

since his two adult daughters were young. His service and sacrifice will truly be missed by a grateful nation, and we hope that he gets that vacation he so clearly deserves and more.

Our Nation will feel the loss of this distinguished officer, warrior and patriot; however, I have the utmost respect for his decision to put his family first. I join many members of the Senate Armed Services Committee in expressing my respect and gratitude to General Allen for his outstanding service to our Nation. I wish him and his wife Kathy "fair winds and following seas."

#### RETIREMENT OF GENERAL JAMES MATTIS

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, today I honor an exceptional warrior and scholar. After a lifetime of service to our Nation, Gen. James N. Mattis is retiring from the U.S. Marine Corps and his current position as Commander of the United States Central Command. On this occasion I believe it is fitting to recognize General Mattis' 41 years of uniformed service to our Nation.

The general was commissioned a second lieutenant on January 1, 1972. He has served in every major combat operation of his era and led at every level from platoon to theater command. Upon promotion to brigadier general, he commanded first the 1st Marine Expeditionary Brigade and then Task Force 58, during Operation Enduring Freedom in southern Afghanistan. As a major general, he commanded the 1st Marine Division during the initial attack and subsequent stability operations in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom. General Mattis led marines into Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003—the defining conflicts of our age.

General Mattis is well known for his dedication and intellect. When selected to command the U.S. Central Command, then Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, called him "one of the military's most innovative and iconoclastic thinkers." He has proved to be that and more. General Mattis is known to carry books on philosophy with him on every combat mission. He is said to have a personal library of over 6,000 books that he takes with him to every new command. Even more important than his intellect and bravery, is his ability to connect with and lead our soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines. In March 2003, he wrote a letter to all forces under his command, telling them to "engage your brain before you engage your weapon." I have had the pleasure of meeting those under his command and am always impressed by the respect and favor he carries amongst them.

I most respect General Mattis' willingness to speak truth to power. His candor is a facet of a professionalism that has been exacted over a lifetime and exercised during a most impressive military career. Thoughtful leaders throughout government will feel his

absence. I join many past and present members of the Senate Armed Services Committee in my gratitude to General Mattis for his outstanding leadership and his unwavering support of servicemembers. General James Mattis' service has evinced the meaning of the words "Semper Fidelis." I wish him "fair winds and following seas."

#### RIDING FOR CHANGE

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, last month a group of 26 cyclists set off on a 3-day, 400 mile journey from Newtown, CT, to the steps of our Nation's Capitol. They began their ride with a stop at Sandy Hook Elementary School, a place that should be synonymous with childhood, innocence, and learning. Instead, for now, it reminds us of tragedy. The cyclists left Newtown that morning to bring Washington a simple message: It is time for Congress to finally take steps to stop gun violence.

These riders were not special interest groups or highly paid lobbyists. They were everyday people—teachers, police officers, librarians, healthcare professionals. People like Heather Peck, a school psychologist and mother of two from Newtown, who wrote that she was riding "for those beautiful smiling faces that I see coming down the hallway each day and their right to feel safe and secure at school." Like Gary Lyke of Brookfield, CT, a Vietnam veteran who wrote that he was riding "in the hope I can help encourage our leaders to join in creating meaningful, common sense laws making it safe for children to grow and inherit the freedoms I and other veterans served for." Like Officer Jeff Silver of the Newtown Department of Police Services, who wrote simply, "I ride for commonsense gun control laws."

But sadly, in a Nation where polls have shown that a majority of Americans support background checks for all gun sales, the status quo defies common sense. Around our country today, anyone, including convicted felons or domestic abusers or the mentally ill, can go to a gun show and purchase a firearm without having to pass any sort of background check. Studies have estimated that 40 percent of U.S. gun sales are conducted by unlicensed sellers without background checks. In 2012, an estimated 6.6 million guns were sold in this way, no questions asked.

Likewise, in a Nation where studies have shown that mass shootings involving assault weapons result in an average of 14.8 people shot. It is startling that almost anyone can walk into a shop or gun show and purchase the same type of military-style assault rifle that was used at Sandy Hook Elementary that horrible day. This includes suspected terrorists, because nothing in current law prohibits individuals on terrorist watch lists from purchasing firearms, unless they fall into another disqualifying category. Polls have shown that 63 percent of

Americans support a ban on the assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition magazines that lead to such horrific crimes.

Legislation has already been introduced into the Senate that, if enacted, would make our society and our schools safer. For example, I am a cosponsor of the Denying Firearms and Explosives to Dangerous Terrorists Act. This bill would close the 'terror gap' in Federal law by denying the transfer of a firearm when a Federal Bureau of Investigation, FBI, background check reveals that the prospective purchaser is a suspected terrorist and the Attorney General has a reasonable belief that the purchaser may use the firearm in connection with terrorism. I am also a cosponsor of the Assault Weapons Ban of 2013, which would stop the flood of military-style assault weapons into our society.

We should listen to the Sandy Hook riders and take action. We should listen to our law enforcement communities, who have implored us to ban the military-style weapons and high-capacity ammunition magazines which can so easily escalate confrontation into murder and a killing of one or two people into a massive slaughter. No law can prevent all tragedies, but these bills could help prevent some. They could help stop another quiet elementary school from falling victim to a Sandy Hook tragedy. They could help save the lives of children. That is more than enough reason to act. I urge my colleagues to swiftly take up and pass these measures.

#### FISHING RESTRICTIONS PREVENTION

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, on March 27, Governor Bill Haslam signed a resolution passed by the Tennessee General Assembly supporting efforts in the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives to prevent the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from restricting public access to fishing areas below dams on the Cumberland River in Tennessee.

The resolution, sponsored by State Senator Jim Tracy, recognizes the traditions that Tennessee anglers have enjoyed for generations, and the dire economic impact that the Corps' proposed restrictions would have on the State of Tennessee. I, along with the members of the Tennessee General Assembly, will continue to urge the Corps to consider alternatives that do not unilaterally prohibit access to some of the highest quality fishing areas in Tennessee and address the concerns of Tennesseans.

I ask that Senate Joint Resolution 114, as passed by the Tennessee General Assembly and signed by Governor Bill Haslam, be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows: