

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 6344) to reauthorize the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

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

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read the third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements relating to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

The bill (H.R. 6344) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

AMENDING THE FEDERAL DEPOSIT INSURANCE ACT

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 6345, which was received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 6345) to make a conforming amendment to the Federal Deposit Insurance Act with respect to examinations of certain insured depository institutions, and for other purposes.

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

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

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

The bill (H.R. 6345) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Texas is recognized.

TAX EXTENDER PACKAGE

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about the tax extender package that will be coming over from the House. It is a very important measure, one of the last items of business that probably will be passed in this session. It is such an important bill. I have to say it doesn't have everything we had hoped it would have. But the important parts that are included are very important. The sales tax deduction—the deductibility of State sales taxes—is a huge item of equity for taxpayers in our country.

As the Presiding Officer knows, there are eight States that do not have income taxes. Yet between the years of 1986 and 2004, there was an inequity. If a State chose to have State income taxes to raise its revenue, their citizens could deduct from their Federal income taxes those State income taxes. But if a State didn't have an income tax and instead raised its State revenue with State sales taxes, you could not deduct the sales taxes on your income tax. It was a huge inequity.

It is essential that in our country we have the same treatment for the people of every State regarding how they pay their State taxes. So this bill, the tax extender package, which will be voted on either tonight or tomorrow, is that equalizer. It does extend for 2 more years the sales tax deduction that would be allowed, just as State income taxes are deductible, from your Federal income tax return. We have had that opportunity for 2 years—2004 and 2005. This would have it available for 2006, this year, and next year, 2007.

The taxpayers in Texas, Alaska, Florida, Washington State, Nevada, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Wyoming would be set to have the penalty if this bill does not pass. This is something I have worked on for years. Since I came to the Senate, I have tried to equalize this inequity. Finally, in 2004, we were able to do that, and now we cannot let this equity go. There are many people who have worked to make this happen, especially the leaders of the Senate. Senator FRIST and Senator REID have been working on this, as I have, for all these years, trying to do what is right by our States, as well as the other States that are affected in this way. We won that right in 2004, and now we will be able to go forward and continue the equitable treatments of all taxpayers in our country.

The other points in the bill that I think are so important are the deduction for college tuition and fees. This can give up to \$4,000 to families who are sending children to college. That is something that makes a huge difference to the families in our country who are paying the ever-increasing college tuition rates. It has a \$250 deduction for a teacher who buys classroom supplies out of their own pockets. I know teacher after teacher in this country who has seen a child who doesn't have a workbook or who wants to enhance the quality of instruction, so the teacher buys, from her own pocketbook, the supplies that will enhance the educational opportunity. Yet the teachers have done it out of the goodness of their hearts, not because they are highly paid—because we know teachers are notoriously underpaid. It is because they care about the students and about the learning. So we have a deduction for those teachers who have done this, and that is in the bill before us in this Congress.

We will extend the research and development tax credit. That has been the lifeblood of innovation in our country. We have extended this credit 11 times since it was enacted in 1981. We know that it has helped us remain competitive, with increased competition from foreign countries, and has added American jobs because of the creativity and technological innovation that has been provided. I wish that we had a few more tax cuts.

We have an inequitable situation with timber taxes, where we have a competition with foreign countries that are subsidized. It is my priority to

work on that going forward. It is not in this bill. I wish it were. I pledge my efforts, along with many other States, to extend or to have this tax credit reenacted.

There is also a very important energy production bill that is in the tax extender package. It is a bill that passed the Senate with full support, and it will bring the cost of energy down. It is the opening of leases 181 and 181 South in the Gulf of Mexico. These are leases that will open up natural gas and oil, which will have a major impact on the cost of fuel in our country.

It is good for America. We must look to our own natural resources to stop our dependence on foreign resources for energy. If we are going to remain secure in our country, and if we are going to remain in control of our economy, we will pass this legislation that opens up these very important leases in the Gulf of Mexico.

While no bill is perfect, no bill does everything everybody wants, I am in strong support of the tax extender bill. I have heard people speak against the bill and say: How can we pass tax cuts when we have deficits? The fact of the matter is, we have higher revenue when we have tax cuts. We have had the highest revenue in the history of America since the tax cuts of 2001 and 2003. We have brought the deficit down and have cut it in half already because of the tax cuts. The stock market is hitting new highs because of the tax cuts.

I hope we will continue to extend tax cuts for hard-working Americans to make our country competitive, to keep the revenue coming in, to bring the deficit down, and to keep the healthy economy that has caused our unemployment to go down to the lowest rates we have had in the last four decades.

It is a good bill. We will work next year to increase the tax cuts, to continue the tax cuts and keep our robust economy and our low unemployment.

Mr. President, I again thank the Senator from Ohio for yielding me this time.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. VITTER). The Senator from Ohio is recognized.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS JOSHUA A. RAMSEY

Mr. DeWINE. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Army PFC Joshua A. Ramsey from Defiance, OH, who died in Iraq on December 12, 2004. He was 19 years old.

