

NOMINATION OF MAJOR GENERAL SCOTT
SPELLMON

Mr. CRAMER. Mr. President, first of all, I just want to associate myself with the words of my colleague Senator BLUNT. I couldn't say it as eloquently. I certainly couldn't improve upon it. I am just going to say I completely agree. Thank you.

The real purpose for my coming to the floor today is to demonstrate my support for MG Scott Spellmon of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

General Spellmon is up for a promotion to Lieutenant General and has been nominated to become the Chief of Engineers and Commanding General to replace General Semonite as he retires.

Since coming to the Senate, General Semonite and I have become well acquainted with each other. While we haven't always agreed, I do appreciate his service, his very hard work, and his accessibility, especially during this COVID-19 pandemic.

His retirement is well earned, and I thank him for his service and wish him well.

As a member of the Armed Services Committee and the Environment and Public Works Committee, I serve on two of the Army Corps committees of jurisdiction. As many of my colleagues can attest, it is a rare occasion that I compliment the Corps. It is an agency that is the epitome in many cases of cumbersome bureaucracy.

I am not unique in my frustration. During our last EPW hearing with the Corps, criticism was both bipartisan and tangible. From Rhode Island to North Dakota to Oregon, each of us expressed frustration with a seemingly tone-deaf bureaucracy, which either doesn't do what it is supposed to do or does what it is not supposed to do.

That frustration brings me here today: Major General Spellmon's pending nomination and promotion. Throughout this process, I have worked closely with General Spellmon on numerous issues important to North Dakota and other Western States.

Early on, I spoke with him regarding the Spring Creek embankment in Central North Dakota. Due to the poor maintenance of relief wells, the Corps was going to move forward with a water control plan that could potentially devastate water supply and irrigation needs in eastern parts of my State.

As per usual, the Corps' decision matrix was overly complicated and did not adequately reflect the needs and realities of rural America. When I brought the issue to General Spellmon, he promised to take a fresh look and reassess the economic impacts of the project. He then worked with me to craft legislation supporting these efforts, which was added to the water infrastructure legislation we unanimously passed out of the EPW not too long ago. He listened to the problem and is working with me to help solve it.

I also challenged General Spellmon on Western State water rights—a prob-

lem that has plagued Western States that operate under the prior appropriation doctrine. On a bipartisan basis, Democrats and Republicans from Western States have been frustrated by an Army Corps that either ignores States and Tribes or needlessly inserts extra bureaucracy into decisions that are really not theirs to make. Once again, General Spellmon listened intently to the concern and provided thorough, honest responses to be used as a guidepost for Corps policy moving forward.

Of equal importance, he acknowledged the flaws within his own organization. In my time in Congress, honesty sometimes seems to be missing but not with General Spellmon. He has proven he is willing to listen and be responsive in a forthright manner, and I thank him for that.

I am confident General Spellmon will continue to listen to Western States and provide the necessary deference to them pursuant to congressional intent and to our Nation's Constitution. I have appreciated getting to know the general, and while my oversight and questions may not have always been the most enjoyable to him, he has proven to be up to the task of replacing General Semonite. I support his nomination and promotion, and I hope his exemplary service will be replicated by the rest of the bureaucracy he is going to lead.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

OBSERVING MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, on Monday, our country will celebrate Memorial Day. It is a very special day—one that we, as Americans, set aside each year to honor those members of the military who have given their lives in sacrifice to their country.

Right now, this is typically the time when I am getting ready to travel home and go to Southern Oregon—to Eagle Point and to Central Point, wonderful communities to spend Memorial Day with hundreds of veterans and members of their families. These are events that take place each year and are inspiring and affirming and basically a time when Oregonians, from very young to often approaching almost 100 years old, assemble and are part of a centuries-long lineage of patriots who have been willing to serve and sacrifice for our great Nation.

There are other communities that come together to remember lost friends and loved ones, but at home in Oregon, we have always said: Eagle Point and Central Point are the gold standard in terms of services and programs to recognize our veterans, and members of their family, who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our Nation.

I think we all know that this Memorial Day is going to be different. There will not be the same big gatherings, and there will not be as many parades. But one of the reasons I want to come to the floor of the Senate today—and I

will be home this weekend thinking about Eagle Point and Central Point—is I want to make sure our country never ever diminishes the significance of this day.

Never should our country take away our determination to honor those who pay the ultimate price in service to America, and it shouldn't cause us to forget that Memorial Day can be hard—very, very hard on the parents and spouses and children and friends our fallen heroes left behind. I know when I am recognized to speak in Central Point and in Eagle Point, I look out in the crowd, and I always see family members with a Kleenex by their eye, trying to remember and at the same time deal with the inevitable grief. This Memorial Day, I am going to be thinking of all of those who have come year after year to Central Point and Eagle Point in Southern Oregon to do something very, very important: to speak up for Oregon on the importance and appreciation we have for those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

My view is, this year, on Memorial Day, it is more important than ever to reach out and connect with those folks who are remembering loved ones they have lost in the line of duty—to give them a call, ask how they are holding up—because the last few months, in particular, have been tough on everybody, and their sacrifice shouldn't be forgotten.

I know when I am home in Southeast Portland this weekend, I am going to be thinking about whom I am going to be talking to, checking in with, and see how they are doing just for the reason I mentioned. These have been tough times for everyone, and I think this is going to be a very difficult Memorial Day for those Americans who are remembering loved ones they have lost in the line of duty.

It is also more important than ever to remember for ourselves that as Americans, we owe so much to so many. The parades and the services may have to wait until Memorial Day 2021, but our deep respect and gratitude for sacrifice does not.

Just on a very personal note, apropos of the respect and gratitude for sacrifice, I think about my late father and my mother, both of whom fled the Nazis. Not all of our family got out. My great Uncle Max was one of the last who was gassed in Auschwitz. My father basically talked his way into our Army because he was a fluent young man in German, and he convinced our military that he could be part of our propaganda unit to drop the pamphlets on the Nazis, making it clear that they could never defeat our great troops.

My mother, on the other hand, was a WAC, and I look often at the picture that is on my wall of my mother in her WAC uniform. For them, during their lives, Memorial Day was a really special day because they were so thrilled to be able to come to the freest and most open Nation on Earth and to be able to serve in our military. They, in