

floor for the Public Safety Officers Benefits program. Counseling services will not longer be capped at \$150,000 a year.

The unfortunate reality of contemporary life is that we may still lose upwards of 100 law enforcement officers a year nationwide. I wish there were none and I will keep working to improve the assistance and support we provide our law enforcement officers. For those families that sacrifice a loved one in the line of duty I support the additional counseling services that could be made available by the Care for Police Survivors Act.

I hope the House of Representatives will also proceed this week to provide the college education assistance that would be made possible for the families of State and local law enforcement officers killed or disabled in the line of duty by the Public Safety Officers Educational Benefits Assistance Act, S. 1525. I am proud to have cosponsored the Federal Law Enforcement Dependents Assistance Act of 1996 and the pending bill that would extend the educational benefits that we previously provided to the children of federal law enforcement to the families of State and local public safety officials who die or are disabled in the line of duty. Those families make the ultimate sacrifice for our public safety and deserve our support and assistance. I commend Senator SPECTER and Senator BIDEN for their leadership on this effort.

The Senate Judiciary Committee reported this bill to the Senate last Thursday. I said then that I hoped it could be included in a package of legislation passed this week. A fitting tribute to those who gave their lives in preserving our public safety would be for Congress to enact during National Police Week and in anticipation of the annual memorial activities for law enforcement officers the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Act of 1998, S.1605; the Care for Police Survivors Act of 1998, S.1985 (or H.R. 3565 its House counterpart); and the Public Safety Officers Educational Benefits Assistance Act, S.1525. Together these make a significant package of legislation to benefit the families of those who serve in law enforcement.

I am encouraged that we have been able to achieve enactment of two of these three measures and look forward to enactment of the third, that to provide educational opportunities to the families of State and local law enforcement officers, as soon as the House is prepared to proceed.

Mr. THOMPSON. Mr. President, despite the respect that I have for Members who are co-sponsors of this legislation, I must oppose S. 1605.

I do not oppose this legislation because I believe that encouraging local law enforcement officers to be provided body armor is a poor idea. Rather, it is not an appropriate activity of the federal government.

If this new grant program passes, we will once again encourage people in

communities all across the country to drive on past city hall, drive on past the state capitol, drive to the airport, fly to Washington and ask the Congress to help them solve a local problem. I believe that local problems can and should be solved by local people. There is hardly any more local issue than the equipment of local law enforcement officers.

Some localities are enlightened and have provided money for body armor. This bill penalizes them. Under this bill, residents of those communities, who have already paid taxed for body armor for their own law enforcement agents, would be taxed to pay for 50 percent of the cost of body armor of law enforcement in communities that have not taxed their citizens to pay for it. Well, as George Bernard Shaw said, "Any government that robs Peter to pay Paul can always count on the support of Paul."

The only purpose for which this money can be used by local government is to provide body armor. Communities that have not provided body armor and communities that have not managed to reduce their crime rates receive first preference for the award of the money. That certainly creates an unfortunate incentive. And it means that in the future, localities may forego important law enforcement efforts on the hope that if they wait a bit, taxpayers in other parts of the country will pay 50 percent of the cost.

Under this bill, taxpayer money will be returned to the people who paid it, less the carrying charges and with strings attached. What if the locality or state would like to spend the money on some other purpose than body armor? They are prohibited from doing so. Even if a community that has not provided body armor has a more pressing law enforcement need, they cannot spend the money on anything but body armor. This is an unwarranted intrusion on federalism. Maybe we would help more if we left more tax money to remain in localities in the first place.

This is exactly why the federal government should stay out of this. The era of big government is over I keep hearing, but here is a proposal to make it bigger. And somebody will have to pay for it with money that could have stayed right in the community where it was raised.

If this bill passes, there will be lots of opportunity to pass the buck. Municipalities that do not provide body armor can pass the buck to Washington, saying that the federal government now has the responsibility of doing so. The federal government will point out that most of the funds will have to come from the states and localities. Fingers will point everywhere and accountability will rest nowhere. This is undesirable in a democracy.

Therefore, I record my opposition to this legislation.

Mr. ALLARD. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate agree to the amendments of the House.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CARE FOR POLICE SURVIVORS ACT OF 1998

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to consideration of Calendar 347, H.R. 3565.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3565) to amend Part L of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safety Streets Act of 1968.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection to the immediate consideration of the bill?

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. ALLARD. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read the third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements relating to the bill appear at this point in the RECORD.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 3565) was deemed read the third time and passed.

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I am pleased that the Senate has passed the House companion legislation—H.R. 3565—to S. 1985 the "Care for Police Survivors Act of 1998", which I introduced along with Senators HATCH, LEAHY, DEWINE and SESSIONS.

This week we celebrate National Police Week. As we honor those who protect us, it is important that we remember those who have fallen in the line of duty. However, more than mere remembrance is necessary. We must work to ensure that the loved ones these officers leave behind are comforted and assisted in every way. The Care for Police Survivors Act does just that.

This legislation modifies the Public Safety Officers Death Benefit program, which—as my colleagues know—establishes national programs that counsel and assist the families of slain police officers. The purpose of the Care for Police Survivors Act, which the House of Representatives passed overwhelmingly (403-8), is to enhance these national programs. It does so by directing more funds to these programs that counsel and support these families in the aftermath of tragedy. Under current law, these counseling programs have a ceiling of \$150,000, this bill changes this to a floor of \$150,000.

Mr. President, I have long been concerned about the plight of families of public safety officers killed in the line of duty—last year, Senator SPECTER and I introduced the Public Safety Officers Educational Assistance Act which provides for the education of the spouse and dependent children of law enforcement officers who die or are totally disabled in the line of duty. In that vein, this legislation offers assurance to those in the public safety profession—and even to those considering

service as public safety officers—that there is a well established support system in place to comfort and assist their families and loved ones in the event that they die in the line of duty.

