

Colonel Kash grew up in a military family. His father was a career Army officer and flew helicopters in Vietnam. While not a native of Maine, Colonel Kash first moved to the State of Maine to attend Colby College in Waterville, where he graduated in 1981 with a bachelor of arts in classics. He then went on to earn his master of science in hospital and health services administration from Ohio State University, before earning a commission in the U.S. Air Force in 1984. As deputy commander of an air transportable hospital, he provided medical support to deployed U.S. forces in support of Operation Provide Comfort, as well as medical care to over 5,000 indigent Haitian patients. In his final assignment, he served as commander of the 18th Medical Group, the largest U.S. Air Force medical unit in the Pacific.

Upon his retirement from Active Duty in 2007, the veterans community of Maine was fortunate to gain a profound leader when Colonel Kash was hired as the CEO of Maine Veterans' Home. During his tenure as CEO, he directed a successful national effort that inspired Federal legislation to correct serious underfunding problems with the new VA program for severely disabled veterans receiving care in State veterans homes.

While his efforts and achievements both in the Air Force and with MVH are notable, a few highlights that illustrate his leadership are MVH Scarborough became the first nursing home in Maine to achieve the rare Gold Excellence in Quality Award by the American Health Care Association and one of only 31 awarded nationally since 1997. Not only have all six facilities in Maine been recognized for providing quality customer services, but they have also achieved the elite Silver Achievement in Quality Award. Four MVH facilities are currently at the highest five-star overall rating by the Center of Medicare and Medicaid Services for survey results, staffing, and quality indicators.

Colonel Kash has prepared Maine Veterans' Home for long-term success by completing a strategic master plan for all MVH campuses with the goal of better delivering resident-directed care in "home" environments using small-house model design principles. His plan includes over \$200 million worth of funding spanning over the next 15 years. His plan is already underway with modernizations projects occurring at various MVH locations in Maine, including a state-of-the-art therapy and rehab addition at Bangor, a multipurpose room addition at Machias, and decentralized dining projects at Scarborough, Bangor, and South Paris. Colonel Kash's leadership has led Maine Veterans' Homes to remarkable transformations and major success in providing better care for Maine's veterans. On behalf of veterans communities across the State of Maine, I want to thank Colonel Kash for his commitment to providing excellent care and access to services for our veterans.

TRIBUTE TO MASTER GUNNERY SERGEANT WILLIAM T. MAHONEY

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, today I wish to pay tribute and honor the distinguished service of one of my former Defense fellows, Marine Corps MGySgt William T. Mahoney. Will and his family have faithfully served our Nation for 30 years, and for that, we are forever grateful. Will's service has always been exemplary, and he will be sorely missed as he moves on to enjoy his well-deserved retirement.

Will enlisted in the Marine Corps on January 7, 1987, and attended basic training in Parris Island, SC. His occupational specialty training as a ground-to-air missile systems operator took place at Fort Bliss in El Paso, TX. Tours in Yuma, AZ, and Okinawa, Japan, followed, with deployments to San Clemente Island, CA, and South Korea.

Will was selected for Marine security guard duty while in Japan and, after graduating, went to school in Quantico, VA, and served at the U.S. Embassy security detachments in Vienna, Austria, and Lusaka, Zambia. Upon his return to the United States, he was assigned to Marine Corps Air Station in Cherry Point, NC. Following this tour, Will was assigned to 8th Marine Corps District Recruiting Headquarters in New Orleans, LA.

Selected for Marine security guard duty for a second time while serving in New Orleans, Will returned to Quantico for training as a security detachment commander. After completing his training as the class honor graduate, Will assumed command of the Marine detachment at the American Embassy in Ljubljana, Slovenia. He later served as command of the security detachment in Tbilisi, Republic of Georgia, where he was meritoriously promoted to the rank of gunnery sergeant and selected for instructor duty in Quantico.

Will served as an instructor-adviser and the operations chief for Marine Corps Embassy Security Guard School, where he was responsible for training the men and women who guard America's embassies and consulates around the world. Upon completion of that tour, Will was assigned to Marine Corps Air Station, New River, NC. He deployed to Anbar Province, Iraq, in late 2008.

While serving in Iraq, Will was selected for the prestigious congressional fellowship program, one of only four enlisted servicemembers to have been selected for this program at that time. After returning stateside in August 2009 and completing several months of familiarization training and education in Washington, DC, he was assigned to serve as a member of my legislative staff. Will provided invaluable insight on matters ranging from the New START Nuclear Disarmament Treaty to veterans' affairs issues to weapons procurement programs for the Department of Defense.

Following his fellowship in my office, Will was assigned as the senior enlisted

adviser to the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. In this position, he advised senior Department of Defense officials on all matters pertaining to the enlisted members of the Armed Forces, their families, and retirees. Additionally, Will assumed the additional duty of senior enlisted adviser to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs for more than 2 years, providing senior military medical leadership with a line perspective on many initiatives and policies.

After completing his time in the Pentagon, Will was selected to serve as the senior enlisted adviser to the director of the White House Military Office, WHMO. In this position, he advised the director and other senior White House officials on all matters pertaining to the members of the Armed Forces assigned to support the office of the Presidency.

Will's humble character rarely does justice to his accomplishments and accolades. However, he does speak very proudly of his wife, Claire, and their three daughters, Katrina, Shannon, and Sophie. Military families are true testaments of both strength and pride. They are constantly challenged by deployments, changes in duty stations, and uncertainties. These hurdles create resiliency, which the Mahoney family patriotically embodies. Will's family is his pride and joy and will be equally missed by all they have served with.

While we will miss seeing Will in uniform, his future endeavors will continue to make us proud. I want to again thank Will and his family for their service to our great Nation and congratulate him on his retirement.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO CONNOR WESTLAKE

• Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, Connor Westlake of Bozeman, MT, is a driven, determined and diligent 19-year-old who has proven to be a leader among his peers and in his community. As an athlete, Connor has had a distinguished career and was awarded the Christian Character Award by the Montana Christian Athletic Association. These experiences have led him to apply his leadership in the service of our Nation's defense, continuing the legacy of military service of his grandfathers, U.S. Marines, U.S. Navy; and uncles, U.S. Navy.

Connor has spent the past year preparing to enter the U.S. Army, where he plans to serve his country in Special Forces with the Green Berets. He will wear the uniform for the first time later this month upon arrival at Fort Benning, GA, where he will be among a group of highly qualified recruits who will proceed directly from initial entry training to Special Forces training. Upon completion of the rigorous and challenging 2-year training, Connor will become a member of one of the best and most highly skilled combat forces in the world.