Joshua leaves behind his father and stepmother Bruce and Le'Ann, his mother Joy, and his brothers Brad and Ty. He is also survived by his grandparents Robert and Margaret Ramsey and Jerry and Nancy Buckles.

Born in Norman, OK, Josh moved with his family to Ohio when he was 10 years old. He attended Ayersville Elementary School and joined the Boy

Scouts. He graduated from high school and the Four County Career Center in 2003, and joined the Army just 2 days later. He did not hesitate. He simply knew it was time to serve his country. Josh was assigned to the 95th Military Police Battalion based in Mannheim, Germany.

One of Josh's teachers at the Career Center, Tonya Fisher, remembers that "Josh was a good student and a good classmate. He worked really hard in class and was really dedicated. He knew he wanted to go into the military."

After graduating, Josh returned one August to talk to the students in the public safety class. "He gave us hugs," Tonya remembers, "and told teachers, 'Everything you said was right.'"

Josh Ramsey will be remembered for his compassion and his love of children. While serving in Iraq, his favorite job was distributing soccer balls and school supplies to the kids he met. He would often stop his humvee, just so he could get out and talk to people. He told his father Bruce that Iraqis simply wanted the same thing that we all do—just to get by and to take care of their families. And that was Josh—always reaching out to others, always building bridges.

"[Josh] loved his job," his mother Joy remembers. "I know he died doing what he wanted to do, and I find comfort in that."

Josh had a passion for cars and one car, in particular—a fully-loaded silver Grand-Am GT that he bought while home on a 2-week leave. He was going to have his brother Brad "hot-rod it up" for him. According to his stepmother Le'Ann, he couldn't wait to return home and show it off to all his friends.

Josh's parents made a car payment for him as a Christmas gift, and Josh, himself, was making double payments on it with his Army salary. He planned to have it paid off entirely in 2 years. A gasoline card for him to bring home and use to fill up his gas tank was included in one of his care packages. On Josh's weekly phone calls home, he didn't want to talk about the war all that much—he wanted to talk about his car.

Josh's grandmother Margaret said that "when it's 150 degrees, you need something to dream about and to plan for. If it helped him through the tough times, it was well worth it. We took pictures of him with his new car, so he could show his buddies."

Josh was a very family-oriented young man, and so hated to leave them. He had a special relationship with his grandparents, and his mother Joy remembers the quiet times they shared during Josh's visits home. He would go fishing and golfing. For dinner, he would ask Joy to "fry up those little brown things." These were chicken livers—one of Josh's favorite meals.

Josh always remained calm about the dangers he faced in Iraq, even when he admitted conditions were getting

rough. As he told his mother Joy, "Mom, I have one of the most dangerous jobs in the Army, but I wouldn't have it any other way." Josh also believed in his job—he believed in what he was doing. "I think we're doing some good over there, Dad," he told his father.

Josh had a bright future before him. He was interested in police work and had joined the Army partly because of the experience of working with the military police. He also talked about becoming an American history teacher.

Josh was loved by all who knew him. He had so much energy and zest for life. One friend, Christy, remembers that he drove a long way while on leave just to see her and give her a hug. And another friend, David Streeter, wrote the following in an Internet tribute to Josh:

Josh was my best friend, and I loved him like a brother. I first met him while I was in basic training and by some strange luck, we were stationed in Mannheim together, then in Iraq. Not a day goes by that I don't think about him, Rest in peace Private First Class Ramsey.

Josh's cousin, Brooke Westcott, left this message for Josh:

Josh was my cousin, and we were like brother and sister. He was always there for me when I needed him. He told me that we would go graduation and birthday shopping for me. I miss him so much and he will always be in my heart.

With his compassion and bravery, Josh truly made this world a better place. He was devoted to his country, his fellow soldiers, and his family. His mother wears his military dog chains around her neck. Her son will never be forgotten.

My wife Fran and I continue to keep the family of Josh Ramsey in our thoughts and prayers.

STAFF SERGEANT ZACH WOBLER TRIBUTE

Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Army SSG Zachary Wobler, from Wheelersburg, OH, who died on February 6, 2005, when his dismounted patrol encountered small arms fire in Iraq. He leaves his wife Corissa, his daughter Trinity, his mother and stepfather Jeannette and Tim Poston, and his father Anthony Wobler. Zach—as his friends and family called him—was 24 years old at the time of his death.

Growing up in Ohio, Zach's parents taught him strong values—values that Zach would carry with him throughout his entire life. He was always hard-working, disciplined, and honest.

Zach, himself, once commented on how important honesty was to his family. In his words, "My father was big on honesty when I was young. That's one thing that was drilled into our family when I was young." Zach's mother Jeannette said that he never caused her a moment's worry growing up. He was so friendly—he never met a stranger. "People loved him when they met him," she recalls.

