

disappointed not to have lived to see the next Democrat in the White House.

He was preceded in death by his beloved wife Edith and daughter Sikandra. He is survived by his sons, Patrick, Stephen and William and his grandchildren, Jeanne, James, Aidan, Katherine, and Rachel.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, the flags are at half-mast today in the village of Tinley Park, IL.

They will be lowered for 5 days, 1 day for each victim of the tragic and senseless shootings that took place last Saturday.

Five lives were cut short that morning: Carrie Chiuso, of Frankfort, IL, a social worker and counselor of high school students at Homewood-Flossmoor High School, dedicated to her community and to her family; Rhoda McFarland, of Joliet, who had served as a nurse practitioner in the U.S. Air Force and who was engaged to be married; Jennifer Bishop of South Bend, IN, a nurse who had worked for 13 years saving lives at South Bend Memorial Hospital; Connie Woolfolk, of Flossmoor, IL, a working mother, with a 16-year-old and a 10-year-old; And Sarah Szafranski, of Oak Forest, only 22 years old, a young woman who had just recently graduated from Northern Illinois University and started on a promising career.

We offer our support and our prayers to the friends and families of these victims. We mourn with them in their time of loss.

There are also reports that a sixth victim was shot in this robbery attempt and that she has survived. Our thoughts and prayers are with her and her family as well.

An investigation by law enforcement authorities is underway, and we hope that the person or persons responsible for these killings will be swiftly brought to justice.

Edward Zabrocki, the mayor of Tinley Park, said, "This is a tragedy that should not happen to any town." He is right.

After a gun-related tragedy, we often hear that now is not the time to talk about gun violence in America. But when is it time?

In America, we lose 81 people to gun violence every day—81 people a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

In 2004, the latest year for which the Centers for Disease Control has complete information, 29,569 people died from gun violence in America. That is more than twice as many people who died that year from HIV/AIDS.

And that doesn't count those who are wounded by gunfire. In 2004, 64,389 people were injured by gun violence. That is an average of 176 people every single day.

Firearm violence is at epidemic levels in this country. No matter who we are or how safe we think we are, any of us could be among the dozens of victims each day who end up on the wrong side of a gun.

We need to change the way we talk about gun violence in this country. It is time to move past the stereotypes of "gun nuts" and "gun grabbers" pitted against each other. The majority of those who own guns in this country obtained their guns legally and use them lawfully.

But we also need to recognize that every year tens of thousands of shots in this country are fired at human beings. And while some are fired lawfully in self-defense or in the line of duty, thousands of gunshots end with suicide, homicide, assault, or accidental death.

We need to reduce these violent shootings, without placing undue burdens on the legal uses of guns.

Here are some principles that should guide us:

No. 1, those who own guns have an obligation to store those guns safely.

No. 2, those who sell guns have a duty to sell them only to those who are authorized by law to purchase them. Whether you are selling at a store or a gun show, you should not turn your head the other way and ignore a buyer's background.

No. 3, those of us who make laws have a duty to balance the rights of people to own and use guns safely and legally with the need to prevent gun violence.

We have had too many funerals for Americans like Carrie Chiuso, Rhoda McFarland, Jennifer Bishop, Connie Woolfolk, and Sarah Szafranski. Too many American lives suddenly and brutally cut short. Gun violence is an epidemic in this country, and each of us needs to take seriously our responsibility to end this violence.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, I was on the floor during the debate and vote on cloture on the motion to proceed to H.R. 5140. My vote was not recorded. I would like the RECORD to reflect that, had my vote been recorded, I would have voted "aye."

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

STAFF SERGEANT ROBERT J. MILLER

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, today I give tribute to an American hero who was killed in the line of duty while conducting combat operations for Operation Enduring Freedom in Barikowt, Afghanistan. SSG Robert J. Miller was wounded by small arms fire and died from these injuries sustained on January 25, 2008. His bravery and selflessness will be remembered and honored. I extend my thoughts and prayers to his parents, Philip and Maureen Miller, and all his family and friends.

Robert Miller was born in Harrisburg, PA, and eventually found his way to the University of Iowa, where he attended his freshman year. Miller was an avid gymnast who aspired to be on the university's gymnastics team and

was an enthusiastic fan of the Hawkeyes. After a year of attending the University of Iowa, he decided to enlist in the U.S. Army in 2003. He earned a green beret from the special forces qualification course in 2005. During his years of service, he has been awarded numerous medals including the Army Commendation Medal with Valor, Army Good Conduct Medal, and Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, among others.

Staff Sergeant Miller was assigned to Company A of the 3rd Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group out of Fort Bragg, NC. He will be remembered for his courageous sacrifice and excellent work ethic. His mother Maureen said it best: "We're proud of what he did, and we loved what we did. He died a hero." I ask my colleagues here in the Senate and all Americans to remember with gratitude and appreciation a brave soldier, SSG Robert J. Miller.

SOCIAL SECURITY COLA PROTECTION ACT

Mr. JOHNSON. Madam President, shortly before our adjournment last December, I was joined by several of my Senate colleagues in introducing the Social Security COLA Protection Act of 2007. This legislation will provide seniors with much-needed relief from steadily increasing Medicare premiums and will ensure that their Social Security cost-of-living adjustment, or COLA, is available for other essential needs such as food, housing, and energy.

I want to first thank Senators BOXER, INOUE, LEAHY, MIKULSKI, MURRAY, REED, ROCKEFELLER, and SALAZAR for joining me in this effort. Representative HERSETH SANDLIN introduced the companion bill today in the House of Representatives, and I want to thank her for her leadership on this issue and other important topics to seniors in South Dakota.

Sixteen percent of South Dakotans are Medicare beneficiaries. When compared to a national average of 14 percent, it is clear that Medicare policies significantly affect my home State. Many of these retirees live on modest, fixed incomes and must pay close attention to their monthly expenses. South Dakota's senior citizens worked very hard all of their lives as farmers, small business owners, teachers, and parents. In their retirement, all they are hoping for is an opportunity to enjoy a basic level of comfort and certainty.

Unfortunately, as the cost of health care continues to rise at an alarming rate, it becomes more and more difficult for seniors to achieve this sense of security during retirement. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, the United States spent about \$2 trillion on health care in 2005, almost three times the \$696 billion spent in 1990. That \$2 trillion represents 16 percent of the gross domestic product. The rate at which our Nation's health care