

Congress has refused to take the necessary steps to prevent it.

Our Nation suffers from a horrific epidemic of gun violence. Over 30,000 Americans die from firearms every year, nearly 12,000 of which are homicides. That is an average of 32 gun murders every day, the same number killed at Virginia Tech. While we all hope and pray that these types of public tragedies do not happen again, the truth is that the threat of gun violence has not diminished.

Gun violence is preventable, however, it requires action. Without action, gun violence will continue to be found in our high schools, universities, religious institutions and our homes. For too long, victims and their families, educators and police officials around this country have cried out for sensible gun legislation that would keep guns out of the wrong hands, close the gun show loophole, reauthorize the assault weapons ban and aid law enforcement agencies in tracking gun traffickers. Passage of such legislation would serve as monumental steps toward ensuring these types of tragedies do not continue. Congress must do everything possible to reduce the level of gun violence in America.

ASIAN PACIFIC ISLANDER AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to the millions of Asian Pacific Islander Americans for their significant contributions and service to strengthen this great Nation, and to join the Nation in celebrating Asian Pacific Islander American Heritage Month.

This month-long tribute would not be complete without recognizing the visionaries who founded Asian Pacific Islander American Heritage Month: U.S. Senator DANIEL INOUE, former U.S. Senator Spark Matsunaga, former Secretary of Transportation Norman Y. Mineta, and former U.S. Representative Frank Horton. As a result of their steadfast leadership, a joint resolution established Asian Pacific Islander American Heritage Week in 1978, and the celebration was later expanded to an entire month in 1992.

This celebration takes place in May to mark the first Japanese immigrants' arrival in America in 1842, as well as the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad in 1869—which would not have been finished without the hard work and dedication of Chinese laborers.

Today, our Nation faces its trials and tribulations as it sees harsh economic times. People throughout the country are losing their homes and their jobs and we must come together as a community and remain strong and dignified. The Asian Pacific Islander American community constitutes one of the fastest growing minority communities in the United States, with over 13 million Asian Pacific Islander Americans in the country. Despite these economic hardships, members of

the Asian Pacific Islander American community have continued to take positions of leadership and have worked hard to secure a brighter future for all.

Asian Pacific Islander Americans are making great strides both in the private and public sectors. Members of the Asian Pacific Islander American community have been named to key appointments in President Barack Obama's administration and at other levels of government. As Asian Pacific Islander Americans advance to positions of power and leadership, we can ensure that the voice of the community is being heard.

While we celebrate the many accomplishments and the promising future of the Asian Pacific Islander American community, we must not forget the history of Asian Pacific Islander Americans in this country. The Angel Island Immigration Station has a significant place in Asian Pacific Islander American history. Declared a National Historic Landmark in 1997, Angel Island served as the entry point in the West for over 1 million immigrants from 1910-1940. This includes approximately 175,000 Chinese immigrants who were detained at Angel Island before they were granted entry to San Francisco. Along with Representative LYNN WOOLSEY, I sponsored the Angel Island Immigration Station Restoration and Preservation Act, which passed in both the House and the Senate in 2005, authorizing \$15 million of federal funds for the Angel Island Immigration Station Preservation Project. After 3½ years since it was closed for restoration, Angel Island reopened this February and will educate the public about the immigration experience and the significance that it holds for many immigrant families today.

After the recent passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, benefits were finally granted to long-time Filipino veterans of World War II. The act recognizes the service of these veterans and includes a provision which allocates \$198 million to the Filipino veterans for their defense of the Philippines, a commonwealth under the United States during World War II. We must praise and commend these brave soldiers for the sacrifices they made during their service in the Armed Forces.

The idea of family is important to Americans and continues to be at the center of the Asian Pacific Islander American value system. It is imperative that we do what we can to keep families united to ensure that immigrants and children receive the support to sustain a livelihood in the United States.

I have continued to support immigration initiatives, such as comprehensive immigration reform and have supported family reunification. I authored legislation to reform the treatment of unaccompanied immigrant children who are in Federal immigration custody. The bill gives unaccompanied minors access to pro bono legal counsel

and requires family reunification whenever possible.

We must recognize that the Asian Pacific Islander American community is diverse, not only in language, culture and foods, but in education and socio-economic levels as well. That is why it is so important to provide talented students who have clearly embraced the American dream the incentive to take the path toward being a responsible, contributing member in our civic society.

I have cosponsored the DREAM Act of 2009 to give undocumented high school students who wish to attend college or serve in the Armed Forces an opportunity to adjust to a lawful status and pursue these goals. If it becomes law, the DREAM Act would help Asian Pacific Islander Americans and others triumph over adversity.

