

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2020—CONFERENCE REPORT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Cloture having been invoked, the Senate will resume legislative session on the conference report to accompany S. 1790.

The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, we are here today to pass the NDAA, the National Defense Authorization Act. It has just passed the procedural vote so we are ready for the vote that is going to take place tomorrow.

It is the 59th year in a row that we will be passing the NDAA, and that is because it is the most important bill Congress will be doing all year and one that fulfills our constitutional responsibilities, and that is to defend America.

There is a document nobody reads anymore that is called the Constitution. If you read that document, it tells you what we are supposed to be doing here, which is providing for the common defense or, simply put, defending America and all who call it home.

This conference report does exactly that. It is a testament to the good work we can accomplish when we work together, and I am talking about Democrats and Republicans of both parties in the House and Senate. The bill has been a long time coming. We started working on it last January, 11 months ago, holding hearings with military leaders about what resources they needed around the world. We started drafting it not long after, and in May we passed the bill out of our committee. We passed the bill out of committee by a 25-to-2 vote. That doesn't happen very often on big bills.

In June, we debated on the floor and incorporated more than 90 bipartisan amendments before it passed with an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 86 to 8. Then we started the conference where we have been working day in and day out since September. This year, we had twice the number of Big 4 meetings. Now, Big 4 meetings are with a Democrat and Republican from both the House and Senate getting together to iron out some of these problems, and there were a lot of problems with this bill. Anytime we have 90 bipartisan amendments we are considering while putting the bill together, that is a big deal. We had twice the number of Big 4 meetings and more than twice the number of staff-level meetings that we normally have working our way through over 1,500 provisions within the bill.

I say this to remind everyone that our committee and staff have been working on this bill tirelessly for nearly a full year, and now we are going to pass it. If I had to break it down, I would say this year's NDAA has two big overarching principles. First, it resources and aligns priorities to implement the blueprint for the National

Defense Strategy Commission. This is it, the publication here, and this was put together by Democrats and Republicans a few years ago, laying out exactly what we have to have to adequately defend America.

We follow this blueprint. We are still following it today, and it is working. This bipartisan document outlines the challenges we need to be prepared to meet, namely, strategic competition with China and Russia. This is something—and I don't say this critically of the previous administration, but President Obama's priorities were not the same as the priorities we normally had. It was not defending America. There were other projects he was concerned with, and as a result of this, if you take the last 5 years from 2010 to 2015, the amount of money going to the military from President Obama's budget was reduced in that 5-year period by 25 percent. Keep in mind, while that was reduced by 25 percent, China was increasing their spending by 83 percent. That has never happened before.

Accordingly, the conference report funds the military at \$738 billion, in line with the bipartisan agreement I just described. So we are sticking with that. It is a good thing when you get a chance to get everyone together. There is always partisanship and all that, but when you get an outline like this, it is something that has worked and worked well.

In addition, the NDAA authorizes \$5.3 billion in emergency disaster recovery to help military installations. Occasionally, we have natural disasters. We had them in Nebraska, Florida, and North Carolina that inflicted great damage on our military bases in those areas.

The Space Force is the President's big deal. It will help protect space and ensure America's dominance in this warfighting domain for years to come. It is interesting also. There are those who are criticizing it, and I had some reluctance at first because we are doing a good job in space. We have been doing a pretty good job in space for quite a while, but it is not all in one area. There is a psychological component. Our chief problems out there are China and Russia. China and Russia have their own space dominance in this Space Force, and just the fact that we don't have one is something that made people believe we didn't have an interest in the Space Force, and we are going to dominate Space Force. This is the first time we will have a new branch in government in over 70 years. The Space Force will help us protect space and ensure American dominance in the warfighting domain for years to come.

To implement the national defense strategy, the NDAA reframes its priorities. It accelerates investment in efforts to modernize our Armed Forces, including creating hypersonic weapons, 5G, cyber, long-range missiles, and areas where we are at risk.

I mention the hypersonic weapons. That is the state of the art and what

we are doing right now. Prior to the last administration, we were ahead in hypersonic weapons. At the end of that administration years later, China and Russia were ahead. Now we are catching up. We are going to pass them. This bill is going to be a way to do this.

