

RECOGNIZING THE AMERICAN
LEGION AUXILIARY

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the 100th anniversary of the American Legion Auxiliary. I appreciate the opportunity to speak about this esteemed organization and recognize their efforts supporting American servicemembers, veterans, and their families. The centennial celebration is a historic occasion for the State of Michigan, as well as the entire Nation.

The American Legion Auxiliary was founded in 1919 to support the efforts of the men in the American Legion. The women of the Auxiliary saw an opportunity to embark on a mission of their own, to not only support active servicemembers and veterans of World War I but also their communities and families. This mission resonated among others and by November 1920, there were 1,342 Auxiliary units founded across 43 States.

During World War II, the Auxiliary jumped into action again to serve brave servicemembers joining the fight. They established scholarships for students to train as nurses and fulfill needs on the frontlines, donated six mobile blood units to the Red Cross, and established an Emergency Voluntary Committee to support the war effort. At the beginning of World War I, there were approximately 500,000 enrolled members. After World War II, membership rose rapidly and peaked in 1955 with 1,001,545 members. Today, the American Legion Auxiliary consists of approximately 800,000 members who continue to support troops and veterans across the world in war and peacetime.

Communities throughout the State of Michigan, as well as across the country, benefit from the Auxiliary's advocacy and outreach. This past year, their work has culminated into over 40 million volunteer hours and \$37 million to charitable efforts across the United States. Their own charitable causes include Girls Nation and State, the Auxiliary Emergency Fund, and American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, as well as numerous scholarships and helping to fund veteran support services.

In addition to philanthropic work, the Auxiliary has advocated for veterans' rights and increased support for those who have served our Nation. They have advocated for legislation such as the GI bill, legislation that would expand U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs benefits, and efforts to help end homelessness among veterans.

It is my great pleasure to congratulate the American Legion Auxiliary on its centennial milestone and recognize the meaningful impact they continue to have in the State of Michigan and across our Nation. I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating its members and their dedication to support servicemembers, veterans, and their families by promoting fellowship, patriotism, peace, and security throughout the world.

TRIBUTE TO CHIEF MASTER
SERGEANT MARCUS T. OATS

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize and honor CMSgt Marcus Oats for his recent promotion to Chief Master Sergeant in the U.S. Air Force and upon the completion of his Air Force fellowship with my office.

Selection for chief master sergeant is extremely competitive, as only 1 percent of the Air Force's entire enlisted population may hold the pay grade of E-9 at any time. Chief Oats clearly epitomizes the finest qualities of a military leader, as evidenced by his distinguished career and elevation to the highest enlisted level of leadership within the Air Force. Chief Master Sergeant Oats entered the U.S. Air Force on September 4, 1996, as a services specialist and was later selected for retraining into the field of acquisition. Chief Oats' honorable service has spanned numerous overseas and state-side assignments including Southwest Asia, four States, and the Nation's Capital. He has also completed several deployments in support of Operations Allied Force, Enduring Freedom, and Inherent Resolve. Chief Oats currently serves as the senior enlisted advisor in the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force's Legislative Liaison Directorate. Chief Master Sergeant Oats has chosen to repeatedly lead his airmen by example.

Despite years of challenging work schedules and countless military obligations, Chief Oats elected to make his education a priority. Since 2011, he has earned two associate's degrees, a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, and a graduate-level certificate.

Furthermore, Chief Oats' outstanding performance has garnered numerous accolades, including the 386th Expeditionary Wing Lance P. Sijan Leadership Award, two time 7th Bomb Wing Senior Noncommissioned Officer of the Year Award, and the Air Force Central Command Senior Noncommissioned Officer of the Year Award. As a true testament to Chief Master Sergeant Oats' exceptional career, he was selected to represent the U.S. Air Force on Capitol Hill as its enlisted legislative fellow in 2019. I was fortunate to have Chief Oats spend the year in my office as an integral part of Team Murkowski and was pleased with his professionalism, character, and devotion to duty.

Chief Oats joined my office in January of this year while serving as my defense fellow on behalf of the U.S. Air Force Legislative Fellowship Program. As the defense fellow, Chief Oats drafted legislation, prepared floor debate materials, planned and analyzed public policy, and served as a congressional liaison between Alaskans and industry or government representatives. Chief Oats is the first enlisted contracting airman selected for this position and is one of only two enlisted Active-Duty Air Force fellows currently serving in this capacity. Chief Oats is a Memphis

resident and an alumnus of Overton High School. He holds a bachelor of science in computer information systems and management, as well as a master's in business administration.

