

manufacturing facilities and background checks for employees handling these applications and cards.

In my view, the Federal Government must be a good working partner with the States, and this amendment, which provides funding for the program, is a step in the right direction. We must proceed with this program on a partnership concept of States and the Federal Government working together. For that reason, I am pleased to learn that the National Governors Association supports this amendment. This program is an important step in achieving some type of identification that will help America feel more secure in our daily requirements to identify ourselves and to otherwise conduct our life here at home.

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I seek recognition to offer my support for the amendment to be offered by Senator CASEY with regard to homeland security grant timelines. This amendment would lengthen the amount of time available to obligate funds provided in fiscal year 2008 under the State Homeland Security Grant Program and the Rail and Transit Security Grant Program from a maximum of 36 months to a maximum of 48 months.

I am advised that several transit agencies have encountered problems obligating homeland security grant funding within the current timetable, particularly for large and complex projects such as installing underground emergency communications networks in subway tunnels.

The Southeastern Pennsylvania Transit Authority, SEPTA, in particular, has encountered problems which have thus far prevented it from being able to utilize federal homeland security grant dollars to install an emergency communications network in its 20-mile subway tunnel system which runs underneath portions of the city of Philadelphia. The absence of a communications system capable of functioning underground severely limits the ability of SEPTA and first responders to deal with a potential emergency in Philadelphia's subway tunnels and does not provide an adequate level of protection for the traveling public.

Specifically, SEPTA claims that a 3-year period is not sufficient time to coordinate regional interoperability issues with the city of Philadelphia and the surrounding first responder agencies. It is my understanding that preliminary engineering requirements and the time associated with procuring the necessary technology further compound the problem. Finally, SEPTA claims that it does not receive enough homeland security grant funding in a 3-year period to complete such a complex project.

This amendment will provide SEPTA and other transit agencies in similar predicaments with additional time to plan, coordinate, secure technology for and fund important and complex projects such as underground communications systems. I urge my colleagues to support this amendment.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period for the transaction of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, today I rise to pay tribute to 55 young Americans who have been killed in Iraq since April 28, 2007. This brings to 777 the number of soldiers who were either from California or based in California who have been killed while serving our country in Iraq. This represents 21 percent of all U.S. deaths in Iraq.

PFC Jay-D H. Ornsby-Adkins, 21, died on April 28 in Salman Pak, Iraq, of injuries sustained when an improvised explosive device detonated near his military vehicle and then encountered small arms fire. Private First Class Ornsby-Adkins was assigned to D Company, 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Benning, GA. He was from Ione, CA.

First LT Travis L. Manion, 26, died on April 29 while conducting combat operations in Al Anbar Province, Iraq. First Lieutenant Manion was assigned to 1st Reconnaissance Battalion, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, CA.

SPC Astor A. Sunsini-Pineda, 20, died on May 2 in Baghdad, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device detonated near his military vehicle. Specialist Sunsini-Pineda was assigned to A Company, 4th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 1st Infantry Division, Fort Riley, KS. He was from Long Beach, CA.

SGT Felix G. Gonzalez-Iraheta, 25, died May 3 in Baghdad, Iraq, of wounds suffered when his unit came in contact with enemy forces using small arms fire. Sergeant Gonzalez-Iraheta was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Schweinfurt, Germany. He was from Sun Valley, CA.

Cpl Charles O. Palmer II, 36, died May 5 while conducting combat operations in Al Anbar Province, Iraq. Corporal Palmer was assigned to 8th Communication Battalion, II Marine Expeditionary Force Headquarters Group, II MEF, Camp Lejeune, NC. He was from Manteca, CA.

PFC William A. Farrar Jr., 20, died May 11 in Al Iskandariyah, Iraq, of wounds suffered when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle. Private First Class Farrar was assigned to the 127th Military Police Company, 709th Military Police Battalion, 18th Military Police Brigade, Darmstadt, Germany. He was from Redlands, CA.

SPC Rhys W. Klasno, 20, died May 13 in Haditha, Iraq, of wounds suffered

when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle. Specialist Klasno was assigned to the 1114th Transportation Company, Bakersfield, CA. He was from Riverside, CA.

SGT Steven M. Packer, 23, died May 17 in Rushdi Mullah, Iraq, of wounds suffered when his dismounted patrol encountered an improvised explosive device. Sergeant Packer was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, Fort Drum, NY. He was from Clovis, CA.