Zach graduated from Ottawa-Glandorf High School in 1998, where he played football, competed in track and

field, and was named the school's senior homecoming attendant. After graduating, Zach studied at Bowling Green University and joined the National Guard. He also took classes at Owens Community College. Zach joined the Army in 2000. As his father, said, "My son was a true soldier. He was definitely a hero, and he was admired. He was truly a great person."

Zach was very successful in the Army. He took advantage of every training opportunity available to him and quickly rose in the ranks. In 2002, he was even named Paratrooper of the Year at Fort Bragg. As his stepfather Tim said, "If Zach did any thing, he wanted to do it completely. He didn't do anything halfway."

Zach was deployed to Iraq in 2003. While serving there, there was nothing more important to him than the men under his command. He always wanted to be on the front lines, and he always cared more about his comrades' safety than his own. During his first deployment, his superiors wanted him to leave earlier than his troops, but Zach refused. As his mother said, Zach "was a natural sergeant. The men in his unit loved him. He stayed with them, and they loved hanging out with him."

Even though during his first deployment to Iraq Zach suffered a knee injury that required surgery, he decided that it was more important for him to be with his men in Iraq than any place else. And so, he returned for a second deployment. According to his mom, "Zach's men weren't going without him."

Zach was more than just an admired leader to the men he served with, however. He was also a friend and confidante. He could simply talk to anyone. Regardless of rank, they would come to him with problems—both personal and professional. According to SPC Ryan Logue, a sniper in Zach's scout team, "Zach always put his men first, and took care of our needs both professionally and personally. He was my mentor. [He was] like my older brother."

SSG Mike Beal remembers Zach's cheerful nature and constant willingness to help. He said: "I couldn't find the words to describe how I never heard Zach complain about anything or about how he was always there for his friends."

While Zach was, indeed, a committed soldier, he was also a devoted family man. According to his mother, the only thing that mattered to him more than his job was his 3-year-old daughter, Trinity. "[Zach] told me that should anything happen to him," his mom said, "He hoped that his little girl would understand when she grew up that he did it for her."

Zach had a bright future before him. His dream was to eventually work in government intelligence. Based on his success throughout life, I have no doubt he would have succeeded.

I would like to share something Zach said when talking about the challenges of facing deployment. He said:

Nobody knows 'til it comes down to it whether you are ready or not.

Well, Mr. President, Zach was ready. He always had been.

Army SSG Zachary Wobler was buried at Arlington National Cemetery. As his father said:

He wanted to be buried there, because he has other friends buried there. If it ever happened to him, he wanted to be with the people who gave their lives in all of the wars.

Zach's father also remembers the dedication with which his son served our Nation. He said:

If Zach were here today, and you asked him if he would do it again knowing what the outcome would be, he would say yes. . . . He was excellent. He was a fantastic guy. I tell you now, I miss him so badly.

Zach will never be forgotten. His wit and charm will always make his friends and loved ones smile. They will remember how one of his quips was once featured on the David Letterman Show. It was No. 3 on a list of "Top Ten Questions To Ask Yourself Before Jumping Out of a Helicopter." Zach had replied: "Am I really in that much of a hurry to get to the ground?"

Most importantly, Zach had a deep commitment to helping others. His compassion touched so many people, and his family has received an outpouring of support. As his father said, "I never realized there are so many people who cared so much."

Mr. President, we do, indeed, care.

My wife Fran and I continue to keep the family and friends of SSG Zachary Wobler in our thoughts and prayers.

SERGEANT MICHAEL C. O'NEILL

Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Army SGT Michael C. O'Neill from Mansfield, OH, who died on November 21, 2004, in Germany from injuries sustained in Afghanistan, while supporting Operation Enduring Freedom. He was 22 years old. Sergeant O'Neill leaves his parents George and Holly, his brother Kevin, and his grandmother Janet.

When I think about the dedication of our men and women in uniform in their efforts to promote and protect freedom, I am reminded of something President Ronald Reagan once said:

Freedom is a fragile thing and is never more than one generation away from extinction. It is not ours by inheritance; it must be fought for and defended constantly by each generation for it comes only once to a people.

Michael O'Neill—Mike to his friends and family—rose to this challenge of establishing freedom in both Afghanistan and Iraq. He dedicated his life to the service of our Nation and embraced the chance to help others who could not help themselves.

Mike was born on May 7, 1982, in San Rafael, California. His family later moved to Mansfield, OH. In 2001, Mike graduated from Mansfield Senior High School. During high school, Mike was very active in athletics, especially soccer and cross-country. He also loved the Kentucky Derby.

After graduation, Mike joined the Army and completed his training at

Fort Benning, GA, as an infantryman. He was assigned to B Company, 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment.

Without question, Mike O'Neill was an extraordinarily dedicated soldier. When he died, he was serving his fourth overseas deployment since he had enlisted in 2001. He had served in Iraq as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003.

Because of his honorable achievements in the Army, Michael has been awarded numerous medals—more than I can list here. But they include the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart, the Meritorious Service Medal, and the Army Achievement Medal.

