

H.R. 4818, the FY 2005 foreign operations appropriations bill, which were completed last year, and I ask if he is aware of language that was contained in the House report regarding World Compassion's activities in Afghanistan.

Mr. MCCONNELL. My staff informs me that the House report encouraged the State Department to review a proposal from this organization.

Mr. INHOFE. My colleagues should know that as a supporter of this group, I continue to encourage the State Department to consider a proposal from World Compassion. This organization's "Shelter, Support, and Skills Training for Afghan Refugee and Displaced Widows and Orphans" Program is an integrated plan that addresses the special needs of widows and their children, many of whom are refugees and internally displaced persons. The program provides shelter, access to clean water, psychosocial support and skills training to enable widows to gain the personal dignity of self-sufficiency.

I would also point out that village leaders have agreed to cooperate with World Compassion on this project. World Compassion has a long, successful track record of working with Afghans in other programs to provide for their basic needs, and it is my hope that the State Department will help them continue to do so.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I appreciate my friend taking the time to highlight the activities of World Compassion and hope that the State Department acts on the recommendations from the House report.

LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ENHANCEMENT ACT OF 2005

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the need for hate crimes legislation. Each Congress, Senator KENNEDY and I introduce hate crimes legislation that would add new categories to current hate crimes law, sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society. Likewise, each Congress I have come to the floor to highlight a separate hate crime that has occurred in our country.

On Monday, February 28, 2005, two men were severely beaten outside of their hotel room in New Mexico. According to police reports, they were targeted because of their sexual orientation. The two men, who were in an openly gay relationship, were followed back to the hotel by a group of people who were yelling antigay comments at the victims. The assailants then assaulted the two men and fled the scene. The incident is being investigated as a hate crime.

I believe that the 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 is a symbol that can

become substance. I believe that by passing this legislation and changing current law, we can change hearts and minds as well.

ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I am pleased to join Senator FEINSTEIN as a cosponsor of her legislation to reauthorize the assault weapons ban. I voted for the original 1994 assault weapons ban and for the amendment to reauthorize the ban in the 108th Congress.

When the 1994 assault weapons ban expired on September 13, 2004, criminals and terrorists gained potential easy access to 19 of the highest powered and most lethal firearms produced. In addition to banning 19 specific weapons, the assault weapons ban also prohibited the sale of semiautomatic weapons that incorporated a detachable magazine and two or more specific military features. These features included folding/telescoping stocks, protruding pistol grips, bayonet mounts, threaded muzzles or flash suppressors, barrel shrouds, or grenade launchers. Common sense tells us that there is no reason for civilians to have easy access to guns with these military style features.

During the 108th Congress, I joined with the majority of my Senate colleagues in adopting an amendment to reauthorize the assault weapons ban for another 10 years. However, the bill to which it was attached was later derailed. Despite the overwhelming support of the law enforcement community, the ongoing threat of terrorism, bipartisan support in the Senate, and the pleas of Americans who have already lost loved ones to assault weapons tragedies, the ban was allowed to expire, as the President and the Republican Congressional leadership were unwilling to act.

Despite the National Rifle Association's assertions that the ban is ineffective, unnecessary, and that guns labeled as assault weapons are rarely used in violent crimes, the need for the assault weapons ban is clear. Just last week, AK-47 assault rifles, like the ones included in the original assault weapons ban, were reportedly used in two separate shootings in Texas and California that left four people dead and four others seriously injured, three of whom were police officers. In Tyler, TX, a gunman armed with an AK-47, wearing a military flak jacket and a bulletproof vest, opened fire outside a courthouse, killing his ex-wife and wounding his son. In the ensuing shootout with police, the gunman was reportedly able to fire as many as 50 rounds at police and innocent bystanders before fleeing in his truck. He was finally shot in another gun battle with police a few miles away. The same day in Los Angeles, a man reportedly

armed with an AK-47 walked into his workplace and shot two of his coworkers to death following a dispute. He later turned himself in at a Los Angeles police station.

Unfortunately, assault weapons such as the ones reportedly used in these two shootings as well as many other similar assault weapons are once again being legally produced and sold as a result of the expiration of the assault weapons ban. I again urge my colleagues to act to help prevent tragedies like these by enacting a common sense ban on assault weapons.

SENATOR HIRAM R. REVELS

Mr. OBAMA. Mr. President, I rise to recognize an important anniversary in the history of this Nation.

One hundred and thirty-five years ago on this day, Hiram R. Revels was sworn in as a U.S. Senator from Mississippi. On that day, February 25, 1870, Senator Revels became the first African American to ever serve in the U.S. Congress.

But Hiram Revel's story started in a place very far from Washington, DC. He was born to free parents in 1822 and grew up as an apprentice to a barber in North Carolina. But Hiram wanted to learn more and see more, and so he left for Indiana and then Ohio, where he furthered his education. He was soon ordained a minister by the African Methodist Church, and traveled to congregations all over the Midwest and the South until he finally ended up in Baltimore.

At the beginning of the Civil War, he helped recruit African-American troops for the Union, and he ended up serving as a chaplain for a Mississippi regiment of free Blacks. He stayed in Mississippi after the war, and continued serving as a pastor at various local churches. In 1868, and he ran and was elected alderman. Respected by both Whites and African-Americans, he was soon elected as a Mississippi State senator. Then, in 1870, just 5 years after the end of the very war fought for his freedom, Hiram Revels was elected the first African-American U.S. Senator in history.

Like so many of our own, Hiram's story is America's story. The story of the seemingly impossible occurring in a land where good people will give everything to make it possible. The story of hope winning out against all odds. The story of one man's improbable achievement paving the way for so many others.

Did Hiram ever know what he was destined for in that barber shop? When he was sweeping that floor in North Carolina and so many of his brothers and sisters were enslaved, did he ever dream that he would end up a U.S. Senator?

We don't know. But we do know that he did dream of bigger things.