VOCA-funded victim assistance programs serve nearly 4 million crime victims each year, including victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, elder abuse, and drunk driving, as well as survivors of homicide victims. Our VOCA-funded compensation programs have helped hundreds of thousands of victims of violent crime.

The Crime Victims Fund is the Nation’s premier vehicle for supporting victims’ services. It bears repeating that the Crime Victims Fund does not receive a dime from tax revenue or appropriated funding. Instead, it is made up of criminal fines, forfeited bail bonds, penalties, and special assessments.

Since fiscal year 2000, Congress has set a cap on annual fund obligations expressly for the purpose of ensuring “that a stable level of funding will remain available for these programs in future years.” The “rainy day” fund created by this spending cap has been used to bridge the difference between annual deposits and distributions three times during the past 7 years.

The future of the fund is being threatened, however. After 26 years of progress, the Bush administration is proposing to siphon all amounts remaining in the fund at the end of fiscal year 2008. That would leave the fund with a balance of zero going into fiscal year 2009 and create a disastrous situation for providers of victims’ services. Over the past 6 years, the Senate has successfully blocked several past attempts by this administration to rescind the fund’s remaining balance and has supported the retention of all amounts deposited into the fund. Over the past 6 years, the Bush administration has squandered record surpluses and racked up $8.5 trillion in Federal debt. It is wrong to try to pay for its failed fiscal policies by emptying out the Crime Victims Fund. These resources are appropriately set aside to assist victims of crime.

In order to preserve the fund once again, Senator CRAPO and I, joined by more than a dozen other Senators are sending a letter this week to the Senate Appropriations Committee asking that the committee oppose the administration’s proposal to empty the Crime Victims Fund and, instead, permit those amounts to remain in the fund, in accordance with law, to be used for the important programs and services needed by crime victims.

Also, last week the Vermont Department of Corrections received a $400,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to implement a Statewide Automated Victim Information and Notification System (SAVIN) for the purpose of providing timely notifications to crime victims who request it. Programs like these give crime victims some peace of mind and facilitate communication among the courts and corrections and other law enforcement agencies.

We need to renew our national commitment to crime victims. The Senate can help by recognizing the importance of the Crime Victims Fund and supporting its essential role in helping crime victims and their families meet critical expenses, recover from the horrific crimes they endured, and move forward with their lives. I urge Senators on both sides of the aisle to honor our longstanding commitment to crime victims by working together to commemorate victims of crime and to preserve the Crime Victims Fund.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

CONGRATULATING DR. HOWARD-YANA SHAPIRO

- Mr. BINGAMAN. Madam President, I wish to congratulate Dr. Howard-Yana Shapiro, who will receive the Organic Leadership Award on May 7, 2007. She is a trailblazer in promoting the Organic Trade Association’s highest honor. I thank him for his commitment to furthering organic agriculture around the world, and I wish him continued success in the years ahead.

MOUNTAIN HOME AIR FORCE BASE

- Mr. CRAIG. Madam President, today I am proud to congratulate Mountain Home Air Force Base for their recent achievement of winning the Commander in Chief’s Annual Award for Installation Excellence for an Air Force Base. Over 85 Active-Duty Air Force installations compete for the award, and I was extremely pleased to get word that Idaho’s own Air Force base came out the winner.

Over the years, I have worked very closely with the different wing commanders at Mountain Home Air Force Base to ensure that their installation will provide our soldiers with the best living conditions and optimal training space to ensure that should they be called to duty, they would be fully prepared. I know firsthand that the work being done both at home and abroad by our airmen and soldiers at Mountain Home Air Force Base is among the best our military can offer.

Over 500 airmen and a crew from Mountain Home Air Force Base are currently deployed in Afghanistan in support of our joint mission with NATO to provide freedom and security from terrorists, and they are serving with great pride. I know that their fellow servicemembers, the Idaho delegation, and all of Idaho await their return and they will be greeted with a hero’s welcome. Although they are not in Idaho to celebrate today, I would like to express my appreciation and congratulations of my colleagues, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of the Air Force, and the Commander in Chief, I know that their contributions greatly aided in Mountain Home Air Force Base receiving this award.

COL Tony Rock, wing commander of the 366th Fighting Wing at Mountain Home Air Force Base, expressed his pride of winning this award but gave the credit to the 4,000 plus men and women who operate the base on a daily basis. Colonel Rock was quoted as saying, “This award validates the hard work, commitment and pride of all our Gunfighters who work together to make Mountain Home the best base in the Air Force. I am simultaneously honored and awed to be a part of this team and lead our Gunfighters as we continue to prove we are the premier combat wing in the entire Air Force.”

I couldn’t agree more with Colonel Rock’s statement.

Again, I would like to extend the appreciation and congratulations of myself and all of Idaho to the soldiers and