

To give you a sense of what that means for State and local governments, consider that in 2005 the community development block grant, CDBG, program alone was funded at \$4.15 billion, \$450 million more than the \$3.7 billion requested for the total 18 programs being consolidated under the new strengthening America's communities grant program in 2006.

That is not a consolidation of programs. It is a direct attempt to dismantle those programs. That is why the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the National Association of Counties, and the National League of Cities all oppose this.

As those groups have pointed out, the Commerce Department lacks the capacity to administer the newly proposed program. HUD has 1,100 urban, suburban, and rural CDBG grantees, constituting a strong infrastructure for program administration. And, HUD's \$4.7 billion CDBG program dwarfs the Commerce Department's \$257 million economic development program. HUD has skills and experience Commerce lacks.

On March 4, 2005, I wrote a letter to Chairman GREGG and Ranking Member CONRAD supporting full funding for the CDBG and objecting to its transfer to the Department of Commerce from HUD.

Those who are closest to the needs of low-income communities our Nation's Governors, community based organizations in Illinois, and local government officials from Illinois have all come out in support of the Sarbanes amendment. They know the CDBG program works and have shared success stories of communities strengthened with CDBG funds. They respect the public servants that administer the program, and they have developed a working partnership with them.

In Illinois, communities large and small are making the most of this assistance.

The city of Chicago, for example, which has already seen its formula share of CDBG funds reduced by \$14 million over the last 3 years, has focused its CDBG priorities on five specific program areas: affordable housing, youth programming, health clinics, job training, and support services to groups with specific needs, such as domestic violence, emergency food aid, and meals on wheels.

Let me give you a specific example of CDBG funds in action. Mujeres Latinas en Acción is an organization in Chicago's Pilsen community that serves Latinas and their families. The total they receive in CDBG funds both through the city of Chicago and the city of Cicero is close to \$170,000.

Mujeres Latinas en Acción depends on CDBG funds to support services such as rental assistance for program participants to prevent homelessness. They also provide comprehensive services for victims of domestic violence including crisis intervention, court advocacy, individual counseling, group

counseling, 24-hour crisis hotline, and referrals to shelters. And, the group also uses CDBG funds to provide services to young people promoting the development of peaceful relationships, open communication with peers and family, and school success. The goal of the program is to provide youth a variety of age appropriate structured activities during nonschool hours to help prevent teen involvement in gangs, alcohol and drug use, sexual activity, pregnancy, and other problems facing adolescents in low-income communities.

In Champaign, IL, CDBG funds have been used to help low-income families become homeowners, make homes accessible for the disabled, provide credit counseling, construct emergency and transitional shelters for the homeless, and provide a broad range of services to people in need. A number of towns in St. Clair County, IL, are using CDBG funds for housing rehabilitation grants and loans for their low to moderate income residents.

As you can see, these proposed cuts in the CDBG program affect big cities and smaller towns. Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley wrote me that, "significant reductions in CDBG funds . . . would have a serious effect on the network of community-based organizations throughout the city which rely on CDBG for their existence. A number 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. BROWNBACK. 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,