

This is the West Virginia that embraced me and later my family. These are the people who helped to give me a true sense of purpose and shape me deep into my core.

This Senator is incredibly proud of our coal miners that do the hardwork of mining the coal that provides the Nation with its electricity and of our steel workers who forged the tracks for our Nation's railroads, the girders for our skyscrapers, and the bridges that span the country; I am proud of those West Virginians who are now building planes, trucks, and doing cutting-edge research into disease prevention and biometrics; of those West Virginians who have dedicated themselves to be our communities' guardians as first-responders, or in the National Guard; and of those in our State who have entered into public service—especially our teachers—and of those rural health care professionals who provide essential and life-saving services to some of our most vulnerable.

And of course, our entire State is tremendously proud of those West Virginians who have earned the honored title of veteran.

Emblazoned on our State flag is our motto, "Mountaineers Are Always Free." It is in that spirit that West Virginians have always answered the call of duty in our country's time of need.

Earlier this week, the Senate honored Frank Buckles, the last surviving soldier from World War I, who now lives in Charles Town. As a teenager, he went to war to defeat the Kaiser, and he was imprisoned by the Japanese for 3½. He is truly a living legend, a touchstone to our past, and we are so proud to have him in WV.

West Virginia's sons and daughters have fought on the Korean peninsula, in the jungles of Vietnam, the mountains of Afghanistan, and the desert of Iraq—and in conflicts in between.

We always have a special place in our heart for our Gold Star Mothers—and for those who gave their last full measure of devotion and now rest in fields that were once made infamous by war.

I could go on and say many more flattering things about our beloved State, our people, and our future, but as West Virginians we know that we are truly blessed. Perhaps that is why humility is one of our greatest virtues, because we know that no matter what challenges we face, as a State we will stand together, harness our "can-do" spirit, and overcome them. That is what we do. We are fighters, in every sense of the word.

#### HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

STAFF SERGEANT TYLER E. PICKETT

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute and express our Nation's deepest gratitude to a remarkable young soldier and his family. I was saddened to receive word last week that on June 8, 2008, Army SSG Tyler E. Pickett of Saratoga, WY, was

killed in the line of duty while serving our country in the war on terrorism. Staff Sergeant Pickett died from injuries he sustained when his unit came under attack by enemy forces using improvised explosive devices in Kirkuk Province, Iraq. He was serving his second tour of duty in Iraq, and had also served a tour in Afghanistan.

Staff Sergeant Pickett served with the 2nd Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, of the 10th Mountain Division out of Fort Drum, NY. He moved to Wyoming at the age of 14 and joined the Army shortly after his graduation from Saratoga High School in 1999. His mother said that serving his country in the Army was always a part of his plan. He came from a family with a strong history of military service, and he knew what he wanted to do. He made friends everywhere he went, and it didn't matter where he was—he was always touching someone's life. He looked forward to retiring from the service one day and spending his life in the mountains of Wyoming.

It is because of Tyler Pickett that we continue to live safe and free. America's men and women who answer the call to service and wear our Nation's uniform deserve respect and recognition for the enormous burden that they willingly bear. They put everything on the line everyday, and because of them and their families, our Nation remains free and strong in the face of danger.

This past weekend, Americans celebrated Flag Day. Like so many before him, Staff Sergeant Pickett fought under the flag of the United States of America. He fought and died for the Republic for which it stands. Words cannot express the gratitude we owe him.

In the book of John, Jesus said that, "Greater love has no man than this, that he lay his life down for his friend." SSG Tyler Pickett gave his life, that last full measure of devotion, for you, me, and every single American. He gave his life defending his country and its people, and we honor him for this selfless sacrifice.

Staff Sergeant Pickett is survived by a loving family including his wife Kristin and their children, his mother Sheri Peterson and father Ed Pickett. He is also survived by his brothers and sisters in arms of the U.S. Army. We say goodbye to devoted family man and an American soldier. Our Nation pays its deepest respect to SSG Tyler E. Pickett 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. May God bless him and his family and welcome him into his home on high.

#### ETHIOPIA

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, Ethiopia has increasingly been an active participant in the international com-

munity and a leader on the African continent—as a charter member of the United Nations, a cofounder of what are now the African Union and Inter-governmental Authority on Development, and a key partner in combating international terrorism. After decades, and some would say centuries of civil strife, the 1994 Constitution and election of the coalition Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front, EPRDF, in 1995 seemed to herald the beginning of an era of peace, democracy, and development. Efforts to reform the economy and political dynamics, while slow, reversed the devastating impact of the Derg and gave the people of Ethiopia some hope that a robust democracy was really taking root. In fact, in the runup to the 2005 elections, there was a deliberate and significant opening of political space—which included broad media coverage of opposition parties, relatively unimpeded access for opposition candidates to their constituents, and live televised debates between opposition candidates and ruling party incumbents. But in the aftermath of that May 2005 election—which ended in a deeply flawed process and aggressive tactics against the opposition—the ruling party has ratcheted up its rhetoric while backtracking significantly on its commitment to democracy. A newly proposed bill, called the Charities and Societies Proclamation, is the most recent indication of this backsliding.

Indeed, for years, the U.S. State Department has reported "widespread human rights abuses" in its annual country report on Ethiopia. Among the most consistent violations listed are the intimidation, beating, abuse, and arbitrary arrest and detention by Government security forces of journalists, opposition supporters, union leaders, and others who dare to challenge the ruling party. Some of the more egregious examples associated with the growing opposition began in 2005 and include the arrest and prosecution for capital offenses of 131 major opposition leaders and the arbitrary detention of 30,000 to 50,000 civilians without charge. The ruling party also forcibly closed opposition political offices that same year and kept them closed through the eve of local elections this past April. Such conduct is a clear violation of regional and international human rights laws, to which Ethiopia is a signatory, and directly contradicts the country's own Constitution, still only 12 years old.

Over the past year, I have become increasingly concerned by reports coming out of the Ogadan region of Ethiopia regarding military attacks on civilians and Government blockades of essential humanitarian and commercial supplies. National and international aid organizations with field missions in the area describe security forces burning villages and Government officials ordering entire village populations to move to specific "resettlement" locations that lack sufficient