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

This is perhaps my morning for sitting 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 even more frequently in our society. 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.

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 the first 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 $120 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 not work just as hard to close the loopholes in our gun laws. Only by doing the latter can we reduce the costs to public health that result from gun violence.