

the Yemeni army, the UN Development program, and nongovernmental organizations have cleared more than 300,000 mines in the country, it is estimated that at least 1 million remain.

The Leahy War Victims Fund, administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development, has provided artificial limbs, wheelchairs, rehabilitation, and vocational assistance to landmine survivors in many countries, and could be used in Yemen.

Yemen was an impoverished country before Iran and Saudi Arabia decided to go to war there, which has caused immense suffering among the Yemeni people. War crimes have been committed by both sides, and by providing weapons to the Saudis, we also are implicated. Every effort should be made to pressure the Houthis to stop using landmines and child soldiers, and the Saudis to stop their bombing of civilian areas. The Department of State should increase its support for humanitarian demining in Yemen, and the U.S. Agency for International Development should increase its support for organizations that help mine victims rebuild their lives.

#### WORLD REFUGEE DAY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, tomorrow, I will be back home in Burlington, VT, to take part in a joyous occasion. In an afternoon ceremony at the Ethan Allen Homestead, I will attend a naturalization ceremony in which 14 new Americans from 11 countries will be administered the Oath of Allegiance. The participants will be surrounded by family and friends as they stand proudly next to the American flag and formally became U.S. citizens. It will be an honor to stand with them.

As we celebrate these immigrants who will join our ranks as American citizens, today, on World Refugee Day, we must not forget the plight of millions of refugees who have not been as fortunate. Right now, there are over 70 million people across the globe who have been forcibly displaced from their home countries by the horrors of persecution, war, famine, and chaos. In 2018 alone, nearly 13.8 million people were newly displaced, meaning that 25 people were forced to flee their homes every single minute of 2018. Nearly half of all refugees are children under the age of 18, many of them just infants and toddlers.

On World Refugee Day, we must recommit ourselves to the hallowed American tradition of being a refuge for the persecuted and the oppressed. Welcoming refugees with dignity is not a Democratic or a Republican priority; it is the American way. We are a better country for it. No single administration will ever be able to erase that from our DNA as a nation of refugees and immigrants.

I couldn't think of a better way to highlight the indelible contributions of immigrants and refugees to our society than to share a personal story that my

good friend, U.S. District Court Judge Bill Sessions, recently offered at a naturalization ceremony at Vermont's State House marking the 17th anniversary of 9/11. Judge Sessions' remarks came just months after he suffered a life-threatening injury, only to later discover that the medical professionals who helped save his life were the very same immigrants he had sworn in as American citizens years earlier.

I for one, am most grateful that they were here in America to save his life.

I ask unanimous consent that Judge Sessions' statement be printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

STATEMENT OF U.S. DISTRICT COURT JUDGE WILLIAM K. SESSIONS III, VERMONT STATE HOUSE NATURALIZATION CEREMONY—SEPT. 11, 2018

I am going to tell you my story. Of course I'm not going to tell you my whole life story, just that part which relates to my injury and illness a number of months ago. So on one level I will share with you my story, my experience. But it really isn't about me. It's about all those who came to my aid. It's about wonderful people who have recently moved here to this country to pursue their dreams, and it's about what these folks do for all of us.

I've been a federal judge since 1995, about 24 years. One of my favorite parts of the job is to preside at naturalization ceremonies. Over the years, I've had ceremonies, in courtrooms, schools, museums, on boats and in legislative halls. Currently, there are 24 such ceremonies performed each year in Vermont, and between 700 and 800 people are sworn in as American citizens. I do two a year, aboard the Ticonderoga at Shelburne Museum and in the State House on September 11th of each year. The State House ceremony is very special. Patrick Leahy and I organized the first such ceremony on the first anniversary of the September 11th attack as a statement that we cherish what immigrants bring to this country, that our welcome to new citizens will not be diminished by the acts of terrorists. It's a large group of between 60 and 80 applicants for citizenship. We have held ceremonies on September 11th of each year ever since.

Naturalization ceremonies are joyous celebrations. The new citizens are from all over the world. In fact these ceremonies often evolve into celebrations of their own cultural traditions. Many come in their native dress, and all of their families share in their celebration. They come up after the ceremony for pictures with me. My photo must rest on hundreds of mantles.

There are a couple of themes that seem universal. First, they are all very happy. For many, this day is the culmination of a long struggle. Many have come from refugee camps in Bhutan or Nepal or war-torn areas, such as Somalia or Bosnia. Some were raised in Communist countries, including Russia, China and the Eastern Bloc countries. Some were from Central and South America, having come here to escape violence at home, and others were from Europe or Canada. They speak about their dreams of America. The American dream is so inspirational for so many new citizens: hope, freedom, education, employment. It is inspirational for us who have lived here all of our lives to be reminded that so many look to this country as a beacon of hope. And we are a multi-cultural community. We take pride in our diversity. The infusion of rich cultural traditions is in many ways our lifeblood.

