

On September 22, 2010, the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee held a hearing entitled "Nine Years After 9/11: Confronting the Terrorist Threat to the Homeland." At this hearing, I questioned FBI Director Robert Mueller about the FBI's efforts to prevent individuals on the terrorist watch list from acquiring firearms and explosives. In regard to S. 1317, I asked Director Mueller if he had an opinion as to whether or not persons on the terrorist watch list should be able to buy guns and explosives. I was pleased to hear Director Mueller's response that "all of us would want to keep weapons out of the hands of terrorists and/or persons on the terrorist watch list." This response echoes the support given at a November 2009 Senate Judiciary Committee hearing by Attorney General Eric Holder, the Nation's top law enforcement official, for legislation to close the terror gap.

In regard to S. 2820, I asked Director Mueller whether he would like to be able to keep firearm transfer records for longer than 90 days for persons on the terrorist watch list. Again, I was glad to hear that Director Mueller favors a longer period of record retention across the board, including for those persons who are on the terrorist watch list. According to Director Mueller, "retention of records gives us an ability to go back, when we identify some person, and determine whether or not there's additional information we would have in those records that would enable us to conduct a more efficient investigation."

At this hearing, Director Mueller added his voice to the chorus of support from so many law enforcement professionals for legislative solutions that address the deficiencies in current law. Closing the terror gap and increasing the duration of firearm record retention are two ways to give the law enforcement community the necessary tools to keep guns and explosives out of the hands of known and suspected terrorists. Congress should listen to the brave men and women charged with protecting the American public and, without further delay, pass these commonsense solutions.

TRIBUTE TO JIM CORLESS

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, as Members of the Senate, we work every day with public servants who fill an amazing variety of roles, and when one of those servants fills his or her role with exceptional skill and dedication, they deserve our praise. One such public servant, Jim Corless, the superintendent of Keweenaw National Historical Park in Michigan, is preparing to retire after nearly 30 years of Federal service, the last 3 of which have come in helping build one of the most unique national parks in the Nation.

Jim Corless came to Michigan's Copper Country from Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park in Skagway,

AK, making him that rare person who moved south to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. This was good fortune for those of us who care about preserving the history of Michigan's copper mining era because Jim's career had prepared him well. As a trained historian, Jim had already helped bring alive the drama of our Nation's founding, the frontier grit of the earliest Texas settlers, the history of Ozark waterways in Arkansas, and the growth of textile manufacturing in Massachusetts in parks from coast to coast.

Preserving the legacy of Michigan's copper mining industry has long been a priority for many of us Michiganders. The Keweenaw Peninsula contained perhaps the world's richest and purest deposits of copper, and from native peoples 7,000 years ago to miners in the 19th and 20th centuries, those deposits have had profound effects on human society across our Nation and on the peninsula.

The park established in 1992 to preserve that history is like no other in the Nation. Unlike the vast majority of National Park Service facilities, in which the government owns and controls the land and associated assets of the park, Keweenaw National Historical Park is an unusual public-private cooperative venture. Private citizens, nonprofit groups, and local governments own nearly all the park's historic assets, and they are managed cooperatively, with the Park Service providing coordination, advice and funding.

That calls for a superintendent who is part historian, part manager, and part diplomat. Jim has skillfully served all three roles. He has worked closely with officials at the Environmental Protection Agency to simultaneously preserve the industrial legacy of the copper mines while remediating the environmental impact of that legacy. And he has taken a leading, but always cooperative, role in bringing together the various community interests who have a stake in the park and its growth. Just one example of this work is his work to help create the Quincy Smelter Steering Committee to help preserve one of the park's most important historic resources.

Jim describes Keweenaw National Historical Park as a "parknership," and that illustrates the thoughtful way in which he has approached his job over the last 3 years. All of us who care about Michigan's vital mining past are grateful for his exceptional service, and we all wish him and his wife Mary Jane the very best as they embark on the next chapter of their lives.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

MASTER SERGEANT JARED VAN AALST

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today to pay tribute to the life and sacrifice of MSG Jared Van Aalst, a native of Laconia, NH. Jared was killed on August 4 while stationed in Kunduz Province,

Afghanistan. He was serving on his sixth combat deployment as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. Jared exemplified the very best in our military's long tradition of selfless service on behalf of this great nation.

Master Sergeant Van Aalst enlisted in the U.S. Army on August 17, 1995. After completing basic training, the signal systems specialist course and basic airborne school, he was assigned to the Headquarters Company. He later completed the Ranger indoctrination program and sniper school, and continued to rise through the ranks as a sniper team leader and squad leader. Master Sergeant Van Aalst was promoted to sniper platoon sergeant, platoon sergeant, and finally served as the non-commissioned officer in charge of Headquarters Company's 3rd Battalion Reconnaissance, Sniper and Technical Surveillance. He saw combat in both Operation Iraqi Freedom and in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.

An exceptional marksman and soldier, in 2005 Master Sergeant Van Aalst defeated 147 of his brothers in arms to take first place at the service-rifle individual championship in the U.S. Army Small Arms Championships. He was later selected as a shooter and instructor for the U.S. Marksmanship Unit at Fort Benning.

Master Sergeant Van Aalst's many awards include the Bronze Star Medal, two Meritorious Service Medals, two Joint Service Commendation Medals, three Army commendation Medals, seven Army Achievement Medals and five Good Conduct Medals, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal with two bronze service stars, the Iraq Campaign Medal with two bronze service stars and the National Defense Service Medal with bronze service star. He was posthumously awarded a second Bronze Star Medal and a third Purple Heart Medal, as well as the Defense Meritorious Service Medal. Our Nation can never adequately thank Jared for his willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice in the defense of American liberties, nor can words diminish the pain of losing this brave American. For his 15 years of service, he has earned our country's enduring gratitude and recognition.

A Laconia native, Jared was a graduate of Plymouth Regional High School in Plymouth, NH, where he was the captain of the high school wrestling team and one of the best wrestlers in the entire state in his weight class. He is remembered for his incredible drive and determination to succeed.

Jared has been laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery. He is survived by his wife Katie Van Aalst, their two daughters Kaylie and Ava, and his parents Neville and Nancy Van Aalst. This brave New Hampshire son will be dearly missed by all.

I ask my colleagues and all Americans to join me in honoring the life of MSG Jared Van Aalst.