PFC Victor M. Fontanilla, 23, died May 17 in Iskandariya, Iraq, of wounds suffered when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle. Private First Class Fontanilla was assigned to the 725th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Fort Richardson, AK. He was from Stockton, CA.

SSG Christopher Moore, 28, died May 19 in Baghdad, Iraq, of wounds suffered when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle. Staff Sergeant Moore was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, TX. He was from Alpaugh, CA.

PFC Joseph J. Anzack, Jr., 20, died in Al Taqa, Iraq. Private First Class Anzack was initially reported as Duty Status Whereabouts Unknown on May 12, 2007, when his patrol received small arms fire and explosives. Private First Class Anzack was assigned to D Company, 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 10th Mountain Division, Fort Drum, NY. He was from Torrance, CA.

PFC Daniel P. Cagle, 22, died in Balad, Iraq, died May 23 of wounds suffered when an improvised explosive device detonated near his unit in Ramadi, Iraq. Private First Class Cagle was assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 69th Armor Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Stewart, GA. He was from Carson, CA.

CPL Victor H. Toledo Pulido, 22, died May 23 in Al Nahrawan, Iraq, of wounds suffered when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle. Corporal Toledo Pulido was assigned to 3d Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, Mechanized, Fort Benning, GA. He was from Hanford, CA.

SPC Gregory N. Millard, 22, died on May 26 in Salah Ad Din Province, Iraq, of injuries sustained when an improvised explosive device detonated near his military vehicle. Specialist Millard was assigned to A Company, 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, NC. He was from San Diego, CA.

SGT Clayton G. Dunn II, 22, died on May 26 in Salah Ad Din Province, Iraq, of injuries sustained when an improvised explosive device detonated near his military vehicle. Sergeant Dunn was assigned to A Company, 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, NC. He was from Moreno Valley, CA.

SPC Mark R. C. Caguioa, 21, died on May 24 at the National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda, MD, died of injuries sustained on May 4, 2007, in Baghdad, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device detonated near his military vehicle. Specialist Caguioa was assigned to B Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, TX. He was from Stockton, CA.

SGT Nicholas R. Walsh, 27, died May 26 from wounds suffered while conducting combat operations in Al Anbar Province, Iraq. Sergeant Walsh was assigned to the 1st Reconnaissance Battalion, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, CA.

LCpl Emmanuel Villarreal, 21, died May 27 from a nonhostile vehicle accident at Kuwait Naval Base, Kuwait. Lance Corporal Villarreal was assigned to Battalion Landing Team 1st Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, CA.

SSG Thomas M. McFall, 36, died May 28 in Baghdad, Iraq, of wounds suffered when an improvised explosive device detonated near his position during a dismounted patrol. Staff Sergeant McFall was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, Stryker Brigade Combat Team, Fort Lewis, WA. He was from Glendora, CA.

SPC Alexandre A. Alexeev, 23, died on May 28, in Abu Sayda, Iraq when an improvised explosive device detonated near his military vehicle. Specialist Alexeev was assigned to A Troop, 6th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, TX. He was from Wilmington, CA.

SPC Doonewey White, 26, died on May 29 in Balad, Iraq, of injuries sustained on May 28, 2007, in Baghdad, Iraq, when a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle. Specialist White was assigned to B Troop, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, TX. He was from Milpitas, CA.

SPC Romel Catalan, 21, of California, died on June 2 in Ameriyah, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle. Specialist Catalan was assigned to A Company, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, Fort Lewis, WA. He was from Los Angeles, CA.

SGT Shawn E. Dressler, 22, died on June 2, in Baghdad, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle. Sergeant Dressler was assigned to A Company, 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, Schweinfurt, Germany. He was from Santa Maria, CA.

SSG Greg P. Gagarin, 38, died June 3 in Thania, Iraq, of wounds suffered when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle. Staff Sergeant Gagarin was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, Stryker Brigade Combat Team,

Fort Lewis, WA. He was from Los Angeles, CA.

SGT Andrews J. Higgins, 28, died June 5 in Baqubah, Iraq, of wounds suffered when his unit came in contact with enemy forces using small arms fire. Sergeant Higgins was assigned to the 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, Stryker Brigade Combat Team, Fort Lewis, WA. He was from Hayward, CA.

PFC Justin A. Verdeja, 20, died June 5 in Baghdad, Iraq, of wounds suffered when his unit was attacked by insurgents using small arms fire. Private First Class Verdeja was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, Fort Carson, CO. He was from La Puente, CA.

