

this year to Ghana, sends a strong signal that the administration is committed to making Africa not only a priority, but also an integral part of overall U.S. foreign policy. The challenge going forward is to sustain a high level of engagement with each of the countries that Secretary Clinton visited and back up that engagement with resources that can make a tangible difference.

On her first stop in Kenya, I am glad that Secretary Clinton took a strong stand against extrajudicial killings, corruption, and the continued failure to prosecute those most responsible for violence after the December 2007 election. As Secretary Clinton said, these conditions are holding Kenya back from realizing its potential. Worse yet, if these conditions persist, we could see a renewal of violence, especially in the run-up to Kenya's next elections set for 2012. Together with other international partners, we need to keep pressing Kenya's leaders to deliver on the reforms they have pledged, beginning with reform of the police and judiciary. At the same time, we should prepare targeted assistance that can be provided as soon as initial steps are taken toward those reforms. The United States and Kenya have longstanding and historic ties, and we need to help Kenyans get through this difficult period.

While in Nairobi, I am also pleased that Secretary Clinton focused on the dangerous situation in neighboring Somalia and met with President Sheikh Sharif of Somalia's beleaguered Transitional Federal Government, the TFG. I have long urged the Obama administration to engage with Sharif at a high level and I am glad that the administration is finally doing this, as well as taking seriously the threat posed by al Shebaab, an extremist group with ties to alQaida. However, going forward, we cannot repeat the mistake of focusing too narrowly on short-term gains in Somalia without a long-term strategy. As we help the TFG combat insurgents, we simultaneously need to help it to advance political reconciliation and deliver critically needed basic services. The TFG's ultimate success rests on whether it can establish a viable government that is perceived as legitimate and inclusive, representative of and responsive to the Somali people.

Secretary Clinton traveled next to South Africa. Over recent years, our relationship with South Africa has cooled considerably, undermining our ability to coordinate and work together on issues of mutual interest. Yet I believe there is an opportunity now to reverse that trend with our new administration and South Africa's new administration under President Jacob Zuma. I am pleased that Secretary Clinton seized upon that opportunity with her visit, committing to deepening and broadening our bilateral relationship in a range of areas from HIV prevention to nuclear nonproliferation to climate change. Moreover, she talked with South Africa about how we

can better coordinate our efforts to address regional challenges, beginning with the situation in Zimbabwe. We need to institutionalize such coordination, while continuing to encourage South Africa to be a leader in human rights and peacebuilding on the continent.

Secretary Clinton's next stop was Angola, a country that is quickly becoming an economic powerhouse and regional leader. As Angola continues to rebuild from decades of civil war, there is a new openness to engaging with the United States, especially as the government seeks to diversify their economy. I am pleased that Secretary Clinton seized upon this potential by visiting Angola and committed to a "comprehensive strategic partnership." She agreed to expand our engagement not only in the areas of trade and agriculture, but also in health, education and governance. Governance is particularly important because while Angola has taken some positive steps to increase transparency and efficiency, there is still a long way to go. To that end, I am especially glad that Secretary Clinton spoke to the Angolan National Assembly about its role in demanding accountability and transparency, and standing against corruption and abuses of power. We need to continue to engage on these issues and encourage Angola's democratization process.

Secretary Clinton next traveled to the Democratic Republic of Congo, with a visit to the eastern city of Goma. I applaud her for choosing to focus on the crisis in the eastern Congo, which has gone neglected for too long despite its unrivaled human toll and the unspeakable levels of sexual violence. Secretary Clinton committed to new efforts to help prevent and respond to the high levels of gender and sexual violence, while also recognizing the need to address the root causes of Congo's crisis, including the exploitation of natural resources by armed groups. Taking action to address those underlying causes is difficult, but essential. Senators Brownback, Durbin and I have introduced legislation that would commit the United States to do more on conflict minerals, and I look forward to working with the administration in this regard. I also look forward to working with the administration to help bring an end to the increasing violence by the Lord's Resistance Army in northeastern Congo.

