

To highlight a few of the great contributions of HELP of Southern Nevada, let me tell you about the Community Alternative Sentencing programs and the Youth Center. The Community Alternative Sentencing Program offers hope to individuals facing incarceration and other sanctions. In lieu of these penalties, individuals give their times and services to aiding non-profits in community service. In addition to the productive and illuminating experience this program offers its participants, it saves taxpayers the cost of incarceration, and directly increases the capacity of nonprofits to help in the community. The HELP of southern Nevada Youth Center provides training and assistance to Southern Nevada's youth to prevent homelessness and equip young people for success. Many are matched with volunteer mentors from the community, who work help them get the most out of classes they take at the center which help them develop work and personal skills. These programs only scratch the surface of HELP's vast offerings.

It brings me great joy to see Nevadans working so hard to make meaningful and lasting influences in our community. Over the course of four decades HELP and its devoted staff and volunteers have exemplified the ideals of selflessness and public service. I know that the hundreds of thousands of individuals whose lives have been touched by the work of HELP would share in my desire to express our gratitude. Furthermore, I would like to congratulate HELP. The positive changes they have made amongst the lives of individuals and within the community are truly remarkable achievements. I am grateful and honored to recognize the 40th anniversary of HELP of Southern Nevada today.

#### BIG OIL

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, the explosion on the Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico was a tragedy for the workers killed and their families. It has also become an economic disaster for the people of the gulf coast and an unparalleled environmental disaster for our Nation. As we work to stop and clean up the spill, we also need to end the coziness between big oil and the Federal agencies that regulate the industry. That chummy relationship has shielded big oil from being held accountable for years, and it is high time we make sure that government is cracking down on, not cozying up to, the oil companies.

As I discussed a few days ago at a Judiciary Committee hearing examining liability issues related to the BP oil-spill, Congress should take action right away to deter wrongdoing and encourage the kind of responsible, careful drilling we need. One way to do that is to eliminate big oil's liability cap for natural resources and economic damage caused by oilspills, such as the loss of travel and tourism revenue that

businesses across the gulf are experiencing. I am a cosponsor of Senator MENENDEZ's legislation to do just that. The oilspill in the gulf has made it painfully clear that this liability cap is far too low. The existing \$75 million liability cap is less than 1 day's worth of profits for BP, which earned almost \$6 billion in profits in the first quarter of this year.

But that must be just the beginning of a comprehensive effort to change the way government approaches big oil. For far too long, the oil industry has gotten special treatment, in large part because it is one of the wealthiest, most powerful special interests in Washington. The oil and gas industry gave \$35 million in political donations in the last Presidential election cycle, and \$¼ billion in donations over the last 20 years. One of the reasons I have worked to curb the influence of money in politics for so many years is because of the undue influence of big oil.

Those donations have contributed to the oil industry's access to Congress and to the agencies that are supposed to regulate oil exploration and production. It is no coincidence that the oil industry has received unjustified tax breaks and other favorable treatment for years. That has to change, and we can start by getting rid of taxpayer-funded giveaways for the oil and gas industry, as I have proposed in my Control Spending Now Act, legislation to cut the deficit by about \$½ trillion over 10 years. Part of that bill would end a taxpayer subsidy for the processing of oil company permits. I also support efforts to repeal over \$35 billion in oil and gas tax breaks targeted by President Obama for elimination. As we seek to rein in record deficits, it is time to end these unjustified giveaways to an industry that doesn't need taxpayer support.

Congress must also make sure that regulators aren't simply acting as rubberstamps for whatever the oil industry wants. Unfortunately, too often the Federal Government ends up listening more to the powerful industries it is supposed to be regulating than to the consumers it is supposed to be protecting. Whether it is Wall Street or big oil that is calling the shots, the result is rarely good for my constituents in Wisconsin.

Another critical way to hold big oil accountable is to pass my "Use It or Lose It" legislation to ensure oil companies are diligently exploring the Federal leases they currently have, and not sitting on those leases in an effort to drive up gas prices. We should also restore the Clean Water Act, CWA, to its full strength. The CWA is the main statute used to prosecute polluters who dump oil into waters of the United States, and it is never been more important to ensure that polluters are held accountable for the damage they do to our economy and our environment.

Congress has the responsibility to look ahead and do what it takes to pre-

vent a disaster like the one in the gulf from happening again. We have to come at this issue from all sides to make sure that BP is held accountable for the current spill, that we work to prevent future spills with proper regulations, and that we upend the culture that provides tax breaks and special treatment for big oil in the first place. Working to stop and clean up the spill in the gulf is not enough. Congress has to clean up the cozy Washington culture that favors big corporations over the needs of American people, and over the protection of our economy and our air and water.

#### GUINEA

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, Guinea is a fragile, resource-rich state in West Africa that has been plagued by political uncertainty since the death of its longtime President, Lansana Conté, in December 2008. Much of this upheaval can be attributed to the fact that the President, in his 25 long years of rule, left little room for governance reform. His autocratic legacy included abusive security forces, a collapsed economy, a divided civil society, and a squabbling opposition. As a result, there was no clear successor and no viable path forward. President Conté's commitment to democracy was cosmetic, at best, and easily trumped by his dictatorial tendencies and unwillingness to relinquish power.

As many Guinea watchers expected, the day after President Conté, died, a military junta calling itself the National Council for Democracy and Development, CNDD, seized power and dissolved the constitution and legislature. Given the deteriorated state of governance and widespread impunity, the junta was initially hailed by many as a safeguard against the endemic problems of corruption, insecurity, and rampant drug trafficking—all of which contribute to the lack of legitimate governance. Furthermore, the fact that the CNDD appointed a civilian prime minister and promised to hold Presidential and legislative elections gave many Guineans hope that the country was on the verge of a legitimate political transition.

But those elections were repeatedly postponed, despite repeated claims by the junta that a transition to civilian rule would occur. As the months passed, a number of signs, including the appointment of military officers to key government posts, indicated that CNDD was in fact not planning to relinquish power and was certainly not ready—or willing—to oversee an election process.

In fact, over the next few months the CNDD sought to tighten its hold on power severely, including an attempt in September 2009 by security forces to brutally crush a peaceful, prodemocracy rally. I joined many in the international community at that time in condemning such blatant and violent repression. A U.N. Commission was