PFC Cameron K. Payne, 22, died June 11 in Balad, Iraq, of wounds suffered from an improvised explosive device that detonated near his vehicle during combat operations in Baghdad, Iraq. Private First Class Payne was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Fort Riley, KS. He was from Corona, CA.

LCpl Johnny R. Strong, 21, died June 12 while conducting combat operations in Al Anbar province, Iraq. Lance Corporal Strong was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, Twentynine Palms, CA.

SPC Damon G. LeGrand, 27, died June 12 in Baqubah, Iraq, of wounds suffered when insurgents attacked his unit with anti-tank mines, rocket-propelled grenades and small arms fire in Baghdad, Iraq. Specialist LeGrand was assigned to the 571st Military Police Company, 504th Military Police Battalion, 42nd Military Police Brigade, Fort Lewis, WA. He was from Lakeside, CA.

SPC Josiah W. Hollopeter, 27, died June 14 in Balad, Iraq, of wounds suffered when his unit was attacked by insurgents using small arms fire in Al Muqadiyah, Iraq. Specialist Hollopeter was assigned to the 6th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, TX. He was from San Diego, CA.

SGT Derek T. Roberts, 24, died on June 14, in Kirkuk, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle. Sergeant Roberts was assigned to B Company, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, Schofield Barracks, HI. He was from Gold River, CA.

SSG Stephen J. Wilson, 28, died June 20 while conducting combat operations in Al Anbar Province, Iraq. Staff Sergeant Wilson was assigned to Combat Logistics Battalion 13, 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, CA.

SGT Shawn P. Martin, 30, died June 20 while conducting combat operations in Al Anbar Province, Iraq. Sergeant Martin was assigned to Combat Logistics Battalion 13, 13th Marine Expedi-

tionary Unit, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, CA.

PFC Raymond N. Spencer Jr., 23, died June 21 in Baghdad, Iraq, of wounds suffered when his unit was attacked by insurgents using an improvised explosive device and small arms fire. Private First Class Spencer was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Bliss, TX. He was from Carmichael, CA.

PVT Shane M. Stinson, 23, died on June 23, in Baghdad, Iraq, of injuries sustained when his mounted patrol encountered an improvised explosive device and small arms fire. Private Stinson was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 69th Armor Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Benning, GA. He was from Fullerton, CA.

PFC Cory F. Hiltz, 20, died June 28 of wounds sustained when his unit was attacked in Baghdad by insurgents using improvised explosive devices. Private First Class Hiltz was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2d Brigade Combat Team, 2d Infantry Division, Fort Carson, CO. He was from La Verne, CA.

SGT Giann C. Joya Mendoza, 27, died June 28 of wounds sustained when his unit was attacked in Baghdad by insurgents using improvised explosive devices. Sergeant Joya Mendoza was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2d Brigade Combat Team, 2d Infantry Division, Fort Carson, CO. He was from North Hollywood, CA.

SGT Michael J. Martinez, 24, died June 28 of wounds sustained when his unit was attacked in Baghdad by insurgents using improvised explosive devices. Sergeant Martinez was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2d Brigade Combat Team, 2d Infantry Division, Fort Carson, CO. He was from Chula Vista, CA.

SGT Shin W. Kim, 23, died June 28 of wounds sustained when his unit was attacked in Baghdad by insurgents using improvised explosive devices. Sergeant Kim was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2d Infantry Division, Fort Carson, CO. He was from Fullerton, CA.

SPC Victor A. Garcia, 22, died July 1 in Baghdad, Iraq, of wounds suffered from enemy small arms fire. Specialist Garcia was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, Stryker Brigade Combat Team, Fort Lewis, WA. He was from Rialto, CA.

SSG Michael L. Ruoff Jr., 31, died July 1 in Ta'meem, Iraq, of wounds sustained from enemy small arms fire. Staff Sergeant Ruoff was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 77th Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Schweinfurt, Germany. He was from Yosemite, CA.

LCpl Juan M. Garcia Schill, 20, died July 2 while conducting combat operations in Al Anbar Province, Iraq. Lance Corporal Garcia Schill was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine

Regiment, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Twentynine Palms, CA.

Petty Officer First Class Steven Philip Daugherty, 28, died July 6 as a result of enemy action while conducting combat operations in the vicinity of Baghdad, Iraq. Petty Officer Daugherty was assigned to an East Coast-based SEAL team. He was from Barstow, CA.