As future generations of Asian Pacific Islander Americans continue to strive for excellence in our educational system, economy, and communities, I am pleased to honor and distinguish the many triumphs and accomplishments of the Asian Pacific Islander American community and their role in shaping our Nation's identity.

MAERSK ALABAMA HEROES

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, this month the Nation was gripped by the pirate attack on Maersk Alabama off the coast of Africa. Today, I rise to cheer Captain Richard Philips, for his bravery and valor, and the Navy SEALs, for securing the Captain's safe return.

We also need to honor the Merchant Marines who did not give up their ship. Though unarmed, using their wits, grit and training, they saved their ship—an American flag-ship—and the much-needed food aid they were carrying to the desperately poor of Africa.

The 20-man crew of the Maersk Alabama belonged to the American Merchant Marines. They were sailing a U.S.-flag vessel carrying 17,000 metric tons of cargo to Mombasa, Kenya.

I am so proud that many of them trained in Maryland at Calhoun MEBA Engineering School in St. Michael's or at the maritime training school in Piney Point. Here, they learned how to navigate at sea, operate and repair ships, and how to handle a pirate or terrorist attack. Here, they received the education to sail the sea with skill that allowed them to save their ship with courage.

Thirteen of the 20 crew members aboard the Maersk Alabama trained in Maryland; 4 at Calhoun MEBA Engineering School and 9 at the Paul Hall Center for Maritime Training and Education.

Richard Matthews of St. Michael's was an engineer aboard Maersk Alabama. He trained at Calhoun MEBA Engineering School, as did three others aboard the ship: Ken Quinn, the ship's second mate who called CNN from the ship; Michael Perry; and John Cronan.

John Cronan later told the "Today" show: "We didn't have to retake the ship because we never surrendered it. We're American seamen. We're union members. We stuck together and did our jobs."

Twelve crew members aboard the Maersk Alabama are members of the Seafarers International Union, SIU. Many of them trained at SIU's maritime school, the Paul Hall Center for Maritime Training and Education, in Piney Point, MD. It is the largest training facility for deep sea merchant seafarers. It teaches skills for sailors and seafarers, such as how to maintain a boat engine and how to secure a ship from pirates. I salute the SIU members aboard the Maersk Alabama for their patriotism and pluck and for their refusal to surrender their ship.

This incident reminds us of the importance of the Merchant Marines. Often unseen and unappreciated, they are vital to our economic security and our national security. They are our eyes and ears on the water. They are experts in marine safety, environmental protection and the new and latest technology. They keep our ports safe and our commerce flowing.

They are the Ready Reserve. They are there in war, transporting vital military aid and supplies to our troops. They are there in peace, supplying aid to those most in need—just as the Maersk Alabama was doing when the pirates attacked. They are prepared to risk their lives defending their flag.

Let's salute the Merchant Marine, not just for what they did aboard the Maersk Alabama, but for what they do, what they stand for, their proud tradition. The Merchant Marine tradition is one of saving America time and time again. They have been the Nation's fourth arm of defense since the American Revolution.

President Roosevelt called our Merchant Marines "heroes in dungarees" because during World War II these gallant men braved the waters of the North Atlantic and the dangers of the Murmansk run to keep our troops overseas fed and clothed. They have fought on the front lines of every war since then—from Korea, Vietnam and the Persian Gulf to the Iraq War. They were there on 9/11, ferrying thousands of people to safety in New York. They were there in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. And they have been there providing food to starving children in Ethiopia, Somalia and dozens of other regions around the world.

The maritime community has been a major player in my personal and political history, from growing up in east Baltimore to my early days in Congress on the Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee. I got my start in politics by representing blue collar workers in Baltimore, the shipyard workers and the dock workers.

I am relieved by the safe return of the Maersk Alabama's crew and captain and I am grateful for all of those involved in their safe rescue and re-

turn: the Navy and their elite Navy SEALs squad and President Obama and his administration for handling the hostage situation with great skill.

As we welcome them home, let us acknowledge not just their heroism off the horn of Africa, but the everyday heroics of our Merchant Marines; their skills and training, their patriotism and proud tradition, and the role they play every day, in every way, supporting our troops, guarding our ports, keeping our economy strong and safeguarding our interests overseas.

TRIBUTE TO JUDY COLLINS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, Marcelle and I have been privileged to have known Judy Collins for years. We have heard her sing in New York, in Washington, DC, and in Vermont, and every time we have been thrilled. I have even been known to call her phone just to hear her sing on her answering machine.