The NDAA has strong support for nuclear modernization, preserving all three legs of the triad to maintain maximum deterrence against our adversaries. Our triad has been controversial for a long time, but it has worked, and there are some who would like to drop it down to just two forces as opposed to three, but we want to make sure we have the best. We want to make sure we can win in a nuclear battle.

It also provides needed reforms to the way the Department of Defense does business. An efficient, effective Pentagon will help America retain and, in some cases, regain the competitive edge. We don't have the competitive edge around the world.

I talk to people around the country. They always assume that America has the best of everything, and there was a time when we did. I think ever since World War II we were in that situation, but we have lost some of that edge, and this is what we are going to do; we are going to regain it.

The legislation also keeps President Trump's promise to continue rebuilding the military. The legislation invests its equipment, resources, and training needed to restore American readiness. These investments mean we will have a larger Army, larger Navy, a more agile Air Force and a more lethal Marine Corps—a force that is ready to deter or, if necessary, defeat any threats that might come our way.

That is something a lot of people think is extreme, but we are used to that. We learned our lesson in World War II. We have gone through several conflicts since that time, and we are not going to allow that to happen again. We are going to keep all of these forces strong. That is what the bill does to rebuild our military and realign to be able to compete with Russia and China.

You go through and see the changing scenes all around the world. You go to the South China Sea and see China building islands out there. It is as if they are preparing for World War III, and some of our allies in that part of the world are wondering what we are doing. They don't see us out there, but we are. Now this bill puts us back in the running.

I said this bill does two main things. The second part is the bill really looks out for our servicemembers and their families. To tell the story of what we do in that area is really to tell the story of two courageous military spouses. Those two military spouses are Janna Driver and Jane Horton.

I have had the honor of knowing both of these women who represent hundreds of thousands of military spouses around the country. About 1 year ago,

Janna Driver reached out to me because she had housing. This all started with privatizing housing. We privatized housing and everything went right for a few years and things started dropping down. People got greedy. We had 14 contractors that were busy doing this.

Janna Driver was from Tinker Air Force Base. I had the honor of knowing her well because she came to me and reached out to me to share the horrible conditions she and her family were facing in their housing at Tinker Air Force Base.

Let's back up a little. Privatized housing was something that was working, but things started slipping. Right now, we have done a lot of work with that. She told me about the mold in her unit, and she couldn't get a contractor to fix it. We are talking about 1 of the 14 contractors that got the awards. We started looking into the problem and learned it was bigger than we thought. When Janna Driver came to me, we thought it was just at Tinker Air Force Base, but after that we found other places in Oklahoma. We have five major military establishments in Oklahoma, and we found they were all having some of these problems. Then I found out this was all over the Nation. So this was a serious problem she called to our attention.

We got to work, holding hearings and inspecting homes and demanding answers. As a result, the NDAA includes a landmark overhaul of the military privatized housing system. The legislation gives military families the tools to demand accountability, and re-engages military leadership. It is only natural that a lot of the military leadership would say: Well, we privatized it. Now it is their problem, not our problem. They kind of stepped aside. Well, they are back in the fight again to make sure contractors live up to their end of the bargain and give military families high-quality housing. That was my experience with Janna Driver.

Then there was Jane Horton. I mentioned there were two heroes I learned to love over the years. In an event in Collinsville, OK, a little bit north of Tulsa, we had a townhall meeting over there, and I was getting ready to go to Afghanistan. This happened about 7 years ago. Jane Horton was there, the wife of someone who was in the military. As I was getting ready, and I mentioned I was going to go to Afghanistan, she told me her husband Chris was deployed there. I promised her I would visit with him while I was there in about a week's time. I never got that chance because Oklahoma Army National Guard SPC Chris Horton was killed on September 9, 2011. He was only 26 years old.

After everything Jane Horton went through after losing her husband, she was then penalized by what we refer to as the "widow's tax"—a dollar-for-dollar offset of benefits as a Gold Star spouse. She came to me, and we started working on it together to repeal it.

Years after we restarted the process, this year's NDAA repeals the widow's tax in a fiscally responsible way. It does it over a period of time that is going to be doable.

That is a fraction of the benefits it has for military families. The conference report provides a 3.1-percent pay raise for all troops. It is the largest pay raise we have had in a decade. The bill also improves access to childcare on military installations.