Chief Oats served as an integral member of our defense team, and I relied on his advice in support of Alaskans and all Americans. His tireless efforts were critical to the passage of the Merchant Mariners of World War II Congressional Gold Medal. This bill is to award a Congressional Gold Medal to the U.S. Merchant Mariners of World War II in recognition of their dedicated and vital service during World War II—service which proved instrumental in securing victory for the Allied powers. Moreover, Chief Oats led a bipartisan effort to introduce the sixth Defense Department Regional Securities Study Center, named after the late Alaska Senator Ted Stevens. The centers aim to support defense strategy objectives and policy priorities through a unique academic forum and to foster strong international networks of security leaders. He also helped secure several wins for Alaska in the Defense appropriations bill.

Chief Oats continued the extraordinary lineage of military fellows I have had the honor of working in my office, serving as a member of my team. He was also the first enlisted contracting fellow in Congress. It has been a great privilege to work with and get to know Chief Oats over the past 11 months. I know that my entire team will agree when I say Chief Oats will always be part of the Murkowski family.

As I thank Chief Oats for his service, I also thank his wonderful family who has remained by his side for his 23-year Air Force career. Chief Oats is married to Cecilia Oats. They have three children, Kayla, Mya, and Myles.

On behalf of the U.S. Congress and a thankful Nation, I want to express our gratitude to CMSgt Marcus T. Oats for his dedicated service to the U.S. Senate and to all Alaskans. We applaud Chief Oats on his recent promotion to chief master sergeant, the highest general enlisted rank of the Air Force, and hope the best for him in his next role of Legislative Advisor to the Chief Master Sergeant of the U.S. Air Force. Just as I have greatly benefited from Chief Oats' leadership and advice, I have no doubt that the U.S. Air Force will also reap the benefits from this true American. Thank you for everything Marcus.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

REMEMBERING BRIGADIER GENERAL JAMES KEMP MCLAUGHLIN

• Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, I rise today in remembrance of the life of Brig. Gen. James Kemp McLaughlin, who passed away this week after living an impressive 101 years full of honor,

integrity, and service to his Nation, State, and county. General McLaughlin was the epitome of what it means to be a member of the greatest generation. He worked hard, served his country, raised a family, and gave back to society more than he could have ever received in return.

Born in Braxton County, WV, in 1918, Kemp, as his family and friends called him, was raised during the Great Depression, and like many others of his generation, he learned the value of a day's work, to be thankful for what you have, and most importantly, how to survive in the face of adversity. After high school, he traveled to Morgantown to attend college at West Virginia University, where his interest in military service and aviation were first piqued when the Army Air Corps testing team visited the school's campus. A year later, he enlisted in the U.S. Army at the age of 21.

A year into his enlistment, the Japanese attacked the U.S. Naval Base at Pearl Harbor in Honolulu, HI, on December 7, 1941. It was not only "a date which will live in infamy," as President Roosevelt so memorably declared, but it was also Kemp's 23rd birthday. Soon after, he was deployed to England as a copilot and second lieutenant in the Mighty Eight's 92nd Bombardment Group, flying the B-17 bomber. The unit's mission was to carry out strategic bombing campaigns in France and Germany during World War II. During his first mission in France, his aircraft took multiple direct hits. McLaughlin returned fire, engaged in air-to-air combat, and eventually took down the enemy. This, in addition to his 38 other combat missions during World War II, were some of the most pivotal air raids in our country's military history. The successful mission he took part in to bomb facilities in Norway is credited with halting Germany's efforts to produce an atomic bomb and potentially saved millions of lives.

Upon returning to the United States in 1945, McLaughlin was recognized with numerous medals and awards, including the Distinguished Flying Cross with three clusters, the Air Corps Air Medal with eight clusters, the French Croix de Guerre, and a Presidential unit citation. He then accepted a commission as a lieutenant colonel before initially retiring in 1946, a retirement that would last 1 year, when he was asked to serve as the first commander of the West Virginia Air National Guard squadron. After the unit's service in the Korean war, he was promoted to full colonel and appointed as West Virginia's assistant adjutant general. McLaughlin was then promoted again in 1962 to brigadier general and continued to serve in leadership positions with the Air Guard until his retirement in 1977.

In addition to serving his Nation in uniform, Kemp also served his community as a Kanawha County Commissioner from 1962 to 1968 and then again from 1974 to 1976, when he was ap-

pointed to serve in the West Virginia House of Delegates. Even after he retired from both his military and public life, Kemp continued to give back to his community and the Air Guard. In recognition of his contributions to the West Virginia Air National Guard, the Charleston base was fittingly renamed McLaughlin Air National Guard Base during a ceremony I was honored to attend in January 2014.

