

"national public health problem," the U.S. Surgeon General recently announced a national strategy for suicide prevention. Central to the strategy is promoting awareness of the fact that suicide is, indeed, preventable and that we must all do our part to help end this tragedy.

One of the Surgeon General's main goals for preventing suicide is to reduce access to lethal means of suicide of which guns are the most deadly. I commend the Surgeon General for recognizing the need to address the role that guns play in our Nation's staggering suicide rate. Firearms account for 60 percent of all suicides, making them the most commonly used method of suicide and;

Each year more Americans die in suicides by firearms than in murders by firearms. The national suicide prevention strategy recommends a public campaign to reduce the accessibility of lethal means of suicide, including firearms, and urges the gun industry to improve firearm safety design. These aims are backed by evidence that limiting access to lethal means of suicide and self-harm can be an effective strategy to prevent suicide attempts and other self-destructive behaviors. In fact, studies have shown that there is a separate, additional risk of suicide when there is a handgun in the home. Moreover, limiting access to lethal means of suicide, especially handguns, can reduce the number of suicide attempts that are fatal. While more than 650,000 Americans attempt suicide each year, the chance that the attempt will be fatal increases dramatically in those cases where a handgun is used.

The relationship between handguns and suicide is even stronger among young people. Every 46 minutes a young person in this country kills himself or herself, over 60 percent of the time with a firearm. And these numbers are continuing to increase: the youth suicide rate has nearly tripled since 1952, making suicide the third leading cause of death among young people 15 to 24 years of age. There is no question that the increased access young people have to guns has been a major factor in this rise. In fact, one of the most rapidly rising suicide rates in this country is among young African-American makes, increasing 105 percent between 1980 and 1996, and this rise can be attributed almost entirely to suicides by firearms.

The Surgeon General has stated that "we should make it clear that suicide prevention is everybody's business. I believe the Surgeon General is right. Suicide is a national problem that demands our attention and our commitment. Congress should do its part to help prevent suicide by encouraging the manufacture of safer handguns and by closing the loopholes that allow young people easy access to handguns.

THE MOSCOW HELSINKI GROUP

Mr. CAMPBELL. Mr. President, May 12th marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of one of the most significant human rights groups of the 20th century, the Moscow Group to Monitor Implementation of the Helsinki Final Act.

On August 1, 1975, the United States, Canada, and thirty-three nations of Europe, including the Soviet Union, signed the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Helsinki Final Act. Among the agreement's provisions was a section devoted to respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Soviet government viewing the document as a great foreign policy victory published the text, in its entirety, in "Pravda," the Communist Party's widely circulated newspaper. That move proved to be decisive for the cause of human rights in the Soviet Union. A small group of human rights activists in Moscow, led by Professor Yuri Orlov, read the Helsinki Accords carefully and decided to take their government at its word.

On May 12, 1976, at a press conference initiated by Dr. Andrei Sakharov, the group announced the creation of the "Moscow Group for Assistance in Implementation of Helsinki Agreements," soon to be known simply as the Moscow Helsinki Group.

Needless to say, the Soviet authorities were not pleased that a group of private citizens would publicize their government's deplorable human rights record. The KGB swept down on the Moscow Helsinki Group and made its work almost impossible. Members were imprisoned, sent to "internal exile," expelled from the country, slandered as foreign agents, and harassed.

Despite considerable hardship and risks, members of the group persisted and their work served to inspire others to speak out in defense of human rights. Soon similar groups sprang up elsewhere in the Soviet Union dedicated to seeking implementation of the Helsinki Final Act. By 1982, the three remaining members at liberty in Moscow were forced to suspect their public activities.

Eventually, domestic and international pressure began to bear fruit and helped usher in dramatic changes under Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. Political prisoners and prisoners of conscience began to be freed and longstanding human rights cases were resolved.

In 1989, the Moscow Helsinki Group was reestablished by former political prisoners and human rights activists. In 1996, President Boris Yeltsin signed a decree formally recognizing the contribution of the Moscow Helsinki Group in the campaign to promote respect for human rights in Russia.

Mr. President, ten years after the fall of the Soviet Union, the Moscow Hel-

sinki Group continues to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Russian Federation. Working with a network of human rights centers throughout the country, the Moscow Group provides a wide range of assistance to Russian citizens and residents seeking information about human rights.

As Chairman of the Commission on Security and Cooperation, I congratulate the Moscow Helsinki Group on its 25th anniversary and wish its members the best in their continued endeavors.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

FREEDOM RIDERS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today, after the Senate finishes its business for the week, many of us will be returning to our home states. I will be flying to my home state of Illinois. And I can anticipate that the trip, for the most part, will be without incident.

However, this wasn't the case for African Americans 40 years ago. Forty years ago, desegregation laws in bus and train stations, as well as their waiting rooms and restaurants, prohibited African Americans from enjoying the same facilities as their white counterparts. The Supreme Court issued a ruling calling for the desegregation of interstate travel. However, this had to be tested.

The Congress of Racial Equality selected a group of students to make a two week trip through the South in nonviolent protest of racial desegregation laws. Congressman JOHN LEWIS was one of those students who was later joined by Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. These civil rights activists became known as the Freedom Riders. But unlike the travel we are all used to, their ride was filled with fear and brutality. Prior to embarking on this historic journey, the students were told to make out their last will and testament, just in case. But like most youths, they thought themselves invincible. They had no idea how truly dangerous and bloody their mission would become.

One white rider, Jim Zwerg, who joined the riders because he could no longer stand the injustice, had three of his vertebrae cracked, all of his teeth fractured, his nose broken, and suffered from a concussion. The Klan thought that he and other white Riders were betraying them.

On Mother's Day in Alabama, the young Freedom Riders were greeted by a mob of 200 with stones, baseball bats, lead pipes and chains. One Freedom Rider bus had its tires slashed and was stopped by an angry mob. An incendiary device was thrown inside the bus causing it to fill with smoke. And the angry mob held the door closed so that the Riders would burn inside.

The Riders were saved when the fuel tank exploded causing the mob to back