

this weekend, Utah will host a variety of ceremonies, all dedicated to celebrating our veterans. The town of Magna will be hosting its annual Veterans Day parade; the town of Howell will be naming its community center after SGT Rocky D. Payne, who was killed in Iraq in 2005; and the students of Granite Park Junior High School will be hosting a special Veterans Day assembly. With events being held all across our State, it is clear to see that Utahns hold our Nation's veterans in the highest esteem. I am honored to represent a State that honors our veterans.

I would also like to personally acknowledge the city of Layton, which will be hosting a grand Veterans Day parade to be followed by the groundbreaking ceremony of a new Vietnam War memorial wall. I could not even begin to describe the endeavor that Mayor Bob Stevenson, the city of Layton, the Utah State Legislature, and so many others have undertaken to bring this wonderful memorial to Utah. I am grateful for their leadership, and I am delighted to see this memorial become a reality.

I will close today by saying this: To all veterans and your families, thank you. Thank you for your sacrifice, for your commitment, and for your dedication to this Nation and its citizens. Most of all, thank you for your patriotism and faith in America. To our Nation's veterans we owe a debt of gratitude that can never be fully repaid.

(At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

#### VOTE EXPLANATION

• Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I was unavailable for rollcall vote No. 266, on the nomination of Peter B. Robb, of Vermont, to be general counsel of the National Labor Relations Board. Had I been present, I would have voted nay.

Mr. President, I was unavailable for rollcall vote No. 267, on the motion to invoke cloture on William L. Wehrum, of Delaware, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. Had I been present, I would have voted nay.●

#### VOTE EXPLANATION

• Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent due to a family funeral for the votes on confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 384 and the motion to invoke cloture on Executive Calendar No. 407.

On vote No. 266, had I been present, I would have voted nay on the confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 384.

On vote No. 267, had I been present, I would have voted nay on the motion to invoke cloture on Executive Calendar No. 407.●

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### RECOGNIZING THE UNION LEAGUE CLUB OF CHICAGO

• Ms. DUCKWORTH. Mr. President, today I wish to celebrate the Union League Club of Chicago ULCC, and their Salute to Vietnam Veterans event.

As a Nation, we must do everything we can to uphold our commitment to those who have worn the uniform of this great Nation and to their families who have made significant sacrifices on our behalf. On Veterans Day we honor the service of our Nation's heroes and reflect on the debt that we each owe to those who have served this great Nation.

Founded during the Civil War, ULCC has been a leader in providing support for servicemembers and veterans for over 138 years. ULCC, an official DoD Commemorative Partner, operates its own American Legion Posts and collaborates with partner groups that provide support to Active-Duty military personnel. ULCC recognizes that, while servicemembers may come from different backgrounds and different branches, they all hold the same sense of duty and commitment and deserve our full support.

As the daughter of a U.S. marine who fought in Vietnam, our Vietnam veterans hold a special place in my heart. I often say that we must always love the warrior regardless of our feelings about the war. Let us recommit our obligation to Vietnam veterans by ensuring that they have the healthcare, disability support, retirement benefits, and any other resources they have earned.

To all of my fellow veterans, to those still serving, and to all the families that have sacrificed, thank you from the bottom of my heart for your honorable service.

Thank you.●

##### REMEMBERING GARY SMILEDGE

• Ms. HASSAN. Mr. President, it is with great sadness today that I recognize the life and passing of Gary Wayne Smiledge, 72, of Gonic, NH.

Mr. Smiledge served bravely in the U.S. Army during the Korean war. As a member of the 2nd Infantry Division, stationed at Camp Casey south of the DMZ, Mr. Smiledge protected orphanages after serving on the frontlines.

When Mr. Smiledge returned to New Hampshire, his service to his fellow veterans continued. In addition to being a member of the American Legion Post No. 7 of Rochester, he was also heavily involved with the New Hampshire Amputee Group, where he worked with other veterans who lost limbs during the course of their service.

Mr. Smiledge was a beloved member of his community, and he will be missed dearly. I join all Granite Staters in expressing our profound

gratitude to veterans like Gary who have fought for the cause of freedom, putting their country and devotion to duty first.●

#### MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 11:15 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 918. An act to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to furnish mental health care to certain former members of the Armed Forces who are not otherwise eligible to receive such care, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1133. An act to amend the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide for an operation on a live donor for purposes of conducting a transplant procedure for a veteran, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1900. An act to designate the Veterans Memorial and Museum in Columbus, Ohio, as the National Veterans Memorial and Museum, and for other purposes.

H.R. 2123. An act to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the ability of health care professionals to treat veterans through the use of telemedicine, and for other purposes.

H.R. 2148. An act to amend the Federal Deposit Insurance Act to clarify capital requirements for certain acquisition, development, or construction loans.

H.R. 2601. An act to amend the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 to improve the access of veterans to organ transplants, and for other purposes.

H.R. 3441. An act to clarify the treatment of two or more employers as joint employers under the National Labor Relations Act and the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938.

H.R. 3634. An act to amend title 38, United States Code, to ensure that individuals may access documentation verifying the monthly housing stipend paid to the individual under the Post-9/11 Educational Assistance Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

H.R. 3897. An act to amend title 10, United States Code, to provide for the issuance of the Gold Star Installation Access Card to the surviving spouse, dependent children, and other next of kin of a member of the Armed Forces who dies while serving on certain active or reserve duty, to ensure that a remarried surviving spouse with dependent children of the deceased member remains eligible for installation benefits to which the surviving spouse was previously eligible, and for other purposes.

H.R. 3911. An act to amend the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 with respect to risk-based examinations of Nationally Recognized Statistical Rating Organizations.

