

municipal governments and first responders of bureaucratic guesswork, allowing them to focus instead on training and execution of response plans.

Currently, Federal programs within the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice, the Department of Health and Human Services, and other Federal agencies provide our first responders with a basic level of support with respect to training and equipment procurement. However, in order to receive this support, State and local officials often must complete separate emergency plans and redundant grant application forms. The information demanded by the various homeland security plans is frequently similar; nonetheless, different Federal agencies require grant applicants to start from square one in each case.

The Homeland Security Grant Enhancement Act of 2003 will put an end to this inefficient practice. Our bill creates an interagency committee, composed of representatives from the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Transportation, the Department of Justice, and the Environmental Protection Agency, as well as any other department or agency deemed necessary by the President, to eliminate duplication in planning requirements and to simplify the application process. The committee will engage in a three-step process to accomplish this goal. First, within 2 months, it will compile a list of the homeland security assistance programs, identifying planning and administrative requirements for each program. Second, it will conduct a 4-month review of these requirements. Finally, within 8 months, it will report to Congress and to the President with recommendations as to how to streamline and standardize requirements.

In order to provide first responders with the support they need, our bill also creates a Homeland Security Information Clearinghouse. The clearinghouse will work with the interagency committee to make grant information available to first responders and local officials, easing the application process. Many State and local agencies, as well as firefighters, police, and emergency service officials, have found the Homeland Security Act provides insufficient guidance from Federal agencies as to the use of government funding and technical expertise in order to meet security needs. Through the clearinghouse, our bill will provide the coordination needed to locate grant information and other resources within the Federal Government. Easy access to this kind of information will improve immeasurably our State and local agencies' ability to deal with potential threats.

First responders have also cited the Homeland Security Act's lack of guidance regarding how Federal dollars can be spent and to whom these funds can be allocated. Neither the Homeland Security Act nor the Department of

Homeland Security's efforts to implement the law has done much to relieve this problem. Our bill seeks to remedy this by streamlining the Office for Domestic Preparedness homeland security grant process from as many as 12 deliberate steps to just 2 commonsense requirements.

When enacted, the Homeland Security Grant Enhancement Act will put in place grant application processes that are much more efficient and user-friendly. State and local authorities will be called upon to develop a single, 3-year homeland security plan that outlines vulnerabilities and capabilities. Federal grant programs will be reconciled to establish a process for a more logical allocation of resources to meet State and local needs. Local agencies or government officials will then apply for funds based on this plan, which can be revised each year pending approval by the Secretary of Homeland Security. These steps will lead to greater ease in securing funding for local police, fire, and emergency service departments. This means greater security for West Virginians and all Americans.

Perhaps more importantly, this will make certain that State and local officials and first responders are all included in the homeland security planning process, allowing them to access funds and equipment in a timely and efficient manner. Our legislation requires that 80 percent of homeland security funding and resources will reach the local level within 60 days of allocation. The bill encourages flexibility in the use of these funds by authorizing local officials to determine their allocation to planning, equipment, exercises, training, or other homeland security functions.

In order to ensure that rural States are included in Federal grant programs whose eligibility criteria sometime favor urban areas, the Homeland Security Grant Enhancement Act follows a procedure that benefited my State of West Virginia earlier this year when we partially funded first responder programs in the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill. As with that legislation, our bill provides that any State whose application for funding through this grant program is approved will receive a minimum of .75 percent of the total amount appropriated for homeland security in a given fiscal year, thereby providing an adequate preparedness funding baseline for all States. The Secretary, acting in cooperation with congressional appropriators, would naturally exercise the authority to make upward adjustments with the remaining funds. However, the .75 percent baseline will make certain that rural first responders are not left out. At the same time, this mechanism will see to it that areas facing higher risk and greater vulnerabilities might receive more funds. Rural areas will not be left out, but areas that are home to elements of the Nation's critical infrastructure, as well as areas with

higher population density—both of which are the most likely targets for international terrorists—will be safeguarded.