Following Congo, Secretary Clinton's next stop was Nigeria—a critically important country in sub-Saharan Africa and a strategic partner and major source of oil imports to the United States. I continue to be very concerned about the direction in which Nigeria is heading, especially with regards to corruption and the rule of law. I am glad that Secretary Clinton touched on these issues, and we must continue to press for meaningful reforms to enhance government transparency, accountability and the independence of

the election commission. In addition, I am pleased that Secretary Clinton discussed the unresolved crisis in the Niger Delta and pledged to review how we might better assist the government's efforts to promote stability there. I look forward to working with her as well in that regard. However, to be successful, the Nigerian government must expand its current amnesty offer to a broader peace process that includes measures to address the marginalization and underdevelopment of the region.

Secretary Clinton traveled then to Liberia, a country with which we have historic ties. Secretary Clinton was right to highlight the progress that Liberia has made since its civil war, while also speaking frankly about the challenges that the country continues to face. I am glad that she chose to speak at the Liberian National Police Academy and pledged new funds for police training. While great strides have been made in reforming Liberia's military, there is still great need to improve the capacity and professionalism of its police force. In addition, Secretary Clinton focused on corruption and spoke directly about this in a speech to the National Legislature. We need to continue to work with all parts of the Liberian government to guard against corruption and other abuses, both in their democratic process and in its management of the country's rich natural resources, especially timber.

Finally, Secretary Clinton visited Cape Verde, a country that has made great progress in terms of both economic growth and democratization. Cape Verde provided a perfect backdrop to reiterate the two major themes of her trip: first, that America believes in Africa's promise, and second, that Africa's future is ultimately in the hands of Africans. Secretary Clinton delivered these messages powerfully and I believe they can be the foundation for a new era of U.S. engagement and partnerships with Africa. The challenge going forward is to give substance to these words and the commitments that were made throughout Secretary Clinton's trip. I look forward to working with her and the administration to do this. It will not be easy and it will require sustained engagement, greater diplomatic capacity, and new targeted resources. But if we get this right, I strongly believe the benefits for Americans and Africans can be immense in terms of our security and prosperity.

FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I rise today to honor this Wednesday, September 9, National Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Day which recognizes those individuals born with a continuum of serious, life-long disorders caused by prenatal exposure to alcohol, which include fetal alcohol syndrome, alcohol-related neurodevelopmental disorders, and alcohol-related birth defects.

Studies show that 50 percent of pregnancies in the United States are unplanned and many women consume alcohol before they realize they are pregnant, resulting in 40,000 children every year being born with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders and subject to a lifetime of cognitive and behavioral impairments. Tragically, Alaska has the highest rate of fetal alcohol spectrum disorders in the Nation. Among Alaskan Native communities, the rate is 15 times higher than non-Native areas in the State. Prenatal alcohol exposure can result in low IQ and difficulties with learning, memory, attention, and problem-solving as well as impairment of mental health and social interactions. Prenatal alcohol exposure can also result in growth retardation, birth defects involving the heart, kidney, vision and hearing, and a characteristic pattern of facial abnormalities. The lifetime health costs for an individual with fetal alcohol syndrome are estimated at \$1.4 million for medical care and treatment interventions. In the United States, approximately \$9.7 billion is spent annually for individuals afflicted with FASD, according to government reports.

There is a great need for research, surveillance, prevention, treatment, and support services for individuals with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders and their families. It is for these reasons that I rise today to dedicate this Wednesday, September 9 as National Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Day. All Americans are encouraged to promote awareness of the effects of prenatal exposure to alcohol; to increase compassion for individuals affected by prenatal exposure to alcohol; to minimize further effects of prenatal exposure to alcohol; and most importantly to bring greater awareness to a disease that is 100 percent preventable!

On behalf of the millions of individuals suffering from the lasting and detrimental effects of fetal alcohol spectrum disorders and advocates for eliminating FASD, I encourage all Americans to observe a moment of reflection on the ninth hour of September 9, to remember that during the 9 months of pregnancy a woman should not consume any alcohol.

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, today I rise to recognize September 9, 2009, as National Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Awareness Day. Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, FASD, is an umbrella term describing the varied range of alcohol-related birth defects that may result from the use of alcohol during pregnancy. The effects of this disorder may be mental, behavioral, and/or involve learning disabilities. FASD is the leading known cause of preventable cognitive impairment in America. It is estimated FASD affects 1 in 100 live births each year.