H.R. 3949. An act to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the designation of State approving agencies for multi-State apprenticeship programs for purposes of the educational assistance programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

#### ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

At 12:43 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bill:

H.R. 3031. An act to amend title 5, United States Code, to provide for flexibility in making withdrawals from a Thrift Savings Plan account, and for other purposes.

The enrolled bill was subsequently signed by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

### MEASURES REFERRED

The following bills were read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 918. An act to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to furnish mental health care to certain former members of the Armed Forces who are not otherwise eligible to receive such care, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R. 1133. An act to amend the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide for an operation on a live donor for purposes of conducting a transplant procedure for a veteran, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R. 1900. An act to designate the Veterans Memorial and Museum in Columbus, Ohio, as the National Veterans Memorial and Museum, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 2123. An act to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the ability of health care professionals to treat veterans through the use of telemedicine, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R. 2148. An act to amend the Federal Deposit Insurance Act to clarify capital requirements for certain acquisition, development, or construction loans; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

H.R. 2601. An act to amend the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 to improve the access of veterans to organ transplants, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R. 3634. An act to amend title 38, United States Code, to ensure that individuals may access documentation verifying the monthly housing stipend paid to the individual under the Post-9/11 Educational Assistance Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R. 3897. An act to amend title 10, United States Code, to provide for the issuance of the Gold Star Installation Access Card to the surviving spouse, dependent children, and other next of kin of a member of the Armed Forces who dies while serving on certain active or reserve duty, to ensure that a remarried surviving spouse with dependent children of the deceased member remains eligible for installation benefits to which the surviving spouse was previously eligible, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Armed Services.

H.R. 3911. An act to amend the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 with respect to risk-based examinations of Nationally Recognized Statistical Rating Organizations; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

### EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-3404. A communication from the Acting Director, Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Imposition of Special Measure

against Bank of Dandong as a Financial Institution of Primary Money Laundering Concern" (RIN1506-AB38) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on November 7, 2017; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-3405. A communication from the Deputy Administrator, Transportation Security Administration, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the Administration's decision to enter into a contract with a private security screening company to provide screening services at Atlantic City International Airport (ACY); to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3406. A communication from the Inspector General, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "CMS Ensured Nearly All Part D Drug Records Contained Valid Prescriber Identifiers in 2016"; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3407. A communication from the Senior Procurement Executive, Office of Acquisition Policy, General Services Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Federal Acquisition Regulation; Federal Acquisition Circular 2005-96; Small Entity Compliance Guide" (FAC 2005-96) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on November 7, 2017; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-3408. A communication from the Senior Procurement Executive, Office of Acquisition Policy, General Services Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Federal Acquisition Regulation; Removal of Fair Pay and Safe Workplaces Rule" (RIN9000-AN52) (FAC 2005-96)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on November 7, 2017; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-3409. A communication from the Senior Procurement Executive, Office of Acquisition Policy, General Services Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Federal Acquisition Regulation; Federal Acquisition Circular 2005-96; Introduction" (FAC 2005-96) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on November 7, 2017; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-3410. A communication from the Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the cost of response and recovery efforts for FEMA-3385-EM in the State of Florida having exceeded the \$5,000,000 limit for a single emergency declaration; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-3411. A communication from the Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the cost of response and recovery efforts for FEMA-3384-EM in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico having exceeded the \$5,000,000 limit for a single emergency declaration; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-3412. A communication from the Acting Assistant Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Agency's fiscal year 2016 Federal Activities Inventory Reform (FAIR) Act submission of its commercial and inherently governmental activities; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-3413. A communication from the Executive Analyst (Political), Department of

Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a vacancy in the position of Director, Indian Health Service, Department of Health and Human Services, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on November 7, 2017; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

EC-3414. A communication from the Solicitor General, Department of Justice, transmitting, pursuant to law, an opinion of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia (United States v. James Marvin Reed); to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC-3415. A communication from the Chairman, Board of Trustees, and the President, John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the Center's consolidated financial statements, supplemental schedules of operations, and independent auditor's report for years ended October 2, 2016, and September 27, 2015, and a report relative to the Center's schedule of expenditures of federal awards and independent auditor's reports for the year ended October 2, 2016; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

EC-3416. A communication from the Office Program Manager, Office of Regulation Policy and Management, Department of Veterans Affairs, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Extension of the Presumptive Period for Compensation for Gulf War Veterans" (RIN2900-AP84) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on November 7, 2017; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

EC-3417. A communication from the Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legislative Affairs, Department of Justice, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "Uninformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA) Quarterly Report to Congress; Fourth Quarter of Fiscal Year 2017"; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

### PETITIONS AND MEMORIALS

The following petitions and memorials were laid before the Senate and were referred or ordered to lie on the table as indicated:

POM-134. A concurrent resolution adopted by the House of Representatives of the State of Michigan urging the United States Congress to properly fund the Department of Veterans Affairs Board of Veterans' Appeals and to urge the Board to streamline its process so that appeals are decided in a more timely manner; to the Committee on Appropriations.

### HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 3

Whereas, Military veterans have a number of benefits available to them when honorably discharged from service. However, to receive disability benefits, veterans must apply and be approved by agents at local veterans affairs offices. If denied, the veteran has a right to appeal to the federal Board of Veterans' Appeals; and

Whereas, As of July 2016, more than 81,000 cases were pending before the Board of Veterans' Appeals, and veterans are waiting an average of five years for cases to be determined. The wait time for a case to be resolved is unacceptable to the men and women who have served our country, and action must be taken to ensure that they are able to access the benefits they have earned; and

Whereas, Additional funding and staff are necessary to properly address the backlog, as well as the estimated 57,000 new complaints received in 2016. Streamlining the complex appeals process is also required. Increased funding for the board was included in H.R.