

family, friends, and members of the community learned of her effort, they wanted to add their wishes as well. When a television station and newspaper from New Orleans reported the story, people from all over Louisiana wanted to add their appreciation. And when other families and friends of sailors abroad the *Theodore Roosevelt* heard the news through the Internet and e-mail, they wanted to include wishes to their own husbands, wives, sons, brothers, sisters and friends. As the news spread across the Nation, even total strangers wrote in to express their thanks to our servicemen and women.

What started out as a simple holiday message to one sailor had quickly grown to a greeting card from all America—a 75-foot banner with more than 1,000 stars, each containing the holiday wishes from grateful Americans from nearly every state and at least three continents. Among them were several families from my home state of Michigan. Those wishes made all the difference to the 5,000 men and women of the *Theodore Roosevelt*, who displayed the banner in one of their hanger bays as a reminder of home and a daily inspiration.

I know my Senate colleagues will join me in celebrating the spirit of America's unity embodied in Kasi Brannen and all our military families who endure separation from their loved ones and who sacrifice in ways that most Americans will never know.

I know my Senate colleagues will join me in acknowledging the commitment of our senior military leaders to the morale and welfare of our forces, as evidenced in the efforts of Vice Chief of Naval Operations Admiral William Fallon and U.S. Fifth Fleet Commander Vice Admiral Charles Moore Jr. to quickly transport the 1,000-star banner to the *Theodore Roosevelt* in time for the holidays.

Finally, I know my Senate colleagues will also join me in honoring the service of AT3 Eric Lepkowski and all the brave, dedicated and skilled men and women serving in the armed forces to keep this Nation free.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I rise today to join my colleague from Michigan in thanking Kasi Brannen for her strong patriotism and undying support for our men and women deployed to the theater of conflict.

Kasi Brannen's son, AT3 Eric Lepkowski, serves aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Roosevelt* in the Arabian Sea. When she began assembling a Christmas card for him, she asked friends and family in her hometown of Covington, Louisiana, to contribute well wishes and greetings. Soon, word got out in Covington that she was going to send a card to the *Roosevelt* and messages poured in from all over town. Then word spread through the entire Northshore, and then to New Orleans, and to Baton Rouge, and then all over the country. Kasi's Christmas greetings to Eric became the opportunity for the entire country to send

its thanks and their holiday blessings to all the men and women serving overseas to protect America. These messages came not just from Navy families, but from scores of Americans who wanted to express their support for our troops. A simple Christmas card turned into a 75 foot banner with over 1,000 messages on it.

Getting this banner to the men and women of the *Roosevelt* was no small feat. December had rolled around and people, known and unknown to Kasi, still desired to add their message to the banner. Kasi was wondering if she could get the package to the *Roosevelt* in time for Christmas. When the Navy found out about Ms. Brannen's project, the Vice Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral William J. Fallon, and the Commander of the Fifth Fleet, Vice Admiral Charles W. More, offered to transport the banner personally.

The 5,000 men and women serving aboard the *Roosevelt* received the banner in time for Christmas and delighted in reading the messages from home. We can only imagine the effect that these messages had on the sailors of the *Roosevelt*. When our sailors go on deployment, they live in cramped quarters and go without the usual creature comforts. This, combined with the isolation and loneliness of combat can take its toll and easily diminish morale. When one of our sailors receives a letter from home, it reconnects them with their families and friends and reminds them just what they are fighting for.

When our nation goes to war, it is fought on many fronts in many different ways. First and foremost, it is fought by the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines who are constantly in harm's way. But these men and women are fully supported by their families and friends at home. I think the spouses and children of all of our fighting men and women know their duty in keeping up morale, and they will follow through.

I am extremely proud of all fighting men and women from Louisiana. Our State is home to thousands of servicemembers, and they are part of the overall force which protects this great nation. I am also extremely proud of our citizens who support these men and women in uniform. The efforts of Kasi Brannen are truly superb and are deserving of great recognition.

I want to join my good friend from Michigan in praising Kasi Brannen and the hundreds of other Americans who contributed to her project. I also want to commend the Vice Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral William J. Fallon, and the Commander of the Fifth Fleet, Vice Admiral Charles W. More for their extraordinary efforts in keeping up the morale of our fighting men and women. I know that my colleagues in the Senate join me in commending the husbands, wives and family back home, our service men and women deployed abroad, and the commanders who lead them.

CONFIRMATION OF RICHARD J. LEON, UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR DC

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I rise to pay tribute to Mr. Richard "Dick" J. Leon, the new U.S. District Judge for the District of Columbia. I have known Dick for many years, and I was pleased that the Senate unanimously confirmed him on February 14, 2002.

Dick has all the key qualities necessary to be a fine a District Judge. He is bright, thoughtful, and ethical. He is a personable individual, who cares deeply about the law. I first worked with Dick in 1987, when I was serving on the Senate/House Select Iran-contra Committee. He had been a distinguished Federal prosecutor for the Justice Department, when our ranking Republican on the committee, DICK CHENEY, hired him to serve as our deputy counsel. His performance on our staff was outstanding and his legal skills as an investigator, counselor, and examiner of witnesses were critical to the work of the select committee.

Dick Leon has distinguished himself as a counselor, handling complex criminal and civil litigation. But, his commitment to legal education is also noteworthy. Over his 28 year career, Dick has served in various positions helping teach others about law. He was a full-time law professor for 4 years at St. John's University Law School in New York, and he currently serves as an adjunct law professor at both the Georgetown University and Catholic University law schools in Washington, DC.

From time to time, Dick has been called to assist Congress with highly sensitive matters. Whether it has been counseling a bipartisan task force or serving on a congressional commission, he always has conducted himself with the utmost integrity. Dick Leon has earned the respect of both Republican and Democratic Members alike.

I have every confidence that Dick is fully prepared for the challenges of being a U.S. District Court Judge. I congratulate him on his new assignment and wish him; his wife, Christina; and their son, Nicholas, all the best.

IN RECOGNITION OF BRAVO COMPANY, FIRST BATTALION, TWENTY-THIRD MARINES

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, for more than two centuries, the U.S. Marine Corps has exemplified the highest virtues of loyalty, service, and sacrifice. From the walls of Tunn Tavern during the Revolution to the far reaches of the Pacific, from the jungles of Vietnam to the vast expanse of the Arabian desert, and from the walls of Camp Rhino and the sand of the Kandahar Airport to Guantanamo Bay, America's Marines have shown the world the meaning of "Semper Paratus."

Through the long march of our history, few military organizations have been held in such high esteem as the