It helps spouses transfer their professional licenses. Here is a problem people don't realize we have, and it is that the military member is going to be moved around every 2 or 3 years. When that happens, the spouse will go with the military member, but that spouse may be a trained professional and working as a second worker in the household. The problem is, there are a lot of States where nurses, for example, if the spouse is a nurse, they have to wait for 1 or 2 years' residency before they can actually practice in the State.

Those are little things that nobody really thought of, and it is kind of discriminatory against our military. So that problem is not going to exist anymore.

The bill continues critical reforms to fight sexual assault—we hear a lot about sexual assault—and misconduct and works to improve the military healthcare system. This bill does a lot.

I have heard people say—there are people around, people who are actually in this body who don't really think we have a real obligation to spend so much time and money on our military. In fact, I have heard people say so many times: Well, wait a minute. The United States spends more money than China and Russia put together. That is true, but you have to realize why that is.

We were just talking about housing. You know, China and Russia are communist countries. They don't care about helping people with housing. They don't care about healthcare for their people. All they do is give them an AK-47 to go out and kill people. The vast majority of what we spend on our military is spent on our people; other countries don't do that. They say you recruit a servicemember, but you retain a family by making our NDAA dedicated not only to the warfighter but also to their families.

Lastly, there are a few other provisions outside of the jurisdiction of the Armed Services Committee, and they are worth highlighting in this bill. This has been happening now for 59 years. One of the reasons is that this is a bill that everybody knows is going to pass. I had doubts this year that it definitely was going to pass, but it did. A lot of people have difficulty getting something passed during the regular session but wait until the Defense authorization bill comes up, and then they will put it on there as an amendment. We have a lot of examples.

There is the MARAD authorization. That is the maritime authorization. Senator WICKER from Mississippi put

that in. He is the chairman of the Commerce Committee. Then we had the intelligence reauthorization. Senator BURR is the chairman of that committee. We have that as a part of this bill. Sanctions designed to punish Syria, Russia, North Korea, China, and all those countries, that would really be in the Foreign Relations Committee. Senator RISC is the chairman of that committee. It is in this bill.

So the result is this is a good bill, and now we are going to pass it. This is the 59th year in a row we have passed the NDAA. It is one of the few authorization bills that passes year after year, and that is because everyone knows how important it is. It usually doesn't get bogged down in partisan fighting.

This year, the process of getting to our final conference report was certainly tougher than most years. The first bill that came out of the House, there wasn't one Republican who voted for it on the floor, and they ended up supporting it. That is the way it happened this year. There were some moments we weren't sure we were going to be able to get one. It took a few months of hard-fought negotiations, but the end result is getting a bill that we are proud of.

I thank Congressman SMITH and Congressman THORNBERRY from the House and, most importantly, Senator REED. Senator REED is my counterpart. I am the chairman of the committee, and he is the ranking member of the committee. We worked together, and I am talking about hours and hours. My wife and I have been married now 60 years tomorrow. I saw more of Senator REED during this time than I saw my own wife. We had a lot of time together working on things. We worked together on the controversial things, and they worked. We were successful.

I also thank the members of the Armed Services Committee who put in good work to make sure the bill supports the military community and keeps America safe. I want to thank President Trump for his leadership in support of the legislation, especially the Space Force. I look forward to him signing this into law immediately.

I would be remiss if I didn't thank the Armed Services Committee staff, especially the staff directors John Bonsell, for the majority; Liz King, for the minority; and my personal staff, who have worked countless hours to bring this bill to the floor today. Also under them, from the majority, we have 33 members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and I think 15 members from the minority. That is a total of 48 members.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD all 48 names of those heroes who participated.

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

From my staff from the Senate Armed Services Committee: John Wason, Tom Goffus, Stephanie Barna, Greg Lilly, Rick

Berger, Marta Hernandez, Jennie Wright, Adam Barker, Augusta Binns-Berkey, Al Edwards, Jackie Kerber, Sean O'Keefe, Tony Pankuch, Brad Patout, Jason Potter, J.R. Riordan, Katie Sutton, Eric Trager, Dustin Walker, Otis Winkler, Gwyneth Woolwine, Katie Magnus, Arthur Tellis, Leah Brewer, Debbie Chiarello, Gary Howard, Tyler Wilkinson, John Bryant, Patty-Jane Geller, Baher Iskander, Keri-Lyn Michalke, Jackie Modesett, Soleil Sykes.

