

helm of this important Detroit institution.●

TRIBUTE TO JOAN K. STEVENS

● Mr. ROBB. Mr. President, I rise today in order to commend and acknowledge Ms. Joan K. Stevens, who is retiring from the White House Military Office after more than 25 years of dedicated service to her country. Ms. Stevens has loyally assisted six Presidents as a liaison to the military and has had the kind of impact on peoples' lives that demands respect and compels our sincerest appreciation. She has facilitated over 500,000 military inquiries from the public and it is because of individuals such as Ms. Stevens that a healthy communication endures between the Commander in Chief and our troops out in the field.

Ms. Stevens first began working in the Special Counsel's Office of the White House in July of 1972. She later spent time in the First Lady's Office in February of 1973. In November of 1974, however, Ms. Stevens found her calling and the WHMO, in turn, discovered an invaluable and faithful staffer. She has been there ever since, working diligently to perpetuate the idea that the men and women of our Armed Forces are indeed important and have a discernible voice in our government that must be heard.

Also noteworthy is the fact that Ms. Stevens has, for more than two decades, been the single point of contact for the thousands of Presidential condolence letters to the next-of-kin of active duty personnel who have tragically died in military related accidents. Paying tribute to America's fallen warriors is an obligation that begins with the leadership of this country. It is hard to imagine the responsibility and burden Ms. Stevens' has ultimately shouldered on behalf of a grateful nation.

In recognition of her efforts and devotion, Ms. Stevens was recently awarded the Secretary of Defense Public Service Medal. It is clear Ms. Joan Stevens will be missed dearly. Still, as a fellow Virginian, the State Ms. Stevens has called home for over 26 years, I am truly honored to have the opportunity today to congratulate her on a remarkable career and salute her commitment to the President, the Armed Forces of the United States, and most importantly, to the American people. Mr. President, I ask that you join me, our colleagues both here and in the White House, and the family and friends of Ms. Joan K. Stevens, in expressing our heartfelt gratitude to this exemplary public servant.●

TRIBUTE TO MS. ARLENE DESEMONE

● Mr. REED. Mr. President, I pay tribute to a proud member of the Rhode Island community, Ms. Arlene DeSemone, who, sadly, passed away on March 11, 1997.

A leader in the insurance industry, Ms. DeSemone served as president of the Rhode Island Life Underwriters Association in 1992. She was president of the National Association of Insurance Women of Rhode Island from 1988 to 1990 and was named professional woman of the year by this organization in 1994. Ms. DeSemone received the R. Kelly Sheridan Award in 1996, as the outstanding life insurance professional of the year. In addition, Ms. DeSemone received the Lloyd Saunders Award for professional dedication to her clients and the industry, and served on numerous committees, including the first Rhode Island Department of Business Regulation Continuing Education Advisory Board.

Perhaps the greatest of Ms. DeSemone's contributions was her work in the fight against breast cancer. Despite her own personal struggle with the disease, Ms. DeSemone led the way in encouraging research efforts to find a cure for breast cancer. Ms. DeSemone cofounded the Rhode Island Breast Cancer Coalition in 1993, an organization whose initiatives received national praise and were recognized by President Clinton and the First Lady. The coalition continues to benefit from her efforts to raise consciousness about breast cancer.

Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to join me in remembering Ms. Arlene DeSemone for her many contributions to Rhode Island and selfless dedication to helping others. Certainly, Ms. DeSemone embodied the strength and determination we all seek to find in ourselves.●

RETIREMENT OF BILL BREW

● Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I rise today to note the impending retirement of Mr. William E. Brew, who currently serves as the minority general counsel of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. As of April 4, his retirement date, Bill will have served 19 years and 1 day as a loyal and dedicated staff member of the U.S. Senate.

A veteran of the Vietnam war, Bill has held increasingly important positions of responsibility on the staff of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. Since he was hired by Senator Alan Cranston in 1978, Bill has served as associate counsel, associate general counsel, minority counsel, deputy general counsel, general counsel, and most recently, minority general counsel to the committee.

Through the many political changeovers in the administration and Congress in his nearly two decades on Capitol Hill, Bill provided institutional continuity, serving as a source of reliable information and wise advice on legislation, policy, and procedure for Members of both parties.

Bill was closely involved in developing all of the major veterans initiatives that were enacted by Congress during this period. Among his major accomplishments are legislation relat-

ing to agent orange compensation, establishment of judicial review of veterans claims, establishment of the U.S. Court of Veterans Appeals, and creation of programs relating to the readjustment needs of Vietnam and post-Vietnam veterans.

In addition to these special accomplishments, Bill worked hard to become the Senate's foremost authority on veterans health care matters. He served as an invaluable resource to members of the committee on the medical needs of the diverse, 27 million-strong veterans population as well as on the legal, administrative, and structural nuances of the hundreds of Department of Veterans Affairs' hospitals, outpatient clinics, nursing homes, and domiciliaries.

Bill is well known for his logical, analytical, and deliberative mind. His patience and fairness are legendary, and few have been as adept at working in the heated, give-and-take atmosphere of the legislative process. His adherence to the very highest personal and professional standards has been a credit to the U.S. Senate. In short, Bill has been the veteran's veteran, that special individual whom Senators, professional staffers, administration officials, and veterans advocates have trusted to render an objective assessment on any particular veterans issue or to undertake any worthy cause in behalf of those who served.

Mr. President, I believe that I have a special insight into the qualities of this outstanding individual. In the days and months immediately following my appointment to the U.S. Senate in 1990, Bill Brew was one of the experienced hands who helped indoctrinate me in the complexities of veterans policy and the doings of the Veterans' Affairs Committee. Since then, I and my staff have relied on him for advice on issues major and minor. Whatever success I have had in the way of veterans legislation is in great measure due to his assistance.

Indeed, no one worked longer or harder to improve the condition of Hawaii's 120,000 veterans than Bill Brew. It was his experience and energy that fueled a series of committee investigations revealing VA's historical neglect of the Aloha State's veterans. As a consequence of these inquiries, VA established four new primary care clinics and readjustment counseling centers in Hawaii; tripled the size of the Honolulu outpatient clinic; began preparations to construct a VA medical center on Oahu; and, established a unique residential treatment center for Pacific-area veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

So, Mr. President, it is with great reluctance that I extend Bill a fond farewell. I offer him my deep gratitude for the service he has rendered me and other members of this body over the last two decades. No one has worked harder to advance the public interest than this stellar public servant. I wish him well in all his future endeavors.●