MAJ James M. Ahearn, 43, died July 5 when his vehicle struck an improvised explosive device in Baghdad, Iraq. Major Ahearn was assigned to 96th Civil Affairs Battalion, 95th Civil Affairs Brigade, Fort Bragg, NC. He was from Concord, CA.

SPC Roberto J. Causor Jr., 21, died July 7 in Samarra, Iraq, of wounds suffered when insurgents attacked his unit with an improvised explosive device and small arms fire. Specialist Causor was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, NC. He was from San Jose, CA.

PFC Bruce C. Salazar, Jr., 24, died on July 6, in Muhammad Sath, Iraq, of injuries sustained when his dismounted patrol encountered an improvised explosive device. Private First Class Salazar was assigned to B Company, 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Stewart, GA. He was from Tracy, CA.

LCpl Steven A. Stacy, 23, died July 5 from wounds suffered while conducting combat operations in Al Anbar Province, Iraq. Lance Corporal Stacy was assigned to 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, CA.

Cpl Jeremy D. Allbaugh, 21, died July 5 from wounds suffered while conducting combat operations in Al Anbar Province, Iraq. Corporal Allbaugh was assigned to 1st Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, CA.

LCpl Angel R. Ramirez, 28, died February 21 at Marine Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, CA, after being medically evacuated following a non-hostile incident in Al Qaim, Iraq, on December 21, 2006. He was assigned to 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Twentynine Palms, CA. His passing was made public on July 10.

SPC Eric M. Holke, 31, died on July 15, in Tallil, Iraq, when his vehicle overturned. Specialist Holke was assigned to A Company, 1st Battalion, 160th Infantry Regiment, 40th Infantry Division, Army National Guard, Fullerton, CA. He was from Crestline, CA.

LCpl Shawn V. Starkovich, 20, died July 16 in Al Anbar Province, Iraq. Lance Corporal Starkovich was assigned to 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, CA.

SGT Ronald L. Coffelt, 36, died July 19 in Baghdad, Iraq, of wounds suffered

from an improvised explosive device. Sergeant Coffelt was assigned to the 503rd Military Police Battalion, 16th Military Police Brigade, Airborne, XVIII Airborne Corps, Fort Bragg, NC. He was from Fair Oaks, CA.

SFC Luis E. Gutierrez-Rosales, 38, died on July 18, in Adhamiyah, Iraq, of injuries sustained when his vehicle encountered an improvised explosive device and small arms fire. Sergeant First Class Gutierrez-Rosales was assigned to A Company, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, Schweinfurt, Germany. He was from Bakersfield, CA.

Cpl Christopher G. Scherer, 21, died July 21 from wounds suffered while conducting combat operations in Al Anbar Province, Iraq. Corporal Scherer was assigned to 1st Combat Engineer Battalion, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, CA.

SGT Shawn G. Adams, 21, died July 22, in Owaset, Iraq, of wounds suffered from an improvised explosive device. Sergeant Adams was assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, Airborne, 25th Infantry Division, Fort Richardson, AK. He was from Dixon, CA.

I would also like to pay tribute to the four soldiers from California who have died while serving our country in Operation Enduring Freedom since April 28.

SSG Joshua R. Whitaker, 23, died May 15 in Qalat, Afghanistan, of wounds suffered from enemy small arms fire. Staff Sergeant Whitaker was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group, Fort Bragg, NC. He was from Long Beach, CA.

SGT Charles E. Wyckoff, Jr., 28, died on June 6 in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, of injuries sustained when his dismounted patrol received small arms fire. Sergeant Wyckoff was assigned to C Company, 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, NC. He was from Chula Vista, CA.

SGT Thomas P. McGee, 23, died July 6 of wounds sustained when his vehicle struck an improvised explosive device in Wazi Khwa, Afghanistan. Sergeant McGee was assigned to the 546th Military Police Company, 385th Military Police Battalion, Fort Stewart, GA. He was from Hawthorne, CA.

SFC Sean K. Mitchell, 35, died July 7 in Kidal, Mali, of injuries sustained from a non-combat related incident. Sergeant Mitchell was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group, Stuttgart, Germany. He was from Monterey, CA.

