

paid for over their lifetime. People following this debate every day pay into Social Security with the understanding when they retire, this is going to be something they can count on. They may not be able to live in luxury with Social Security, but it is the nest egg, the cornerstone of your retirement income. The idea behind Social Security is still a sound idea. We should keep Social Security strong, we should strengthen it and do it on a bipartisan basis, but not at the expense of cutting benefits. That is what President Bush's privatization plan will do in addition to creating \$2 trillion in additional debt. That does not help Social Security; in fact, it weakens Social Security. That should not be our goal.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THOMAS. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

STAFF SERGEANT BRIAN BLAND, USMC

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I today to express our Nation's deepest thanks and gratitude to a special young man and his family. I recently received word that on January 26, 2005, Marine SSgt Brian Bland of Newcastle, WY died in the line of duty while serving his country in the war on terrorism. SSgt Bland was killed, along with 30 of his brothers in arms when the CH 53E Super Stallion helicopter they were riding in crashed in western Iraq. The Marines were on their way to provide security operations for the recent Iraqi elections.

SSgt Bland was member of 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment out of Hawaii. He grew up in Newcastle and joined the Marine Corps after graduating from high school there in 1995. He had re-enlisted twice. He held a profound sense of duty and knew he was doing the right thing, telling family members shortly before the crash that he felt good about what he was doing in Iraq. He was very proud of being a Marine and had planned to stay in the service until he retired. He is remembered as one who enjoyed motorcycles and was friendly to everyone, and he took every opportunity to return to visit family and friends in Wyoming and South Dakota.

Because of people like Brian Bland we continue to live safe and free. America's men and women who answer the call of service and wear our Nation's uniform deserve respect and recognition for the enormous burden that they willingly bear. Our people put everything on the line everyday, and because of these folks, our Nation remains free and strong in the face of danger.

The motto of the Marine Corps is "Semper Fidelis." It means "Always Faithful." Through his selfless and courageous sacrifice, Staff Sergeant Brian Bland lived up to those words with great honor in that he willingly gave the last full measure so that others could live in freedom and liberty.

SSgt Bland is survived by his wife Stacey, his mother Beverly and stepfather Mark, his brother Jeremy, his grandmother Emma Lee, and his brothers of the United States Marine Corps. We say goodbye to a husband, a son, a brother, a Marine, and an American. Our Nation pays its deepest respect to SSgt Brian Bland for his courage, his love of country and his sacrifice, so that we may remain free. He was a hero in life and he remains a hero in death. All of Wyoming, and indeed the entire Nation, is proud of him.

So from one Marine to another, SSgt Bland, Semper Fi.

CORPORAL NATHAN SCHUBERT

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Cpl Nathan Schubert, a member of the U.S. Marine Corps, who died on January 26, 2005, while serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Corporal Schubert was a member of the 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Division based out of Kaneohe Bay, HI.

Answering America's call to the military, Corporal Schubert joined the U.S. Marines in October 2001. His brother, Matthew, remembers him as a skilled athlete and a pheasant hunter. Corporal Schubert was carefree and a bit of a joker. His sister, Elizabeth, remembered that, "He would sometimes wrap stuff from around the house to give as gag gifts."

Corporal Schubert courageously served our country with great distinction and, as a hero, died as a proud member of our Armed Forces. He served as a model of the loyalty, dedication, and military professionalism that is required for the preservation of freedom. The thoughts and prayers of my family, as well as our Nation's, are with his family during this time of mourning. As well, our thoughts continue to be with all those families who have children, spouses, parents, and other loved ones serving overseas.

The lives of countless people were enormously enhanced by Nathan's goodwill and service. He inspired all those who knew him and our Nation is a far better place because of his life. All Americans owe Nathan, and the other soldiers who have made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of freedom, a great debt of gratitude for their service.

I join with all South Dakotans in expressing my sympathies to the friends and family of Corporal Schubert. I know that he will always be missed, but his service to our Nation will never be forgotten.

NOMINATION OF ALBERTO GONZALES

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I rise in support of the nomination of Alberto Gonzales to be our next Attorney General. Certainly his life story embodies the American dream: Son of immigrant farmers, the first in his family to go to college, attended Rice University, Harvard Law School, now nominee to be our Nation's first Hispanic top law enforcement officer.

I am troubled by some remarks unfairly distorting his honorable record. I am concerned, as well, that the Senate is losing some of its civility, which is what makes our Chamber unique.

I cannot think of anyone who would do a better job than this man as U.S. Attorney General. I support him.

I yield to my friend from Montana.

Mr. BURNS. I thank my friend from Wyoming.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana is recognized.

Mr. BURNS. Could the Senator arrange some more snow to Montana?

Mr. THOMAS. We are not ready yet.

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I am in support of the nomination of Judge Alberto Gonzales for Attorney General of the United States. We have all heard his life story. I can relate to that somewhat because he grew up in Texas. I grew up in Missouri, starting out on 160 acres consisting of two rocks and dirt. He comes to this job with a different perspective.

When we look down the line of the nominees the President has sent to the Senate for confirmation, we can see there are a lot of calluses, a lot of dirt under their fingernails. That is what he brings to this job.

We congratulate the former Attorney General. John Ashcroft has done a wonderful job on the heels of September 11. As the primary law enforcement officer, he was not only in charge of law enforcement on the domestic side but had a lot to do around the world with the collection of intelligence, coordinating, protecting.

We are in a time where we do not get smacked and then just simply pick up the pieces and continue. We are in the business of preempting activities. When these nominees come with a different perspective, a ground-level perspective, everything they do touches American lives.

I commend Judge Gonzales for accepting the President's call to service. It is a thankless job if you look at the dollars. Yet it carries with it great responsibilities.

We are quickly learning how to adapt to the threat of terrorism. In an attempt to make all Americans safe, we have changed policy and government structure dramatically. In a free society, a mobile society this makes our job even more difficult.

The groundwork we have laid and will continue to build upon is what makes us a great nation. The United States is a world model for picking up the pieces, adapting to new challenges.