

how far we have to go—in improving our emergency management capabilities. As the magnitude of the tragedy became known, the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency and hospitals throughout southern New England activated emergency incident command systems, many of which were designed after September 11, 2001. The process of rescuing and treating victims, putting out the blaze, identifying bodies, accounting for the missing, providing crisis counseling for survivors put a tremendous strain on State and local agencies.

I have no doubt that Rhode Island's post-September 11 emergency management planning efforts, backed by Federal assistance programs through the new Department of Homeland Security, made a difference in responding to the West Warwick fire.

In the past year, Rhode Island's ability to respond to mass casualty events has been further improved with the help of Federal programs such as the State Homeland Security Grant Program, the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program, Interoperable Communications grants, and the Department of Health and Human Services' bioterror response grants to hospitals. All told, Congress has provided more than \$75 million to Rhode Island over the past 3 years for emergency management and terrorism prevention and response. Yet we continue to face tremendous challenges, and we need to do more.

I want to say a special word of thanks to my colleagues Senator GREGG and Senator HOLLINGS for their strong support in securing funding through the Department of Justice to reimburse State and local law enforcement agencies in Rhode Island for extraordinary expenses related to the fire.

The Station nightclub fire was a catastrophe. Fault will be appointed in the days ahead by the civil and criminal courts, but Rhode Island is already taking steps to ensure that a tragedy like this never happens again. The Rhode Island General Assembly passed the Comprehensive Fire Safety Act of 2003 to repeal the "grandfather" exemption from modern fire codes and require more sprinklers in places of public assembly, especially nightclubs. The law also bans pyrotechnics in most indoor venues and gives greater power to fire inspectors. The State fire marshal now faces the task of training the State's fire inspectors and meeting with businesses and institutions to explain how the code applied to individual buildings.

As State and local officials across the country reexamine their fire and building codes and step up enforcement of safety practices in public buildings. Congress should do everything it can to support this effort and to encourage both State and local governments and Federal agencies to adopt and strictly enforce the most current fire and building consensus codes. I was also proud

to join my colleague Senator HOLLINGS in introducing the American Home Fire Safety Act—S. 1798—to require the Consumer Product Safety Commission to implement comprehensive fire safety standards for upholstered furniture, mattresses, bedclothing, and candles.

No one in Rhode Island will forget the tragic events of February 20, 2003, and I hope we will never forget the way Rhode Islanders came together in that dark hour to do whatever was needed to save lives and relieve the suffering of the victims. That generous spirit has continued. Over the past year, Rhode Islanders and Americans across the country have donated more than \$3 million to the Station Nightclub Fire Relief Fund to help families affected by the tragedy, including children who lost parents in the fire.

We often hear that it is in times of crisis that a person's true nature is revealed. That standard applies to communities as well, and as we approach a painful anniversary that will again focus the world's attention on the sorrow and grief felt by so many Rhode Islanders, I believe the people of our State have much to be proud of for the way they responded to this tragedy. It is now our duty to do all that we can to make sure that no community ever again faces a catastrophe like this one.

I thank the Chair and I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.
The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant journal clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

INDIAN BUDGET ISSUES

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, 2 days ago I talked about the need to find a way to ensure that every American has access to health insurance and high-quality health care—and to counter the defeatism of some who suggest it isn't possible. As I said, the United States is the only industrialized country that has failed to achieve this goal. It is possible. It is a matter of political will, and we must show that we, as a Nation, have it.

Today I want to talk a little about a group of people who are counted among the insured in this country—Native Americans. They are counted among the insured, but the Government has failed utterly to deliver even basic health care to the vast majority of them.

Through treaty and statute, the Federal Government has promised health care to all Native Americans through the Indian Health Service. In fact, the Federal Government provides less than half what it would cost to provide basic clinical services to the current IHS user population.

Incredibly, the Federal Government spends twice as much per capita on

medical treatment for Federal prisoners than it spends on treatment for Native Americans. Twice as much on Federal prisoners as Native American children.

