Mr. WELLS. Mr. President, I rise today to support the Bioterrorism Preparedness Act of 2001. This act represents a critically important turning point in the readiness of our public health system to respond to the challenge of bioterrorism. In many places in our Nation the public health infrastructure has been underfunded and understaffed. Many of our public health workers have been working day and night since September 11. The anthrax attack has demonstrated that our system can be overwhelmed by a bioterrorist attack. This bill provides essential assistance to our network of local and State health departments, public health laboratories, hospitals and health care facilities so that they can protect all of us in the event of another bioterrorist attack, or of other infectious disease outbreaks.

Mr. President, we in Minnesota have long been aware of the dangers of bioterrorism. In 2000, we lost an American public worker, John F. Cullen, to anthrax. He was a pathologist here in Minnesota. Mike Osterholm, head of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota. But since September 11, everywhere that I have traveled in Minnesota I have been hearing about the need for preparedness. I am very glad that this bill is providing for bioterrorism preparedness.

This bill provides block grants to States to improve public health departments and to get the equipment they need, and to help local governments safeguard their communities from these threats. The bill also provides grants to hospitals and other health care facilities to improve their abilities to respond quickly and effectively to a bioterrorist attack. I am glad that this bill emphasizes getting funds to the local level. That is very important. In fact, I would have even gone further in setting aside funds specifically for localities.

I do have some reservations about the scope of the antitrust exemption the bill in its current form provides to the drug industry and others in connection with the development of countermeasures against bioterrorism. I fully understand the urgency of the situation and the need to create “safe space” for the work necessary to bring such countermeasures on line. However, I do think we need to tread carefully when it comes to further insulating the drug industry from the discipline of competitive market forces. I hope that my colleagues will work with me as we move forward in an important measure to ensure the fullest possible protection for American consumers consistent with the development and production of necessary countermeasures.

As chair of the Subcommittee on Employment, Safety and Training, I am particularly glad that this bill recognizes the threat of bioterrorism in the
workplace. Virtually all of the anthrax attack involved places where people work, including media offices, the U.S. Postal Service, and other locations. The Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation are making every effort to determine how the anthrax was delivered. It is important that we ensure that those who are at risk for biological threats or attacks have the protection they need.

Finally, I am particularly pleased that my provisions regarding mental health were included in this important bill. We know from the outstanding hearing on mental health and terrorism, chaired by Senator Kennedy in the HELP committee, that the preparedness and response activities for the mental health consequences of bioterrorism are as important as all other public health initiatives this Congress can support. Dr. Kerry Kelly, Chief Medical Officer of the New York Fire Department, reported at that hearing that since September 11, the men and women of the New York Fire Department and the families of those who were lost have had to endure a tremendous sense of grief. She said that, “the emotional well-being of our department requires intervention to provide stress debriefing, bereavement counseling, and continued psychological support of our members, our families, and the children affected by this event.”

The mental health provisions in the Bioterrorism Preparedness Act of 2001 support Federal, State, and local efforts to enhance the preparedness of public health institutions, providers of medical care, and other emergency service personnel, including firefighters, to detect, diagnose, and respond to the mental health consequences of a biological threat or attack. Additionally, State and local emergency measures ensure that hospitals and health care providers have adequate capacity and plans in place to provide mental health services to meet the need of vulnerable populations, including children, the elderly, and the disabled. Training programs are also authorized to educate health care professionals to recognize and treat the mental health consequences of a biological threat or attack, including the consequences for children.

We know one thing for sure. It is a mistake to believe that bioterrorism events cannot have lasting impact on the mental health of the individuals who experience them. Let us not repeat the mistakes that were made in the aftermath of the Vietnam war, when the trauma experienced by veterans was ignored or trivialized until well after the emotional healing of the veterans was past. We have learned from the outstanding research funded by the VA and NIMH of the severity of the disorder and the effective ways in which it can be treated. We must ensure that all Federal, State, and local public health efforts to respond to and prepare for these attacks take advantage of this knowledge.

I do not believe that mental health problems are a widespread or inevitable consequence of bioterrorist attacks. But as we heard from the experts at the HELP hearing, we should not underestimate the severe impact that these events have on people’s sense of identity and safety, and how the multiple losses and horrific experiences they go through has the potential to affect them for a long while. There have been many reports in the media of the heightened sense of anxiety and vulnerability throughout our country. These feelings are normal and I have confidence that most Americans will get through these crises. But I also firmly believe that the Federal, State, and local governments can play a major role in helping people to understand what has happened to them, and establish programs for mental health services for those who will need it. We in Congress are doing our part by the inclusion of these mental health initiatives within this bill.

In closing, this bill represents an essential step forward in safeguarding both the physical and mental health of our Nation in the event of further bioterrorist attack.

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 July 5, 1993 on Staten Island, NY. A 22-year-old gay man allegedly was beaten by 30 youths shouting anti-gay slurs. One of the assailants, Andrew Dubitsky, 17, was charged with second-degree assault.

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 Enhancement 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.

SPECIAL SESSION OF CONGRESS IN NEW YORK CITY

Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, I would like to draw my colleagues' attention to an editorial, which appeared in the New York Daily News on September 25, 2001.

In the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, this editorial proposes that Congress should convene for a special session in New York City. Daily News rightly points out that Congress should convene in New York City to reaffirm the American people's steadfast resolve against the cowardly perpetrators of terrorism—and that the attack on New York represented an attack on our Nation. I am pleased to report that a bill, H. Con. Res. 249, calling for a special session of Congress to meet in New York City, has been introduced in the House of Representatives and that yesterday Senator SCHUMER and myself introduced a corresponding bill here in the Senate. I urge my colleagues to support this measure, which calls for a special 1-day joint session of Congress to be held in New York City as a symbol of the Nation's solidarity with New Yorkers who epitomize the human spirit of courage, resilience, and strength.

Mr. President, on behalf of Senator SCHUMER and myself, I ask unanimous consent that the editorial be printed in the Record.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the Record, as follows:

(From the New York Daily News, Sept. 25, 2001)

CONVENE CONGRESS IN NEW YORK

In today's primary election—and savagely interrupted two weeks ago—pundits are predicting an abysmal turnout. But today, New Yorkers you have every reason to go to the polls. Not only will you help to select candidates for one of the most critical elections in the city's history, you will be sending a message that our representative democracy still stands tall—the democracy that terrorists are intent on destroying.

New York was targeted because this city represents America. The U.S. Congress also represents America—figuratively and literally. So herewith, a proposal: Congress should assemble in New York City for a special session.

The duration doesn't matter—a day would be enough. What matters is that, by meeting in New York, Congress would affirm its solidarity with the nation and the world that it stands in solidarity with New York, and that the strikes against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were strikes against an America that has emerged stronger than ever. An America united in its determination to eradicate terrorism. Indeed, the 335 members of the House and Senate could use the New York session to pass a resolution or legislation related to this new war we are waging. For it is Congress assembled that represents America.

Holding a special session here would be unprecedented, but there is nothing in the Constitution or federal law or the rules of Congress that dictates where the House and Senate shall convene. In its history, the only time Congress traveled was during the Revolution, when it fled the British. This time, it would not be defeated, nor determined to action—and doing so at the scene of the worst enemy attack ever on American soil.

Since the terror murder of thousands Sept. 11, President Bush and Congress have visited the city to witness firsthand the destruction, the heroism and the stoicism. Forty members of the Senate came as a group. Consider the symbolic impact of the entire Congress assembling in New York.