

this impressive win in one of her many passions. We are lucky to know her, and Vermont is lucky to have her.

I ask unanimous consent that the article, "State rep wins gold in international skating competition," originally published by "The Other Paper," be printed in the RECORD.

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

[The Other Paper Nov. 7, 2019]

STATE REP WINS GOLD IN INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION

It was an introduction even Townsend—Chittenden District 7-4 State representative—wasn't expecting to hear. But sure enough, it's how she was presented to judges, the audience and her fellow competitors at the International Adult Figure Skating Competition in Lake Placid, N.Y., on Oct. 17.

"I confess that it got my attention being introduced as representing the United States as opposed to representing my club, which is what I am used to hearing," Townsend said.

But represent the U.S. she did, as skaters from around the globe filled the Olympic-size rink. In her own category, Adult Ladies Bronze V division—V designating competitors born in 1951 or earlier—Townsend skated against three other Americans and a Canadian to earn the gold.

As she took to the ice, she noted the judges' position and prepared herself for the music to begin. "Bumpin' on Sunset," a Jazz song by Wes Montgomery, filled the arena. It was a personal selection, as most of Townsend's program music is.

"There is the adage, let the music take you there," she said. "It does; you have practiced so long, over and over again, this music is part of a person and the music just carried me."

As she left the ice and awaited her score, Townsend felt great pride. She knew she had skated well and met her requirements.

"I'm my hardest critic," she said, but added, "I knew when I came off the ice that I'd skated it really well."

But getting to victory was no small feat. Townsend began preparing her program with her coach, Martha Harding, in early summer. The two worked an hour each day Tuesday through Thursday, adding in Fridays the month before internationals.

The program looked better each week, until just before internationals.

"For two solid weeks before this competition, nothing was working right, everything was falling apart," Townsend said. "I was psyching myself out."

But getting on the "storied rink" at Lake Placid—where countless "greats" like the Russian duo, the Protopopovs, Sonja Henie and Scott Hamilton have skated—made the rough practices disappear.

"I got on the ice to do the program and it was like those two awful weeks never happened," Townsend said. "I was in the zone and it just felt so good."

What's noteworthy about Townsend's skating is that it only began 25 years ago, when she was 50 years old.

Townsend was an avid fan of watching the elite figure skaters on television.

"I'd find myself just so drawn to it, and oftentimes I'd find it so beautiful I was there crying watching the performances," she said.

When an ad for group skating lessons stared up at her from the pages of a newspaper, Townsend knew the message was meant for her.

Townsend wasn't fearful about safety when she hit the ice for the first time. Rather, she said she was concerned about being the "tallest skater." Figure skating is a sport that

typically attracts a less aged crowd, but Townsend discovered age is but a number. She practiced the basics in group lessons, then found a coach to study under.

With Coach Julie MacDonald's help, Townsend honed her skills and grew tremendously. Though Townsend was content to continue lessons with MacDonald, her coach saw a greater future for her.

"At a given point in time, Julie [MacDonald] informed me that she needed to kick me out of the nest," Townsend said. "I was very comfortable with Julie and she sensed I was too comfortable." That's when Townsend paired with Harding.

"Martha [Harding] was this really big deal coach," Townsend recalls. "I was really scared, I remember saying to Julia, 'What if she rejects me?'"

But Townsend met all of Harding's requirements and the duo has worked well together ever since.

"Julie knew what she was doing when she kicked me out of the nest," Townsend said. "Martha worked with me, understanding as an older skater my goals are very different from a kids'."

Harding and Townsend spend much of their time working on "quality skating." For Townsend, that means dedicating effort to flow, posture and working the edges of her blades.

"To me, skating is when your foot is on the ice, as opposed to jump, jump, jump, jump," she said. "There's the whole business of interpreting the music ... if all you're doing is going back and forth jump, back and forth jump, it's not being one with the music."

Don't let that fool you, Townsend still gets some air. In her early years with Harding, she did all the single jumps—save for the Axel. Today she does what jumps and spins her body permits.

And one of her big requirements is looking confident and competent on the ice. It's not uncommon for people who start skating in their adulthood to be more cautious than their youthful counterparts, according to Townsend.

"Adults are more cautious in skating, I think, than kids are," she said. "Kids don't have so far to fall, kids heal a lot faster than adults and kids don't have to go to work the next day."

But Townsend challenges that. In fact, she's had judges assume she's skated for most of her life. And though Townsend is the first to say she's learned a great deal from Harding, Harding says the feeling is mutual. "I've learned a lot from [Townsend] as far as being disciplined," Harding said.