Last year, and the year before that, I offered amendments to the budget resolution to make up the difference. During consideration of last year's budget resolution, we were two votes short of passing our amendment to add \$2.9 billion in funding for IHS clinical services.

Every Democratic Senator voted for the funding; every Republican Senator voted against it. Republican leaders then offered an amendment to provide one-tenth of those funds—\$290 million to the IHS. As meager as that increase was, it was welcome. Unfortunately, that amendment never made it through the conference with the House. Furthermore, when the Interior Appropriations bill was considered, the Republican support for that \$290 million—their own proposal—had dried up.

This year, the President's budget does no better. The President's budget includes a \$7 million increase for IHS clinical services—less than the cost of inflation, and about \$3.4 billion short of what is needed to meet Native Americans' basic health care needs.

I have spoken many times on this floor about the "life or limb" test at the Indian Health Service. When funding is low—and that is pretty much all the time—treatment is rationed using the "life or limb" test.

If a Native American patient isn't at immediate risk of losing his or her life or a limb, then he or she is turned away. Of course, denying early treatment often leads to a worsening condition. Sometimes by the time their condition is bad enough to meet the "life or limb" test, the funding is simply gone.

People are suffering preventable long-term health effects, and even dying, because we—the U.S. Government—are failing to meet our responsibilities. Sometimes we grow numb to these realities.

We do not want to face them. We hear "life and limb test" and simply don't believe it. But this is the reality in Indian country. We have the power to fix it.

The Indian health care budget and the overall budget for Indian country were the subjects of discussion in several meetings I have had this week. Tuesday afternoon I met with, among others, John Yellow Bird Steele, president of the Oglala Sioux Tribe.

President Steele talked about what an affront to Indian country President Bush's fiscal year 2005 budget is. Inadequate funding for Indian health. Inadequate funding for Indian education. Inadequate funding for law enforcement. Inadequate for housing. There is only one area of the budget that was increased—the Department of the Interior's proposed reorganization of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Office of the Special Trustee that will oversee

the Interior Department trust reform efforts.

This reorganization plan was given a 50 percent increase in the President's budget. One who hasn't heard much about the trust reform issue might think that should be welcome news. But the truth is that Indian tribes and trust account holders strongly oppose the reorganization plan. This plan has been pursued without proper consultation with Indian tribes and over the vehement objections of Indian tribes.

So this administration has dedicated wholly inadequate resources to Indian country and, in distributing those scarce resources, has devoted its only increase to a proposal that Indian people vehemently oppose. In the process, the administration has ignored the needs of Indian health, education, law enforcement, and every other major priority facing Indian tribes and Indian people.

Again, Indian country needs are not theoretical. They are real, everyday needs.

Tuesday President Steele and other representatives of the Oglala Lakota people talked to me about a few of them. They reminded me that Pine Ridge has four judges and two prosecutors to serve the entire reservation. BIA law enforcement funds cover the salaries of those two prosecutors for only 6 months of the year. Because the tribe's general fund is limited, it cannot make up the entire difference. This year, the prosecutors volunteered their time for 3 months of the year.

Pine Ridge has 2 troopers to cover its 1,800 miles of roads. When there is a car accident on one of those roads, more often than not, the troopers will not be able to respond. There are more unattended crashes on Pine Ridge than attended crashes. On Pine Ridge, the "first responders" are often the next people who happen to drive by.

Waste water systems are inadequate—some underground pipes date back to the 1800s. Housing is inadequate—some homes have no electricity or running water. As Cora Whiting, a tribal council member, said to me, "How many people in America are still living that way?"

Pine Ridge has an unemployment rate of 85 percent. Tribal leaders like President Steele and Cora Whiting know that the only way to improve that statistic is to bring economic development to the reservation. But it is impossible to attract businesses without the infrastructure necessary to support them. And we have a duty to help build it.

Yesterday I met with Chairman Harold Frazier of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe. We discussed many of these same issues. We talked about their unmet needs, and their story is all too close to that of Pine Ridge.