At the same time, naturalization ceremonies mark transitions from their homes and extended families to our community, and that transition is hard. They bring with them such rich cultural traditions, but often they see in their children the influence of the western community. Fernanda spoke to this—you feel caught between two worlds.

But where do they go after being naturalized? There have been over 12,000 new citizens sworn in since I have been a judge. That's a very significant portion of our whole community. Yet I never understood where they go. How do they integrate into our Western culture? Just what were they doing here that impacts all of us? Now I have a much greater understanding of what they contribute for all of us.

Now to my story. In late February, Abi and I were skating on the frozen fields of Blue Ledge farm, our daughter's and son-in-law's property. I took a fall backwards, striking my head on the ice. The sound could be heard throughout the county. I gathered myself. I seemed to have a headache, but not more. We skated back to the car. I of course did nothing.

Over the next two months I occasionally had minor headaches. It seemed like nothing more than a distraction. Things changed on a Sunday night in May. I had trouble speaking. Abi wanted to take me to the nearby ER, I said I'd visit a doctor the next day. John Barstow called. He in his own blunt way ordered I go to the ER. Two vs. one, so we went Sunday night. A CT scan was done and sent to the University of Vermont Medical Center. A neurosurgeon reviewed it and sent back the following message: I had massive bleeding in the brain. I was to be transported to Burlington, and he had scheduled brain surgery for 4 that morning.

So I remember very well meeting the neurosurgeon outside of the operating room. He explained the presence of blood and the movement of the brain from the pressure. He then waited for my response, but I couldn't answer him. I could not speak, I couldn't make a sound. He was an older man, almost a contemporary of mine. He put his hand on mine and said in a very kind way: "We're going to make you all better." I could only nod.

I spent close to a month in the hospital, rotating between UVM Medical Center and Fanny Allen. One of my first observations was that people who took care of me were from all over the world. Those included nurses, medical technicians, and support staff. I just loved talking with them about their stories. They all had such pride in their cultural heritage. And they had such hope for their life here in the United States.

One day one of my favorite nurses said to me: "You probably don't remember me, but you swore me in as an American citizen." I didn't remember her, but I felt an immediate connection. The ceremonies were special to both of us, and I felt a joy and a level of comfort that she was taking care of me. Also there was such a sense of small world.

During my hospitalization I had a number of setbacks that are common with this type of operation. Those setbacks took away my strength. They also impacted my ability to walk and to speak. I began occupational and physical therapy and speech pathology to relearn those skills. On the second day of meeting my occupational therapist, she told me that I had sworn her in as a citizen on September 11th at a State House ceremony. She brought the program for the ceremony the next day. Yes indeed, I was the judge who performed her ceremony. And in the course of my rehabilitation, I met a number of therapists, many of whom were either naturalized citizens or were married to naturalized citizens. So the answer to my original

question: Where do immigrants go to integrate into the community? Many go in to the health care community.

But then how about the neurosurgeon? He had reviewed the CT scan, ordered that I be transported to Burlington. He scheduled surgery at 4 a.m., and waited all night to perform the operation. And he was so kind to me before the operation.

My follow-up appointment with him was one month after the operation. Abi and I went to his office. A CT scan was done, which he showed us. The bleeding had stopped, the blood was all gone, and the brain had moved back to where it was supposed to be, about 2.2 cm. He then said to both of us: "You will make a full recovery." As he was leaving the room, I said to him: "Doctor, thank you for saving my life." He stopped, looked directly at me and said: "You're welcome. And thank you, Judge." I had no idea why he would thank me and asked for what. His response: "On September 11th, 2006, on the fifth anniversary of the attack on New York and Washington, at a ceremony at the State House in Montpelier, you swore me in as an American citizen. It was a very special day for me."

So what have I learned from my experience? Immigrants bring to us their stories, the richness of their cultural traditions. This makes our community so much more diverse and interesting. We all benefit so much by their presence.

But now I look at the group being sworn in as citizens in a different light. Among the group may be nurses, medical technicians and aides who care for us when we are our most vulnerable; there may be therapists and speech pathologists who work to restore us who have been injured to our previous health; there may be doctors and surgeons who make life-altering decisions that may save our lives; there may be teachers and principals who care for and educate our children; there may be civil rights lawyers who defend our liberties, and police officers who protect us in the community. With the exception of native Americans we or our ancestors made that same voyage, often with those same dreams. We are them and they are us. We need to welcome them, but we also should thank them for all they do to make our community a safer, healthier and richer place in which to live.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I want to take the opportunity to join communities across the country and around the globe to commemorate the 19th observance of World Refugee Day.

Let me start with two sobering statistics from the UN agency charged with protecting refugees. The first is that 25 people were forced to flee their homes every minute of last year. The second is that more than 70 million people have now been forcibly displaced by conflict and persecution, the highest number the UN refugee agency has ever seen. So suffice it to say that the global need is real.