And from the minority: Jody Bennett, Carolyn Chuhta, Jon Clark, Jonathan Epstein, Jorie Feldman, Creighton Greene, Ozge Guzelsu, Gary Leeling, Kirk McConnell, Maggie McNamara, Bill Monahan, Mike Noblet, John Quirk, Arun Seraphin, Fiona Tomlin.

Mr. INHOFE. From my personal staff, we had Luke Holland, Andrew Forbes, Dan Hillenbrand, Jake Hinch, Don Archer, Kyle Stewart, Bryan Brody, Esther Salters, Devin Barrett, Leacy Burke, Wendi Price, Laurie Fitch, Whitney Folluo, Mark Powers, Brandon Ellis, and Charlotte Mitchell.

And the floor staff, they are always back there. They work on all the bills, but they dropped everything to make this a reality: Laura Dove, Robert Duncan, Chris Tuck, Megan Mercer, Tony Hanagan, Katherine Foster, Brian Canfield, and Abigail Baker.

Now, let's vote on this conference report, and let's have the vote be so overwhelming that there isn't a military family in America who could doubt our commitment to them. Let's use our vote to send a message as well to Russia and China that we are revitalizing American power so we can win the competition for influence that will shape the kind of world our children and grandchildren are going to live in.

Kay and I have 20 kids and grandkids. They are the ones I am concerned about, as well as your kids and grandkids. We are not going to win with a strong military alone, but we will lose without one. That is what this NDAA will do: revitalize American military power so we can achieve our vision of a safe, prosperous, and free world. That is what this is all about. That is what we are going to do.

Merry Christmas.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULIVAN). The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the National Defense Authorization Act. I want to begin by thanking the chairman of the Armed Services Committee and also his ranking member, Senator JACK REED. I think Senator INHOFE and Senator REED have both shown tremendous leadership on behalf of our men and women in uniform, working together in a bipartisan way.

The Presiding Officer, as a member of our military still today, can certainly vouch for the importance of this legislation. The way they worked together and got this done, I think, is exactly the way people would want the chairman and ranking member of the Armed Services Committee to work on behalf of our military. So I thank the good

Senator from Oklahoma and his ranking member. It is really an outstanding effort.

This is a very important piece of legislation. Of course, it is something that we need to get done on behalf of our military, the finest men and women in uniform in the world. This is an incredibly important support. I thank not only the chairman and the ranking member, but I also thank all of my colleagues on the Armed Services Committee for their diligence and for their efforts to reach a conference agreement on this National Defense Authorization Act. This is a critical piece of legislation that supports our Armed Forces.

This year, the conference agreed to \$738 billion in overall funding authorization. I am a member of the Defense Appropriations Committee, so I work on the other side of the equation to make sure that those authorizations are funded. Obviously, this includes numerous provisions and investments that build readiness, modernize our force, and preserve our status as the world's preeminent military power.

In addition to providing a 3.1-percent pay raise for our men and women in uniform—the largest increase in nearly a decade—the agreement also includes important provisions to support our servicemembers and veterans. I am proud to have worked on some of those and backed, of course, not only those provisions but other provisions that make this very good legislation for our men and women in uniform.

Similar to legislation I helped introduce earlier this year, the NDAA extends TRICARE Reserve Select eligibility to all guardsmen and reservists, including those who also are Federal employees. That is effective beginning January 1, 2030. That is something that I know members of our Guard and Reserve felt was very important.

It also includes the Military Widow's Tax Elimination Act, which repeals the current military widow's tax to ensure that surviving military spouses receive their full survivor benefits.

Another bipartisan bill that I wrote together with the Senator from New Hampshire, Mrs. JEANNE SHAHEEN, the Air Traffic Controller Hiring Reform Act of 2019, is included in this legislation as well. It enables the FAA to prioritize the hiring of veterans and graduates of FAA-Certified Collegiate Training Initiative schools, like the University of North Dakota John D. Odegard School of Aviation and Aerospace, and it removes the current 10-percent hiring pool limitation. That is very important for our universities that provide training in air traffic control, and it is very important for the FAA and for the safety of aviation in our country, making sure that we have qualified air traffic controllers out there managing air traffic in the national airspace.