Townsend's disciplined nature keeps her skating even when the Legislature is in session. During the session, she's up at 3:15 a.m. to walk her dog and prepare for the day, then she's on the ice at 5:45 a.m. and en route to the Capitol by 6:35 a.m. But skating is good for both mind and body, Townsend said. During the session it's a joyful event that can be "cleansing."

"If I didn't skate I think I'd be a much older 75 than I am," Townsend said.

That's why Townsend would recommend the sport to anyone who's interested but perhaps trepidatious to skate.

"You're not too old to do it. There's no reason to be defined by a number," she said. "I really believe that. I intend to keep skating 'til my body tells me, 'Stop.' So far my body's nowhere near telling me to stop."

#### BACKGROUND CHECKS

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I implore the Senate to take up legislation addressing America's gun violence epi-

demio. We must pass legislation requiring universal and completed background checks for individuals seeking to purchase a gun, to help insure that guns do not fall into the wrong hands, with deadly results.

Last week, on the morning of November 14, it was a normal Thursday at Saugus High School in Santa Clarita, CA. Just before second period, a 16-year-old boy pulled a semiautomatic pistol out of his backpack. In just 16 seconds, he shot five of his classmates, killing two. A short time later, he turned the gun on himself.

After hearing the gunshots, Katie Holt, a teacher at Saugus High School, rushed students into her classroom and barricaded the door. One of the injured girls made it into Holt's classroom. Thankfully and incredibly, Holt had a gunshot wound kit in case of a school shooting. The girl had been shot twice, and Holt only had one kit. Holt dressed the two wounds as best she could with one kit, while a freshman student applied pressure. The injured girl survived.

Katie Holt's preparedness and quick action likely saved that young girl's life. As we commend her heroic actions, we have to ask ourselves: How did we get to this point? How did we get a place where American teachers feel obligated to keep gunshot wound kits in their classrooms?

We also mourn the tragic loss of life in several other recent mass shootings. On November 18, three people were killed outside a Walmart in Duncan, OK. Just this past weekend, on November 17 in Fresno, CA, 10 individuals were shot and 4 were killed at a football watch party. On October 31 in Orina, CA, five individuals were killed and four wounded at a Halloween block party. And we all remember the horrific spate of mass shootings this summer, including those in Texas, Ohio, California, and Virginia, leading to dozens killed.

In February 2019, the House passed H.R. 8, the Bipartisan Background Checks Act, by a bipartisan vote of 240-190. That month, the House also passed H.R. 1112, the Enhanced Background Checks Act. Since that time, these bills have languished in the Senate where the Republican leader refuses to allow Senate consideration.

By refusing to take up legislation to require universal and completed background checks, the Senate is failing the American people. We have a responsibility to pass commonsense gun reform to end the senseless bloodshed. We need gun reform now, not only to address our country's seemingly endless cycle of mass shootings, but we need gun safety legislation now because our communities are ravaged by daily gun violence that does not make news headlines.

On average, about every 13 hours, someone is killed with a gun in Maryland. On average, 656 Marylanders die from fatal gunshot wounds every year. Firearms are the first leading cause of

death among children and teens in Maryland. African-American children and teens in Maryland are five times as likely as their White peers to die by guns. In Maryland, African-Americans are 16 times as likely to die by gun homicide as White people.

In 2017, 53 percent of the guns recovered from Maryland crime scenes came from another State. Often, these guns used in crimes in Maryland are from States with more lenient gun control laws.

American women are 21 times more likely to be killed with a gun than women in other high-income countries; 4.5 million women in the United States have been threatened with a gun by their current or previous intimate partner. It has estimated that 900,000 American women have been shot or shot at by their current or previous intimate partner. When there is a gun present during a domestic violence situation, a woman's risk of being killed goes up 500 percent.

In Maryland, from 2013 to 2017, 48 women were fatally shot by an intimate partner. African-American women are 1.7 times more likely as White women to be fatally shot by a partner. These are women like Maryland resident, Timira Hopkins. Hopkins' relationship with her boyfriend was abusive, and he had made threats before. One night in 2014, Hopkins' boyfriend delivered on his threats, shooting Hopkins five times before killing himself. Incredibly, Hopkins survived, but the right side of her face is paralyzed, and she is deaf in one ear. In September of this year, Hopkins shared her story on NPR in the hopes she can help other survivors.

We need to do more for brave women like Timira Hopkins. We need to join her in the fight to protect people suffering domestic violence. This body understands the dangerous potential consequences of domestic violence perpetrators owning guns. That is why, in 1996, we passed the Lautenberg amendment, banning gun ownership for individuals convicted of misdemeanor domestic violence. However, without universal background checks, we can't effectively enforce this prohibition and keep guns out of the hands of violent abusers.