Which is why it is so heartbreaking to see Donald Trump's repeated efforts to try and slam America's doors shut to the world's most vulnerable.

It is particularly outrageous that the Trump folks aren't even on track to admit their own historically low cap of 30,000 refugees this year.

Let's be clear: Turning away refugees isn't some cornerstone of conservatism. Ronald Reagan admitted tens of thousands of refugees, so did George W. Bush.

In another era, that would have included my family, who fled Nazi persecution in the 1930s, seeking sanctuary in this country. I would have never had the honor of representing my State of Oregon here in this body had America sent my parents away.

Now, Edith and Peter Wyden aren't exactly household names, but here are a few that should be: Madeleine Albright, Albert Einstein, Gloria Estefan, Mila Kunis, and Elie Wiesel.

America is so much the richer for their contributions to diplomacy, physics, music, film and television, literature, and more.

So there is a practical reason for accepting refugees: Doing so makes America better.

There is also a moral reason for accepting refugees. Faith traditions speak of it as a duty to repair the world or to welcome the stranger. In Oregon, we just call it the right thing to do.

America is better than the administration's cruel and callous policies. I remain committed to challenging Donald Trump's exclusionary, anti-refugee policies on all fronts, and I challenge my colleagues to do the same.

Folks are looking to the Senate for strong, principled leaders. They want more than rhetoric; they want results.

So I urge my colleagues in the strongest terms to honor this World Refugee Day by rolling up their sleeves and working to revive America's historic, bipartisan commitment to the plight of refugees around the world.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, it has been said many times before, but it bears repeating today more than ever, on World Refugee Day—ours is a country built by immigrants. We have a proud tradition of welcoming foreigners to our shores.

The first European settlers in North America—those who founded our original Thirteen Colonies—were fleeing religious oppression and persecution. Over the following decades, America became, in the words of Thomas Paine, "the asylum for the persecuted." We welcomed Irish Catholics fleeing starvation and British rule, Germans fleeing political turmoil, Eastern European Jews fleeing the pogroms, and countless others. Over the generations, America welcomed Europeans displaced by war, and later, millions of refugees seeking political asylum from Communism during the Cold War.

In 1980, we passed landmark legislation—the Refugee Act—which provided a permanent and systemized procedure for admitting refugees. This law established the concept of a Presidential determination on refugee admissions, by which the President can set the number of refugees that the United States may admit in a given year. For the past 40 years, both Democratic and Republican administrations demonstrated a commitment to robust resettlement. Prior to the Trump administration, the average annual refugee admissions cap was 95,000 refugees. Administration of-

officials of both parties took seriously the Presidential determination and worked to maintain a resettlement rate on par with it.

At nearly every juncture in history since its founding, America has been called upon to be a leader in welcoming the persecuted. More often than not, we have answered that call and today, it sounds to us louder than ever. With more than 24 million refugees around the globe, America must step into our historic leadership role, not away from it.

Now is the time to increase the refugee admissions ceiling, not cut it. Now is the time to build up our resettlement infrastructure, not decimate it. Now is the time to open our door, not close it. But the Trump administration betrayed the foundational values of this Nation by slashing our annual refugee admissions ceiling to a dismal 30,000 refugees. This was an unprecedented low, both in number and humanity. That is why I introduced the GRACE Act. This bill prohibits any U.S. President from setting an admission ceiling below 95,000 refugees each year and requires administration officials to treat that figure as a goal.

We must not be silent. We must continue to meet the global crisis of displaced persons head on, and like our forefathers, we must extend a hand to those fleeing persecution around the world. Thank you.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### TRIBUTE TO DYLAN WICHMAN

• Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, this week I have the honor of recognizing Dylan Wichman, of Billings, for his impact on the Yellowstone community and surrounding areas.

Dylan, only a rising senior at Billings Central High School, earned second place at the State Science Fair and took first at Montana State University-Billings' regional fair for his wildfire predictive and preventative algorithm, FASTCAT. Dylan also participated in the International Science Fair in Phoenix, AZ alongside 1,800 other students from 80 countries. Dylan earned third place in his category.

Inspired by the tragic Paradise Fire in 2018, Dylan put in countless hours to develop FASTCAT. FASTCAT is an algorithm used to predict the size of wildfires before they even occur, to ensure Montanans will be safer and more prepared during fire season. Dylan's artificial intelligence algorithm utilizes a neutral network model, ensuring the algorithm's ability to problem solve as more data is input and analyzed. His innovative creation is an impressive improvement in Montana's existing fire safety and prevention programs. Dylan hopes to see his system implemented State and nationwide and globally in the future. Dylan will continue to work on his program alongside a professor at University of Montana next year.