

we talk about access to health care—we must consider waiting times for an appointment. Many of the delays in appointments, referrals, and transfers that veterans experience stem from inadequate staffing, especially the increasingly critical shortage of skilled nurses. I have recently introduced legislation to improve VA's ability to recruit and retain nurses, whose skills are essential to providing high quality health care in a timely fashion.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the efforts of the many volunteers who help bring rural veterans closer to health care. Disabled American Veterans (DAV) operates a nationwide Transportation Network that helps sick and disabled veterans reach VA medical facilities for care. Since its inception, DAV volunteers in West Virginia have dedicated more than 700,000 hours of time to driving veterans to medical appointments, often in vans donated by DAV to the VA. Nationally, DAV Hospital Service Coordinators operate 185 such programs, where 8,000 volunteers donated almost 2 million hours last year alone. Although this program does not replace VA's obligation to bring services close to the veteran where possible and to smooth transfers between medical centers, this service is certainly indispensable to disabled veterans who must reach a VA medical center for necessary medical care.

Mr. President, in closing, I look forward to working with VA and my colleagues in the Senate to find the best ways to extend health care more efficiently—and effectively—to veterans in our Nation's rural areas. We owe our veterans nothing less.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE SIXTH NAVAL BEACH BATTALION

Mr. DOMENICI. Madam President, I rise today to recognize the bravery and fortitude of the Sixth Naval Beach Battalion, many of whom gave their lives for their country on D-Day, June 6, 1944. Recently, a small group of the living members of the Battalion gathered in Normandy, France to unveil a commemorative plaque dedicated to their fellow sailors who paid the ultimate price for the defense of liberty. This memorial will serve as a small reminder of the tremendous sacrifice that these men made in order to secure the freedoms that we, as a nation, now enjoy.

Unfortunately, for many years, the Sixth Naval Beach Battalion was known as the "Forgotten Sailors." While many of its members were individually recognized for their bravery, the Battalion as a whole had never been recognized. However, thanks to the persistent efforts of its living members, the Battalion was finally honored last year with the Presidential Unit Citation. This great honor was presented to the Battalion at its annual reunion last year, and I am proud that the valiance of these men has finally been recognized.

The World War II generation is frequently referred to as America's "Greatest Generation," and this is no more true of the Sixth Naval Beach Battalion. They landed on Omaha Beach early in the morning of June 6 and faced extraordinary peril on that historic day. Yet, the Battalion demonstrated its courage and fought gallantly despite overwhelming odds. We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to all of the members of the Battalion, both living and deceased, for the hard-fought victory over tyranny that was achieved on that day.

I would like to share my gratitude for the bravery and selflessness of the Sixth Naval Beach Battalion. I would hope that America never forgets the great sacrifice that the Battalion's members made in the defense of our liberty. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the speech given by Lieutenant Commander Joseph Vaghi at the unveiling of the commemorative plaque be printed in the RECORD.

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

DEDICATION ADDRESS OF THE 6TH NAVAL BEACH BATTALION PLAQUE AT OMAHA BEACH—NORMANDY, FRANCE

(By LCDR Joseph P. Vaghi, USNR (Ret.))

We are here today this 5th day of June 2001, to unveil a plaque dedicated in memory of the men of the 6th Naval Beach Battalion who gave their lives on D-Day, June 6, 1944.

A small remnant of living members of our Battalion is also here today to pay tribute to their comrades, who have fallen and paid the ultimate price by giving their lives.

Each and every person here for this unveiling shares in the victory of freedom over tyranny by the selfless action which took place 57 years ago on this sacred soil of Omaha Beach.

You will remember that for four long years the fate of freedom flickered in the shadow of the world's aggressions.

We watched as the war in Europe spread across the English Channel to Britain. Then came Pearl Harbor. We as a nation were at war.

It was on these beaches of Normandy that the 6th Naval Beach Battalion made its contribution in the fight for liberty and against tyranny. This became the greatest military operation in all of history.

The men of the 6th Naval Beach Battalion had great faith that what was head of us was right and just. We knew what we were doing had to be done.

It made little difference if we were 18 or 38 years of age. We knew that what we were about to do was in some manner exactly what God wanted us to do.

The men of the 6th Naval Beach Battalion prepared for D-Day at Camp Bradford, VA., and Fort Pierce, FL., on the beaches of Slapton Sands, England, and in training with the 5th Engineer Special Brigade in Swansea, Wales.

At each step, we become more aware of the responsibility we would be asked to assume as we landed on the shores of France.

Elements of our battalion who were part of the Underwater Demolition Team landed at H-Hour (6:30 in the morning) with the main body of the battalion coming ashore an hour and five minutes after H-Hour at 7:35 a.m.

Of the thousands of men who came ashore that day, 9386 are at rest in the cemetery above the cliffs behind us.

This plaque we dedicate today is in memory of our comrades, and in extension is in memory of all who were laid to rest in the hallowed ground of the Normandy Cemetery. The plaque will be a perpetual reminder of the sacrifices made here on this beach, not only the 6th Naval Beach Battalion but the Coast Guard and Army too.

Last year at the 12th annual reunion of our battalion we were presented with the Presidential Unit Citation. It had been recommended by the Joint Command of Operation Overlord, which was the code name for the invasion of France, both the Army and Navy issued approval and recommendations that the 6th Naval Beach Battalion be honored with the citation.

When inquiries were made by some of our men, the Defense Department began looking into the situation and in September of last year there followed a full ceremony for the presentation of the award.

For 56 years we of the 6th Naval Beach Battalion were known by writers as the "Forgotten Sailors." Many of the officers and men of the Battalion had been recognized for individual heroism but not the Battalion as a unit.

Our being here today is the cap-stone of our *raison d'être*, the 6th Naval Beach Battalion stands with all the great body of men who have been immortalized here on these beaches. Permit me to close by quoting President Roosevelt, "The quality of our American fighting men is not all a matter of training, or equipment, or organization. It is essentially a matter of Spirit. That Spirit is expressed in their faith in America!"

That was the faith we had then and the faith we have today. Thank you, may God bless America.

LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2001

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Madam President, I rise today to speak about hate crimes legislation I introduced with Senator KENNEDY in March of this year. The Local Law Enforcement Act of 2001 would add new categories to current hate crimes legislation sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society.

I would like to describe a terrible crime that occurred July 27, 1990 in Grand Chute, WI. Two policemen, from Marathon County and Blanchardville, were accused of disorderly conduct in the beating of a gay man. Witnesses said the officers, who were in a local nightclub, began taunting the victim on the dance floor with anti-gay slurs. Witnesses said they later saw the officers beat and kick the man in the parking lot. The victim was treated for bruised ribs and internal injuries.

I believe that Government's first duty is to defend its citizens, to defend them against the harms that come out of hate. The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act of 2001 is now a symbol that can become substance. I believe that by passing this legislation, we can change hearts and minds as well.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE NOMINATIONS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I am pleased that the Judiciary Committee