Finally, this bill also provides a logical flexibility for Federal officials who oversee unspent funds previously appropriated to the Office for Domestic Preparedness. Rather than allowing this money to sit idle while our first responders clamor for adequate funding, this legislation will enable DHS to dispense funds to those States that obtain a waiver from the Secretary. Funds earmarked for one purpose, such as training, may then be used to pay costs associated with another first responder need, such as equipment.

I commend the Senator from Maine for her close personal attention to the matter at hand, and for her hard work in putting this legislation together. She has worked closely with many of the groups who will benefit directly from this legislation. While many of these organizations do not endorse legislation, the approach we offer today has been supported by the National Governors Association, the National Conference State Legislatures, the Council of State Governments, the National Association of Counties, the National League of Cities, the International City/County Management Association, and the International Association of Fire Fighters.

I believe the Homeland Security Grant Enhancement Act will greatly improve coordination between the various agencies that distribute homeland security funds to our States, communities, and first responders. Relevant information will flow more freely and the grant application and funding process will become more clear and more flexible. While we have made great strides in our efforts against international terrorists, stifling their ability to conduct operations, the danger of an attack remains. This legislation improves efficiency within a multi-agency bureaucracy, easing the burdens on those who are charged with defending the homeland. These changes will also better prepare our first responders to meet the threats they face.

PROSECUTING GUN-RELATED CRIMES

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, last month I spoke about a report released by Americans for Gun Safety Foundation entitled, "The Enforcement Gap: Federal Gun Laws Ignored," analyzing the Justice Department's commitment to enforcing and prosecuting gun laws. The report examines prosecution data acquired from the Justice Department under the Freedom of Information Act for fiscal years 2000 through 2002. The AGS study reveals a significant gap between the number of federal gun crimes committed and the number of Federal prosecutions initiated.

In response to this report, Representative JOHN DINGELL, the Dean of the Michigan delegation in the House, sent

a letter to Attorney General Ashcroft asking "how the Justice Department plans to improve its abysmal record of enforcement of all of the major federal firearms statutes." He goes on to say, "by not enforcing existing federal firearm laws, we are not only allowing criminals to arm themselves, we are eliminating any deterrent effect these laws may have."

Justice Department officials regularly point to a 38 percent increase in prosecutions of gun crimes since 2001 as evidence of their success. However, according to the AGS report, at the end of fiscal year 2002, federal prosecutors filed 197 cases for gun trafficking, despite 100,000 guns showing signs of trafficking. Only 27 cases were filed against corrupt gun dealers, even though AGS reports that gun dealers are the leading source of firearms recovered in gun trafficking operations. Across the country, only seven cases for illegally selling a gun to a minor were filed, even though more than 30,000 gun crimes were committed by youths age 17 or under. Only 202 cases were filed for possessing or selling a stolen firearm, despite nearly 140,000 reported gun thefts that year in which the make, model and serial number of a stolen gun was reported to police. And, a mere 98 cases for possessing or selling a firearm with an obliterated serial number were prosecuted, despite thousands of these guns being recovered in cities across the country each year.

I believe vigorous and fair enforcement of our gun safety laws is a critical step toward reducing gun violence. I commend Congressman DINGELL questioning the Justice Department about the enforcement gap, and I hope the Justice Department will step up its efforts to prosecute not only people who commit gun crimes but those corrupt or negligent dealers who put guns in criminal hands.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2003

• Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the need for hate crimes legislation. On May 1, 2003, Senator KENNEDY and I introduced the Local Law Enforcement Act, a bill that would add new categories to current hate crimes law, sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society.

I would like to describe a terrible crime that occurred in Palos Heights, IL. On September 11, 2001, a man attacked a Moroccan-American gas station attendant with the blunt end of a 2-foot machete. The attacker was arrested and charged with a hate crime.

