

of them would likely close their doors." And, in the words of Eric Kellogg, the mayor of Harvey, IL, population 30,000, "Many have characterized CDBG as the best federal domestic program ever enacted because of its flexibility and adaptability in meeting the needs of a diverse America."

The CDBG program works. Let's not destroy it.

I urge my colleagues to support the Sarbanes amendment.

MORNING BUSINESS

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA GRIZZLIES IN THE NCAA

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate the University of Montana, which for the first time since 1997 will watch both its men's and its women's basketball teams advance to the NCAA tournament, and we do so with Big Sky tournament championships fresh in hand.

The University of Montana men's basketball team will head to the tournament for the sixth time in school history. The Grizzlies now face a daunting task, facing the No. 1 seed University of Washington, and we are going to beat them.

Under Coach Larry Krystkowiak, we have a coach and a team that is going to win. Larry was a legendary basketball player for the Grizzlies in the 1980s, rising all the way up to the NBA, and now in his first year as head coach of the Grizzlies, he is a champion.

We won the tournament. We are going to beat those characters over in the State of Washington. We are going to win the next round.

The Lady Griz basketball team is leading to the tournament for the 16th time in school history. They will face Vanderbilt, and I am quite confident head coach Robin Selvig—just a terrific coach—will have his team ready to play.

Both teams represent that which is great about college athletics: fellowship, sportsmanship, and fair play. They are great kids. The student athletes conduct themselves with dignity and class, and I am very proud how well they have represented my home State, and we are very proud to see them compete on a national stage for the national championship.

All I have to say is, watch out, Vanderbilt; watch out, University of Washington. Montana is coming.

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.

Last September, a gay tourist was attacked outside a popular gay club in Hawaii. The woman was walking to the club with two of her friends when she was approached by two men. One of the men asked if the women were gay. When the men found out that the women were lesbians, they began to shout antigay epithets at them, and the tourist was struck in the face. She received several fractures below her eye, a broken jaw, and a concussion from the attack.

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.

RUSSIAN SUPPORT FOR THE SYRIAN REGIME

Mr. BROWBACK. Mr. President, the Helsinki Commission, which I chair, held a hearing last week that examined the close relationship between Russian Federation and Syria. The Commission heard testimony detailing their intricate financial and military dealings that began in the earliest days of the Cold War and continue to this day. This relationship allows Syria to continue to support numerous terrorist groups, groups that have terrorized Lebanon for the past three decades and fuel the insurgency in Iraq. In addition, we heard details about Syria's support of terrorist organizations who operate around the world. Finally, we heard from both Lebanese and Syrians committed to freedom and democracy who have become victims of the Assad regime and are now languishing in the prison cells of Damascus.

The Commission's concern regarding Russia's involvement with Syria—a country that has been listed as a state sponsor of terrorism since 1979 by the State Department—rises from the Helsinki commitments that Russia has freely accepted as a participating State of the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe OSCE. The OSCE Charter on Preventing and Combating Terrorism was agreed to at the Porto Ministerial in 2002. Russia then committed to refrain from instigating or providing active or passive support or assistance to, or otherwise sponsoring terrorist acts in another state. Russia also committed to reducing the risk of terrorists gaining access to weapons and materials of mass destruction and their means of delivery.

Russia's support for the terrorist regime in Damascus flies in the face of

these commitments. Russia is an active enabler of the Assad regime, whose Ba'ath Party was described by one of our witnesses as the richest terrorist organization in the region. The Syrian regime has received untold amounts of military hardware, much of which are currently being used by terrorists in Iraq against our American troops and our allies. Additionally, Syrian intelligence supports terrorist units in Iraq, composed not only of Syrians, but including Egyptians, Sudanese, Moroccans, and other Islamic mujaheddin.

Even more alarming is Russia's plan to sell an unknown number of Igla SA-18 shoulder-held missiles to Syria. Such a sale to this terrorist state is more than criminal. This sale will put in the hands of terrorists some of the most sophisticated shoulder-held missiles in the Russian inventory, and increases the likelihood that they will get into the arsenals of other terrorist organizations around the world. Despite Russia's denials, indicators are that this sale will go forward soon, putting at risk every airline flight, every military flight, with the potential for massive loss of life and the shutting down of modern transportation around the world.

We must focus on the fact that, while there is no apparent direct Russian involvement in Iraq, this direct support of Syrian military and intelligence operations, coupled with Syria's support for Hezbollah in Lebanon and the long list of evil deeds coming out of Damascus, cast Russia as a suspicious party to these terrorist activities. We should not sit idly by and allow this to transpire without comment. We must call upon President Bush and Secretary Rice to reiterate U.S. demands that Russia disengage from its support of Syria, a state sponsor of terrorism. It is not enough to stop the sale of the missiles. Complete cessation of financial and military support to this rogue regime is necessary.

On the eve of the Helsinki Commission hearing, a courageous group of human rights activists and pro democracy reformists held a demonstration in Damascus, a daring display of dissent quickly broken up by the security forces. One of the protesters held up a banner that read: "Freedom for Prisoners of Opinion and Conscience." According to the Syrian Human Rights Committee, the Assad regime in Damascus has executed nearly 17,000 Syrian and Lebanese prisoners. Additionally, there are over 600 prisoners of conscience in Syrian jails, champions of human rights, accountability and transparency who are still languishing under horrible conditions.

I would like to highlight a few of these prisoners of conscience whose names were submitted to us by one of the witnesses and call for their immediate release: Riad Seif, member of parliament; Aref Dalilah, economist;

Maamun al-Homsi, member of parliament; Abdul Aziz al-Khayer, physician; Habib Issa, lawyer; Walid al-Bounni, physician; Mohammad Bashir al-Arab, student leader and doctor; Muhanad al-Debs, student leader; Mahmoud Ammo, activist; Mahmoud Abou Sader, activist; Mazid Ali Al-Terkawi, businessman; and Fawaz Tello, engineer.