Mike is deeply missed by all who knew him. They remember his blue eyes and his bright smile. Shortly after his death, several friends gathered at Todd Basilone's house to comfort each other and to remember Michael. Brett Gordon said that they were all heartbroken. In Brett's words, he owed everything to Mike.

Katie Mayo, another of Mike's former classmates, said that he had been an unbelievable person and a friend of hers since childhood.

Nick Sazdanoff is another of Mike's many, many friends. He spoke with Mike over the phone just a few weeks before his death. He recalls how dedicated he was to the service. "Mike is an outstanding soldier," he said.

Mike shared a strong bond with his friends. He, Brett Gordon, and Todd Basilone all had the same tattoo on their ankle—a tribal design. According to Brett, "My freshman year in college we did it—right after Mike got out of basic training."

Michael O'Neill's death has been a loss to his entire community. He is the second 2001 graduate from Mansfield Senior High to have died serving in either Iraq or Afghanistan. The other, SPC A.J. Vandayburg died on April 9, 2004, while deployed in Iraq. A.J.'s father Allen left Mike the following message on an Internet tribute webpage:

Mike—you are a hero and were like a son to me. I know that you and A.J. are together and have no more worries, but I wish I had you both back. Till we all meet again, Mike, we all love you. You were a true Ranger."

A loving son and brother, Mike was also dedicated to his family. His parents Holly and George will never forget the wonderful memories they have of their son, and I am honored that I was able to meet and speak with them during calling hours held for Mike. His Uncle Michael—and namesake—wrote his nephew the following message on an Internet tribute page:

Mike—I take this time during Memorial Day weekend to remember you and to say how proud I am of you. I miss you very much—even more so when I listen to a military ballad of some sort. I never got the chance to thank you and all our sons and daughters who are in service to our country. So, I'll keep you all in my thoughts and prayers. God bless you, Mike—my namesake and my nephew.

SGT Michael C. O'Neill truly embodied the Ranger Creed that reads, in part, as follows:

I accept the fact that as a Ranger, my country expects me to move further, faster and fight harder than any other soldier . . . I will shoulder more than my share of the task whatever it may be, one hundred percent and then some. . . .

Mike was an honorable soldier and an honorable man, who will live on in the hearts and minds of all those who had the privilege of knowing him. My wife Fran and I continue to keep his friends and family in our thoughts and prayers.

SERGEANT JOSEPH GARMBACK, JR.

Mr. President, I rise today to honor a fellow Ohioan—Army SGT Joseph Martin Garmback, Jr., from Cleveland. He died in service to our country on July 8, 2004, while stationed in Samara, Iraq, about 70 miles north of Baghdad, where he and the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry's mortar platoon were halfway through a shift at an Iraqi National Guard headquarters. Sergeant Garmback was 24 years old.

Sergeant Garmback leaves his mom and dad Marylon and Joseph Garmback, Sr., his three sisters Susan, Arlene, and Christine, and his girlfriend Christiane.

Joseph was born on April 9, 1980, in Cleveland. He grew up in the same West Park neighborhood where his family went to church—where he was baptized, received his first communion, and went to Sunday school. Members of his community cherish their fond memories of the fun loving, considerate, and loyal Joey Garmback, as he was known to those closest to him.

Joey grew up with a strong conviction to serve the United States as a soldier in the Army—just as his father had. At the age of 16, Joey left high school and took on a job running parties for a catering firm owned by Bill Rini. Bill remembers Joey well and describes him as a "very kind, compassionate kid, who worked for everything he got." Bill saw Joey growing into a capable young man. Knowing of Joey's interest in the Army, Bill introduced him to his friend, SGT James Mauer, who helped Joey earn his high school diploma and enlist in the Army in May 2002.

Joey was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 26th Regiment, 1st Infantry Division out of Germany. His father had been a paratrooper, and Joey told his parents that he planned to re-enlist in jump school after finishing his first term of service. During his time in the military, SGT Garmback was an extremely decorated soldier, earning 16 medals, including the Bronze Star and Purple Heart.

But, though his medals and awards are a sign of his dedication, Joey was so much more than the ribbons and medals he earned. He was a wonderful son, friend, and brother. Joey lived the way he served—with passion, love, and a strong loyalty for those around him.

The last days Joey spent at home were happy and busy. He returned from

Germany over Christmas, and as a present, Joey's family took him to a different place every day—to the arcade, to the movies, on road trips. Joey spent his last days with his family, doing all of his favorite things.

Joey left a lasting impression on this world. Those who knew him will never forget his smile, his compassion, or his fierce dedication. One of Joey's childhood friends, Laura Weimer, wrote this note to the Garmback family:

I have known you all for many years. Joey and I grew up together, and I had the honor of watching him grow from a kid to a wonderful young man. Joey is a hero who fought bravely for our country. He will always be remembered and missed. Joey is part of who I am today, and I will always cherish him.