PETTY OFFICER FIRST CLASS JEFFREY CHANEY

Mr. HAGEL. Mr. President, I rise to express my sympathy over the loss of U.S. Navy Petty Officer First Class Jeffrey Chaney of Omaha, NE. Petty Officer First Class Chaney was killed on July 17 by an improvised explosive device in Salah Ad Din Province, Iraq. He was 35 years old.

Petty Officer First Class Chaney graduated from Bellevue West High School in 1990. He enlisted in the Navy in 1993 and spent 4 years of his 14-year Navy career as a recruiter. Petty Officer First Class Chaney's passion for serving his country made him a strong recruiter. He was even able to recruit his brother Randy Chaney to the Navy.

Petty Officer First Class Chaney was assigned to Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit 11, based at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, WA. His experience with ordnance disposal led to other experiences. He worked with Secret Service for President George H.W. Bush's 80th birthday celebration in 2004, where he met the former President and former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. He also assisted Secret Service with security during the 2004 Presidential election and met both President George W. Bush and Senator JOHN KERRY. Petty Officer First Class Chaney had been in Iraq for two months. We are proud of Petty Officer First Class Chaney's service to our country, as well as the thousands of other brave Americans serving in Iraq.

In addition to his brother Randy, Petty Officer First Class Chaney survived by his daughter Brianna Chaney of Omaha, his father Larry Chaney of Bloomington, MN, his mother Connie Chaney of Omaha, and brother Jim Ecker of Oakland, IA.

I ask my colleagues to join me and all Americans in honoring Petty Officer First Class Jeffrey Chaney.

SERGEANT JACOB SCHMUECKER

Mr. President, I also rise to express my sympathy over the loss of U.S. Army National Guard SGT Jacob Schmuecker of Norfolk, NE. Sergeant Schmuecker was killed on July 21 by an improvised explosive device in Balad, Iraq. He was 27 years old.

Sergeant Schmuecker graduated from West Holt High School in 1999, where he was a linebacker and defensive end on the football team. He attended Northeast Community College before he joined the Nebraska Army National Guard in 2001 as a member of the 134th Infantry Detachment in Lincoln, NE.

He was mobilized for service in Iraq in August 2006 with the Nebraska National Guard's 755th Reconnaissance and Decontamination Company based in O'Neill, NE.

Sergeant Schmuecker was a model leader. He had a strong concern for the men that he led and hoped that if anything were to happen, that it would happen to him. He inspired his brother Chris Shepperd to enlist and he would go on to serve in Iraq as well. We are proud of Sergeant Schmuecker's service to our country, as well as the thousands of other brave Americans serving in Iraq.

Sergeant Schmuecker is survived by his wife Lisa and their three children, his parents Rodney and Patricia Schmuecker, three brothers, and three sisters.

I ask my colleagues to join me and all Americans in honoring SGT Jacob Schmuecker.

REMEMBERING LADY BIRD JOHNSON

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, when Lady Bird Johnson passed away on the afternoon of July 11, 2007, the United States mourned the loss of a dignified and compassionate First Lady. Even though she is gone, she has left us with the legacy of her beautification of America. Through her diligent efforts, Mrs. Johnson was not only an advocate for the natural beauty of America but also of the beauty and strength of its people. Sharon and I extend our deepest sympathy to her daughters Lynda and Luci, their families, her friends, and all of those whose lives have been touched by her life's work.

As President Lyndon B. Johnson entered the White House in one of our Nation's most harrowing moments, Mrs. Johnson stood by her husband with poise and courage that helped comfort a wounded nation. Her service to our country would go even further as she became a leading voice for preserving and defending America's natural resources. Here in the Nation's Capital, people can't help but be reminded of Mrs. Johnson's vigorous work to adorn Washington, DC, with flowers, giving us an aesthetic that all Americans could take pride in and enjoy.

I have always shared Mrs. Johnson's deeply held love for the beauty of the United States, from the mountains of West Virginia to the plains of Texas. It was because of her commitment to the environment and the splendor of our country that the Beautification Act of 1965 was passed. She strove to line our highways with wildflowers and still found time to enjoy walking through the national parks that she fought to protect.

In addition to her work with the environment, I truly admire her efforts to address poverty in the United States. Under President Johnson, the VISTA program was enacted, sending out volunteers to improve the conditions of impoverished communities. I can proudly say that as a VISTA volunteer in Emmons, WV, I saw firsthand the immense benefits of this program for participants and for the communities they serve.

