

## PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the privilege of the floor be granted to Jennifer Bacigalupi, an assistant in my office, during today's session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. INOUE. I ask unanimous consent that Stephen Tela, a legislative fellow assigned to Senator KENNEDY's office, be accorded floor privileges during today's consideration of H.R. 2658.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent a staff person in Senator BINGAMAN's office be granted privileges during the pendency of this bill. His name is Jonathan Epstein, a congressional fellow.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that William Greer and Ryan Pratt of Senator LOTT's office be granted the privilege of the floor for the remainder of the day.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

## CHECK TRUNCATION ACT OF 2003

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask that the Chair now lay before the Senate a message from the House on H.R. 1474.

The Presiding Officer laid before the Senate the following message from the House of Representatives:

*Resolved*, That the House disagree on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 1474) entitled "An Act to facilitate check truncation by authorizing substitute checks, to foster innovative in the check collection system without mandating receipt of checks in electronic form, and to improve the overall efficiency of the Nation's payments system, and for other purposes", and ask a conference with the Senate on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses thereon.

*Ordered*, That the following Members be the managers of the conference on the part of the House:

For consideration of the House bill and the Senate amendment, and modifications committed to conference: Mr. Oxley, Mr. Bachus, Mr. LaTourette, Ms. Hart, Mr. Tiberi, Mr. Frank of Massachusetts, Mr. Sanders, and Mr. Ford.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate insist on its amendment to the House bill, agree to a conference with the House on the disagreeing votes, and the Chair be authorized to appoint conferees at a ratio of 3 to 2.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Presiding Officer appointed Mr. SHELBY, Mr. BENNETT, Mr. ALLARD, Mr. SARBANES, and Mr. JOHNSON as conferees on the part of the Senate.

## BULLETPROOF VEST PARTNERSHIP GRANT ACT OF 2003

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 193, S. 764.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 764) to extend the authorization of the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Program.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I am pleased that the Senate is taking up and passing the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Act of 2003, S. 764, a bill to reauthorize an existing matching grant program to help State, tribal, and local jurisdictions purchase armor vests for use by law enforcement officers.

This bill marks the third time that I have had the privilege of teaming with my friend and colleague Senator CAMPBELL to work on this legislation. We authored the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Act of 1998 in response to the tragic Carl Drega shootout in 1997 on the Vermont-New Hampshire border, in which two State troopers who did not have bulletproof vests were killed. The Federal officers who responded to the scenes of the shooting spree were equipped with lifesaving body armor, but the State and local law enforcement officers lacked protective vests because of the cost.

Two years later, we successfully passed the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Act of 2000, and I hope we will go three-for-three this time around. Senator CAMPBELL brings to our effort invaluable experience in this area and during his time in the Senate he has been a leader in the area of law enforcement. As a former deputy sheriff, he knows the dangers law enforcement officers face when out on patrol. I am pleased that we have been joined in this effort by Judiciary Chairman HATCH, Judiciary Committee Senators BIDEN, SCHUMER, KOHL and FEINGOLD, as well as five other Senate cosponsors.

Our bipartisan legislation will save the lives of law enforcement officers across the country by providing more help to State and local law enforcement agencies to purchase body armor. Since its inception in 1999, this highly successful Department of Justice program has provided law enforcement officers in 16,000 jurisdictions nationwide with nearly 350,000 new bulletproof vests. In Vermont, 148 municipalities have been fortunate to receive funding for the purchase of almost 1200 vests. Without the federal funding given by this program, I daresay that there would be close to that number of police officers without vests in Vermont today.

The Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Act of 2003 will further the success of the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Program by re-authorizing the program through fiscal year 2007. Our legislation would continue the Federal-State partnership by authorizing up to \$50 million per year for matching grants to State and local law enforcement agencies and Indian tribes

at the Department of Justice to buy body armor.

Not only should we reauthorize this program, but also we should work to see that it is fully funded. While the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Program funding has been consistently authorized at \$50 million per year, that amount gets whacked in half during the appropriations process. Law enforcement agencies, however, clearly need our help to purchase vests—for the current fiscal year, the Bulletproof Vest Partnership office received funding requests from small jurisdictions, with populations under 100,000, totaling \$59 million—more than double the funds appropriated. The authorizing legislation requires that smaller jurisdictions receive priority funding through this program. Those requests consumed the entire amount of funds available and for the first time ever awards could only be made to small jurisdictions.

We know that body armor saves lives, but the cost has put these vests out of the reach of many of the officers who need them. This program makes it more affordable for police departments of all sizes. Few things mean more to me than when I meet Vermont police officers and they tell me that the protective vests they wear were made possible because of this program. This is the least we should do for the officers on the front lines who put themselves in danger for us every day. I want to make sure that every police officer who needs a bulletproof vest gets one.

I look forward to Senate passage today of the bipartisan Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Act, and I hope the House and the President will promptly act on this lifesaving legislation to help better to protect our law enforcement officers.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate, and that any statements relating to this measure be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (S. 764) was read the third time and passed, as follows:

S. 764

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

## SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Act of 2003".

## SEC. 2. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

Section 1001(a)(23) of title I of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3793(a)(23)) is amended by striking "2004" and inserting "2007".

## NATIONAL HEALTH CENTER WEEK

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 195, S. Res. 140.