Mr. President, it is critical that we not only remember, but offer real help to the families of those police officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice to keep our streets and homes safe.

PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1998

Mr. ALLARD. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the consideration of calendar 359, S. 1525.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1525) to provide financial assistance for higher education to the dependents of Federal, State, and local public safety officers who are killed or permanently and totally disabled as the result of a traumatic injury sustained in the line of duty.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection to the immediate consideration of the bill?

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the bill be considered read the third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements relating to the bill appear at this point in the RECORD.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (S. 1525) was deemed read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 1525

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Public Safety Officers Educational Assistance Act of 1998”.

SEC. 2. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION TO DEPENDENTS OF PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS KILLED OR PERMANENTLY AND TOTALLY DISABLED IN THE LINE OF DUTY.

Part L of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3796 et seq.) is amended—

(1) in the heading for subpart 2, by striking “**Civilian Federal Law Enforcement**” and inserting “**Public Safety**”;

(2) in section 1211(1), by striking “civilian Federal law enforcement” and inserting “public safety”;

(3) in section 1212(a)(1)(A), by striking “Federal law enforcement” and inserting “public safety”;

(4) in section 1216(a), by inserting “and each dependent of a public safety officer killed in the line of duty on or after October 1, 1997,” after “1992.”; and

(5) in section 1217—

(A) by striking paragraph (2); and

(B) by redesignating paragraphs (3) and (6) as paragraphs (2) and (3), respectively.

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I am pleased that the Senate has passed S. 1525, the “Public Safety Officers Educational Assistance Act of 1998.”

Last congress, the Senate passed the “Federal Law Enforcement Dependents Assistance Act”—led by Senators SPECTER and KOHL and co-sponsored by myself and nearly every member of the Judiciary Committee. This law provides for the education of the spouse and dependent children of federal law enforcement officers who die or are totally disabled in the line of duty.

The purpose of the legislation was to remove a significant financial burden from the families of these deceased officers and to allow them to continue on the educational path they would have followed had their parent or spouse not been killed in the line of duty.

Last fall, about 30 young men and women were able to go to college under this program. Unfortunately, this program is only available to the children of federal law enforcement officers.

The Public Safety Officers Educational Assistance Act, which Senator SPECTER and I introduced last year, extends these same educational benefits to the dependents of all public safety officers—in other words, not just federal—but also state, county and local law enforcement officers, and fire and rescue personnel—who have given their lives in the line of duty.

Under this bill, the Attorney General will administer a program which will provide up to \$4,485 per child, per year to attend a 4-year college. This is the same amount of educational assistance the federal government provides to veterans.

The Justice Department estimates the total cost for this year to be about \$300,000. What is more, the Justice Department already has the funds to pay for this \$300,000 within their current budget—so we will not need any additional appropriations.

It is critical that we remember the families of those officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice to keep our streets and homes safe. This bill is intended to allow the dependents of public safety officers to continue with their education as they would have been able to do had their parent not been killed or totally disabled in the line of duty.

PASSAGE OF S. 1605, H.R. 3565, AND S. 1525

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, this week we have been commemorating Peace Officer's Memorial Week, in honor of those law enforcement and public safety officers who have died in the line of duty. As we remember those who have fallen in defense of the public safety, it is highly fitting that the Senate consider legislation to help save police officers' lives, and also to do all we can to comfort and assist the families and loved ones they have left behind. Thus, I am gratified by the Senate's action today in passing three bills to accomplish these goals.

The first of these bills is S. 1605, the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Act. This bill establishes a matching

program to help States, units of local government, and Indian tribes to purchase armor vests for use by law enforcement officers. The lives of our law enforcement officers will be secured by ensuring that every police officer who needs a bulletproof vest receives one, providing an increased measure of protection to those who protect the public.

The FBI estimates that nearly one third of the 1,182 law enforcement officers killed by a firearm in the line of duty since 1980 would be alive if they had worn a bulletproof vest. The FBI also approximates that the risk of fatality to law enforcement officers while not wearing an armor vest is 14 times higher than for officers wearing an armor vest. In addition, the Department of Justice estimates that nearly 150,000 State, local, and tribal law enforcement officers, roughly 25 percent, are not currently issued body armor. This piece of legislation will save officers' lives by helping get vests to those who need them.

The second of these bills is the Care for Police Survivors Act of 1998, H.R. 3565. I was proud to introduce the Senate companion to this bill, S. 1985. This bill will strengthen programs available to the families of our slain police officers. For example, groups such as Concerns for Police Officers, more commonly referred to as COPS, will now be allowed to increase and improve their services to these families. Authority will be given to the Director of the Bureau of Justice Assistance to spend no less than \$150,000 out of the Public Safety Officers' Benefits program to support and enrich national peer support and counseling programs for families of police officers lost in the line of duty.

This act will also expedite the process of handling cases pending before the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Office by allowing the expenditure of PSOB program funds on outside hearing officers. Currently, survivors of fallen police officers have to wait entirely too long to obtain an appeal hearing for denial of benefits. By enacting this bill, we will make the process of helping these families less burdensome.

Finally, S. 1525, the Public Safety Officers Educational Assistance Act of 1998, will provide aid to the families of those federal law enforcement officers who are killed or totally disabled in the line of duty. By amending the Federal Law Enforcement Dependents Assistance Act, also known as the Degan Law, approximately \$4,500 per year in college assistance will be awarded to participants—the children and spouses of these great officers. Under S. 1525, the current program will be expanded to cover state and local public safety officers as well. I am a proud supporter of this program that will both promote and fund education for the small number of families of those who have given their lives or health while protecting our communities.