

So here we are, with an obvious impact for next year of sequestration which would dramatically impact our ability to defend this Nation. In desperation, I am asking my colleagues to at least agree to smoothing out this path—which would end up with the same reductions in the spending but at least not hit this bottom level which would cause us to have planes that will not fly, ships that can't sail, and men and women in the military unable to train and operate. Once we reduce and impact operations and maintenance, readiness suffers, and readiness incapability only shows up over time.

I spent last Sunday with my friend Senator ALEXANDER. The Senator from Tennessee and I were at Fort Campbell, KY, where we spent some time with the men and women who are serving in the military. We were briefed by the military leadership and the command master sergeants of the various units based at Fort Campbell, KY. We found that already the ability to train, the ability to retain, the ability to act with the kind of proficiency which is necessary in today's world is already being seriously degraded.

So I ask my colleagues, in working with Senator SESSIONS via the Sessions amendment, to consider this amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act so we can at least soften the blow, to some degree, of sequestration.

Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER and I were taken by the patriotism, the hard work, and the quality of the men and women serving our Nation in the United States Army at Fort Campbell, KY. Senator ALEXANDER and I were both deeply alarmed at the fact that these people are literally having to budget and operate on a month-to-month basis. They are not able to sustain the level of readiness and capability that this Nation needs at this very difficult time.

So I urge my colleagues to consider this amendment that Senator SESSIONS will be sponsoring. I look forward to debating and hopefully passing this legislation to give our men and women the relief they need to serve this country with the patriotism and the efficiency we need in these difficult times.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

SEVERE NOVEMBER STORMS

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I am here to talk about legislation I have introduced that I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting, but first I would like to make a couple of comments about the terrific storms that roared through the Midwest, including my

State, yesterday afternoon and evening. Mother Nature was in full fury and caused significant damage to my State. Fortunately, no deaths were reported, but there were injuries, destroyed buildings, turned-over cars, and downed trees and power lines. There was quite a bit of damage across our State affecting a significant number of towns—Muncie, Kokomo, Marion, Lebanon, Washington, Lafayette, and others. It was a line of storms that packed a lot of power and did a lot of damage.

We were fortunate in Indiana not to suffer loss of life. Our neighbors to the west in Illinois took the brunt of this storm. Our thoughts and prayers go out to those families and those loved ones who were lost in that storm.

There has been a good response by FEMA. People are on the ground already. Assessments are being made and Hoosiers are rolling up their sleeves and cleaning it up, as we fully expect them to do. The response has been terrific. I certainly have to acknowledge that this caused some severe damage but the response addressing it has been terrific.

NATIONAL CEMETERIES ACT

Mr. COATS. The bill I would like to talk about is S. 1471, the Alicia Dawn Koehl Respect for National Cemeteries Act, which hopefully will come before the Senate this week. I wish this legislation were not necessary. It should not be. Tragic events happened on May 30, 2012. Obviously, we wish that had never happened and wish there never had to be a bill named after Alicia Dawn Koehl. I regret that the Department of Veterans Affairs made a mistake that resulted in even more pain and heartbreak for this family who is already suffering from heartbreak from the loss of Alicia Dawn Koehl.

These are the circumstances. On May 30, 2012, Michael LaShawn Anderson went on a shooting spree at an Indianapolis apartment complex, injuring three people and taking the life of Alicia Dawn Koehl, a devoted wife and loving mother of two children. As police were arriving at the scene, Anderson then killed himself.

Shortly after the Koehl family faced the unimaginable—putting their mother and wife to rest—they discovered that the local Department of Veterans Affairs had made a very disturbing mistake. The VA erroneously granted the shooter a burial with military honors at Fort Custer National Cemetery in Augusta, MI, on June 6, 2012. Although Anderson was a U.S. veteran, his unthinkable act made him ineligible by law to be buried in a national cemetery. We passed a law prohibiting a veteran who has committed a federal or state capital crime, even though they have given service, from benefiting from the honors of a military cemetery burial.

After learning that Anderson was given this distinct honor of being bur-

ied alongside our country's heroes in a national cemetery, the Koehl family requested that the VA disinter his remains. They contacted our staff, me, and for over a year, together, we worked and we have been working with the VA and the Koehl family to remove Anderson's remains from the Custer National Cemetery in Michigan.

However, earlier this year the VA informed me personally that it could not exhume the remains of Anderson because the Department does not believe it has the legal authority to do so without the Congress passing legislation and signature by the President. In other words, the VA was not permitted under current law to bury Anderson at the national cemetery, but the Department's legal interpretation of the law says it does not have the legal authority to fix that mistake and exhume the remains of this ineligible veteran. Legislation had to be offered to right this wrong. The bill that is being presented here would grant both the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense the authority to disinter ineligible veterans buried at national cemeteries who have committed a Federal or State capital crime. It would give the VA the authority it needs to exhume the remains of Michael Anderson.

Last month I testified in support of this bill before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee hearing, and I was pleased to be joined by Alicia's father-in-law Frank and mother-in-law Carol, who traveled from Fort Wayne, IN, in support of this particular bill. I thank chairman BERNIE SANDERS and ranking member RICHARD BURR and members of the committee for immediately grasping the nature of this and being willing to do everything possible to help us move this legislation. It could not have been done without their support, and their efforts have been advanced and expedited by their commitment to support this and to have Senate action on the legislation as soon as possible.

I am here today to urge my colleagues to support and pass this Alicia Dawn Koehl Respect for National Cemeteries Act. The victims and family members of this tragic shooting have suffered enough and should not be forced to wait much longer to have their requests met. As a veteran myself, I have the deepest respect for those who have worn the uniform to serve and defend our country. But no veteran who commits a capital crime should be given the honor of a military burial and being laid to rest next to our Nation's military heroes. That is the law today, and we need to make sure that law is followed. By passing this legislation, we can resolve an unacceptable mistake and help provide the family with a sense of peace and closure.

My Indiana colleague, Congresswoman SUSAN BROOKS, has introduced legislation in the House and is working to carry this across the finish line.