The New York Times on April 23 of this year wrote a review of her current engagement at the Café Carlyle, and I talked with Judy about it. I know that she and Louis keep a very busy schedule, but I just wanted to congratulate her on another well deserved review.

I would ask unanimous consent to have the New York Times article printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the New York Times, Apr. 23, 2009]

FOLK GODDESS DESCENDS FROM HER LOFTY PEDESTAL

(By Stephen Holden)

It wasn't always so. But nowadays a Judy Collins concert is a seamless flow of music and storytelling. Alternating between the guitar and the piano, Ms. Collins offers a version of a personal musical history that is too complicated and rich to be covered in a single evening.

On Tuesday night at the Café Carlyle, where she began a six-week engagement, the emphasis was on her folk-music side, and for more than half the show she accompanied herself on acoustic guitar, with Russell Walden assisting on piano and backup vocals.

Her song "Mountain Girl," performed early in the evening, set the tone. Ms. Collins grew up in Colorado, and her silvery vibrato-free voice might be described as an Alpine instrument. Especially when she sings a cappella, it has the ringing purity of a voice emanating from a lofty altitude and reverberating in an endless echo chamber of mountain passes. Ms. Collins, who will turn 70 on May 1, has miraculously retained her upper register. The higher she sings, most of the time with perfect intonation, the more she projects the ethereality of a flute played by the wind.

The influence that propelled her from a piano prodigy who played Mozart, she recalled, wasn't the sound of the Weavers or Woody Guthrie, but that of Jo Stafford on her 1950s folk albums. In particular it was Ms. Stafford's recording of "Barbara Allen," first heard on the radio, that drew Ms. Collins away from classical piano. And as she sang this ballad of unrequited love, death and grief, her vocal similarities with Stafford, who died last year, were striking. Both singers expressed a demure self-containment

in unadorned phrases that imbued their performances with faraway longing.

In recent years Ms. Collins has descended from the folk-goddess pedestal to emerge as a funny, self-effacing Irish-American storyteller, and the tension between her pristine singing voice and her salty reminiscences lends her shows a theatrical dimension. She reminisced at length about her first meeting with Leonard Cohen, who had no confidence in his talents until she recorded his song "Suzanne." He returned the favor by persuading her to take up songwriting.

Her wildest tale described an adventure in Chicago on a winter night in which she caroused until 3 a.m. with two folk-singing colleagues, one of whom gave her a handgun for protection during the walk back to her hotel. Once safely in her room, she tried to remove the clip, and the gun went off.

Those were the wild old days to which Ms. Collins increasingly alludes in her shows. The more she talks about her itinerant life as a folk musician, the more you want to know. The high point of the show was her rendition of a recent Jimmy Webb song, "Paul Gauguin in the South Seas." The song, which describes the painter's retreat from civilization in a search for paradise that eventually landed him in the Marquesas Islands, evokes the quest of any artist for sacred ground that has never been visited: an elusive place Ms. Collins conjures when her voice soars.

TRIBUTE TO BUDDY AND JULIE MILLER

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, Marcelle and I have gotten to know Buddy and Julie Miller over the years—especially with their friend of ours, Emmy Lou Harris. So many times when I have traveled I have listened to Buddy and Julie's music on my headphones and one of the great thrills I had was when they dedicated a song to Marcelle and me years ago at the Birchmere.

The Wall Street Journal this week wrote an excellent article about the "first couple of Americana." I ask unanimous consent that it be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Wall Street Journal, Apr. 28, 2009]

BUDDY AND JULIE MILLER: FIRST COUPLE OF AMERICANA SINGS OF SETBACKS AND SORROWS
(By Barry Mazor)

NASHVILLE—By virtue of their broad musical accomplishments, Buddy and Julie Miller have essentially reigned since the mid-1990s as the unpretentious but royal couple of Americana music, that lovably motley modern-roots music genre derived from the American music traditions of country, folk, gospel, roots rock and more. Their CDs, whether recorded together or individually, have consistently garnered high praise for both the songs they write for them and for the often touching, sometimes feisty country-soul delivery. Their long-incubating new release, "Written In Chalk" (New West Records), is no different in that regard.

Songs of theirs have been recorded by everyone from country hit makers Lee Ann Womack, Patty Loveless, the Dixie Chicks and Dierks Bentley, to jazz great Jimmy Scott. Mr. Miller was seen bringing his always coveted, tasteful guitar work behind Alison Krauss and Robert Plant on this year's Grammy Awards show, as he did throughout their recent tour of major arenas. (Led Zeppelin veteran Mr. Plant performs a comic duet with Mr. Miller on the