

Peratovich Day and affirm our beliefs in equality.

Thank you for allowing me to embrace the memory of one woman who fought for equality for all, Alaskan Elizabeth Peratovich.●

REMEMBERING KEVIN TONN

● Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the life of Kevin Tonn, a loving son, devoted friend, and respected law enforcement official. Officer Tonn lost his life serving the Galt Police Department on January 15, 2013. He was 35 years old.

Kevin Tonn was raised in the Sacramento region. He graduated from Roseville High School and the Roseville Police Explorers program before serving in the U.S. Army as a military police officer at Fort Drum and later as a firefighter in New York. In January 2009, he returned home to California and graduated from the Sacramento County Sheriff's Academy.

For the past 3½ years, Officer Kevin Tonn was a member of the Galt Police Department, where he was known for his hard work, sense of humor, and dedication to the community and its people. In his short time with the department, he was promoted to the K-9 unit, where he proudly served with his devoted German Shepherd partner, Yaro.

Officer Kevin Tonn, like all those who serve in law enforcement, put his life on the line to protect and serve his community. His commitment to public safety and to the citizens he served will never be forgotten.

On behalf of the people of California, whom he served so well, I send my gratitude and deep sympathy to his friends and family, including his beloved parents Will and Mary Ann Tonn. We are forever indebted to Officer Tonn for his courage, service, and sacrifice.●

HONORING GORDON H. MANSFIELD

● Mr. BURR. Mr. President, on behalf of Senator SANDERS and myself, as the ranking member and chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I wish to pay tribute to Gordon H. Mansfield, a great American hero, a distinguished public servant, and a boundless advocate and friend of veterans, who died on January 29, 2013, concluding a life of exceptional service to America.

On February 4, 1968, Gordon, then a young Army captain, was leading troops in battle in Quang Tri province, Vietnam, during the Tet Offensive when he was shot twice in the spine by the enemy.

Without the use of his legs, he made sure all his men were safe and all other wounded troops were evacuated before he allowed himself to be medevac'd. Gordon received the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions on that day—a day that marked a new beginning, not an end, to his service to our Nation.

The wounds Gordon suffered required him to use a wheelchair for mobility for the remainder of his life, but after 5 years of rehabilitation and thanks to his amazing determination, he graduated from law school and started a new chapter in his life.

In 1981, he joined the staff of the Paralyzed Veterans of America, and he later became its executive director. His passion for public service led him to become the Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity at the Department of Housing and Urban Development. And in 2001, he joined the Department of Veterans Affairs, VA, first as Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Legislative Affairs, then as Deputy Secretary, and briefly, in 2007, as Acting Secretary.

At VA, Gordon brought his unique perspective on the needs of paralyzed veterans to the day-to-day management of the Department. He spoke out regularly on the need to improve access for paralyzed veterans to VA services; to ensure that disabled veterans were properly compensated for their services; and to provide opportunity for every paralyzed veteran to live a full, barrier-free, and productive life.

In 2009, Gordon retired from VA, but he did not conclude his service to veterans and their families. He became a member of the board of directors of the Wounded Warrior Project, serving a new generation of veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. He also joined the board of directors of the Disabled Veterans' Life Memorial Foundation.

Gordon's lifetime contributions to our country and its citizens were well recognized. In addition to the Distinguished Service Cross, his military decorations included the Bronze Star, two Purple Hearts, the Combat Infantry Badge, and the Presidential Unit Citation. He was inducted into the Army Ranger Hall of Fame in 2007 and the U.S. Army Officer Candidate School Hall of Fame in 1997.

He received the Department of Defense Medal for Distinguished Public Service, the Presidential Distinguished Service Award, the Robert Dole Service to Our Nation Award, the Disabled American Veterans Outstanding Disabled Veteran of the Year Award, and the Paralyzed Veterans of America Outstanding Service to Veterans Award.

We offer his wife Linda; his children, Gordon and Leon; and his entire family our deepest condolences. They, and all Americans, have lost a remarkable leader, a courageous hero, and a role model to all individuals with disabilities. He will be sorely missed.●

VERMONT ESSAY WINNERS

● Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I ask to have printed in the RECORD winning essays written by Vermont High School students as part of the Third Annual "What is the State of the Union?" Essay contest conducted by my office.

The essays follow.

CAROLINE BRAUN, CHAMPLAIN VALLEY UNION HIGH SCHOOL (WINNER)

There is no simple cure for the abundant issues plaguing our nation. Not only are we recovering from a recession, but we also are confronting challenges related to climate change, healthcare, and education. While our efforts to address these issues are noble, our failure to solve them reflects a more concerning societal problem.

On December 14, 2012, twenty children and six faculty members were fatally shot in Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. Not only did this devastating tragedy leave close friends, family, and the local community in shock, but also the nation. Though it is remarkable that our country embraced the friends and families of those killed, we only seem to value such a strong sense of community after a crisis. The dramatic increase in violence in the past decade raises new questions about our current societal values and priorities: have we forgotten what's truly important in this new age? While we enjoy the many luxuries that accompany technology and contemporary life, has the lure of modern convenience eclipsed our fundamental human need to take care of and support each other, our families, and our communities?

Perhaps it is time we recalibrate who we are and who we want to be as a country so that the fundamental values on which our country was founded can once again flourish. How can one pursue happiness without access to basic healthcare, food, or the ability to spend time with the ones we love? Certainly when our forefathers declared our right to bear arms, their intent was not for corporations and special interest groups to profit from its citizens being armed with assault weapons intended for war. Instead of unbridled greed and big business dominating our economy, it is imperative we support small businesses so they can thrive once again. Environmentally, we have yet to replace our dependence on oil with renewable energy resources and reduce our effects on climate change. And while we all agree educating our children is a requisite investment in our future, teachers continue to earn, on average, 12 percent less than other workers with similar education and work experience.

As a world leader and role model for democracy and peace, we need initiatives that not only connect people and communities, but also ones that will act as catalysts for change. Increasing awareness of issues related to social justice will spark larger movements for societal change; whether it is reducing community violence, practicing business ethics, implementing renewable energy sources, advocating for mental health care, or investing in our teachers and schools. Instead of businesses and special interest groups being the sole influence on policies and the direction of our country, now is the time, once again, for all citizens to be heard, cared for, and respected. Although as a nation we have made and continue to make advances that were inconceivable just a century ago, our penchant for the new shouldn't trump our commitment to older values and fundamental human rights. EMILY ELLSWORTH, COLCHESTER HIGH SCHOOL (2ND PLACE)

Social mobility is essential to the development of the American character. The ability to overcome class distinctions and succeed economically through hard work equates to opportunity. Yet current U.S. taxation policies are harming the middle-class and widening the gaps of income inequality, thus narrowing the window of opportunity for Americans. Federally enforced legislation such as the Bush Tax Cuts and the income