Indeed, SGT Garmback lives on in the hearts of his family, the friends he grew up with, and those he fought beside. SGT Owen Fulsome, one of these men, wrote the following message to Joey after his death:

Garmback—you were a good friend and an excellent soldier. We had a lot of good times in Germany. You always gave 100 percent to our squad down there, and I will never forget you. You are truly a hero and the Mortars were lucky to serve with you.

Starr Richmond grew up with Joseph and was proud to watch him become a strong and able young man. This is what Starr said about Joey:

There are no words to express how much Joe will be missed and always be loved. It is always hard to lose someone and even harder when it is your child. But, with family, friends, and love, it helps the hurt. Joe . . . did more in his time than most people his age will ever do. He was a great friend, and he became our hero. Always remember the time we had with him. Whether it was sad and you cried with him or angry and you yelled with him, especially remember the times he brought a smile to your face and made you laugh. I will always remember the fun times as kids and remember him growing into a man and fighting for our country. He will be greatly missed and loved forever. Thank you, Joe, for being my friend.

SGT Joseph Garmback, Jr., was a good man who worked hard and loved his family and his country. We will always remember him and we will always be proud of him.

My wife Fran and I continue to keep Joseph's family in our thoughts and in our prayers.

BRIAN WAGONER

Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to civilian contractor Brian Wagoner, originally from Maumee, OH, who was killed on March 3, 2005, when a roadside bomb exploded as he was escorting a convoy of engineers in Iraq. He was 30 years old.

As a civilian contractor providing security as Iraq is rebuilt, Brian played an indispensable role in preserving that nation's newly found freedoms. Brian worked for contractors who worked with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to destroy captured enemy munitions. Brian's job was to protect the people responsible for defusing the weapons of the insurgency. Brian was on the front lines.

On March 3rd, 2005, Brian and his colleague and friend Jimmy Riddle were accompanying a convoy of workers to an ammunition storage point in Al Ashraf, Iraq. During this convoy operation, a roadside bomb was detonated. Both Brian and Jimmy were killed instantly.

Brian's life ended in service, protecting others and keeping them out of harm's way. Reflecting on his life, family and friends remember Brian Wagoner as a man who always wanted to serve others. Growing up in Maumee, he sought responsibility. At Maumee High School, he volunteered to manage the football team. Even though he didn't play, he was a key contributor to the team. As former Maumee High football coach Hal LaFountaine remembered, "He was a real find for us. He was quiet, unassuming, and just did his job. For him to become the professional he was and the things he did, it made sense. It fit his personality. He was a team player."

After graduating from Maumee High School in 1994, Brian left Ohio for North Carolina and military service. He spent 4 years in the Army's 82nd Airborne as a member of the Air Defense Artillery unit at Fort Bragg. Near the end of his time serving in the Army, Brian married the love of his life Melissa, or "Missy" as he called her.

Brian and Missy had three beautiful children together, Bryce, Brandon, and Allyson. No matter where Brian was or what he was doing, his family remained the center of his universe.

With a young family to support, Brian left the Army and enrolled in school to become a police officer. Applying the discipline and work ethic he learned at Fort Bragg, Brian quickly worked his way from patrolman to police chief of Pinebluff, NC.

He was promoted to the top spot at just 26 years of age. As if his service in the military and work in the police force weren't enough, Brian volunteered as a firefighter in his spare time. As his wife explained, "Brian was a fearless guy. He was in the military. He was a volunteer firefighter. He was a police chief." Anywhere there was an opportunity to get involved and help others, that's where you'd find Brian. He always wanted to be where the action was.

While serving as police chief in Pinebluff, Brian was recruited by a defense contractor based in Minden, NV, that provides security for companies overseas. His expertise in law enforcement made him a prime candidate to protect workers rebuilding Iraq. Given his leadership training and as a chief of police, Brian was also well suited to train the newly constituted Iraqi police. By any measure, the job was a great fit.

Brian saw the opportunity to work in private security as the chance to give his family a better life. As Missy explained, "Most of all, Brian wanted to provide for his family. He wanted to be

able to give the children and me anything he possibly could."

Through this job, Brian would be able to secure a better future for his family, while also satisfying his desire to serve his country abroad. He accepted the offer in 2004.

Brian's assignment in Iraq was a dangerous one. His assignment was to confiscate explosives. Even though his family worried, Brian only saw opportunity, excitement, and a chance to give. When he wasn't clearing explosives, Brian gave Iraqi children clothes his own kids outgrew. That was the essence of the man—simultaneously a protector and a provider and—at all times—selfless.

Even though he was thousands of miles away, Brian kept in close contact with his loved ones. As Missy recalled, "There was not a moment that went by that he did not tell me that he loved me, missed me, or that I was beautiful." No matter the distance that separated them, Brian's heart was always with his family.

Brian's death was devastating for his family, his friends, and his community. It was not only sudden, but he was scheduled to return home from Iraq to his family in only 9 days.

