

degree in German studies in 1993 and a master's degree in German linguistics in 1998. Additionally, he was a Fulbright Scholar at Christian-Albrechts-University in Kiel, Germany, in 1993 and worked as an academic technology liaison at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

It is clear that Jamie Bishop touched many lives with his personality, his sense of humor, his numerous talents, his passion for teaching, and his love of scientific art. In fact, those who were close to him have said he talked about "changing the world with art." He has been described as an intelligent, artistic, caring, gentle, and polite individual.

It is difficult to fathom how something like this could happen, and words can't fully describe the grief we all feel as the weight of this tragedy settles over our Nation. My prayer is that, through faith and resolve, our country will emerge from this disaster in unity and strength as together we find healing from this sorrow.

Julianne and I will keep his wife Stefanie Hofer, who is a member of the Virginia Tech faculty, as well as his parents Michael and Jerri Bishop in our thoughts and prayers during this time of sorrow.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

PETTY OFFICER 1ST CLASS JOSEPH ADAM
MCSWEEN

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, I wish to honor U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Joseph Adam McSween of Oak Harbor, WA.

Petty Officer McSween will be remembered as a loving husband and father, a dedicated friend and sailor, and a strong leader. After graduating from Georgia Christian High School, he received a track scholarship to York College in York, NE, where he would later graduate in 2001 with an associate degree. While there, Petty Officer McSween was recognized as a natural leader and participated in campus leadership activities. He also met and fell in love with his wife Erin Hammitt while they were students together. They later had two daughters: Lily, age 5, and Gwyneth, age 2.

On April 6, 2007, while serving near Kirkuk, Iraq, as a demolition specialist with the Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal Unit 11, based at Whidbey Island, WA, Petty Officer McSween and two others passed away when a rocket hit their humvee. McSween was 26 years old. He was awarded the Bronze Star "V", Combat Distinguished Device, the Purple Heart, and the Combat Action Ribbon at his military service.

Adam was not a Nebraska resident, but he chose to be buried in York, NE. His very close friend, Petty Officer Randy Leppell, U.S. Navy, had this to say at the funeral: "One thing I remember about Adam, one story he told was that he called back to some crazy little town called York, Nebraska, which I'd never heard of, and he told

me he hadn't been to the school for a while. But the admissions officer still remembered his name. He said, 'This is Adam.' The Admissions Officer said 'Adam McSween?' He couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe it. I think it speaks volumes for the people of York."

Hundreds of people from York and many other areas of Nebraska and surrounding States, people who never even knew a young college student named Adam McSween, came to his funeral and lined the streets, proudly displaying the American Flag as the procession made its way to Adam's final resting place in Greenwood Cemetery in York, NE.

In addition to his wife and two daughters, Petty Officer McSween is survived by his parents Bob and Florence McSween; his two brothers Robert and Kyle; and his sister Angela. I offer my sincere condolences to the family and friends of Petty Officer McSween. He made the ultimate and most courageous sacrifice for our Nation. I join all Americans in grieving the loss of this remarkable young man and know that Petty Officer McSween's passion for serving, his leadership, and his selflessness will remain a source of inspiration for us all.

BACKGROUND CHECKS

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, the Brady law requires prospective gun purchasers to undergo a criminal background check before they are able to obtain a firearm from a federally licensed firearm dealer. It was created to prevent felons, fugitives, domestic abusers, and other prohibited persons from gaining access to guns. However, there are significant holes in this legislation that permit exploitation by those who wish to avoid criminal background checks and still obtain guns.

In 1993, President Clinton signed the Brady bill into law. This law required a waiting period for handgun sales until records were available to instantly check criminal background of prospective gun purchasers. Once the National Instant Check System, NICS, became operational in 1998, the Justice Department maintained background check records on approved purchases for 6 months in order to ensure that felons and other prohibited buyers were not mistakenly approved. In 2001, the Justice Department shortened this record retention period to 90 days, the actual amount of time it takes to ensure proper audits of NICS.