I was pleased to hear of Syria's promise to a U.N. envoy to withdraw its troops and intelligence agents from Lebanon, but as the counter-demonstrations yesterday against Syria demanded, Damascus must follow through with actions as soon as possible. I am hoping that details of the withdrawal plan from U.N. envoy Terje Roed-Larsen after his talks with Syrian President Bashar Assad and Lebanese President Emile Lahoud will allow the people of Lebanon to hold their parliamentary elections in May without any interference from the Syrians and to do so in a manner that is free, timely, and transparent.

What would be unacceptable is the kind of warning issued by Prime Minister-designate Omar Karami that polls may have to be postponed if the country's political opposition fails to enter a dialogue with the government. Such an effort will surely ignite the kind of violence that the Lebanese people have been yearning for so many years to avoid.

It is time for the international community to lend support for the slogan that defines the people's revolution in Lebanon and in the region: "Kifaya," which means "enough." Let's listen to what the people in Lebanon are saying for what they are saying is now being heard not only in Beirut but in Damascus, in Cairo, and in Riyadh: enough of autocrats, enough of the corruption, and enough of the repression.

WINDS OF CHANGE IN ROMANIA?

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I rise to congratulate the people of Romania and newly elected President Traian Basescu on the success of their recent national elections, and to encourage them in their efforts to consolidate democracy in Romania. In the 15 years since the overthrow of the brutal Communist dictatorship which ruled that country for decades, Romania has undertaken four successful national elections and peaceful transfers of power, and has made important strides in building democratic institutions and the rule of law.

I was recently appointed chairman of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe—the Helsinki Commission—and have followed events in Romania for many years. In that capacity, I look forward to working with the government and the people of Romania on the challenges confronting both of our countries.

Romania is a good friend of the United States and a strong partner in the war on global terrorism. I thank the Government of Romania for its steadfast support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, where a battalion serves on the ground, and for its support of the U.S.-led military action in Iraq. More than 700 Romanian soldiers contributed to the efforts that supported the people of Iraq in their historic ballot. Romania is our NATO ally and anticipates accession to the European Union in 2007.

President Basescu has recognized that endemic corruption and the poverty it breeds are a threat to Romania's national security, and his government is already taking steps to combat this scourge and to institute effective government reform. We commend the President's efforts and stand ready to assist him as he shines the light of transparency across Romania.

President Basescu's focus and determination give me hope that progress can also be made on a number of matters that have been of concern.

In 2001, Romania imposed a moratorium on all international adoptions under pressure from the European Union, and amid allegations of "baby selling." This moratorium was extended several times pending development of comprehensive child protection legislation to include new rules on adoption. The new legislation came into effect in January of this year and limits international adoption to the grandparents of the Romanian child—effectively ending international adoption. More than 200 U.S. families were in the process of adopting Romanian children when the moratorium was established, and the Government of Romania indicated that it would proceed with those adoption requests that were "already in the pipeline." However, to date, these cases remain unresolved. This total ban on international adoptions is regrettable and means that many children in Romania will now grow up without permanent families. I am particularly concerned about the over 200 adoption cases which were already being processed for U.S. parents, and I urge the Government of Romania to resolve these cases quickly, so these children can be placed with the families as promised. I also urge President Basescu to consider revising existing law to allow the resumption of international adoptions with appropriate safeguards.

The Government of Romania enacted a comprehensive antidiscrimination law in 2000 and has in place a national action plan on Roma. Yet the great majority of Roma and Sinti in Romania remain marginalized, living in abject poverty due to severe discrimination in employment, housing, and education. President Basescu should take bold and concrete steps to ensure that Romani citizens have full opportunity

to participate in the civil and political life of Romania. The establishment of a fund to implement school desegregation would be an important step toward achieving that goal and would make the Romanian government's participation in the Decade of Roma Inclusion truly meaningful.

Following decades of denial, the Government of Romania has made great strides in the past year in recognizing Romania's role in the Holocaust. I commend the government for taking steps to examine this dark and painful chapter in the country's history. The International Commission for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania, led by Elie Wiesel, officially issued its findings last November in Bucharest. In addition to the establishment of a national Holocaust Remembrance day, which Romania marks on October 12, the Commission's recommendations include the construction of a national Holocaust memorial and museum in Bucharest, the annulment of war criminal rehabilitations, and the establishment of Holocaust education curricula and Holocaust courses in secondary schools and universities. The government should move quickly to implement that Commission's recommendations.

In a related matter, I hope that the Government of Romania will finally bring to closure the rehabilitation and honoring of World War II dictator, Marshall Ion Antonescu, Hitler ally and war criminal condemned for the mass murder of Jews and Roma. During the past 3 years, government officials publicly condemned efforts to honor Antonescu and removed from public land three statues that had been erected in his honor. One statue remains on public land in Jilava, the site of Antonescu's execution, and important streets in the cities of Cluj, Targu Mures, and Campulung Muscel continue to be named after him. I urge the Government of Romania to remove these remaining vestiges honoring the former dictator.

The process of providing restitution or compensation for property confiscated by former regimes in Romania has been slow, complicated, and difficult. Government records indicate that more than 200,000 claims for property restitution have been filed by individuals, and more than 7,000 claims have been filed by religious denominations and communal groups. The plight of Romania's Greek Catholic Uniate Church, which was banned by the Communist government in 1948, is particularly troubling. More than 2,500 churches and other buildings seized from the Uniates were given to Orthodox parishes. The government decree that dismantled the Greek Catholic Church was abrogated in 1989, however, of the thousands of properties confiscated from the Greek Catholics, fewer than 200 have been returned. I