

I can tell you that it is always, for any Senator, a moment that one has a conflicted heart when a man or a woman on their team who has contributed so much and has become part of the family, the Senate family, is ready to take on a new challenge away from these Chambers to develop their skills and to take their experience to a new extended conversation. It is a bitter-sweet moment.

We are proud of what our team members have contributed and proud of what they are going to contribute as they go off to a new responsibility.

Today, that member of my team is Louie Reckford. Louie, seated behind me, first came to my office in the fall of 2013 as part of that semester's intern class, and it wasn't long before he stood out, distinguished himself, and thus, when we were hiring a deputy scheduler the following March, Louie's name was at the top of the list, and he formally became a part of our team.

So for more than 5 years now, he has contributed. He has never stopped distinguishing himself, taking on one task and one position after another and excelling at every one of them. In his 2 years as deputy scheduler, Louie fielded thousands of requests for meetings, from constituents, from nonprofits, from local businesses and more, making sure that every detail was right. His attention to detail and to turnaround time made a very positive impression with all who contacted our office.

Over the last 3 years, he has been an invaluable member of my correspondence and foreign policy team, first as legislative correspondent and later as legislative aide. On top of sending out 181,000 pieces of constituent mail, mail from my office to my constituents, an average of 251 per day—on top of that, he has used his considerable leadership skills and subject-matter experience and strategic negotiating abilities to help pass a host of bills and resolutions in committee and here on the floor. When our foreign policy top staffer was transitioning into a new role as legislative director, he stepped up to fill the gap, helping to manage a team with two foreign policy fellows at that time. I could spend quite a lot more time extolling his list of accomplishments—his instrumental role in planning several international congressional delegations, his role in helping me carve out a new role on the Foreign Relations Committee, and, of course, that vital role of leading our office softball team.

I will just say that Louie will be deeply missed by all members of Team Merkley, and we wish him well in his new adventure with Foreign Policy for America, where he will continue to be an invaluable leader of a myriad number of pressing foreign policy issues confronting our Nation today.

Louie Reckford, we here in the Senate wish you all the best in your next chapter of contributing to solving the complex international issues that face our Nation.

Thank you, Madam President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, the Appropriations Committee staff was working until midnight last night, as they do so often, on the disaster supplement. We know that in January the House sent us a disaster supplemental appropriations bill to help communities across the Nation. These communities were dealing with the deadly aftermath of hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, and volcanoes.

It has been my experience over the years that normally disaster bills sail through both Chambers of Congress. Every Member knows that one day it will be his State or her State that needs help recovering from a disaster.

I well remember when we had a terrible hurricane in Vermont; it created the most damage in generations in our State. The day after the devastation, I went with our Governor and the head of our National Guard in a helicopter to survey the damage. For many towns, the only way we could reach them was in a helicopter. The bridges were like a child's toy, twisted and gone. The roads totally disappeared. Houses were upside down in the river.

It was heartbreaking, but as we were going there, I received email after email. My Senate colleagues, many of them Republicans, said "Vermont stood with us when we had"—and they named the disaster. "We will stand with you." That is what we do. It doesn't make any difference whether you are a Republican or a Democrat; if there is a disaster, you stand together.

What I cannot understand is that in my 44 years here—it was different this time. When we brought up a disaster supplemental appropriations bill in January of this year, the President of the United States came out swinging against it. Why? Because the bill contained assistance for Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico had been hit by 2 back-to-back, category 5 hurricanes, and apparently providing assistance to 3 million Americans in need was a step too far for him. He did not want to provide aid to these Americans. "Not one more dime for Puerto Rico" he was reported to have said—shocking words for somebody who holds the highest office in the land, especially after they had nearly unprecedented back-to-back hurricanes.

From the beginning, I have said what my Republican colleagues and Democratic colleagues have always said. It is a role of the Federal Government to stand by all Americans in times of need. It should not matter whether you are a Georgia peach farmer, a California small business owner, or a child living in San Juan. If your community is devastated by a natural disaster, you are an American, and the American community will stand with you. That is what I have always fought for.

So here we are, 5 months later—5 months of negotiations, 5 months of talks—and we finally reach a deal on a disaster aid bill that helps all—*all* Americans. We don't pick and choose. It is a good deal. It addresses the need from Alabama to California and many States in between. But 5 months is too long to wait. It is far too long for the communities who are trying to rebuild their homes and their towns, so we have to act now.

The President has asked that we add \$4.5 million to the disaster supplemental bill to address the issues that we face at our southern border. I agree with the President that some of this money is badly needed. We don't dispute that. But everyone in this Chamber, Republicans and Democrats, knows that under this President, anything to do with immigration is controversial; it is going to be hotly debated. We have been working night and day to strike a compromise on the President's request. When we finished in the middle of last night, we were close, but we are not there yet.

I hope in the next few hours we can resolve our remaining differences, but if we cannot reach agreement, then at least pass the disaster bill without it today—not tomorrow, not next week, not next month—today. Five months has been too long for America to have to wait.

We have a deal on the disaster aid bill. It is a bipartisan bill. It is supported by Democrats and Republicans. It is ready to go. Let's pass it today, and let's show the American people we stand with them in times of crisis, just as Members of this body stood with my beloved State of Vermont when we were hit. We didn't say we are Republicans or Democrats. We said that we are Americans, and Americans have been hurt, and Americans stand together when we are suffering. Today, Americans are suffering across this country. Let us—as the conscience of the Nation, the U.S. Senate, let us stand with them, and let's get the disaster aid they need.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECESS

Mr. SASSE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess until noon today.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 10:57 a.m., recessed until 12 noon and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. FISCHER).

