

of B Troop, 2nd Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, Fort Lewis, WA. Staff Sergeant Griffith died on March 11, 2005, in Tal Afar, Iraq, when his dismounted patrol was attacked by enemy forces using small arms fire. My heart goes out to his parents and family, who reside in Mechanicsville, IA, and his wife in Lakewood, WA.

Today, this Nation remembers and honors a man who sacrificed his life to defend his fellow soldiers and his country. With the death of Donald Griffith, this Nation lost a hero.

We know that there is no greater gift than the laying down of one's life for another. Staff Sergeant Griffith has given us that gift and we are forever grateful for his sacrifice. I ask that my colleagues join me reflecting on the memory of Donald D. Griffith, Jr. as we extend our thoughts and prayers to his family and friends.

TRIBUTE TO SENATOR HOWELL HEFLIN

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, it is with deep sadness that I learned this past week of the passing of a dear friend and former colleague, Senator Howell Heflin.

My thoughts and prayers today and those of my wife, Barbara, are with his loving wife, Elizabeth Ann "Mike", and his family.

Everyone thought of Howell as "Judge" Heflin, even as he served in the Senate, because he forever looked and acted the part of the "country judge". He came to the Senate, as I did, in the class of 1978. Howell was then already a distinguished jurist, having served 6 years as chief justice of the Alabama Supreme Court. He went on to build a solid reputation and to play an important role in the life of the Senate over the next 18 years.

Howell Heflin, a man of not only intellect, but warmth and good-humor, tackled some of the more thankless tasks in the Senate, including the arcane issues involving bankruptcy and administrative practice, and serving as the chairman of the Senate Ethics Committee in particularly turbulent times. He could always be counted on to approach difficult issues with careful thoughtful analysis, and to apply his balanced judgement objectively. For this reason, and others, Howell Heflin was respected on both sides of the aisle. In fact, he frequently served as a bridge between Democrats and Republicans in a way sorely needed in today's Senate. He was a true moderate, moderate in politics and by temperament. His demeanor, his objectivity, as well as his expertise, diligence and attention to the facts, have been missed and are among the very elements most needed now in this Chamber if we are to hope to remain the world's most deliberative body.

Senator Heflin served the people of Alabama, proudly. He served our nation with genuine dignity. And, today, as I look back on the life and career of Howell Heflin, I reflect on how proud I am of having had the opportunity to serve with this very special man, and to call him my friend.

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 month, a 19-year-old gay man from New York was brutally murdered. The victim's dismembered limbs were found throughout Brooklyn, including inside a subway tunnel.

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.

TERRORIST APPREHENSION RECORD RETENTION ACT

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I am pleased to join Senator LAUTENBERG in introducing the Terrorist Apprehension Record Retention Act. I cosponsored the Terrorist Apprehension Record Retention Act because I believe it is commonsense legislation which will strengthen our homeland security.

According to the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act, anyone seeking to purchase or obtain a permit to possess, acquire, or carry firearms must undergo a background check through the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, or NICS. This process requires the applicant to provide a variety of personal information including name, date of birth, current residence, and country of citizenship which is then compared with data in the NICS system to determine whether the person is prohibited by law from receiving or possessing firearms. Disqualifying criteria include felony convictions and fugitive or illegal alien status. If no disqualifying information is found within 3 business days, the transaction is allowed to continue.

As part of the background check, applicants are also checked against known terrorist watch lists. However, under current law, membership in a known terrorist organization does not

automatically disqualify an applicant from receiving or possessing a firearm. In cases where a positive match is made, Federal authorities search for other disqualifying information. If no disqualifying information can be found within 3 business days, the transaction is permitted to continue. In addition, all records pertaining to a positive match of an applicant to a terrorist watch list must, under current law, be destroyed within 24 hours if no disqualifying information is found.

A report released by the General Accountability Office on March 8, 2005, found that from February 3, 2004, through June 30, 2004, a total of 44 firearm purchase attempts were made by individuals designated as known or suspected terrorists by the Federal Government. In 35 cases, the transactions were authorized to proceed because Federal authorities were unable to find any disqualifying information.

Federal Bureau of Investigation counterterrorism officials stated "receiving all available personal identifying information and other details from terrorism-related NICS transactions could be useful in conducting investigations." Currently, counterterrorism officials do not have access to the majority of these records because they are destroyed within 24 hours of the transaction in the absence of disqualifying information.

The Terrorist Apprehension Record Retention Act addresses this issue by requiring that in cases where an NICS background check turns up a valid match to a terrorist watch list, all records pertaining to the transaction be retained for 10 years. In addition, the bill requires that all NICS information be shared with appropriate Federal and State counterterrorism officials anytime an individual on a terrorist watch list attempts to buy a firearm. Learning about a suspected terrorist's purchase of a firearm could potentially be critical to counterterrorism investigators working to prevent a terrorist attack.

This bill takes a commonsense approach to assisting Federal authorities in monitoring and apprehending suspected terrorists without compromising the privacy rights of law-abiding citizens. I am hopeful that the Congress will take up and pass this legislation to give Federal and State counterterrorism officials the information they need to help keep our families and communities safe.

AFRO-COLOMBIANS AND THE LEADERSHIP OF THE CBC

Mr. OBAMA. Today I wish to commend Congressman BOBBY RUSH and other members of the Congressional Black Caucus for their work on behalf of Afro-Colombians. The consistent advocacy of the CBC on this human rights issue has been critical to increasing consciousness and activism in