The NDAA also includes several more important measures that I was pleased to cosponsor, one that helps ensure

that the children of National Guard and Reserve members have access to additional support services in school, as well as another provision that corrects the disparity in the U.S. Bankruptcy Code to protect veterans' benefits in the event they file for bankruptcy.

There are many other important priorities in this legislation that go to my particular State, whether it is the MQ-9 program that our National Guard runs out of Hector Field in Fargo or whether it is the Global Hawk's mission at the Grand Forks Air Force Base or the B-52 and ICBM mission at Minot Air Force Base. All of these installations and our Guard, of course, play an incredibly important part in terms of the overall defense of our country, as well as so many other aspects.

Things that we have come to rely on, whether it is flood, fire, hurricane, or anything else, who do you turn to first? It is always the National Guard. They are always there, and they are always ready. Of course, they do an amazing job when we send them overseas or in any military capacity, but they do such an amazing job for us in so many other situations. Like I said, in any kind of disaster, fire, flood, or emergency, they are there for us.

The NDAA legislation also includes an amendment that I sponsored that requires the Air Force and the National Nuclear Security Administration to regularly report on their progress in developing the new ICBM and replacing its warhead. This measure will foster interagency cooperation and in turn help ensure the replacement for the Minuteman III is on schedule.

Not only do we need to authorize these programs, but, as I said, we also need to provide the funding for them as well, which we do through Defense appropriations. As the Presiding Officer knows, we will be taking up that legislation soon, as well. That is the other side of the coin, that we need to make sure we get done this week, in a timely way, for the full year so that our military knows they have not only the authorization but the funding to move forward with these programs.

There is no question that we have the finest military in the world and that we have the finest men and women who put everything on the line for us to serve in that military. We need to make sure we not only get these programs authorized, but that we fully appropriate the funding for those programs to support our tremendous men and women in uniform. There is no way for us to say thank you enough for all they do, but it is very important that we get our job done here and provide this very important support for them.

With that, I thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding the provisions of rule XXII, at

11:45 a.m. on Tuesday, December 17, all postcloture time be considered expired on the conference report to accompany S. 1790 and that the Senate vote on the pending motion to waive the budget act, if applicable, prior to a vote on adoption of the conference report.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

DEBBIE SMITH ACT OF 2019

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I have long maintained that rape victims shouldn't have to wait years for justice, and that is why I supported the original version of the Debbie Smith Act when the Senate Judiciary Committee originated it more than 15 years ago. I am delighted that we last week reached a compromise enabling Congress to send another 5-year reauthorization of the Debbie Smith Act to the President's desk this year.

Congress has generously funded the program authorized by this statute at roughly \$100 million annually since its inception. Unfortunately, however, we have seen repeated media reports that a backlog of untested sexual assault evidence persists in many States, and the Justice Department, which administers this formula grant program, has not done enough to tackle persistent issues with the program's implementation.

These reports concerned me, and at a 2016 meeting of the Judiciary Committee, I began voicing questions about whether rape victims were truly the top priority under our DNA Capacity and Backlog Enhancement Program. I also questioned whether additional oversight was needed. I insisted at this time that transparency requirements be added to the Justice for All Act reauthorization prior to its passage by the full Senate. These changes, which I later offered as a floor amendment and which the Senate accepted by voice vote in 2016, ensure that the Justice Department collects and reports more data about how Federal grant funds are being spent.

In 2017, I also called on a government watchdog agency to assess the progress we have made in reducing backlogs of untested DNA evidence in sexual assault kits since the enactment of the Debbie Smith Act grant program. Last year, as chairman of the Judiciary Committee, I also convened an oversight hearing to review Congress' billion-dollar investment in the DNA backlog program, which makes Federal resources available each year for crime laboratories across the country to analyze untested DNA evidence collected

from crime scenes and convicted offenders.

