

other colleagues. This legislation is intended to expedite the transition to full NATO membership of emerging democracies in Central and Eastern Europe. This bill builds on earlier bipartisan legislation, such as the NATO Participation Act of 1994, which reflects the strong bipartisan support for the policy of enlarging the NATO alliance. NATO has expanded its membership on three occasions, each time enhancing security and stability in Europe. Bringing eligible Central and Eastern European nations into NATO will serve that same critical purpose. For nearly 4 years, the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe have sought to protect their freedom and independence by becoming members—full members—of Western institutions, especially NATO. They have repeatedly petitioned for membership. Moreover, they have seized every opportunity for such association, proving their flexibility and seriousness. They have become partners for peace, but they desire to become real members of a real alliance. The need for a more inclusive, more effective atlantic alliance that would respond to present security needs has been clear at least since violent aggression began in the former Yugoslavia—where the world witnessed the ineffective response of the United Nations, the European Community, the Western European Union, NATO, and the United States.

Since that time, it became clear that the elaborate architecture of European security developed during the cold war era was, and is, not up to the challenges of the post-cold-war world.

Meanwhile, the window of opportunity for consolidation of new freedoms, independence, and security is closing. Forging new relationships and new institutions is increasingly difficult and controversial. In my view, further delays will undermine the governments and confidence of people recently freed from the expansionist ambitions of aggressive neighbors. Yet, the Clinton administration has acted as if time were not a factor—as if there were no threats to the independence of the newly self-governing democracies.

Secretary Christopher in a recent speech stated that the administration's policy was "slow, but deliberate." I believe the administration's policy is deliberately slow. The Clinton administration has consistently avoided concrete steps toward NATO enlargement—studying and discussing, but not acting. Mr. President, this legislation is designed to facilitate NATO enlargement by providing targeted security assistance for those countries most likely to become eligible to join NATO. The NATO Enlargement Facilitation Act creates a \$60 million assistance program composed of Foreign Military Financing [FMF] loan and grant programs and the International Military Education and Training [IMET] program. This legislation declares Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic eligible for this assistance and authorizes

the President to designate others as they meet the criteria in current law.

This legislation, however, does not name countries to be NATO members. That is a decision for the alliance to take. This legislation seeks to make up for time lost due to a lack of U.S. leadership. It is also important to note that this bill is a beginning, not an endpoint. Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary will likely be the first countries in Central and Eastern Europe to join NATO—not the last. Finally, this legislation should not be interpreted as a lessening of U.S. interests in close ties with other countries in the region. The freedom and security of all of Europe's new democracies are a big concern to us.

I believe that the United States and NATO must act decisively—before the window of opportunity closes. When the Bush administration was confronted with the challenge of German reunification, Western leaders swiftly reached agreement on policy and acted resolutely to achieve it.

As with German reunification, the act of including Central and Eastern European democracies in NATO is not and cannot reasonably be seen as an affront—much less a threat—to any other country, least of all Russia. All actual and potential members of the NATO alliance share an interest in a peaceable, democratic Russia. Furthermore, the United States has a distinct national interest in a firm security relationship with Russia. Any United States Government should, and we expect, will work cooperatively with a democratic Russia for the consolidation of security in Europe—but not by denying NATO membership to Europe's new democracies.

Mr. President, NATO enlargement has enjoyed bipartisan support since the end of the cold war. I hope that all of my colleagues will support this legislation in that same bipartisan spirit.

Let me say that we also, of course, addressed in our press conference earlier today, when we were honored to have former President Lech Węleśa of Poland with us, that no countries are named. It is very likely that the first three countries invited will be Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. Though we have not forgotten the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and other Central and Eastern European countries when they have complied and when they have been selected by NATO.

So my view is that we have had the good beginning. The former President of Poland was very impressed, and he feels that we may now be on the way to achieving something that has been eluding these freedom loving people for a number of years.

TRIBUTE TO HOWELL HEFLIN

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, it has been my practice as Senator Republican leader to pay tribute to colleagues who are retiring from the Senate.

Usually, these remarks are delivered shortly before the Senate adjourns for the year.

However, my announcement of 2 weeks ago that I will also be leaving the Senate has moved up my time schedule.

In the coming days, then, I will be devoting some of my leader time to share a few memories of those of our colleagues who will not return to this Chamber when the 105th Congress convenes next January.

Let me start with a friend of all of us, Senator HOWELL HEFLIN of Alabama.

For 18 years, HOWELL HEFLIN has represented Alabama with distinction here in the U.S. Senate. But to many here in this Chamber, and to countless Alabamans, it is not "Senator" HEFLIN, it is "judge" HEFLIN.

Prior to his arrival in the Senate, judge HEFLIN served for 6 years as chief justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, earning a reputation for fairness and common sense. It's a reputation that has continued through his service here in the Senate.

As a member of the Judiciary Committee, Senator HEFLIN has become known, in the words of the almanac of American politics, as "a careful lawyer who picks at the rules of law with the delicate touch of a watch repairman."

It took someone with that touch to successfully revise America's bankruptcy laws, as Senator HEFLIN did in 1994.

Alabama, like Kansas, is a State with a strong agriculture heritage, and I have enjoyed serving with Senator Heflin on the Agriculture Committee, and learning a great deal from him about issues ranging from peanuts to the boll weevil.

But as I reflect back on our 18-year friendship, the one incident that remains most clearly in my mind was Senator HEFLIN's vote authorizing President Bush to use force to remove Saddam Hussein from Kuwait. Senator HEFLIN was 1 of 11 Senate Democrats who has the courage to break with their leadership and stand with the President. History will always reflect that this was the right decision and that had the 52 to 47 vote gone differently, it would have been a tremendous blow to America's prestige.

Elizabeth and I are proud to call HOWELL and "MIKE" HEFLIN our friends, and we wish them many more years of health and happiness as they return to the state they love so much and have served so well.

TRIBUTE TO CLAIBORNE PELL

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, "I am less dynamic than many," Senator CLAIBORNE PELL once said in his typical quiet manner, "But I have my own course, which I set and try to follow."

For six terms, CLAIBORNE PELL has followed that course in representing America's smallest State in terms of geography with a commitment and dedication that is anything but small.