Under the Bush administration, however, Attorney General John Ashcroft sought to require the records of approved purchasers to be destroyed within 24 hours. In July 2002, the Government Accountability Office, GAO, issued a report on the potential effects of next-day destruction of NICS background check records. It concluded that destroying these records within 24 hours would prevent the Government from auditing the NICS system to en-

sure its accuracy and "would have public safety implications." The GAO warned that a corrupt dealer could provide the FBI with a different name than that of the actual buyer to obtain approval for the name of the false purchaser and then proceed with the sale to the actual prohibited buyer. Such a scheme would be nearly impossible to detect with background check records destroyed before the ATF could audit the dealer. Citing his concern about the privacy of gun owners, Attorney General Ashcroft ignored the GAO report and the 24-hour record-destruction provision went into effect.

Another loophole in the law is that it applies only to sales by licensed gun dealers, not to private transfers between unlicensed persons. Approximately 40 percent of gun sales are between private persons, such as at gun shows. Only six States require background checks on all firearm sales. According to the ATF, almost one-third of trafficked guns are acquired at gun shows and flea markets. These gatherings present the perfect opportunity for unlicensed sellers to offer countless guns for sale with no questions asked. People who would not pass a background check in a licensed gun store are able to purchase as many guns as they wish at gun shows.

Between the enactment in 1993 and 2005, the Brady Act has prevented approximately 1.4 million convicted felons and other prohibited persons from buying guns from licensed retail dealers. Without NICS records, law enforcement officers do not have the opportunity to retrieve a mistakenly sold gun in order to protect against its use in a crime. I urge my colleagues to pass commonsense gun regulations which would put an end to these gaping holes in our gun laws.

THE STATE OF SMALL BUSINESS MANUFACTURING

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, today I commemorate National Small Business Week, which President Bush designated for April 22-28, 2007. As ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, I have made it one of my top priorities to champion our Nation's small businesses and manufacturers and promote their needs and concerns. Our top job creators deserve nothing less. The fact is, small businesses are the driving force behind our Nation's economic growth, creating nearly three-quarters of all net new jobs and employing nearly 51 percent of the private sector workforce. It is essential that we in Congress continue to support small businesses ability to grow and expand so our economy can accelerate forward and create more jobs.

I can tell you, there is no higher priority for me than bolstering the state of our Nation's small manufacturers. In Maine, more than 20,700 manufacturing jobs disappeared between August 2000 and August 2006. We here in

Congress cannot accept any more losses as a foregone conclusion. This vital sector continues to face tremendous challenges—taking on a significant level of domestic costs that foreign competitors do not, including labor costs, fuel costs, and the regulatory and tax burden. Sadly, as a result, many manufacturers are forced to close their doors or outsource abroad.

The reality is, the manufacturing sector, more than any other sector, drives our Nation's economy—with manufacturers responsible for more than 70 percent of private sector research and manufacturing goods making up over 60 percent of U.S. exports. There is no coincidence that this is a value added industry.

I believe that we can and must fight for our Nation's manufacturers especially when you consider the manufacturing industries pay wages that are about one-third higher than average wages. And that is all the more true for small business when they have resources available that have proven their value, including the SBA which has helped to create or retain over 5.3 million jobs since 1999. And just last year, the manufacturing extension partnership's, MEP's, services helped to create and retain over 35,000 jobs and increase revenue by \$6.25 billion. We must work hand-in-glove with Small Business Administration, SBA, and MEP to bolster our manufacturing base to ensure not only that resources are available to those who wanted to either maintain, grow, or start small businesses.

That is why I introduced an amendment today to the America COMPETES Act that clarifies the MEP non-Federal cost share language to enable the MEP centers to draw down all of their available funding and further enhance their capability and capacity to work with manufacturers.

This amendment clarifies the intent of Congress when it first enacted the statute authorizing the Manufacturing Extension Partnership Program, now known as the Hollings Manufacturing Partnership Program, to provide Federal assistance to manufacturers in the United States.

A key concept in the program is the requirement that each center obtain 50 percent of its capital and annual operating and maintenance costs from sources other than the Federal Government. The National Institute of Standards and Technology, NIST, officials have, in the past, properly considered cost share requirements to have been met when centers partnered or entered into other agreements with other organizations meeting the needs of American manufacturers.

