

member of the 2019 Salve class says he will remember Sister Jane en route to “bring candy and snacks to student athletes for conference games” and her willingness to meet with any student in her office. Indeed, when visiting Newport, young alums in search of graduate school advice or a word of encouragement have known that they are welcome to stop by Sister Jane’s office to find an open door, a warm heart, and wise counsel.

Over the course of her career, Sister Jane embodied the values of her Catholic order, the Sisters of Mercy. The Sisters were founded with a mission to spread the gift of education and care for those in need in their community. Last year, Sister Jane told Newport Daily News she sees the institution she led as “imbued with mercy,” adding, “I hope I’ve helped to cultivate that spirit.”

I should note that with regard to the legacy of the Sisters of Mercy, in her service, Sister Jane also honored an extraordinary tradition of extraordinary female leadership.

As I am giving these remarks, I am so glad that the Presiding Officer in the U.S. Senate is a woman Senator.

Sister Therese, who was Sister Jane’s predecessor, was a skilled and beloved leader of Salve Regina, and Sister Lucille—before Sister Therese and before Sister Jane—was another powerful and effective leader. This impressive tradition of leadership by women is worth celebrating on its own as we celebrate the achievements of Sister Jane, and Sister Jane has shown herself well worthy and advanced that tradition.

Sister Jane, it is clear to all who know you—and that is pretty much all who love you—that the spirit of mercy has flourished at Salve Regina and has been enhanced in our State under your leadership. We wish you well in your next chapters.

I join my senior Senator in these sentiments.

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT

Madam President, at some point during the course of these remarks, I expect the majority leader to come to the floor to put the Senate through its closing paces. When that happens, I ask unanimous consent that the part of my remarks prior to his statement be moved to join with the remainder of my remarks in the RECORD so that they are combined.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). The majority leader is recognized.

#### ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, at 2:15 tomorrow, all postcloture time on the Collins nomination be considered expired; further, that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate’s action.

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

### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for 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.

#### NATIONAL MILITARY APPRECIATION MONTH

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, the month of May is nationally designated Military Appreciation Month, so named because, in the month of May, we also observe Memorial Day, Military Spouse Appreciation Day, and Armed Forces Day. Last week, my friend from the State of Oklahoma, Mr. INHOFE, the distinguished chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, organized a floor event around National Military Appreciation Month. I would like to take a moment to lend my voice to this significant commemoration.

In the State of Alaska we like to think of military appreciation month as every month, military appreciation day as every day. Alaska is proud to host more than 19,000 Active-Duty servicemembers, more than 4,600 members of the Reserve Component, and about 5,000 appropriated funds civilians across all of the services. That number will grow significantly as the Air Force begins the beddown of the F-35A Joint Strike Fighter, at Eielson Air Force Base, its first F-35 operating base in the Pacific Area of Responsibility.

At first blush, Alaska is a difficult place to serve. It is dark in the winter, light all night in the summer, prone to temperature extremes, and geographically distant from family. Some military families who receive orders to Alaska are apprehensive at first, but when they speak with other military families that have served in Alaska, they come to understand that Alaskans treat our military families like no other people, and the opportunity to live in Alaska, while serving, is a once in a lifetime wonderful experience.

I could offer many examples of the ways in which Alaskans make life wonderful for those who serve here. The one that is freshest in my mind is the annual Military Appreciation Banquet in Fairbanks. It is one of two that Alaskans put on each year. The Fairbanks banquet tends to occur in May; the other major banquet is Salute to the Military in Anchorage each February. Both attract senior military leaders as keynote speakers. During each, the services honor outstanding members from within their ranks and thank the community for its extraordinary support.

I would like to speak to the history of the Fairbanks banquet for a moment. It began 51 years ago—1968 to be exact—when Jim and Rosemary Messer started small dinner in the home parties for friends in the military; 1968 was a pretty controversial year in the Nation’s history with the country torn over our participation in the Vietnam conflict, but the Messers were determined to show those who came from around the country to serve in Alaska some love and home-cooking.

The idea quickly outgrew the confines of the Messer home, and the Fairbanks Military Appreciation Banquet is its successor. The banquet is held in the Carlson Center, which is the convention center for Fairbanks. Capacity is about 600 people, and the banquet sells out every year. Following in the Messer legacy, each community member buys two tickets, one for themselves and another for a servicemember to host at their table.

In addition to recognizing exemplary servicemembers, the Fairbanks community recognizes one local individual each year who has done the most to promote civilian-military relations with an award. That award is named the Messer Award, in honor of the couple that inspired the annual banquet.

This year, the keynote speaker was VADM Michael J. Dumont, U.S. Navy, Deputy Commander of U.S. Northern Command. I am told he was a big hit. Last year, for the 50th anniversary, we had Gen. Joseph Lengyel, U.S. Air Force, Chief of the National Guard Bureau. We are grateful that our senior leaders travel a great distance to celebrate the military presence in Alaska’s Interior, and I know that the participants are as well.

This is an example of what we view as the golden contract between the community and the military. Each year, Alaskans go out of their way in big ways and small ones to make life for our servicemembers and their families extremely comfortable. Each year, in the presence of a distinguished senior leader, we break bread together to renew these bonds.

I am proud of those who serve in Alaska and the Alaskans who serve them, and I am proud that we observe military appreciation month every month of the year.

#### TRIBUTE TO CHRISTOPHER E. O’CONNOR

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, today I am proud to recognize in the RECORD the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, VA, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs, OCLA, Christopher E. O’Connor, in honor of his upcoming retirement. Mr. O’Connor recently received the VA’s Exceptional Service Award for his long record of service to our Nation’s veterans.

Mr. O’Connor has advised four VA Secretaries, four acting VA Secretaries, and their legislative teams as