

which unduly limit access to abortion services, including laws that single out providers, close down clinics, and impose onerous restrictions that do nothing to further women's health or safety.

I will continue to work for access to comprehensive reproductive care and vote against proposals that threaten a woman's right to make her own health decisions.

TRIBUTE TO LIEUTENANT COLONEL ALBERT J. GOMEZ

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, my colleague Senator JIM RISCH joins me today in honoring LTC Albert J. Gomez on his outstanding career as he retires from serving as the West Point field force State coordinator.

Lieutenant Colonel Gomez—Al—has set a standard of excellence in Idaho leaving a lasting, positive impression in the lives of many. For nearly 20 years, he has been an invaluable asset to our offices. In 2000, the Idaho congressional delegation began to hold annual service academy days. Service academy days are an opportunity to provide information to Idaho's best and brightest young men and women who are interested in attending our Nation's service academies. Al has been instrumental in setting up service academy days from the beginning while juggling deployment and other commitments. He has assisted numerous Idaho students with obtaining an exceptional educational and service opportunities available at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. He is responsible for incorporating the principle method into the delegation's nomination process, which has made a significant difference in the number of Idaho appointees to West Point. In fact, he is considered the "secret weapon" in our delegation responsible for the high success rate of Idaho students receiving appointments to West Point. For Lieutenant Colonel Gomez, his remarkable work has always been about his love for West Point and our country. He is known for his extraordinary mentorship of youth, and candidates are frequently told to listen to Al if they want to be successful.

As a West Point alumni, Al has clear insight into what it takes to succeed at a service academy and what it means to serve our Nation. He earned his regular Army commission in 1979 and started his career in 1980 as a lance missile platoon leader serving in Germany. His assignments took him and his family to Fort Sill, OK, and Neckarsulm, Germany, which included command of a Pershing II missile nuclear capable firing battery. He served in deployments in support of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. He was selected to represent the U.S. Army and provide testimony to the Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces in November 1992. Al continued his military education with a 1994 grad-

uation from the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, KS. He served as a State Inspector General for both the Idaho and Guam National Guard for nearly a decade before his retirement from the U.S. Army in 2006. As a civilian, he worked for the Idaho National Guard as a special security officer for the Supervisor Human Resource Office before his current position, as the State equal employment manager.

His strong work ethic and dedication have not only given him a reputation among the delegation of being a go-to-guy when something needs to be done right and quickly, but also have contributed to him being recognized with many honors for his service to our country. These include the Legion of Merit; Bronze Star Medal; Meritorious Service Medal, 4th Award; Army Commendation Medal, 3rd Award; Army Achievement Medal; National Defense Service Medal, 2nd Award; and many other recognitions.

Lieutenant Colonel Gomez has set an honorable example in how he cares for Idaho service academy candidates and how he has served our Nation. He has created a strong team of West Point liaison officers who will continue his mission of providing Idaho students a chance to obtain a world-class education. We congratulate LTC Albert Gomez on his exemplary career.

Your leadership and friendship will be greatly missed. Thank you for setting such a high standard of outstanding service to our Nation and Idahoans.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL WETHERBEE

• Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, this week I have the honor of recognizing Sheridan School Superintendent Micheal Wetherbee for his commitment to students' success. Mike was recently honored with the 2017 Montana Association of Agricultural Educators' Administrator of the Year award, as well as the 2017 Montana Association of Career and Technical Education's Administrator of the Year award.

Mike came out of retirement to serve as superintendent when he saw there was a need in the community. When STEM and STEAM learning were just getting a foothold in education, Mike wanted to be sure the school would be on the frontlines. With buy-in from the community, Sheridan Schools are becoming well known for putting kids on a path to success through hands-on learning and experiences. In fact, high school students are now teaching fourth graders how to code. In Mike's own words, "We've got it going on academically."

When asked about the awards, Mike is much more interested in talking about what the school is doing to build a great FFA program and thriving

business department. What excites him the most about these programs, which he has been recognized for, are the opportunities they provide students to leave Sheridan High School and become successful in other places. Mike, who grew up in Montana, understands what service to the community means, and he is doing it every day by building up the students in Sheridan schools.

Thanks, Mike, for your continued work to shape Montana kids into the bright leaders of Montana's future.●

STATE OF THE UNION ESSAY CONTEST WINNERS

• Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, since 2010, I have sponsored a State of the Union essay contest for Vermont high school students. This contest gives students in my State the opportunity to articulate what issues they would prioritize if they were President of the United States.

I would like to congratulate the almost 600 students who participated this year. It is truly heartening to see so many young people engaged in finding solutions for the problems that face our country. To my mind, this is what democracy is all about.

A volunteer panel of Vermont teachers reviewed the essays and chose Marjorie "Maggie" Parker as this year's winner. Maggie, a sophomore at Woodstock Union High School, focused on the need to prevent hate crimes, particularly against members of the LGBT community.

Alaura Rich, a senior at St. Johnsbury Academy, was the second place winner. Alaura wrote about the prohibitive cost of a college education at a time when the United States needs to have the best educated workforce in the world.

Oliver Minshall, a junior at Hanover High School, was the third place winner, having written about addressing income inequality and creating a more equitable and sustainable economy.

I am very proud to ask to have printed in the RECORD the essays submitted by Maggie, Alaura, and Oliver. The material follows:

MARJORIE PARKER, WOODSTOCK HIGH SCHOOL
SOPHOMORE, WINNER

In our current day and age, I believe that one major challenge that faces our country is the prevention of hate crimes against minorities. One group I believe needs specific protection, especially with the new administration, are members of the LGBT community. With the recent military ban on transgender Americans, the LGBT community is feeling singled out and at risk. One way to bring a greater feeling of peace to these fellow Americans is by increasing protections instead of taking them away. I believe two major steps forward to help these people would be a law against employment discrimination for LGBT people, and also a repeal of "bathroom bills" which put transgender people at a greater risk of being harassed for their identity.

Firstly, on the topic of employment discrimination, many LGBT Americans face discrimination in the workplace simply for being open about their identities. In 2011, the