I will never forget her devotion to her husband, her family, and her country. I will never forget her passion fighting for civil rights and against poverty. Nor will I ever forget her determination to leave a beautiful America for future generations.

Lady Bird Johnson, again, held my sincerest respect and appreciation. To her family and the people of Texas, I offer my deepest sympathies. Mrs. Johnson was a valuable public servant, an inspiration and a friend. More than anything else, she was an irreplaceable First Lady.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise today to speak on the minimum wage increase, which takes effect today.

Today, millions of hard-working Americans will finally receive the first increase of a \$2.10 raise in the Federal minimum wage. Today, we are putting an end to a decade-long stagnant wage that has kept those who are working their hardest at the bottom of the ladder. Today, they are getting the chance that everyone in this country deserves—the opportunity to build a better life.

Now, \$2.10 may not sound like much to most Americans. But that small increase will make a difference in the pockets and in the lives of millions of Americans. Those \$2.10 add up to more than \$4,400 more every year enough to help a low-income family depending on a minimum wage income to afford 2 years of child care, a year and a half in utility bills, or a year of tuition at a public college.

I am also proud that my State of New Jersey has not waited for Congress to do what is right. Instead, New Jersey has taken it upon itself to increase the State minimum wage far in advance of Congress, which now is at \$7.15 per hour. New Jersey's minimum wage has given more than a quarter million workers the opportunity to build a better life for themselves and their families.

And today, all Americans earning minimum wage will have that same opportunity to build a better life. In enacting the first minimum wage increase in over a decade, Congress took a critical first step towards correcting a grave injustice. For far too long, we have let some of our hardest working employees—those who prepare our food, clean our offices, treat us at the doctor, and guard our buildings at night—see their wages erode by 10 years of inflation.

Ten years is far too long for those who work round the clock, hoping to save a little extra for groceries, for those working so they can buy school supplies or clothes for their children, or for those saving so one day they can live in a place they are proud to call home.

Today, we should also commit that never again will we let this injustice persist for 10 years. The increase going into effect today is an important improvement, but it is not the end of the battle. An increase in the minimum wage is only part of the solution.

We cannot ignore that the income gap has been widening—and now it has taken on a new twist. We no longer have inequality just between those living comfortably and those struggling to make ends meet. Income is now more concentrated at the top than it has been in the past 70 years. In fact, as the wealthiest 1 percent have seen their income grow by 20 percent or more within the past few years, everyone else has seen their income grow by less than 4 percent.

And that inequality is ever too real for women and minorities, who are more likely to be minimum wage earners.

So while increasing the minimum wage is just one step toward closing the income gap, it is an important step.

Ultimately, a wage increase is about fairness, about ensuring all Americans, not just those at the top, can share in the American dream.

Before today, 13 million minimum wage workers did not have the chance to share in that dream.

Before today, 4 million Latinos and African Americans earned less than \$7.25 an hour with no expectation that their wages would rise.

Before today, nearly 7 million women, who make up well over half of minimum wage workers, would not have seen their wages increase.

And before today, a minimum wage earner with a family of three would be making \$6,000 below the poverty level. Before today, that family would not have a way out of poverty and into prosperity.

We have changed the course, not just for minimum wage workers but for our country. We have finally taken steps toward providing greater equality and given our hardest workers and their families the chance to earn a wage of dignity and respect.

A wage increase is only a downpayment on our promise to all Americans—it is a preview of what is to come. Democrats pledge to continue to change the course to ensure all Americans and their families have a fair shot at achieving the American dream.

Thank you. I yield the floor

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNIZING IRVIN L. TRUJILLO

• Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I wish to recognize Mr. Irvin L. Trujillo for receiving the National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellowship Award. He is one of only 11 artists nationally recognized with this award for his work. The chairman of the NEA, Dana Gioia, will personally deliver the award to Mr. Trujillo this Sunday in Santa Fe. Mr. Trujillo, a Chimayo native, is part of the ever-growing population of talented artists that reside in New Mexico. He is a seventh-generation Chimayo weaver.

Art is such a big part of the New Mexican way of life. Artists from all over the world dream of showcasing their art in one of the many New Mexico Art galleries. Art is a great outlet of creativity and emotion for those who experience its beauty and wonder. Art can take up many avenues; it can be a painting or a piece of pottery, a woven rug or even a photograph. New Mexico is home to many galleries featuring such pieces of art. I am proud to represent a State so full of culture and creativity.