A memorial service for Brian Wagoner was held at the Church of St. Andrews United Methodist in Toledo. Brian was buried in Fayetteville, NC. A flag outside of the Pinebluff, NC, town hall flew at halfstaff in honor of Brian's service as chief of police and firefighter.

Today, we honor and remember him again here on the Senate Floor. Although Brian Wagoner is gone, memories of him remain. He will be remembered as a lighthearted, humorous man, who loved NASCAR and who would take his wife to the shops of Hendrick Motorsports and Dale Earnhardt, Inc.

Brian Wagoner will be remembered as an avid outdoors man, who had a passion for people and animals. "He was always on the go, even when he was young," his father recalled. "He loved to fish, he loved to swim—he really liked to be on the go. But, even though he was very busy, he always had time for his kids."

And that is how Brian will be most vividly remembered—as a family man who put his family and their future ahead of all else. "You could tell he loved his wife and his kids," said Pinebluff Town Clerk Betty McDuffie. "The last time we spoke . . . we talked about getting together and having a cookout in March, when he got home."

Just this past November, Brian was honored by the United States Army with the Defense of Freedom Medal—the civilian equivalent of the Purple Heart. It is an award that he richly deserved. We are proud of him and his service.

My wife Fran and I continue to keep his family and friends in our thoughts and prayers. Our hearts go out to

Brian's father Jim, his mother Barbara, his brothers Jason and Christopher, and his wife Melissa and their children Bryce, Brandon, and Allyson.

SPECIALIST JASON LUCAS

Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Army SPC Jason Lucas from London, OH, who lost his life October 13, 2006, while serving our country in Afghanistan as a part of the NATO peace keeping force. Army Specialist Lucas was killed when his vehicle was attacked by a suicide bomber. He was 24 years old.

Jason was a brave soldier, who was proud to serve. He had a warm heart and a big, infectious smile. His friends and loved ones often called him "Smiley." He leaves behind his wife Monica their two sons Zausten and Ethan, his father Bill, his mother Beth; and his sister Samantha.

Jason was born in Columbus and grew up in London. For 2 years, he lived in McEwen, TN. While there, he worked on farms and learned how to hunt deer and turkey. He was called "Cutie," because he always had girlfriends. He enjoyed playing football and basketball while growing up, but his favorite sport was always baseball. Jason graduated from London High School.

Unsure exactly what career to pursue after graduation, Jason worked in a warehouse for a time and at various other jobs. His mother recalls his interest in being a firefighter, policeman, FBI agent, or working with the Drug Enforcement Administration. But instead of pursuing these admirable careers, Jason chose to become a United States soldier. "He loved being in the Army," his high school sweetheart and wife Monica remembers. "He was the best guy. He loved being in charge."

Jason's take charge attitude led him to the position of squad leader at the Army's boot camp in Fort Polk and then again in Afghanistan. "Jason was proud of what he did," recalls his mother, Beth. While serving overseas, he had told her, "I was trained by the best, and I'm working with the best. Don't worry about me."

CPL Christopher Jackson remembers this same determined spirit. This is what he said:

His personality made training easier. He . . . wasn't afraid to stand up and take charge. When you were with him, you wanted to work for him. He didn't have to tell you to work.

Jason loved his work, and what kept him and his fellow soldiers in good spirit through the tough times was his incredible sense of humor. "Lucas was an excellent soldier, but his personality was his greatest asset," 1LT Daron Moreno said. "He knew how to live and how to make others laugh."

First Lieutenant Moreno remembers when Jason would perform his favorite impersonation, acting like a high school football coach, sticking out his gut and screaming, "What the heck is going on here? I can't believe what you are doing!" First Lieutenant Moreno

said that Jason would continue "ranting and raving" as the coach and that by the end of his performance, the rest of the soldiers would be rolling over with laughter.

Indeed, Jason's enthusiasm and humor could make any day fun. His friends—Cheryl, Joe, and Chance—from Grove City, OH, remember one of these days, in particular, with Jason. Together, they wrote the following on Jason's Internet tribute webpage:

We will never forget our times we spent with Jason—especially the day at King's Island. We rode a couple rides that only Jason could talk us into. We had such a great time when we were together. Jason kept in touch after joining the service and it was always nice to hear from him. We will never forget him or what he did for our country. Our deepest sympathies go out to [his wife and children] and to the rest of Jason's family. We were so saddened to hear of the loss of Jason. It was an honor to have known him as a friend and a Hero.

Jason Lucas was more than just a funny guy—especially to his family. He was a dedicated father and loving husband, and spent as much time as he could with his family. His son Zausten, is always wanting to play Army—to be just like his daddy. According to Jason's wife, little Zausten can identify Army helicopters and planes and wants only Army clothes and toys.

Monica remembers how important it was to Jason to keep in touch with his family while abroad. "We talked to him every day—about three times if not more," she said. "He was a great daddy."

Jason was home this past summer spending time with his wife and children. He also spent time with his father Bill. "We had a lot of fun," Bill recalls. "I'm just thankful of the time I had to spend with him, especially this past July before he left."