I believe that 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.●

(At the request of Mr. DASCHLE, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

RETIREMENT OF MR. WILLIAM M. COFFEY

• Mr. BREAU. Mr. President, I rise today to extend my congratulations and best wishes to Mr. William M. (Bill) Coffey on his retirement as president and chief executive officer of Volunteers of America Greater Baton Rouge.

It is my privilege to recognize Bill's dedicated service to the people of our State. During his nearly 40 years as a public servant and a nonprofit leader, Bill has helped countless individuals and families in need.

Born in 1940 on a small farm in north Louisiana, Bill began working for the State Department of Health and Human Services in 1964 after earning a master's in social work from Louisiana State University. His distinguished career as a State employee spanned 25 years and a day, before his retirement in 1987 as deputy director of the Department of Mental Retardation.

He then joined Volunteers of America—one of our Nation's leading human services charities B and in 1989 was appointed president/CEO of the organization's Baton Rouge affiliate. Under his leadership, Volunteers of America expanded its vital mission of service, opening new programs in Lafayette, Lake Charles and many smaller communities across south Louisiana.

Today, Volunteers of America serves more than 14,000 south Louisiana residents every year—abused and neglected children, at-risk youth, the elderly, homeless families, people with mental illness or mental retardation, people living with HIV/AIDS, victims of hurricanes and other disasters, and many more.

Above all, Bill has been a community-builder, bringing together those in need with those who have a need to serve.

My wife Lois and I have experienced the joy of service through Volunteers of America many times, especially on our visits with the children at Parker House in Baton Rouge, a therapeutic setting for young victims of the most severe abuse and neglect. We were honored to be part of a recent \$1.2-million fundraising campaign to acquire a new residence for these children, and a center to prevent child abuse. The outpouring of support for this new facility helped fulfill one of Bill's long-term dreams. It will surely be the crowning touch of his life of service, and his legacy for generations to come.

For all Louisianans, I wish to express our thanks and best wishes to Bill and his family—his wife, Cooky, and their children, Pam and Blake—for many happy years ahead.●

(At the request of Mr. REID, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE

• Mr. REED. Mr. President, I am necessarily absent today to attend funeral services for the former Rhode Island Superior Court's Presiding Justice, Anthony A. Giannini, in Providence.

Were I present today, I would vote "yea" on Executive Calendar No. 218, the nomination of R. Hewitt Pate to be an Assistant Attorney General.●

CONGRATULATIONS TO BRYAN JONES

• Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I commend Mr. Bryan Jones of Yazoo City, MS, for his distinguished service as President of Delta Council.

Delta Council is an area development organization representing the 18 Delta and part-Delta counties of Northwest Mississippi. Delta Council was organized in 1935 to bring together the agricultural, business, and professional leadership of the region to confront the major problems facing the region at that time. Since then, and over the past 68 years, the organization has expanded its role under leaders like Bryan Jones, for the purpose of working in the fields of educational policy, water resource conservation, highway developments, agricultural research, and flood control.

As President of Delta Council, Bryan has served unselfishly and in an effective role to lead the people of the Delta during very stressful economic times. He has performed admirably and gained the respect of his peers through the use of sound judgment and meaningful action.

Bryan has distinguished himself in many areas on behalf of the Mississippi Delta region that he loves so much. Bryan has led the organization of Delta Council into new fields of endeavor such as health care and adult literacy. He has supported innovative approaches toward expanding the conservation provisions of our farm laws. He has been a strong advocate for water resource developments that include significant features for improved environmental restoration. And, he has become well known throughout the region and among members of the Mississippi Congressional Delegation as an effective spokesperson on behalf of the Delta's largest industry, which is agriculture.

After graduating from the University of Mississippi, Bryan Jones could have been placed in a senior executive position in almost any company located anywhere in the United States. However, because of his love for the Mississippi Delta, Bryan returned to the Delta region and joined his local peers in building a \$1 billion banking system which has rapidly grown throughout our State. In addition to serving as the Chief Executive Officer of the Delta Division of BankPlus, Bryan operates a