

the practice of opening legislative sessions with prayer has become part of the fabric of our society. To invoke divine guidance on a public body entrusted with making the laws is not a violation of the Establishment Clause, but rather is simply an acknowledgment of beliefs widely held among the American people, said the Court.

Voluntary prayer in elected bodies should not be limited to prayer in State legislatures and Congress. School boards are deliberative bodies of adults. They are similar to a legislature in that they are elected by the people, act in the public interest, and are open to the public for voluntary attendance.

And let's not forget that this Nation was founded on the principle of freedom of religion. Not freedom from religion but freedom of religion. The Framers intended that the U.S. Constitution would bar the Government from enacting any law that favors one religious denomination over another, not prevent any mention of religion or reference to God in civic dialogue. The Framers recognized that freedom to practice religion and to express religious thought is a fundamental and alienable right belonging to all Americans.

The ACLU, which backed this lawsuit against the school board, has criticized those of us who have called for the school board to appeal the district court ruling. I do not share the ACLU's opinion, and more importantly, the people of Louisiana do not share the ACLU's opinion.

It is a fact that Americans often turn to their elected officials for relief, especially after being rebuffed by courts. As stated by the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service:

With regard to religious liberty, the origin and growth of an individual's right to believe or not believe, and the safeguarding of that right, have occurred almost entirely outside the courtroom. The regular political process has protected the religious freedom of minorities as well as and often better than the courts.

In short, it is not unusual for Congress to advance religious liberty beyond what is available from the judiciary.

On April 29 I introduced a resolution, S. Res. 132, expressing the United States Senate's support for the practice of prayer at the beginning of school board meetings. U.S. Congressman BOBBY JINDAL has introduced a similar measure in the U.S. House of Representatives.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Mr. COBURN, Mr. GRASSLEY, and Mr. DEMINT for their cosponsorship of S. Res. 132. I urge my other colleagues to support this resolution, which recognizes that prayer before school board meetings is a protected act in accordance with fundamental principles upon which this Nation was founded.

SUPPORTING RESPONSIBLE GUN STORAGE LEGISLATION

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, two separate accidental shootings in Detroit on April 22 of this year left one 13-year-old boy dead and a 9-year-old boy critically wounded. These tragedies should remind us again that much more must be done to prevent access to guns by children.

According to published reports, both of these shootings involved children playing with guns inside their own homes. In both cases, the guns accidentally discharged and shot the victim in the head. In reference to the accidental shooting of the 9-year-old boy, Lieutenant James Tolbert of the Detroit Police Department commented, "This is an unfortunate and needless incident that would have been prevented if people would make sure that a weapon in the home is secure and out of reach." In addition, Lieutenant Tolbert suggested that similar shootings could be prevented through the use of trigger locks or the storage of ammunition separate from the gun.

Recent research supports Lieutenant Tolbert's suggestions. A study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association found that the application of responsible gun storage measures can significantly reduce the risk of unintentional shooting or suicide by minors using a gun. According to the study, when ammunition in the home is locked up, the risk of such injuries is reduced by 61 percent. Simply storing ammunition separately from the gun reduces such occurrences by more than 50 percent.

According to the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, teenagers and children are involved in more than 10,000 accidental shootings in which close to 800 people die each year. Reducing the number of accidental shootings involving children and teenagers requires that commonsense gun storage measures be adopted.

During the 108th Congress, I joined with 69 of my colleagues in voting for Senator BOXER's trigger lock amendment. Senator BOXER's amendment would have required that all handguns sold by a dealer come with a child safety device, such as a lock, a lock box, or technology built into the gun itself that would increase the security of the weapon while in storage. Although the underlying gun industry immunity bill to which this amendment was attached was later defeated, the support for Senator BOXER's proposal is clear.

Requiring that guns be stored in a responsible manner could have prevented many of the accidental shootings we have seen in Detroit and around the country. I am hopeful that Congress will work to limit children's access to guns so that fewer families will have to endure the loss of their child because of a preventable accident.

HONORING IOWA FINALISTS WE THE PEOPLE: THE CITIZEN AND THE CONSTITUTION NATIONAL COMPETITION

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I rise to congratulate the students from Central Academy in Des Moines, IA who recently participated in the We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution national finals in Washington, DC. The annual competition is the culmination of the students' extensive study of the American system of constitutional democracy. The team from Central Academy won the State competition, earning the honor of representing Iowa in the national finals from April 30 through May 2, 2005. I am also proud to say that they won a unit award for their impressive performance on unit 3.

Unfortunately, I was in Iowa during the national finals this year so I was unable to meet with the students from Iowa as I customarily do. However, I am always impressed by how knowledgeable and politically astute the students are who have been through this program and I understand this year's group of students was no exception. I know Iowans can be very proud to have had them representing Iowa.

The We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution program is run by the Center for Civic Education with the help of federal funding. The program provides an excellent curriculum and valuable professional development opportunities for teachers, giving students a solid grounding in the history, philosophy, and practice of our American system of constitutional democracy. The result is young people who are more politically aware, more engaged, and more equipped to be good citizens.

In closing, I would like to recognize the Central Academy students who participated in this program, Emily Burney, Julia Busiek, Kate Conlow, Tim Di Iulio, Jon Hill, Lisa Jefferson, Alix Liftka-Reselman, Phillip Miller, Ben Miller-Todd, David Nolan, Caroline Rendon, Andrew Tatge, Erin Turner, Emily Varn, and their teacher, Michael Schaffer. They can all be very proud of their knowledge and accomplishments. I would also like to recognize the We the People district coordinator, Ivette Bender, and the state coordinator for Iowa, Linda Martin, for their hard work and dedication to the We the People program.

NOMINATION OF STEVEN JOHNSON TO BE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I would like to briefly discuss my vote in favor of cloture on the nomination of Stephen Johnson to be the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency EPA. I have always believed that the President should be granted significant deference in selecting his