

VERMONT OLYMPIANS

• Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to honor the twenty-two Vermonters who will be representing our country this week at the XVIIIth Winter Olympics in Nagano, Japan. Perhaps Chris Graff of the Associated Press said it best when he noted in an article that appeared in the Rutland Herald that Vermont produces more than its share of Olympians, “. . . a fact that should surprise no one. There is something about Vermonters and the Vermont spirit that is so keenly associated with the Olympic spirit.” Maybe it is the mix of severe weather, Yankee stubbornness, and that New England work ethic that instills in Vermonters an appreciation for hard work and perseverance.

Representing Vermont on the U.S. Men's Ice Hockey Team is the now famous John LeClair from St. Albans. LeClair may play professional hockey for the Philadelphia Flyers, but he has never forgotten his roots in the small city of St. Albans. John donates his time and expertise to the people of Franklin County throughout the year. His skill and All-American image have brought civility and a touch of New England neighborliness to the most unlikely of sports. For the first time ever, the National Hockey League is competing in the Olympics. Vermonters are rooting for John LeClair to leave a lasting impression.

If there is one thing Vermonters excel at it is getting through snow, so it makes sense that Vermont is well represented on the U.S. Olympic Cross Country Ski Teams. Four Vermonters will be on the team; Marc Gilbertson and Laura Wilson of Montpelier, Kerrin Petty from Townshend, and Suzanne King of East Warren. This is Marc's first time as a member of a U.S. national team and I admire his grit in going after his Olympic dream. Laura, Kerrin and Suzanne will bring experience to the women's team and are aiming to show the world what Vermont women are made of.

The Nordic Combined event has Norwich native Tim Tetreault competing. Tim's parents Tom and Anne will be going to Japan this week to watch their son, who has been skiing since he was five, compete in his third Olympic games. The Freestyle U.S. Ski teams also include four skiers and a head coach from Vermont. Ann Battelle from Williston got hooked on skiing during her years at Champlain Valley Union High School and has never looked back. Jim Moran of Stowe and Evan Dybvig of Turnbridge who have both spent many cold hours conquering the slopes of Stowe, will also be competing. Donna Weinbrecht, another team member, knows well all the steep trails and sharp twists at Killington mountain. The four will be joined by coach Jeff Good from Williston.

Skiing comes naturally for Vermonters, but add a rifle and you have a sport Vermonters can really get behind! Seven Vermonters will be doing

just that on the U.S. Biathlon teams—Dan Westover from Colchester, Robert Rosser of Underhill, Kristina Viljanen-Sabasteanski of Richmond, Deborah Nordyke from Jericho, Kara Salmela of Bolton Valley, Algis Shalna (head coach) from Williston, and Timothy Derrick (assistant Coach) of Jericho. Head Coach Shalna brings with him Olympic experience having competed for the Soviet Union's Gold Medal winning team in the 1984 Winter Olympics. The group has been training at a state-of-the-art Vermont National Guard facility in Jericho—which will be hosting the World Junior Biathlon Championships just after the Olympics.

New to the Olympics but familiar to Vermont is snowboarding. As the birth place of this sport and home to Jake Burton's renowned snowboard company, it is appropriate that Vermont will be sending three talented competitors as part of the first U.S. Snowboarding Team. Ross Powers from South Londonderry, Ron Chiodi of Rochester, and Betsy Shaw of East Dorset will be traveling to Nagano this week. Ross knows all about travel since snowboarding has taken him all over the world. He will celebrate his nineteenth birthday on February 10th and be joined by his mother, Nancy, in Japan. East Dorset will be cheering for their neighbor, Betsy, who has “surfed” mountains all over the globe but knows the ones in Southern Vermont best. Ron too will bring his Vermont experience at Stratton Mountain with him to the Olympics.

Also going to Nagano, Japan is Vermontor Kathryn Vigensna Lipke of Belvidere. She will be serving as one of five international jurors who will judge the snow-sculpting competitions. Having lived in the mountains of Belvidere with its snowy peaks and dense woods, Kathryn will make an excellent judge of cold weather beauty.

I am truly proud of the athletes Vermont is sending to the Olympics. I commend them for their hard work and the example they set for Vermonters and for athletes everywhere, and join all Vermonters in wishing them the best in the 1998 Winter Olympics. •

PROTECTION OF THE AMERICAN FLAG FROM PHYSICAL DESECRATION

• Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, I am proud to join Senators HATCH, CLELAND, and others in cosponsoring the proposed constitutional amendment to grant the States and Congress the power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States. Our flag occupies a truly unique place in the hearts of millions of citizens as a cherished symbol of freedom and democracy. As a national emblem of the world's greatest democracy, the American flag should be treated with respect and care. I have long held that our free speech rights do not entitle us to consider the flag as merely personal property, to be treated

any way we see fit, including its desecration for the purpose of political protest. I want to commend Senator HATCH for once again leading us in this very worthwhile cause.

Mr. President, with the introduction of this resolution, we resume our effort to protect the greatest symbol of the American experience. There is no more powerful symbol of freedom, democracy, and our commitment to those principles that the American flag, and it is altogether just that we try to ensure that it is publicly displayed with pride, dignity, and honor. Make no mistake, Mr. President, the flag is not merely a visual symbol to us, nor should it be. Too many Americans have contributed too much of their labor, their passion, and in some cases their very being for it to be so simply regarded. For the flag permeates our national history and relays the story of America in its simplest terms. Indeed, knowing how the flag has changed—and in what ways it has remained constant—is to know the history and hopes of this country.

More than 220 years ago, a year after the colonies had made their historic decision to declare independence from Britain, the Second Continental Congress decided that the American flag would consist of 13 red and white alternating stripes and 13 white stars in a field of blue. These stars and blue field were to represent a new constellation in which freedom and government of the people, by the people and for the people would rule. As we all know, the constellation has grown to include 50 stars, but the number of stripes has remained constant. In this way, the flag tells all who view it that no matter how large America may become, it is forever rooted in the bedrock principles of freedom and self-government that led those first 13 colonies to forge a new nation.

Equally important is the fact that the flag also represents our commitment to these ideals. This commitment has exacted a high human toll, for which many of America's best and brightest have given their last full measure of devotion. It is in their memories and for their commitment to America's ideals that I am proud to support the amendment introduced yesterday.

The amendment is necessary because the Supreme Court, in its 1990 U.S. verses Eichman ruling, held that burning the flag in political protest was constitutionally protected free speech. No one holds our right to free speech more dearly than I do, Mr. President, but in my view, the Eichman decision unnecessarily rejects the deeply held reverence in which millions of Americans hold our flag. With all the forums for public opinion available to Americans every day, from television and radio, to newspapers and internet chat rooms, Americans are afforded ample opportunity to freely and fully exercise their legitimate, constitutional right to free speech, even if what they have