An estimated 22 percent of U.S. gun owners purchased their most recent firearm without a background check. When background checks are not required, domestic abusers get ahold of guns. In 2018, Sara Schmidt was murdered by her husband, who should have been prohibited from purchasing a firearm because of a domestic violence felony. Schmidt's husband purchased the gun he used to murder Sara from an online private seller, bypassing background check requirements.

Passing legislation to expand background checks to every gun sale, including those conducted online, at gun shows, and through private transfers, should be the top priority in Congress. Congress should also make sure that

background checks are fully completed before a gun sale is finally approved. There is no one answer which will fix America's gun violence epidemic. But we can't let the complexity of the problem paralyze us. We need to take steps forward.

The American people deserve action. They are demanding action. An overwhelming majority of Americans—97 percent—support expanding background checks. Congress must listen to the 97 percent of Americans and take action. We cannot wait any longer. While we wait, Americans are dying, and communities are traumatized by violence. We must do the right thing and take up the House legislation requiring universal and completed background checks for individuals seeking to purchase a gun. The time for action is now.

#### CONFIRMATION OF STEVEN J. MENASHI

Mr. VAN VOLLEN. Madam President, last week, I voted against Steven Menashi's nomination to serve on the Second Circuit, to the same seat once held by Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall. Throughout his legal career, Menashi has shown himself to be hostile to women's rights, communities of color, and LGBT Americans.

I am disappointed that my colleagues have avoided passing important legislation and have solely focused on confirming many extremist judges. The Senate Republican leader has refused to allow votes on a host of important legislation, including bills to secure our elections from foreign interference, to strengthen background checks, and to reduce the rate of gun violence in our communities, and to provide a path to citizenship for DACA and TPS recipients. All of these bills deserve a vote, but they are all languishing in the Senate legislative graveyard.

Menashi has a record of bias and while at the Department of Education, has repeatedly supported policies that hurt students and borrowers. Alongside Secretary DeVos, Menashi, created an illegal scheme to deny debt relief to defrauded students, including Marylanders. Additionally, Menashi has worked hand-in-hand with Trump senior advisor Steven Miller to advance cruel policies that undermine American values.

The American people deserve better from the U.S. Senate. We should not have voted on and confirmed this nominee and instead should be working on legislation to improve the lives and ensure the safety of our constituents.

#### TRIBUTE TO LARRY WOOTEN

Mr. BURR. Madam President, Senator THOM TILLIS and I would like to recognize the distinguished service of a great North Carolinian. After a 25-year career with the North Carolina Farm Bureau, Larry Wooten is stepping aside as president at the end of this year.

President Wooten has been a steadfast advocate for agriculture and rural North Carolina.

Larry has worked tirelessly to advance initiatives that strengthen and improve our State's rural communities. He is an exemplary servant leader that has always encouraged others to "give back" to the organizations, the communities, and the State that have provided them with opportunities for growth and advancement. He is a founding member of the NC Rural Economic Development Center where he served on the board of directors and executive committee. He has also served with distinction on the American Farm Bureau Board of Directors, the NC Board of Agriculture, the Agricultural Consortium Board, and the Rural Prosperity Task Force. He has served as chair of the American Farm Bureau Foreign Trade Committee and on USDA's Agricultural Policy Advisory Committee, APAC.

Most significant, however, is the impact Wooten has had on North Carolina agriculture. In his role as president, he has been an effective voice for agribusiness and farmers—educating leaders and lawmakers about the State's largest economic sector and helping shape sound State and national policy for its future. A lifelong farmer from Pender County, North Carolina, Larry knows firsthand the positive impact of a sound agricultural education, research, and extension of that research onto his farm. Larry was a key influencer in the inclusion of NC State University's Plant Sciences Building in North Carolina's Connect NC Bond Referendum, as well as supporting the university's efforts to create new paths for more rural students to earn their NC State degree. Wooten, through his leadership of the Farm Bureau, has been a tireless supporter of NC A&T State University's Small Farms Initiative. All these efforts will create pathways for North Carolinians to have an oversized positive impact on farming and economic development in our state and nation.

Larry Wooten is a remarkable leader who put the wellbeing of our state and its citizens above his own. It is through the work of selfless leaders like Larry that North Carolina has become a state where the weak have an opportunity to grow strong, and the strong can grow great.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### TRIBUTE TO THE HULMAN-GEORGE FAMILY

• Mr. BRAUN. Madam President, I rise today to celebrate and recognize the Hulman-George family for their accomplishments and success in business and their stewardship of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway for the last 75 years.

On November 4, 2019, principals of Hulman & Company announced the sale of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, among other assets of the