

and bringing smiles to everyone's faces.

In the Arkansas National Guard, SSG Robbins worked full-time as administrative sergeant at the Guard's armory in Beebe. Last year, he was one of only about a dozen soldiers from the armory mobilized for duty in Operation Iraqi Freedom. It would prove to be a bitter-sweet time for the Robbins family; just as the family welcomed home William's mother Janice, a major in the Army Reserves returning from a deployment in Germany, they bid him farewell with prayers of a safe return.

Staff Sergeant Robbins' deployment was the first in his 11-year service in the Arkansas National Guard. While in Iraq, he was attached to the 206th Field Artillery Battalion of the 39th Infantry Brigade, and was selected to work in a military advisory capacity with the Iraqi National Guard. As American forces sought to transition more of their security and stabilization responsibilities to the Iraqi people, SSG Robbins advised and trained these civilian volunteers on infantry tactics as well as the fundamental aspects of being a soldier.

Last fall, SSG Robbins took his military leave and was able to return home for a short time. It was a much-needed reprieve from the dangers of Iraq and offered him the opportunity to return to the place he called home and spend time with the people he cared for most. It also offered him the opportunity to explain to Tristan, who was simply too young to fully understand, why her father had been away and when he would be back for good. As best he could, he explained to her the circumstances of his absence and even the possibility that he may not return. He was once a young man with a parent in the military and could relate to the lack of comprehension children often have in these situations. Relying on this perspective, as well as the natural gift he had always shown in relating to children, Tristan's father was able to provide her with some much needed comfort and understanding.

Along with many of the soldiers from the 39th, SSG Robbins' mission was soon coming to an end and he was to be scheduled to return to Arkansas in late March or April. Upon his return, he was looking forward to a new job with the Arkansas National Guard at Camp Robinson's Regional Training Institute in North Little Rock. Even more so, he was looking forward to being reunited with his family. When he spoke with Kimberly, he reminded her how very much he loved her and couldn't wait to come home. When he spoke with Tristan, he told her how much he looked forward to seeing her again so he could take her in his arms and swing her like an airplane.

Tragically, he passed away on February 10 from a gunshot wound at his home base at Camp Taji. While the loss

for Kimberly and her family will be felt deeply, they have found some solace knowing that his last days were spent doing what he wanted to do, helping people. In the days following his death, it was clear to his family the impact he had on each of their lives. It was also quickly apparent that although he was no longer with them, his presence would always be felt; whether it was the devotion and thoughtfulness evident in the basket of chocolates and Valentine's Day card he sent Kimberly just before his death, the spirit embodied in the eyes of Abigail who turned 1 year old on February 23, or the courage that Tristan, thanks to her father, has shown in trying to understand what has happened. They are lasting examples of not only the remarkable way he led his life, but more importantly, are a testament to the kind of man he was.

My thoughts and prayers go out to the family and friends of William Robbins, and to all those who knew and loved him. His 31 years with us were far too short, but his legacy of love and service to his Nation will remain with us forever.

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 October 2, 2004, Daniel Fetta was brutally beaten to death. Fetta, a 39-year-old deaf and gay man, was allegedly struck repeatedly with bricks and boards by three men in his home town of Waverly, OH. His body was stripped of all clothing and thrown into a dumpster. It is believed that the motivation behind this brutal attack was the sexual orientation of the victim.

I believe that the Government's first duty is to defend its citizens, to defend them against the harm that comes 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.

NATIONAL PEACE CORPS WEEK

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. President, this week is National Peace Corps Week. It is with great pleasure that I send my congratulations to the Peace Corps volunteers serving throughout the world as we celebrate the Peace Corps' 44th year of service.

Currently, more than 7,700 volunteers are answering the call to serve in 72 countries around the world. It is a list that is growing. In an historic agreement focused on science and technology, the Peace Corps entered Mexico last year. And over 20 other countries have expressed interest in establishing a partnership with the Peace Corps.

Peace Corps volunteers have made a 27-month commitment to serve overseas typically in undeveloped or rural areas devoid of many modern necessities such as sanitation, transportation, and electricity. They work to achieve the first goal of the Peace Corps: training and educating people around the world. Volunteers are serving as teachers, business advisors, information technology consultants, agricultural workers, and as HIV/AIDS educators. Today over 3,100 Peace Corps volunteers are helping to implement President Bush's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief.

Even as they work on their projects to help those in the countries they serve, Peace Corps volunteers become America's unofficial "ambassadors" of goodwill, fulfilling the Peace Corps' second goal of helping to promote a better understanding of America. In the words of former U.S. Ambassador Tibor Nagy: "During my long overseas service, I consistently met two categories of people who were highly favorable toward our country: those who had close contact with Peace Corps volunteers, and those who had studied in the U.S." These kinds of public diplomacy efforts are more important today than ever.

What's more, Peace Corps volunteers' unofficial "ambassador" duties do not conclude when they return home to the United States. Rather, they set about completing the third goal of the Peace Corps by promoting a better understanding of other countries here in America. In this way, Peace Corps volunteers give back much to their communities here at home.

As chairman of the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Peace Corps, and Narcotics Affairs, it is my desire to continue to assist in the growth of Peace Corps, and the well-being of its volunteers. As the Peace Corps continues to expand, I believe it is necessary to provide this agency the resources it needs to continue to ensure volunteer safety, productivity, and satisfaction. And I applaud efforts by the Peace Corps to further diversify our volunteers.

It is my pleasure to recognize 223 Minnesota volunteers who right now are serving our Nation around the globe in countries from Albania to Uzbekistan. I would also like to recognize the over 5,000 returned Peace Corps volunteers who have already represented Minnesota and the United States abroad. Finally, I am happy to