. One of the attackers called the letter "F," presumably for "faggot," on the victim’s shoulder. I believe that government’s first duty is to defend its citizens, to defend them against the harms that come out of hate. The Local Law Enforcement Act of 2001 is now a symbol that can become substance. I believe that by passing this legislation, we can change hearts and minds as well.

**COSPONSORSHIP OF S. 1188**

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, because of a clerical mistake, Senator SPECTER was not listed as an original