In September, Jason left for Afghanistan for what was supposed to be his last year overseas. Jason and Monica had plans to move the family to Fort Polk, where Jason had planned to return by December. They didn't intend to settle there for long, however. "Maybe Kentucky or Tennessee," Monica recalls, would be where they intended to settle down. Together, they dreamt of moving somewhere beautiful when he was discharged.

Jason's family will miss him deeply. Monica and their sons left Jason the following message for Jason on the Internet. This is what they wrote:

Daddy, we love you with all our heart, we will never forget you.

Jason will be remembered affectionately for his commitment to his family and for his dedicated service to our country.

He was always trying to make others laugh and bring a smile to their faces. He could make everyday fun. His bright, beaming smile will never be forgotten. We will always remember him as a brave and courageous soldier.

My wife Fran and I continue to keep the family of Army SP Jason Lucas in our thoughts and prayers.

SERGEANT NATHANIEL S. ROCK

Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Marine SGT Nathaniel Rock from Toronto, OH. Along with 5 other members of his sniper unit, Sergeant Rock was killed on August 1, 2005, while on a mission in the Al Anbar province of Iraq. He was 26 years old.

Sergeant Rock leaves his parents Adriana and Tim, his sisters Nicole and Tara, his brother Jared Rock, and his niece and nephew, Taylor and Elija.

Growing up, "Nate", as his friends and family called him, was always drawn to the military. When he was only 12 years old, he loved to eat the military pre-packaged meals that he got from his sister's Marine husband. His favorite clothes were camouflage, and "Army" was his favorite game to play.

Nate also loved to hunt and fish, and loved his mom's cooking—spaghetti, homemade soup, and cabbage rolls. He graduated from Toronto High School in 1997, and enlisted in the Marines when he was only 17. The decision wasn't a surprise to anyone who knew him. He served in the Marines for 6 years and then joined the Marine Reserves in 2003. His parents were always supportive of his decision to serve. As his father said, "It is some comfort to us that we know he was doing what he wanted—what he loved to do."

Nate was also a graduate of the Jefferson Community College Police Academy in Steubenville, OH. Michael Garcia attended the Academy with Nate and reflected upon his friend in the following message on an Internet tribute website. This is what he wrote:

I never met a man in my life who was as honest, outspoken, and courageous as Nate. He was probably the most liked person in the Academy. He was serious most of the time, but if you got on his good side and got him to laugh, he wouldn't shut up and was your best friend from that day forward. Everyone—teachers and students, alike—respected him and liked him. But, he earned his respect from us because of his abilities. We knew what he was capable of being—[and that was] a United States Marine.

After graduating from the Police Academy, Nate became a part-time policeman for the Martins Ferry Police Department, where his brother, Jared, also worked. Martins Ferry Police Chief Barry Carpenter remembers that Nate was an excellent young officer—talented, with so much potential.

"He was a young police officer who took a vested interest in everyone and especially his work," Chief Carpenter said. "He was here at every opportunity, and I especially liked him. I always saved a spot for him."

Chief Carpenter also remembers that serving in the Marines was simply Nate's dream. "It was a goal he'd always had and a goal he was able to achieve," he said. "It allowed him to serve his country."

Nate was, indeed, a proud and dedicated Marine. In a Mother's Day card that he sent to his mother, he explained his reasons for serving. This is what he wrote: "I'm sorry I'm putting

you through this, but I couldn't sit on the sidelines and watch Marines being hurt on the TV."

This was Nate. He always wanted to be involved—he always wanted to be there for his fellow Marines. That was the type of man he was.

As his father Tim said, "He was proud to be a Marine—to be serving his country. He was true to his duty and true to his men."

SGT Brian Casagrande served with Nate and the other fallen members of his unit. In a eulogy for them, he had this to say about Nate:

Nate Rock was a Marine who made his presence known wherever he was. Before the platoon left for Twenty-nine Palms, he was incorporated into my team, and I quickly came to respect him as a man and a Marine. After arriving in country, he led his own team. We soon became friends and came to know everything about each other. He will not only be missed by me and the platoon, but by his family that he constantly talked about and his fellow police officers who he served with in Martin's Ferry, Ohio.

I had the privilege of meeting Nate family and speaking with them at Nate's calling hours. He was a courageous young man—someone who valued his friendships and loved his family dearly, as they loved him.

Nate's death has been a loss to his entire community. One of his former teachers, Roy Golec, remembers Nate for the rare sense of integrity and purpose he had even as a teenager. "He could do just about anything he put his mind to," Roy said. "He had his head on straight, and he knew what he wanted to do."

Joe Neeper, Nate's neighbor, had known him all his life. According to Joe, Nate was the epitome of professionalism and loved being a Marine. He was always disciplined, committed, and ready to serve. As Joe said, "When you talked to Nate, you noticed he had the Marine Corps attitude."