I have great concern about the impact in South Dakota and across the country of FASD. We must move past the stigma of this devastating disease to truly help those and their families

who are affected by FASD get the health, education, counseling and support services they need and deserve. We must also address the tragedy of FASD at the source, by increasing awareness that any amount of alcohol during pregnancy can have heartbreaking, lifelong effects. We must work to ensure this is understood by all women of childbearing age and that treatment and counseling services are available for these women.

One of the most distressing facts regarding FASD is that it is entirely preventable. I have joined several of my colleagues in the Senate to introduce a resolution designating September 9, 2009, as National FASD Awareness Day. It is my hope these efforts progress toward global awareness of FASD and an end to this destructive disease.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF NASCOE

• Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, this year the National Association of Farm Service Agency County Office Employees, NASCOE, is celebrating its 50th anniversary. NASCOE was founded in Memphis, TN, in 1959 in an effort to provide a nationwide association through which county committee employees of the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, ASCS, could render better service to American agriculture by having a national network for the exchange of ideas and information and to facilitate closer cooperation in working toward solution of mutual problems.

In the USDA Reorganization Act of 1994, Congress combined the ASCS, the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation, and the agricultural lending programs of the Farmers Home Administration into a single Farm Service Agency. Today, NASCOE continues to represent the county office employees of the "new" FSA. In Tennessee last year, 250 NASCOE employees provided valuable assistance to 90,000 producers through a wide range of Federal programs from conservation to price support and helped them cope in times of emergency and disaster.

I think we can all recognize the value of the local Farm Service Agency office to farmers and ranchers, and I commend NASCOE on its dedication to FSA county employees and the farmers they serve. I congratulate NASCOE on its 50th anniversary and hope that they will continue to assist in conserving and improving our Nation's natural resources and agriculture industry. •

REMEMBERING JUDGE ROBERT M. TAKASUGI

• Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I take this opportunity to honor the life of Judge Robert M. Takasugi, the first Japanese American appointed to the Federal bench. Judge Takasugi passed away on August 7, 2009, at the age of 78.

Robert Takasugi was born in Tacoma, WA, on September 12, 1930, to Japanese parents who had immigrated to the United States in search of a better life. His family moved to Los Angeles in 1942 in the wake of anti-Japanese sentiment following the Pearl Harbor attack. That same year, Robert and his parents were sent to an internment camp at Tule Lake, CA, 3 of 130,000 Japanese Americans who were interned during the war. In the years since, Judge Takasugi often called the experience "an education to be fair."

After being released from the internment camp in 1945, Robert returned to Los Angeles where he resumed his studies and graduated from Belmont High School. He went on to earn a bachelor's degree from UCLA in 1953. Robert was then drafted into the U.S. Army during the Korean War, where he served as a criminal investigator. Upon discharge, he went on to earn a law degree from USC in 1959 with the aid of the G.I. bill.

After graduating from USC, Robert joined his only Latino classmate, future Superior Court Judge Carlos Velarde, and together they opened a law practice in East Los Angeles. The firm represented many indigent minorities, including arrestees from the 1965 Watts riots, East Los Angeles riots, and other civil rights demonstrators in the 1960s.

Robert's first judicial appointment, by then-Governor Ronald Reagan, landed him on the Los Angeles Municipal Court in 1973. Two years later, then-Governor Jerry Brown promoted him to the Los Angeles County Superior Court and in 1976, Judge Takasugi became the first Japanese American to be appointed to the Federal bench after being named by President Gerald Ford.

Throughout his career, Judge Takasugi was known for his fairness and compassion. In his spare time, he served as a mentor to thousands of young lawyers. He founded a free bar review course, which he taught from his living room for many years, for students who were having trouble passing the bar exam. In 1999, the Robert M. Takasugi Public Interest Fellowship was created by his colleague to honor Judge Takasugi and ensure that his courage and vision of equal justice are carried out by generations to come.

Judge Takasugi was a trailblazer for Asian Americans in the field of law. His dedication to justice and equality was evident in everything that he did throughout his 36-year judicial career on the Federal bench. His many years of service to the City and County of Los Angeles, to the State of California, and to our Nation will not be forgotten.

Judge Takasugi is survived by his wife Dorothy; his son Jon; his daughter Lesli; and his two grandchildren. I extend my deepest sympathies to his family.

Whether he was fighting for our country or fighting for integrity and equality under the law, Judge Robert