MORNING BUSINESS—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

HONORING SERGEANT VERDELL SMITH

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, yesterday, Tennesseans were really filled with a bittersweet pride as President Trump awarded posthumously the Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor to a heroic Tennessean, Sergeant Verdell Smith.

His watch with the Memphis Police Department ended on June 4, 2016. On that day, an armed gunman stole a car and led Memphis police on a chase into the downtown area. Officer Smith responded to the call and worked quickly to clear the pedestrians from an intersection directly in the path of a speeding car. Then the unthinkable happened. Before the police were able to apprehend him, the gunman crashed through a barrier and fatally struck Officer Smith.

Valor is a word that is defined as "great personal bravery." Valor, you don't hear it a lot, but valor is that great personal bravery in the face of danger, and I think there is no better way to describe the actions of Officer Smith.

I honor him on behalf of all Tennesseans for his service in the U.S. Navy, for his 18 years with the Memphis Police Department, and for his final act of heroism.

MEMORIAL DAY

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, as I reflected on Sergeant Smith's story, I began to think about Memorial Day and the ways we honor the valor of every soldier who has made that ultimate sacrifice. One of the first official Memorial Day observances was in 1868, and it was just over the Potomac River in Arlington National Cemetery. If you have not been there to honor those who have given the ultimate sacrifice, I encourage you to do that.

In 1868, individuals gathered to honor those who had lost their life in the Civil War, and they gathered to decorate the graves of the fallen, both the Union and Confederate soldiers. This set a precedent for what would become a national day of unity. Think about that, a national day of unity, of mourning, and of remembrance. As the years went by, Americans took greater steps to memorialize the fallen and those who have exercised valor and have chosen to make that ultimate sacrifice.

After World War I, observances were expanded to honor those who fell in all American wars. Finally, it was in 1971 that Congress declared Memorial Day to be a national holiday. Since then, each year, at the end of May, cities across the Nation have lowered their flags to half-staff as a silent reminder of the cost of the freedom.

Just like Sergeant Smith, the fallen warriors we honor this Memorial Day made a choice to serve this Nation. They knew it wouldn't be easy. They

knew it would be dangerous or even deadly, but they knew that it would be worth it because it would be a step in preserving freedom and freedom's cause. It is this choice—and the choice to serve bravely and selflessly on behalf of a grateful nation—that we remember, as we debated crucial legislation supporting our Armed Forces.

Memorial Day marks the conclusion of Military Appreciation Month, which has provided each of us an opportunity to unite and reflect upon the heroic courage of all the members of our Armed Forces. We thank them continually for the service they provided and the sacrifices that they and their families make on behalf of this Nation and freedom.

Yesterday, members of the Armed Services Committee—of which Madam President and I are each a member of this committee—completed our first steps in ensuring that this year's National Defense Authorization Act fully funds the resources our military needs to defend against the threats that we face on land, by sea, in air, and of course in the cyber realm. Our proposed \$750 billion national defense budget will more than support this goal and includes a much-needed and well-deserved pay increase for our military men and women.

The NDAA, as it is called in an acronym that we hear around here so regularly, is just one piece of our greater promise to care for soldiers on and off the battlefield. As Members of Congress, we have a duty to keep the promise to those who bravely defend the safety and the security of the American people. Also, we have a responsibility to those whose broken-hearted vigil we join this Memorial Day weekend.

Just as valor lived in the hearts of the fallen, so does their sacrifice endure in the life of every person blessed to call this great country home.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

END MASS DEPORTATION ACT

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Madam President, I take to the floor today to urge my colleagues to halt the President's indiscriminate deportation regime. This administration is targeting immigrants who are deeply woven into our communities, and this inhumane approach must end.

For 30 years, David Chavez-Macias, who was born in Mexico, lived in Reno, NV. He worked as a landscaper during the week and went to church on Sundays. He raised four children, and he tried to follow the law. He paid his

taxes and hired attorneys to help him become an American citizen. In 2013, he was pulled over for turning left as the street light changed. That traffic stop brought him to the attention of immigration enforcement.

Now, the previous administration had permitted Mr. Chavez-Macias to stay with his family. After all, he had a heart condition that required regular treatment, and he had been a hard-working community member for decades; yet under this administration, David was deported to Mexico, ripping him from his family.

Now, as a granddaughter of immigrants, I understand how much immigrants like David contribute to American communities, and as a native Nevadan—a State where one in five schoolchildren have an undocumented parent—I know how deeply communities are hurt when we drive out longtime members. That is why I am introducing the End Mass Deportation Act to keep the Trump administration from pursuing people like David. This bill will make sure we are not indiscriminately targeting people for deportation who have contributed to their communities for decades.

Just days after taking office, President Trump issued an Executive order that changed our immigration enforcement priorities. He gave ICE the green light to aggressively pursue anyone without papers, not just people who had committed serious crimes or posed a threat to our public safety. My bill rescinds this cruel and counterproductive order.

Now, the Trump administration is deporting people who have lived in the United States—sometimes for decades—playing by the rules, providing for their families, starting businesses, and contributing to their communities. In Nevada, almost 90 percent of undocumented residents have been in the United States for more than 5 years.

These are people who own their own homes. They are people who pay billions of dollars in taxes each year. Their children are citizens, legal permanent residents, and Dreamers. They are our neighbors, our coworkers, and our friends. The impact of this policy on American families has been profound. Since President Trump signed his Executive order, arrests of immigrants without criminal records have tripled.

The End Mass Deportation Act would make the administration focus our law enforcement resources where they should be: on people who pose a legitimate threat to our communities.

Historically, prosecutorial discretion was used to take into account the compelling circumstances of an individual's case, like parents who have U.S. citizen children and strong ties to the community or individuals who have served in our military. As a former prosecutor, I understand what an important law enforcement tool this is.

The President's mass deportation order ends that prosecutorial discretion in our immigration system, taking