September 21, 2001

Mr. BOND. Madam President, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing the heroic efforts of the brave pilots from the Redding Area Pilots Association who indomitably flew through the fires from the air in their service with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

Larry Groff, from Windsor, CA, leaves behind Christine, his six children and two grandchildren. Lars Stratte, from Redding, CA, leaves behind his wife Terri and two children.

Larry Groff and Lars Stratte served their community and the people of California with great distinction. I am honored to pay tribute to these brave men today and I encourage my fellow colleagues to come together in celebrating their lives and service, mourning their passing and extending our condolences to their families.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF TWO BRAVE CALIFORNIA PILOTS, LARRY GROFF AND LARS STRATTE

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, I rise today to commemorate the tragic deaths of Larry Groff and Lars Stratte, pilots who were killed on August, 27, 2001 in a mid-air tanker collision while fighting the Bus Fire in Northern California. Both pilots were flying Gruman S-2 aircraft and were making fire retardant drops on the fire when they collided.

Larry Groff and Lars Stratte were established and dedicated pilots who have recorded numerous hours of flying time. Both pilots were employees of San Jeron, Inc., and in addition to the Redding Association.

Larry Groff was a 20 year Navy Veteran pilot and Lars Stratte was Past President of the Redding Area Pilots Association.

We will never forget the service of these men and their commitment to the difficult and dangerous occupation, they demonstrated outstanding courage and extraordinary ability to fight fires from the air in their service with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

Mr. KOHL. Madam President, I rise today as an original cosponsor of the Bruce Vento Hmong Veterans Naturalization Extension Act of 2001. This important piece of legislation will ensure that the sizable Hmong population in Wisconsin is able to take advantage of a status adjustment opportunity extended to them unanimously by this Congress last year. The Hmong, and particularly the Lao Veterans of America, deserve our respect and honor for all their help during the conflict in Vietnam.

The Hmong Veterans Naturalization Act of 2000 waives the English language requirement and provides for a translator during administration of the Civics test for all Hmong Veterans of the Southeast Asian Wars and their spouses and widows applying for U.S. citizenship. However, the Hmong veteran community only had the benefit of this legislation for 18 months. Since enactment, fewer than half of all Hmong veterans and their family members have been able to seek citizenship under these standards. The legislation introduced today would give those eligible an additional 18 months to apply for citizenship under the Naturalization Act.

I commend my colleague Senator Wellstone for his efforts on behalf of the Hmong population living in the upper midwestern United States, and I urge expeditious consideration of this legislation.

CONDEMNING BIGOTRY AND VIOLENCE AGAINST ARAB, MUSLIM AND SOUTH ASIAN AMERICANS

Mr. FEINGOLD. Madam President, I rise today to join with my colleagues in support of H. Con. Res. 227 condemning bigotry and violence against Arab, Muslim, and South Asian Americans.

I am sincerely grateful for and proud of the tremendous response of the American people who have shown true courage and loyalty in the face of the horrific attacks on our country on September 11, 2001. No one should doubt the resolve of this Nation to meet the challenge before us in fighting terrorism. But as we continue to wrestle with deep and conflicting emotions of sadness, pain, anger, and fear, we must ensure that the spirit of America, that ability to transcend differences in race, religion, and ethnicity to achieve greatness, is not only preserved, but strengthened as a result of this tragedy.

As history has shown, America has always triumphed when we are united. That is why it is so important in this chapter in our history, as we prepare to defend and preserve our Nation, that we remain united as one Nation. This should not be an occasion for irrational impulses of fear, hate or violence towards Arab-Americans, Muslim Americans, South Asian Americans, or any other person in this country. Such actions are wrong. The idea of "America" knows no racial, ethnic, or religious boundaries, and no American should have to live in fear as a result of this situation. I stand together with my colleagues, and with Americans of all backgrounds, in condemning such actions. We must renew our commitment to protect our fellow Americans and our Nation against those who want to divide us with hate.

Unfortunately, there has been a rash of hate crimes, adding to the already compounding the anxiety of Americans in communities throughout this Nation. I have been saddened to hear of incidents in my own State. Ashraf "Mike" Khaled, a Wisconsin resident of Jordanian descent and gas station owner, has been the victim of several incidents of hateful statements and threats of his safety by customers and