

serve with you, and we look forward to working with you in the days and weeks and months ahead to serve the very people you talked about in your remarks.

#### NATIONAL MILITARY APPRECIATION MONTH

Mr. President, May is National Military Appreciation Month, a chance for us to honor the service of those who have kept our Nation free for 243 years.

For me, when I reflect on our military men and women, there are always two things in the forefront of my mind: my dad, Harold Thune, and the men and women of Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota and the South Dakota National Guard.

My father was a fighter pilot who flew Hellcats off the USS *Intrepid* in the Pacific theater during World War II. I came to know the “greatest generation” through my dad—their humility, their quiet service, their patriotism, and their deep dedication to the cause of freedom.

I have come to know the men and women of today’s military through Ellsworth and through South Dakota’s National Guard and the great work, the extraordinary work they do day in and day out, the professionalism, the skill, the talent, and the dedication they bring to the work of defending America and America’s freedoms.

Ellsworth has been on my mind in particular this week because right now the Air Force is conducting a large force exercise involving B-1 bombers, B-2s, B-52s, F-16s, C-17s, KC-135s, JSTARS and AWACS, and, for the first time, F-35s.

My acquaintance with Ellsworth began during my time as a Member of the House of Representatives, but I really got to know the base and what it meant to the Rapid City area shortly after I became a Senator.

Just a few months into my first term in the Senate, Ellsworth found itself targeted for closure by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission. That summer of 2005 was a long one as we mobilized to protect the base. I don’t think I missed a BRAC hearing in DC that summer. It didn’t matter whether Ellsworth was on the agenda; I wanted to be there in case the chance to advocate for Ellsworth arose.

Thanks to the efforts of a lot of dedicated people, we were victorious. We demonstrated to the Commission that Ellsworth was a vital national security asset and that moving the B-1 fleet from Ellsworth would actually cost money. We also made the case that the United States shouldn’t put all of its eggs in one basket, that it shouldn’t consolidate all of its assets in one location.

By August, we had succeeded in having Ellsworth removed from the closure list. Since then, the congressional delegation, Ellsworth, and community leaders have worked hard to build up the base so that we never again find ourselves in that same position. In 2007, we saw the Air Force Financial Services Center open at Ellsworth. In

2011, we saw the arrival of the 89th Attack Squadron and its command and control stations for MQ-9 Reapers. In 2015, a decade-long mission paid off with the expansion of the training airspace for the base. The Powder River Training Complex is now the largest training airspace in the continental United States. It is undoubtedly partly thanks to this airspace that Ellsworth was just chosen not only as the home for the B-21 training mission, the first bombers to the fleet, but operational squadrons as well.

Once on the chopping block, Ellsworth is going from strength to strength, and South Dakota is deeply proud to host this crucial base.

Ellsworth’s airmen have played an essential role in the armed conflicts of recent years. Ellsworth’s pilots have engaged targets in the Middle East using Predator and Reaper remotely piloted aircraft for vital reconnaissance, search and rescue, and strike missions.

The Thunderbirds of the 34th Bomb Squadron and the Tigers of the 37th Bomb Squadron have flown countless missions, conducting strikes, providing deterrence, and delivering critical close air support.

During Operation Odyssey Dawn, B-1s from Ellsworth launched from South Dakota, flew halfway around the world to Libya, dropped their bombs, and returned home—all in a single mission. This marked the first time in history that B-1s launched combat missions from the United States to strike targets overseas.

During my time advocating for Ellsworth, I have had the chance to learn a lot about aircraft and the incredible capabilities of the U.S. military, especially the capabilities of the U.S. Air Force. But the greatest part of representing Ellsworth has been the chance to meet with and get to know its airmen, from the wing commanders and other base leaders to the airmen who care for the planes.

Ultimately, no matter what technology we have, the strength of our fighting force comes down to our military men and women. It is because of the men and women we have that the United States has the strongest fighting force in the world.

Members of the military are a special breed. At an age when many are focused on graduation ceremonies or summer vacations, they take a different path—a path that challenges them mentally and physically, that pushes them to their limits and then asks them to go further, that asks them to forget their own needs and to focus only on what they can do for others, and that asks them to forgo comfort for sacrifice, up to and including the sacrifice of their lives. At 18, at 21, these warriors pledge to lay down their lives for the rest of us, and they make that pledge again every day of their service, every morning when they wake up and head to work, whether that is the repair base at Ellsworth or a battlefield half a world away.

I am profoundly grateful for the honor of representing some of the men and women of the U.S. military here in the Senate. We owe our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and Coast Guard a debt we can never repay.

As Military Appreciation Month continues and Armed Forces Day approaches, we can take the time to remember—to remember that we go about our lives in peace and freedom every day because of members of the U.S. military who are standing watch for us. May God bless the members of the U.S. military, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### ABORTION

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I want to start today by saying I am really appalled by the extreme, cruel, shameful abortion ban that was passed yesterday in Alabama. That legislation is nothing short of an attack on women, and it is part of a larger effort we are seeing today around the country to take away the constitutional right of women to safe, legal abortion and allowing politicians to make decisions for women about their bodies, their health, and their lives instead of trusting doctors and women.

I want every woman reading the news this morning and wondering what this means for you, your family, and for your granddaughters to know I am with you, and I am going to keep fighting for you every step of the way.

#### NOMINATION OF WENDY VITTER

Mr. President, I want to turn to speak about my opposition to Wendy Vitter’s nomination, which is yet another step extreme politicians are taking to undermine women’s rights and access to healthcare.

I oppose Wendy Vitter’s nomination to the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana.

President Trump and Vice President PENCE have made it clear that they want to pack the Judiciary with far-right judges who will turn back the clock on reproductive rights, and this nominee is no exception.

Time and again, Mrs. Vitter has advocated against women’s reproductive rights using inflammatory language and falsehoods. She has demonstrated a keen sense of partisanship and a poor sense of judgment, starting with her initial response to the Senate Judiciary Committee’s questionnaire.

Mrs. Vitter left out information about her past statements in her response to the committee—the kinds of serious submissions Republicans have objected to with other nominees. I am