This amendment clarifies and re-emphasizes that such agreements and partnerships, and the money spent by those organizations assisting American manufacturers, clearly are to be considered proper cost share as long as the partnering organization is meeting the programmatic objectives for assistance

to be provided to American manufacturers as set forth for the Hollings Manufacturing Partnership Program. By teaming with such organizations, as encouraged by the original statute, the centers can and do leverage their Federal resources and avoid duplicating services necessary for the successful operation of American manufacturers. With the right resources, many more small manufacturers will be eligible to use this program to help grow their business.

We cannot ignore the effect that countries like China are having on our Nation's manufacturers. In order to compete fairly in this increasingly competitive global market we must ensure that currencies are not strategically manipulated. That is why I will continue to work with the President and those in Congress to ensure that our Nation gets tough with China on those important issues. I continue to pressure the Treasury Department and the U.S. Trade Representative to also work toward that goal China to move toward a market-based exchange rate.

The bottom line is, our country's future will be determined by today's small businesses. The faster we strengthen and sustain our Nation's small manufacturers, the more quickly America's economy will grow.

SMALL BUSINESS' VITAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE ECONOMY

Mr. SNOWE. Mr. President, today I offer a few remarks regarding National Small Business Week, which President Bush designated for April 22–28, 2007. As ranking member of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, one of my top priorities is to champion our Nation's small businesses and to promote their needs and concerns. Our top job creators deserve nothing less.

This week, I have already discussed how Congress must solve the small business health insurance crisis and bolster the state of our Nation's small manufacturers. Today, I would like to spend a few minutes on the critical role small businesses play in the American economy. In the back of our minds, we in Congress all know how vital small businesses are to economic growth. But when we come to the floor to speak about small businesses issues, we are generally trying to fix a specific problem. We generally gloss over the overall impact small businesses have on driving our Nation's economy.

The Small Business Administration's Office of Advocacy, an independent voice for small businesses within the Federal Government, has published a wide variety of statistics regarding small firms. This data, which shows that small businesses are responsible for 50 percent of nonfarm economic output, or gross domestic product, clearly reflects how vital small businesses are to job creation and the Nation's economy.

One little known fact is that small businesses represent just about every

private-sector employer in the United States. According to the Office of Advocacy, which defines a small business as an independent employer with fewer than 500 employees, small firms represent 99.7 percent of all employer firms. In 2005, approximately 25.8 million small businesses, 671,800 of which are estimated to have opened in that year alone, were operational and providing consumers and businesses with goods and services. Of these firms, 5.8 million had employees, and 18.6 million were sole proprietorships. In contrast, there were only approximately 17,000 larger business in operation across the country in 2005.

Not only do small businesses account for just about every employer in the United States, but these firms are also job providers. Small businesses employ fully half of all private-sector workers. They also pay more than 45 percent of U.S. private payroll. Of the 113.4 million nonfarm private-sector workers in 2003, 57.4 million were employed by small firms with fewer than 500 employees. Notably, small businesses with fewer than 100 employees accounted for 41 million of that number.

In addition to employing American workers, small businesses are also at the forefront of creating new jobs. Over the last decade, small businesses have generated 60 to 80 percent of net new jobs annually. What is particularly interesting is that in 2003, the most recent year for which complete data is available, small businesses created 1,990,326 net new jobs. In contrast, large firms with 500 or more employees shed 994,667 jobs. Thus, if it were not for small businesses, the economy would have lost jobs in 2003 instead of creating just about 1 million new employment opportunities for America's workforce.

It is vital to point out that the jobs small businesses are creating reflect the needs of a high-tech, innovative, and global marketplace. Small businesses have led the technological revolution and currently employ 41 percent of high-tech workers, including scientists, engineers, and information technology professionals. Moreover, small businesses are constantly creating new products, producing 13 to 14 times more patents per employee than large firms. In addition, these patents are twice as likely as large-firm patents to be among the one percent most often cited. Finally, America's small business are competing on a global scale, comprising 97 percent of all identified exporters and producing 28.6 of total exports in 2004.

The fact is small businesses are the driving force behind our Nation's economic growth creating nearly three-quarters of all net new jobs and employing nearly 51 percent of the private sector workforce. These are the reasons it is so essential that we in Congress continue to support small businesses' ability to grow and expand so that our economy can accelerate forward and create more jobs. I hope we keep this in