In Nate's memory, the Northeast Ohio Dog Training Academy gave the Martins Ferry Police Department a new drug dog. He was named "Rock," after their fallen officer.

One of Nate's fishing companions and brothers-in-arms, John Howard, reflected on his friend in the following message:

Every time I cast my line out, I am overwhelmed with great memories of the good times Rock and I had while fishing the Potomac River. The last summer of our active service, it became a nightly ritual to throw the rods and tackle boxes into Nate truck and head down to the dock for catfishing. Even when the fish weren't biting, our stories would keep us occupied.

And Joel Andrade, who served with Nate in the Marine Corps from 1998 to 2001, said this about his fellow Marine:

Nate stood out from the rest. I remember him as a quiet, polite guy, who was respected by everyone. He was always willing to help anybody who needed help and always greeted you whenever he saw you.

The world is a better place because of Nathaniel Rock. He intuitively understood the importance of service. He loved his family. He loved his country.

He was a dedicated, committed marine, who is missed by his family, friends, comrades, and community.

My wife Fran and I continue to keep Sergeant Rock family in our thoughts and prayers.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I come to the floor with several objectives. We will be voting later tonight. We are still waiting for the bills to come over from the House.

TENNESSEE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, as we serve in a class of Senators, we have several roles. We wear several hats. Probably the most important one is to represent the people who elected us, and that is our constituents back home in our home States. That has been for me a real honor over the last 12 years, to serve the people of Tennessee.

In addition to that, of course, we serve America as 100 individuals representing this entire country. That is a real privilege. If you are elected to leadership, you have other responsibilities.

Twelve years ago, the people of Tennessee entrusted me with the responsibility to serve their interests in the Senate. I have done my best each and every day to meet the Volunteer State's needs and to serve the people of my home State with dignity and honor. What an honor it has been to follow in the footsteps of former Senators Howard Baker and Bill Brock. What a tremendous privilege it has been representing the interests of the people of Tennessee.

And serving along side true statesmen such as Fred Thompson and Lamar Alexander—men who have dedicated so much of their lives to the people of Tennessee—has been a remarkably rewarding experience.

When I first stood for election in 1994, I pledged to all Tennesseans that I would serve two terms in the Senate and then return to home to live under the laws I had helped enact.

I made that commitment because I believe strongly in the concept of the citizen legislator—spending years developing real world experience outside the political arena as I did in medicine and then bringing that expertise to the legislative process for a period of time . . . only to make way for the next citizen with his or her fresh perspectives and new ideas.

As the time comes to resume my private life in the Music City, I have spent countless hours reflecting on the milestones in my service to Tennessee from which I derive particular pride.

I think about accomplishments such as establishing a prescription drug benefit that provides quality, affordable coverage for more than 700,000 beneficiaries in Tennessee.

I think about the State sales tax deduction, which I hope we will soon extend for 2 more years. Enacting that

provision corrected a 15 year inequity in the Tax Code by allowing Tennesseans to deduct their State sales tax expenses from Federal income tax returns—and it resulted in additional savings of nearly \$500 in taxes for more than 530,000 families across the State.

I recall the hours spent combating methamphetamine, a drug epidemic that has plagued Tennessee and dozens of other States.

I helped develop minimum Federal standards restricting access to the ingredients that produce methamphetamine, the drug our Nation's local law enforcement officials have ranked as our greatest problem.

I also enjoyed working with other members of the Tennessee delegation to establish a statewide methamphetamine task force and develop a statewide crime tracking system—all in an effort to eradicate this devastating drug from our communities.

During my time as majority leader, we also enacted a tobacco buyout that ended an outdated quota system that hurt Tennessee's farmers by providing fair compensation that will bring a total of \$767 million to tobacco communities in the State over the next decade.

And we passed my National Park Fee Equity Act, a law that provides the Great Smoky Mountain National Park with an additional \$200,000 to \$300,000 each year by allowing the park to keep 100 percent of the user fees it collects.

I was also pleased earlier this year when the Senate confirmed the final member of a TVA board modernized by legislation I nursed through the legislative process over a 9-year period—legislation that resulted in the first African-American board member, the first west Tennessee board member, and the first chief executive officer in TVA history.

In addition, we passed legislation I authored allowing TVA to refinance its debt at lower rates, thus saving roughly \$100 million per year.

These reforms will help increase accountability and oversight at TVA, which benefits both the utility and its ratepayers.

I have also worked extensively with my colleagues on the HELP Committee to extended health care and support services to Nashville, Memphis, and other emerging metropolitan communities disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS through reauthorization of the Ryan White CARE Act.

The CARE Act provides funding for low-income, uninsured and underinsured individuals affected by HIV/AIDS, but none of Tennessee's cities met the legislation's original criteria to receive support—a fact I knew we had to correct and one which we rightly remedied.

I have dedicated significant energy to strengthening Tennessee's research infrastructure, and bringing both the Spallation Neutron Source project and the National Leadership Computational Facility to Oak Ridge demonstrates our State's leadership in advanced science and technology.