In West Virginia, we are extremely proud of our military heroes, of which we have many. However, very few have had the impact on our State's military institutions and their reputation across the country as Brig. Gen. James Kemp McLaughlin. I am honored to have known him, West Virginia is fortunate to call him one of our own, and our Nation is forever thankful for his honorable service. Together, we grieve the loss of one of our greatest. ●

REMEMBERING WILLIAM A. LOWRY

● Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, along with my colleagues Senator JAMES RISCH, Representative MIKE SIMPSON, and Representative RUSS FULCHER, I pay tribute to Idahoan Bill Lowry, who was deeply respected among his peers and beyond, having earned a wonderful reputation with hard work and integrity. His wisdom, good will, and stature helped inspire the development of the Owyhee Initiative, which we expect to help secure the future of ranching families and the culture of Owyhee County.

The following is Bill's obituary honoring the life of this great American:

"William 'Bill' Anson Lowry was born June 6, 1921 to Charles and Sally Lowry joining a sister, Hazel in Bend, Oregon. He was later joined by 3 brothers (Bob, Al, and Richard) and 7 more sisters (Effa, Gladys, Rhonda, Alta, Dorothy, Betty Jean, and Peggy). The family lived in Prineville, Oregon where Bill began school. They moved a couple times but landed back in Prineville where Bill graduated from the 8th grade.

After his 8th grade graduation, he began working for the Stearns Cattle Company of Prineville. His Army discharge report listed his civilian occupation as 'cowpuncher'. Bill always had a lot of respect for the Stearns family and they became his second family. It was there that he met the love of his life, Vernita 'Nita' Hein, who was working in the cookhouse.

In 1942 after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Bill was drafted into the United States Army. However, his induction was pushed back because of the flood of boys enlisting. Bill always wanted to honor the boys who quit school and rushed to enlist, describing many of them as being too young to shave. He related his experience and desire to honor these young men to Idaho State Representative Christy Zito at a meeting in Pleasant Valley. Christy then told his story to her friend, Brian Arnold, who composed a poem entitled Too Young to Shave. Through the good work of the Idaho Chapter of Dream Catchers, the poem is now engraved on a marble plaque and displayed in the Warhawk Museum in Nampa, Idaho, fulfilling his dream of honoring these young men.

While on leave from his time in the Army Corps of Engineers, he married Nita on July 31, 1945. He was discharged in November of

the same year and the young couple returned to Bill's job on the Stearns ranch. The couple began to save their money to realize their dream of owning their own ranch. They worked hard, lived simply, and saved every penny they could even with the addition of their sons, Tim and Mike.

Eventually they were able to lease a couple of ranches, later purchasing a ranch in Pleasant Valley, Idaho in 1965. One of Bill's greatest joys in life was working on his ranch and with his Hereford cattle. His love (some would say obsession) for Hereford cattle came from his years of working for the Stearns and with their reputation commercial and registered Hereford cattle. His passions were family, Hereford cattle, thoroughbred saddle horses, conservative politics, education, and unwavering patriotism.

Bill is survived by his sons and their families, Tim (Rosa Maria) and Mike (Gaylene); 10 siblings; 5 grandkids—Mirren Lowry, Amaya (Jim) O'Connor, Luke Lowry, Micki (Kevin) Golden, and Melissa (Cody) Bullock; and 9 great-grandchildren. He is preceded in death by his parents, Charles and Sally Lowry; oldest sister, Hazel; and wife, Nita. His family would like to express their deepest appreciation to the staff and residents of Grace Assisted Living in Nampa and the First Choice Hospice caregivers for their kindness to and care of Bill. He was grateful for all of you!"

The poem titled "Too Young to Shave" by Brian Arnold that was inspired by Bill and referenced in his obituary follows:

"His body was gnarled and twisted, like a wind-blown juniper tree

He'd seen the sunrise and seen the sun set more times than two of me.

Hobbling from his truck using two canes, so I stopped and held the door

He said, 'I'm here for the Town Hall meetin'. Is that what you're here for?'

I wondered aloud why a ninety-year-old man even cared about civic affairs

He said, 'Let me tell you a story.' So I grabbed a couple of chairs.

'When Pearl Harbor was bombed a bunch of us boys all went into town to join up

From the farms and ranches, and some from in town, we had an enemy to whup.

They took down our names and gave us a number, then said they'd give us a call

So many young fellers were signing up that they couldn't process them all.

Was a whole lot of youngsters standin in line, see they was lyn about their age

All ready to die for our country, while still too young to shave.

It took a few months before they got to us all, 'cause so many wanted to go

I was an infantryman in the Army, a regular G.I. Joe.

Saw many a good man die over there, it was a special kind of hell

We were all just tryin to do our part, for some it didn't work out well.

Most are buried in those foreign lands, they never did come home

They gave their all for freedom, across the briny foam.

That war's long over and there's been some since, but I can never forget

True comrades that I fought alongside, as they placed their final bet.

So that's why I'm here, just to make sure, that as long as our proud flag waves

I do my damndest to honor, those men too young to shave.'"

Bill was a blessing to his family and the community in which he lived, and he will be long-remembered with great affection and respect. We are all saddened by Bill's passing yet grateful for his life and legacy. ●