

was engaged by a German tank and company of infantrymen. With his anti-tank weaponry destroyed, Staff Sergeant Choate left a position of safety to search for trapped comrades and to chase the enemy tank, which was by then moving to attack American troops nearby. Grabbing a rocket launcher, Choate singlehandedly attacked the tank, disabling it, and then killed its crew with his pistol. He completed destruction of the German vehicle while under heavy enemy fire by dropping a grenade into the turret. With their firepower rendered useless, the German troops retreated, having been turned back solely through the heroic actions of Staff Sergeant Clyde Choate.

In presenting him with the Congressional Medal of Honor, this country's highest award, in the East Room of the White House on August 23, 1945, President Harry Truman noted that "Staff Sergeant Choate's great daring in assaulting an enemy tank single-handed, his determination to follow the vehicle after it had passed his position, and his skill and crushing thoroughness in the attack prevented the enemy from capturing a battalion command post and turned a probable defeat into a tactical success."

A New York Times story written that day notes that President Truman thanked the medal recipients and commented that their "deeds demonstrated that when leadership was required, no matter what the emergency, it came to the top through the young men of America." How true these words ring today when we think about the young men and women who are defending our country in the battle against a new and frightening enemy.

Leadership rose to the top through Clyde Choate on a daily basis. His political career was born that late summer day in our Nation's capital when the young veteran seized his opportunity to lobby at the highest level and expressed to President Truman his concerns about the coal industry in southern Illinois. Perhaps, President Truman suggested, the young Clyde Choate should run for public office. The very next year, Clyde was a candidate for the Illinois House of Representatives and won. He took up residence in Union County's seat and kept it warm for the next 30 years. In that three-decade span, he served as both minority and majority leader of the Illinois House many times.

I remember State Representative Clyde Choate. He was passionately committed to southern Illinois but could always find common ground with his colleagues from the ethnic neighborhoods of our State's biggest cities. His common sense and great sense of humor made him a trusted leader and favorite friend of Democrats and Republicans alike. After leaving the Illinois General Assembly, Clyde Choate became a strong voice for Southern Illinois University.

Last year when I visited southern Illinois, my friend Clyde Choate came to

my town meeting. Though illness had dimmed his vision, nothing could dim his insight. He pulled me to the side and in his characteristic style whispered into my ear about politics, the President and our national agenda. His title was gone but his passion for the important issues of our time was undiminished.

Clyde Choate was a soldier for our great nation and a fighter for the great State of Illinois. We have benefitted tremendously from his dedication, his drive and above all, his leadership. He will be sorely missed by the people of Illinois and, most especially, by his neighbors and friends in Union County, all of whom he so tirelessly served.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SEAFORD, DELAWARE FIRE DEPARTMENT

• Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, on November 10th, 1901, several leading citizens of Seaford, DE met in the Town Council room to discuss the organization of a fire company. They understood what we are so very mindful of today, that local firefighters are a key part of our first and best defense against disaster.

By the end of November 1901, there were more than 50 members of the new Seaford Volunteer Fire Department, and W.H. Miller had been elected to serve as its first president. The first chief, T.H. Scott, was elected in early December, and soon after led the company on its first fire response on December 18th, 1901, at a building that was both a store and a home on Seaford's High Street.

The Seaford firefighters used hand-drawn hose reels and ladder trailers until 1921, when the first fire engine was purchased. It is worth taking note that Government money helped buy that first engine, a reminder that a public investment in the fire service is necessary and appropriate. This partnership is all the more important 80 years later, when we ask our firefighters to respond to such a range of threats and dangers.

Today, the Seaford Volunteer Fire Company fleet includes four Pierce fire engines, an aerial truck, two ambulances, a rescue truck, a brush truck, a utility truck and a van, as well as "Old Number 4," a 1948 Seagraves used for fire prevention programs. Four paid ambulance attendants now serve the community, with more than 50 volunteer firefighters still ready to answer the call when their neighbors need them, and 50 more volunteers working in support of the Department.

As we honor the heroes of September 11th, including so many members of New York's Bravest, we stand in prayerful wonder and immeasurable gratitude for what firefighters sacrifice and risk on our behalf. They are, truly, the best of neighbors and the best of citizens.

The Seaford Volunteer Fire Department has been a part of that great tradition for 100 years, and on behalf of the people of my state, and on behalf of the United States Senate, I am proud to extend congratulations to Chief Steve Mayer, President Rich Toulson and all the men and women who have kept the Department and the community strong into a second century of service. Again, we are very proud, and we are deeply grateful.●

CONGRATULATING BARBARA ELY RITTER ON 30 YEARS' FEDERAL SERVICE WITH THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

• Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to congratulate an exceptional Federal employee and friend, Barbara Ely Ritter, who on October 18 of this year will complete 30 years of Federal service with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

Mrs. Ritter is currently Chief of Budget Execution for the USFWS here in Washington, D.C. But her career extends back to 1971 when, as she tells it, as a newly arrived "Cheechako" in Anchorage, Alaska, confronting an extremely tight job market, she was faced with a choice between two career paths: night clerk in a liquor store or temporary clerk/typist with the USFWS. Fortunately for the Service and for the taxpayers, Mrs. Ritter chose the latter path.

Thus began a career that has taken her from Alaska to New Mexico to North Carolina to Washington, D.C. to Oregon, and back again to Alaska and the District of Columbia. In each transfer Mrs. Ritter has moved into positions of greater and greater responsibility, establishing along the way a reputation for getting things done and done right. Indeed, she is known in the Service as one of the "go-to" people on budget matters. In addition, she has chosen to share her experience and knowledge with up-and-coming USFWS managers and budget specialists by mentoring and instructing prospective managers through the Service's "Stepping Up to Leadership" program.

She is a regular lecturer at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepardstown, WV, as well as co-developer of the NCTC's course of budget instruction. In addition, in her various management positions Mrs. Ritter has effectively implemented the Federal Government's oft-stated hiring goals of diversity and quality in its workforce. As an example, she personally led efforts to hire the first visually impaired employee in the USFWS Portland, OR, office—an employee who is, herself, coming up on 10 years' service with the USFWS.

Our nation's future depends to a large degree on the quality and professionalism of the Federal employee. Oft-maligned unjustly, the Federal employee is the person who, ultimately, has to get the job done for America.