

National Community Development Association in recognition of outstanding achievements and exemplary uses of the community development block grant funds. In the spirit of this program, which assists the needs of low-income families and neighborhoods, the city of Valdosta has set a goal of eliminating substandard housing by the year 2010.

Through its 2006 Southern Hospitality Workcamp, the city gathered over 350 youths from across the country to repair 46 homes for low-income and disabled individuals and families. This annual program has also earned the city of Valdosta the State of Georgia's Magnolia Award for excellence in affordable housing. The city has won this award in 3 of the past 6 years.

The honorable work by these students exemplifies the dedication the city has to its goal of eliminating substandard housing. I would like to thank the city of Valdosta for its efforts as well as encourage the city to keep working on this outstanding goal in the future.●

#### HONORING MASTER SERGEANT LARRY PERRY

● Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today I recognize MSG Larry Perry of Bruce, SD, who was recently awarded the Purple Heart Medal at Camp Clark in Afghanistan for injuries he incurred while on patrol.

Master Sergeant Perry is married and has two sons. He has served with the National Guard for more than 18 years. He is a member of the 147th Field Artillery Brigade of the South Dakota Army National Guard and is currently the 203rd Regional Corps Assistance Group, RCAG, 1st Brigade Motor Officer. Master Sergeant Perry's service in Afghanistan is part of the efforts to train and mentor members of the newly organized Afghan National Army. The brigade trains Afghani soldiers in areas such as intelligence, communications, logistics, maintenance, military operations, and leadership skills. These necessary skills are allowing the Afghan National Army to operate independently as a professional force to curb terrorist attacks, provide safety and security for its citizens, and participate as an important ally in the war on terror.

On the morning of September 25, 2006, Master Sergeant Perry was serving as a gunner in the turret of a Humvee in Khowst Province when a suicide car bomb exploded alongside his convoy. The explosion sent shrapnel into his shoulder, and he suffered burns to his face and neck.

Master Sergeant Perry and his fellow soldiers face such dangers every day, and their willingness to put themselves in harm's way for the American and Afghani people is truly humbling. I, along with the citizens of South Dakota and the entire United States, owe Master Sergeant Perry a debt of gratitude that we will never be able to

repay. We honor Master Sergeant Perry for his patriotism, bravery, and selflessness, and we applaud his courage in the face of danger.●

#### TRIBUTE TO JOSEPH W. WHITAKER

● Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, today I acknowledge the contributions of a dedicated public servant, Joe Whitaker. Joe currently serves as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army, Installations and Housing. This makes Joe Whitaker the most senior career civilian official in the Army responsible for military installation issues such as the construction of new facilities and housing for our soldiers and their families. Joe Whitaker's service to the Army includes both military and civilian service, and he is retiring as a member of the Senior Executive Service at the end of this month after a career of over 35 years of dedicated public service to the U.S. Army.

As chairman of the Subcommittee on Readiness and Management Support, I appreciate the challenges Joe Whitaker has faced over the past few years trying to modernize the facilities where our soldiers live and work. These challenges include: an Army at war; the 2005 round of base realignment and closures; the so-called modular conversion of the Army from a division-based force to a brigade-based force; and the relocation of thousands of Army personnel and dependents from Europe to the United States. This would be a significant set of challenges to deal with even if they had occurred one after the other, but Joe Whitaker and the Army have had to address them simultaneously, and I commend him for the job he has done in meeting these challenges.

As a Senator from the State of Hawaii, I have seen first hand the improvements in both military capability and quality of life that have taken place for the Army in Hawaii thanks to the efforts of Joe Whitaker and others in the executive and legislative branches. This includes the privatization and improvement of over 7,800 homes for Army families in Hawaii under the Residential Communities Initiative and the construction of facilities to stand up a Stryker Brigade Combat Team in Hawaii. Our Army forces in Hawaii are better off because of Joe Whitaker's contributions.

Dedicated career civil servants like Joe Whitaker are so important to the work of the Army and other Federal agencies. They provide the continuity, background of knowledge and experience, and relationships that the political appointees representing any administration need to get things accomplished. This is even more true in the military, where effective command during the relatively brief tours of senior military leaders would not be possible without the expertise of career civil servants like Joe Whitaker.

Finally, the members and staff of our committee have also known they could

rely on Joe Whitaker as a candid, hard-working partner in our shared responsibility for providing for our men and women in uniform and their families. On behalf of the Subcommittee on Readiness and Management Support and the entire Senate Armed Services Committee, I express our appreciation to Joe Whitaker for his contributions, and dedication to, the soldiers of the U.S. Army and his country, and I wish him success in his future endeavors.●

#### TRIBUTE TO DONALD D. JUNCK

● Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize Donald D. Junck of Sioux Falls, SD. In November of 2006, Donald submitted the one-millionth Trademark Electronic Application System, TEAS, filing.

Donald currently owns two small businesses in Sioux Falls, SD: a construction company and a laser engraving company. He used TEAS to protect the name and logo of his mark, Bait Craft, which is used for his unique, handcrafted fishing tackle boxes. Fishing and other outdoor activities are an important part of South Dakota's heritage and are vital to our State's economy. Fishermen have spent \$173 million and hunters \$193 million in South Dakota over the last 5 years. TEAS has helped Donald and many others in our State achieve the entrepreneurial success that creates jobs and keeps our economy moving forward.

The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, USPTO, opened TEAS on a worldwide basis in 1998. TEAS is a cost-effective way to increase access and participation in the trademark process. This system allows trademark applicants, such as Donald Junck, to file an application at anytime and from any location with Internet access. TEAS has been a vital conduit in helping South Dakota's entrepreneurs protect their investments and improve their businesses.

Today, along with the USPTO and Donald Junck's friends, family, and colleagues, I wish to recognize his most recent trademark application and the milestone one-millionth TEAS filing.●

#### MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Williams, one of his secretaries.

#### EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

#### MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 1:03 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by