

the fundamental spirit of the Olympic games and should disqualify Beijing.

This is perhaps my morning for tilting at windmills because I believe the international committee will probably give China the Olympic Games, but sometimes it is important just to make that statement on the floor of the Senate. I believe others should speak out as well.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN OFFICE ACT

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I rise today to announce my cosponsorship of S. 570, the Violence Against Women Office Act introduced by my colleague Senator BIDEN. This bill will further our efforts in combating the problem of domestic violence. Domestic violence is not simply a localized, private issue, the ripple effect—socially and economically—from this problem makes it a concern for all Americans.

The statistics make my case. The crime of battering occurs every 15 seconds in this country. Over 50 percent of women will experience physical violence in an intimate relationship during their lifetime. Estimates range from 960,000 incidents of violence against a current or former spouse, boyfriend, or girlfriend per year to three million women annually who are physically abused by their husband or boyfriend.

The Violence Against Women Act is a strong indication of our commitment to address this problem. Any possible action we can take to enhance the effectiveness of our government's efforts in this arena must be taken. This bill is one such action.

Establishment of the Violence Against Women Office, (VAWO) by statute will provide permanency in our federal efforts to combat domestic violence. This bill will institutionalize the office and will help to fulfill the federal government's responsibility to meet the goals embodied in the Violence Against Women Act, (VAWA).

This office will be located within the U.S. Department of Justice, placed within the Associate Attorney General's Office, and will be led by a director appointed by the President and approved by the Senate. In addition to running the VAWO, the Director will serve as Special Counsel to the Attorney General on all issues related to violence against women. The office is responsible for the development of policy, programs, public education initiatives, and management of all grant programs funded under the VAWA. I would underscore that this legislation does not contemplate increased staff or require any expenditure of funds beyond that currently appropriated.

In the past, the VAWO director has brought visibility and credibility to the matter of violence against women, making it an issue of national concern

and earning the respect of police, prosecutors, and victim service providers. This precedence should be furthered by establishing an office to address violence against women by statute. The Office and its Director will reflect the importance that Congress and the Administration place on making this issue a priority for the federal government and the country.

In addition, this step will insure that succeeding Administrations will continue to fully implement the provisions of the VAWA. An office placed under the direct supervision of the Associate Attorney General will reflect the Justice Department's understanding that non-criminal justice system services should be offered as part of a community coordinated response. By employing a specialized knowledge of the best practices in the field, a statutory mandate will guarantee that grant funds are well utilized. A strong and visible office is necessary to implement the recommendations embodied in the National Agenda and Call to Action on Violence Against Women.

I am proud that New Mexico has many dedicated individuals offering services to battered women in our state. The Violence Against Women Act has bolstered their means to provide shelters for women in crisis, get access to legal assistance, and transition out of abusive situations. Further, VAWA funding is provided for educational outreach to medical providers and local law enforcement to increase their abilities to identify and respond in domestic violence cases.

Just last year, New Mexico entities received numerous grants as a result of the Violence Against Women Office. These grants included:

El Refugio, Inc. of Silver City received \$304,931 from the Civil Legal Assistance Grant Program, an increase from their 1998 grant of \$295,596. With these monies, they will be able to continue existing project activities in their legal assistance program from low income and indigent battered women.

Likewise, The Eight Northern Indian Pueblos, Inc., the Jicarilla Apache Tribe, the Pueblo of Laguna, and the Santa Ana Pueblo have collectively received \$331,593 from the STOP Violence Against Indian Women Discretionary Grant Program. This allocation will be used to enhance and maintain current programs aimed at decreasing violence against women.

Since enactment of VAWA, other grants totaling over \$1.5 million have been provided to the City of Albuquerque in support of the Albuquerque Police's Domestic Abuse Response Team (DART), to Santa Fe County for implementation of a judicial oversight program to enhance offender accountability, and to Dona Ana County's efforts to expand prosecutorial services for victims, DART and La Casa Inc., the local battered women's shelter.

This nation-wide problem demands a local response. Federal funding is being effectively used to leverage existing community-based organizations and local law enforcement officials to help prevent and persecute domestic violence.

Last year I cosponsored the Violence Against Women Act. This year I am supporting full funding of VAWA programs for the Justice Department programs and in the Health and Human Services budget, despite the tight fiscal constraints and competing priorities for those agencies.

Domestic violence is a scourge. We must commit to addressing it. This legislation is one concrete step in the right direction.

THE PUBLIC HEALTH IMPLICATIONS OF GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, before we adjourned for the Fourth of July recess, we spent two weeks on the Senate floor discussing the Patients Bill of Rights. I supported the strong, enforceable bill which the Senate finally approved on June 29th. After years of consideration and a hard legislative battle, the bipartisan vote this bill received reflects the overwhelming support the bill has from the American people.

Over the next several months we will continue to discuss the importance of reforming our health care system to make it more affordable and more accessible to the American people. But as we debate the subject, we must not ignore an issue that is often overlooked as a public health problem. I'm talking about gun violence. Because, Mr. President, accompanying the tremendous human costs of gun violence are enormous public health costs that we cannot afford to ignore.

According to a 1999 report from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, every day in the United States, 93 people die as a result of gunshot wounds and an additional 240 sustain gunshot injuries. The report states that "the fatality rate is roughly equivalent to that associated with HIV infection—a disease that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has recognized as an epidemic." In addition, according to a 1997 study cited by the Violence Policy Center, the cost of gunshot wounds exceeded \$126 billion in 1992 alone. That same year, the injury cost per bullet sold in the United States exceeded \$25.

So as we in the Senate work to improve health care for all Americans, we should work just as hard to address the loopholes in our gun laws. Only by doing the latter can we reduce the costs to public health that result from gun violence.