

with OMB regarding the increased threshold. Through negotiations during the critical early hours following the passage of the micropurchase increase, OMB agreed to issue guidance which provided a temporary limit on who could utilize the new limits. This guidance helped to prevent undocumented spending and potential abuse; however, it only served as a temporary stop-gap measure.

On September 15, I introduced legislation on this topic. The bill introduced, S. 1716—the Emergency Health Care Relief Act of 2005—contained a provision that would roll back the increased micropurchase thresholds to a responsible level while maintaining flexibility for those providing relief in the impacted Gulf States. I included this provision in the bill I introduced because of my experience in fighting fraud, waste, and abuse that has occurred as a result of Government credit cards.

Unfortunately, S. 1716 has been held up in this body for too long, preventing legislation from fixing this potential giveaway and delaying health care to those most desperately in need.

I was pleased to hear that Senators DORGAN and WYDEN have voiced their concerns by recently introducing legislation on this matter. I am also pleased that legislation which was introduced by Senators COLLINS and LIEBERMAN on this matter was recently reported out of Committee in a favorable voice vote. Both of these bills represent what I believe is the sense of Congress, that this increased limit must be reduced statutorily.

On October 3, OMB revised its guidance for micropurchases, reducing the increased limits from \$250,000 to \$2,500, the same correction sought in the different legislation introduced by Senators COLLINS and LIEBERMAN and the subsequent legislation by Senators DORGAN and WYDEN. I applaud OMB for stepping forward and taking corrective action; however, I remain concerned that this limit could be changed by OMB at any time as the increased limit still remains in the law.

Fortunately, OMB has listened to my recommendations and recognized the need to rescind this provision and is now supporting efforts to provide a legislative fix. I have learned from OMB that all agencies within the Government have agreed that the higher limit is unnecessary and also support reducing the increased limit.

The micropurchase threshold increase needs to be repealed permanently by Congress and not merely corrected through regulatory guidance. As this body continues to hold up action on S. 1716, the best option for quick and decisive action to reduce this increased credit limit is to support the legislation introduced by Senators COLLINS and LIEBERMAN which was recently voted out by the Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs.

S. 1716 remains an important piece of legislation providing health care for

those who have been affected by the tragedy in the Gulf States. By no means should my support of this legislation be seen as reducing the need to pass S. 1716 however; it just makes sense for this body to move quickly in closing this potential loophole for fraud, waste, and abuse.

I urge all my colleagues to join me in supporting quick passage of both S. 1716 and the legislation offered by Senators COLLINS and LIEBERMAN, to help prevent relief dollars from being lost to fraud, waste, and abuse and provide the much needed health care to the region devastated by Hurricane Katrina.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I am pleased to rise today to commemorate Hispanic Heritage Month. I was proud to support, along with my Senate colleagues, a resolution recognizing Hispanic Heritage Month and celebrating the vast contributions that Hispanic Americans have made to the strength and culture of our Nation.

I would like to take a moment now to honor the contributions of the Latino community in the great State of New Jersey. New Jersey's 1.3 million Hispanic Americans are an integral and vital part of our State, contributing to every aspect of life, from business to culture. Hispanic or Latino Americans represent nearly 15 percent of the population of my State. They are the largest and fastest-growing minority group in the Nation and in New Jersey.

As the son of immigrants who came to this country for the opportunities it offers, I am proud of the way our Latino neighbors have worked to make a better life for themselves and for their children.

New Jersey is home to more than 50,000 Latino-owned businesses, ranging from big corporations like Goya Foods, which is based in Secaucus, to small mom-and-pop bodegas. Through their energy and talent, these Hispanic businesses in New Jersey generate more than \$9 billion in economic activity and support 167,000 jobs.

Latinos contribute to our economy, to our culture, and also to our public life. Hispanic Americans serve our Nation and the State of New Jersey at all levels of government—as mayors and municipal council members, county freeholders, and in countless elected and appointed capacities throughout the State. Seven members of the State's current General Assembly are of Hispanic descent, as well as a member of our Congressional delegation, Congressman ROBERT MENEZES. In 2004, Justice Roberto Rivera-Soto became the first Hispanic American to serve on New Jersey's Supreme Court. And just this year, New Jersey's first Latino county prosecutor was appointed.

I am honored today to recognize the efforts and contributions of New Jersey's Hispanic Americans and I thank my colleagues for supporting this important resolution.

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.

On April 27, 1998, Stephen Goedereis, was killed by two teens near his home in Miami, FL. Goedereis was walking down the street, when he complimented one of the two teens. The teens then beat Goedereis, who subsequently died 2 days later in the local hospital. The teens were convicted of second degree murder and robbery, both of which were classified as hate crimes. 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.

LIBERIA'S ELECTIONS

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I commend the Liberian people on their recent Presidential and parliamentary elections. News reports of people camping outside polling areas to vote, strong voter turnout, and a free and fair democratic process in Liberia are inspiring. Following a 14-year-long civil war and the regime of former Liberian leader Charles Taylor, who fled in exile in August 2003, the war-tired people of Liberia deserve our support as they work to bring about a legitimate, representative government in that country.

However, Liberia's elections are not the silver bullet for stability. There remains much work to be done to build long-term stability in this country, and the U.S. has a meaningful role to play. We must remain engaged in Liberia to help rebuild and strengthen institutions. The legitimacy of government is contingent upon the public's confidence, and lasting stability depends on such steps as rooting out corruption and providing transparency in government. The Liberian people deserve our unflinching support in those endeavors. Too much is at stake to turn our back and allow Liberia to regress into a state that houses a corrupt and abusive government and further destabilizes West Africa.

In looking forward, Liberians must also reconcile with the past. Years of horrible violence and conflict and the drastic decline of humanitarian conditions in the country under the regime of Charles Taylor need resolution. We also know now that Charles Taylor's