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Four Senate Democrats — Minority Leader Tom Daschle (from left), Joseph Biden, Carl Levin and John Kerry — speak on behalf of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty during a Capitol Hill press conference Oct. 13.

Prelate decries treaty vote

UNITED NATIONS (CNS) — The Vatican nuncio to the United Nations said the U.S. Senate's rejection of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty is "a blow against the universality of the treaty."

Archbishop Renato R. Martino made the comments Oct. 14, the day after the Senate voted 51-48 against ratification of the treaty.

Sixty-seven votes were needed to ratify the pact, which seeks to stop all nuclear testing among the nations that sign it. It also covers monitoring procedures and sanctions against violators.

With only 14 hours allotted for debate on the Senate floor before the vote, most discussion had to take place outside the halls of Congress.

Pro-treaty advocates acknowledged that no treaty is perfect nor is any test-detection program foolproof. But in an effort to placate foreign policy hawks, they asserted that the United States' ability to conduct computer and laboratory simulations of its nuclear ar-

senal gave the nation a strategic advantage over other nations in the nuclear club — an advantage that would be locked in by ratification.

But the argument fell on deaf ears to a majority of the Senate. In the wake of the Senate's rejection, peace advocates and religious leaders denounced the partisan nature of the debate.

Democrats had chided Republicans for having kept the treaty in committee for two years without so much as a hearing. Republicans called the Democrats' bluff and scheduled the 14 hours of debate over two days in the full Senate within a month.

Despite earnest efforts by the White House to persuade senators to support the treaty, and an intensive pro-treaty campaign featuring military chiefs, Nobel physics laureates and religious leaders advocating for the treaty, the Senate didn't budge.

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., offered

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Alliance calls for polite politics

When it comes to the growing phenomenon of political incivility, the Interfaith Alliance believes candidates must take the high road.

To help reverse two current trends — incivility in public discourse and alienation among U.S. voters — the Washington-based interfaith group has sounded a nationwide "Call to a Faithful Decision 2000." The multi-pronged program of fair campaign pledges, voter education and registration drives, and political programs is supported by a Rochester chapter of the alliance.

"(I)n the political arena, if the speech and actions are not civil, we have real alienation of the voters," said Sister Gratia L'Esperance, RSM, a member of the board of directors of the Rochester Interfaith Alliance chapter. She is also assistant director of the Mercy Center with the Aging in Rochester.

Sister L'Esperance said that if voters don't start demanding civility in political campaigns, they may regret it in the end.

"It's easy to say, 'I don't want any part of that,' and

surrender the term 'politics' and 'political' to the abusers as it were," she said.

Faithful allies

The Interfaith Alliance was founded five years ago by Protestant, Catholic and Jewish leaders to counter claims by the "radical religious right" that it spoke for all people of faith, alliance leaders said. Several Catholic bishops have served on its board, which now includes Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim representatives.

The latest alliance program, co-sponsored by the Interfaith Alliance Foundation and unveiled in September at a Washington, D.C., press conference, includes:

- A challenge to presidential and other candidates to embrace a civility code stressing integrity, fairness, respect and responsibility.
- An Internet petition drive, at www.civility.net, calling for political civility.
- Voter registration drives in partnership with such

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