Their tribal court system is a perfect example. The Bureau of Indian Affairs' tribal priority allocations fund the Cheyenne River Tribal Court. This year, their funding is about \$300,000

short of what they require to deliver the bare minimum of services. In essence, they have enough funds to pay salaries and benefits for an inadequate number of staff. They can pay for nothing else—no attorney fees, no supplies, no juror fees, nothing.

The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe also faces some of the same infrastructure problems that the Oglalas and so many other tribes face. Water systems cannot maintain water pressure or support building upgrades that are essential to the provision of basic tribal services. And, of course, Chairman Frazier and I also talked at length about health care and the system that has failed them.

People tend to think of budgets as intellectual exercises—something that isn't binding or real. Even when we say we have balanced the budget—something we actually did in the 1990s—people tend not to believe it. And now that the failed fiscal policy of the last few years has turned projected surpluses into massive deficits, our credibility is even lower.

But budgets are not just numbers. They reflect choices about our priorities and our political will. They have real consequences for real people.

For several years, I have watched this administration and its allies defend tax cuts for the wealthy while they claim we "can't afford" to fund the Indian Health Service. We have borrowed money—from Social Security and other countries—to finance those tax cuts, but we have denied Indian children the health care that federal prisoners take for granted.

The fact that we choose to afford huge tax cuts for the wealthiest among us, or the construction of hospitals in Iraq, but choose not to afford health care or education or housing for Indian families is lost on no one in Indian country.

This budget isn't Indian country budget. It isn't America's budget. It is time to make our budget reflect America's true priorities, which are fair opportunities for every child in America, for their parents who work so hard to create a better life for them, and for their grandparents who deserve to retire with dignity.

That is the budget I'm going to be talking about and fighting for as this year unfolds.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REED. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

VETERAN PATRIOT MAX CLELAND

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I rise to respond to a scurrilous attack against the patriotism of a friend and former colleague, Max Cleland. In a town-

hall.com column by Ann Coulter, which is described as a conservative news and information Web site, scurrilous, unprincipled attacks have been leveled against a patriot, a warrior, and a friend. I want to put my response in context.

I had the privilege of serving in the U.S. Army for 12 years on active duty. I did some challenging things there: qualified as an Army Ranger, paratrooper, commanded a company in the 82nd Airborne Division of paratroopers. But I am not a combat veteran. I did not serve in a combat zone. Max Cleland, and many, many others, did. There is a difference between those who wear the uniform of the United States and those who served in a combat situation, particularly a situation such as Vietnam.

The difference is that in that situation, more than any others, you live constantly with a sense of your own mortality. At any moment, through any fire or mishap, you could die or be seriously injured. At any moment, you could see people, your fellow soldiers, die from injuries. And for officers such as Max Cleland there is a special burden that goes along with leadership—not just officers but also noncommissioned officers. You have to make tough decisions that some day could result in the death or injury of another. That is a very special type of service that is inherent in being in a combat zone.

Max Cleland served with distinction. The article that Miss Coulter wrote mocks his service, mocks his sacrifice, and, in doing so, mocks the service and sacrifice of thousands and thousands of Americans in the past and today across the globe.

For example, this is how she describes Max in some respects. In her words:

Moreover, if we're going to start delving into exactly who did what back then, maybe Max Cleland should stop allowing Democrats to portray him as a war hero who lost his limbs taking enemy fire on the battlefields of Vietnam.

Let's get one thing straight right now: Max Cleland is an American hero.

Let me read from the citation he received for the Silver Star, obtained from Senator MILLER's Web site.

Captain Cleland distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous action on 4 April, 1968 . . . during enemy attack near Khe Sanh.

When the battalion command post came under a heavy enemy rocket and mortar attack, Captain Cleland, disregarding his own safety, exposed himself to the rocket barrage as he left his covered position to administer first aid to his wounded comrades. He then assisted in moving the injured personnel to covered positions.

Continuing to expose himself, Captain Cleland organized his men into a work party to repair the battalion communications equipment, which had been damaged by enemy fire.

His gallant action is in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service, and reflects great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

Max Cleland is a hero. No one has to portray him as one; he is one.