

members of the Maine National Guard who have participated in this operation, including the former and current adjutant general, GEN Bill Libby and GEN Doug Farnham, as well as our current guardsman stationed in Montenegro, Army CPT Nicolas Phillips. All of them have worked very hard during the past 10 years to help Montenegro get ready for this highly significant moment.

We must be clear-eyed about the fact that the Russian Federation has undertaken an extensive overt and covert campaign to derail Montenegro's bid to join NATO. These efforts include a brazen plot to disrupt Montenegro's elections last October and to turn the public against the pro-NATO ruling government there. According to Montenegro's special prosecutor assigned to the investigation, at least two Russian intelligence officers actively participated in this plot, which fortunately was disrupted.

Ratifying Montenegro's NATO membership demonstrates our firm resolve against Russia's efforts to deny other countries the opportunity to participate in NATO free from outside interference. That is why the Supreme Allied Commander for Europe and NATO testified just last week before the Senate Armed Services Committee that it is "absolutely critical" that Montenegro join NATO.

As President Trump prepares to travel to the NATO leaders' summit in Brussels at the end of May, I can think of no better action for the Senate to have taken ahead of his visit than our action tonight to finally ratify Montenegro's membership in NATO. In the meantime, I also look forward to the continued special relationship between Montenegro and the great State of Maine.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

WEEK ON THE STATUS OF BLACK WOMEN

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I wish to request that the U.S. Government officially recognize the last week

in March as the Week on the Status of Black Women. During the week of March 27, 2017, as part of Women's History Month and in honor of the United Nations Declaration designating 2015 as the Decade of Afro-Descendants, this week marks the perfect occasion on which to begin an annual recognition and celebration of Black women's contributions to American society.

Black women have long gone above and beyond the call of duty in their contributions to American society through civic engagement, high voter turnout, and serving as leaders in their communities. Even in the face of grave oppression throughout our Nation's history, Black women have continued to stand strong and contribute to the well-being of their families, communities, and our country as a whole. A recognition of the Week on the Status of Black Women by the Trump administration and Congress would send a clear message that the Federal Government recognizes the unique struggles and achievements of Black women in America.

Black women have consistently played a leading role in shaping our Nation's history, often behind the scenes and with little recognition. Harriet Tubman escaped slavery and bravely returned to the enslaved South over a dozen times to lead her people to freedom on the Underground Railroad. A century later, Rosa Parks witnessed the oppression of her fellow Black women and took an active role in organizing the Montgomery Bus Boycott, while also taking up Black women's sexual harassment claims. Today, a Black woman, Carla Hayden, is our Nation's Librarian of Congress. Recognition of the Week on the Status of Black Women would honor the sacrifices of women such as Harriet Tubman and Rosa Parks, who paved the way for so many Black women in public service, business, and other industries today.

Yet even as Black women throughout our Nation's history have been leaders in American civic life, Black women today still continue to face many undue burdens. No one in America should have to choose between earning a paycheck and taking care of their family, but too many Black women who serve as primary family breadwinners are forced to make this painful choice. Black women continue to earn less than their male counterparts and also less than women who are not Black. Black women remain at the economic margins of society, and we all have a responsibility to help fix that.

This year, a coalition of organizations advocating for the well-being of women and communities of color will partner to elevate the stories, histories, and realities of Black women's lives. Each day of the week, starting on March 27 and continuing through March 31, will focus on a different challenge Black women face in society today, ranging from disproportionate experience with police violence to dis-

criminatory media representation. Exploring these issues and acknowledging the centrality of Black women to our history and social fabric, along with recognizing the unique intersection of gendered and racialized inequities they face, is critical. As we continue to work to extend equal rights to all Americans, we must ensure that Black women are a leading part of this movement. I hope and request that this year will be a continuation of years past in celebration and intentional recognition of Black women in America through the Week on the Status of Black Women.

REMEMBERING ENI F. H. FALEOMAVAEGA

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, today I wish to honor the life and dedicated service to our country of my friend and colleague, Eni F. H. Faleomavaega of American Samoa. I had the honor of serving with him in the U.S. House and was deeply saddened to hear of his passing on Wednesday, February 22, 2017.

Eni served 13 terms as the Delegate from American Samoa, and we worked together because of his close ties to Hawaii. Eni's strong ties and service to Hawaii makes him a "keiki o ka aina." He was a graduate of Kahuku High School and the Church College, the forerunner to Brigham Young University in Laie, HI. Eni was a passionate advocate for indigenous peoples including native Hawaiians. Whether it was Federal recognition or health and housing programs for native Hawaiians, Hawaii could always count on Eni's outspoken support and assistance. One of the stories Eni enjoyed sharing was about his experience sailing on the voyaging canoe Hokulea in 1987, and in August 2014, he welcomed the arrival of the Hokulea and Hikianalia arrival in American Samoa and offered his best wishes to Malama Honua Worldwide Voyage.

I always appreciated his warm presence at the annual Kamehameha Day Lei Draping Ceremony at the capitol where he would often perform traditional Samoan chant and dance. Of course, he also served his American Samoa constituents in Congress with distinction for two decades. During his service in the House, he rose to become the first Asian-Pacific American to serve as chairman of the House Foreign Affairs' Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific. He brought his unique perspective as a Pacific Islander to this post and constructively worked to raise the concerns of the region in Congress.

Eni was also a veteran of the Vietnam war and a selfless advocate for his fellow veterans in American Samoa and across the Nation. Thanks to Eni's efforts, American Samoa veterans can now receive their healthcare from a Department of Veterans Affairs clinic built in Pago Pago with funds he helped secure. It is therefore most appropriate that the House and Senate