The Government Accountability Office, or GAO, testified at last year's congressional hearing that we still don't know with certainty that this program is working. GAO explained—and this year reconfirmed in the final report prepared by GAO at my request—that the Justice Department has yet to articulate measurable program-wide goals for the grant program authorized by the Debbie Smith Act, making it difficult to assess and verify State grantees' performance. GAO raised similar concerns in a 2013 report on this national program. GAO also suggested the need for the Justice Department to implement additional steps to prevent lobbying-related conflicts of interest.

This year, I developed additional proposed reforms in response to the issues that GAO and others raised. I want to thank Penny Nance of Concerned Women for America, who testified at my invitation at last year's Judiciary Committee hearing, for suggesting certain changes to ensure that the analysis of sexual assault evidence is accorded a higher priority by grantees. This statutory reform is essential, because most States impose a statutory deadline by which crimes of sexual violence must be prosecuted. Changes suggested by her organization, for which I have advocated since 2016, were incorporated into the Debbie Smith Act reauthorization bill by the Senate sponsor, Senator CORNYN, with my support. The House of Representatives also accepted these changes this year.

Additional reforms I proposed to the program this year, based on GAO's findings and suggestions, cleared the Judiciary Committee as an amendment to the Debbie Smith Act during our committee's consideration of the 2019 reauthorization. The full Senate later approved the reauthorization, including these reforms, by voice vote, but the House of Representatives declined to accept all of them. If enacted, the changes opposed by the House would require both that the Justice Department articulate measurable, program-wide goals and that the National Institute of Justice take additional steps to prevent lobbying-related conflicts of interest. They would not resolve every issue with the DNA backlog program, but I believe their enactment would substantially strengthen the program.

Because the House of Representatives dropped the GAO-backed reforms that the Senate approved by voice vote, I imposed a hold on the other Chamber's reauthorization measure this month. I then called on the Attorney General to implement my proposed reforms through administrative action. I thank the Attorney General for almost immediately agreeing to do so. Rather than indefinitely hold up the extension of the Debbie Smith Act, I lifted my hold on the bill last week, and I will continue to conduct oversight to ensure that these reforms are implemented as promised by the executive branch.

At this time, I want to thank Senator CORNYN for his efforts to advance the 2019 reauthorization, which I cosponsored, and for cosigning my December 2019 letter to the Attorney General.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that this letter and Attorney General's response be included in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. I am hopeful that this bipartisan measure can be approved today by voice vote and sent to President Trump's desk this week for signature.

BATTLE OF THE BULGE

Mr. CRAMER. Mr. President, today's 75th anniversary of the beginning of the Battle of the Bulge presents an opportunity to honor the heroism of the Allied forces who fought in this last major German offensive in Western Europe during World War II. More than 650,000 troops from the United States, Great Britain, Belgium, Canada, and other countries fought in this battle to defeat Nazi Germany. These soldiers bravely fought for 38 days from December 16, 1944, to January 25, 1945, and their victory made possible the final defeat and surrender of Germany in May 1945.

More than 40 Senate colleagues joined in cosponsoring S. Con Res. 23, which my West Virginia colleague, Mr. MANCHIN, and I introduced and the Senate passed last week to remember the significance of this historic battle.

The Battle of the Bulge was an attempt by the Germans to split the Allied forces and pressure them to seek a negotiated peace. These troops, located in the Ardennes region of Belgium and Luxembourg, were greatly outnumbered by the German Army as they faced harsh weather conditions and treacherous and unknown terrain.

It is difficult to comprehend the massive losses incurred from this one battle—including 89,000 American casualties. Nineteen thousand American soldiers made the ultimate sacrifice, with another 47,500 wounded and more than 23,000 captured or missing in action. Other nations suffered great losses as well. Belgium lost more than 74,000 civilians, in addition to many more who suffered through other atrocities that come with war. They persevered through this dark time and rebuilt their lives the best way they could after the war ended.

In the decades since, the citizens of Belgium and Luxembourg have generously hosted thousands of U.S. veterans as they have kept the memory of the Battle of the Bulge alive through numerous memorials and museums. Among them has been one of North Dakota's most distinguished World War II veterans, Lynn Aas of Minot.

Mr. Aas enlisted in the U.S. Army in August 1942 at the age of 21 and was called into service in March 1943. He was assigned to the 193rd Glider Regiment in the 17th Airborne Division. Arriving in England in August 1944, he