

attend the inaugural “Vet Con,” or Veterans Treatment Court Conference, the first ever gathering of veterans court team members from across the nation. The conference is being put on by Justice for Vets, a professional service division of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals, with the goal of providing in-depth training to the nearly 200 vet courts across the nation.

Key to the operation of a veterans treatment court is the collaborative partnership of the judicial system, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the county Veterans Service Office, veterans service organizations, community agencies and volunteers. These community members partner in a treatment team which convenes before each court session to review cases and develop problem solving recommendations. This coordinated response addresses an array of issues from community protection and restitution to offender rehabilitation. Weekly court appearances afford close judicial supervision of the veteran defendant’s progress. The court hands out encouragement and sanctions as warranted.

Mr. Speaker, it may seem a bit lengthy, but we think it is important that we recognize each of the team members in order to honor the hard work of holding veterans accountable while guiding their progress in a treatment court setting.

We are very proud of the work done for veterans in the Marion County Circuit Court. Back in 2010, the Honorable Joseph V. Ochoa perceived that many of the veterans in the criminal justice system had a certain nexus between their crime and their military service. Judge Ochoa sought to create a protocol to handle these veteran criminal defendants with the goal of obtaining treatment services for these veterans through the Veterans Administration.

Judge Joseph Ochoa decided to retire after 16 years on the Marion County Circuit Court and in the later months of 2011 handed over the dream of building a veterans’ treatment court to the Honorable Vance D. Day. Judge Ochoa has remained active in the building the Marion County Veterans Treatment Court and has set aside his title as a judge and committed to serve as one of the defense attorneys in the treatment court. Joe Ochoa is a member of the team participating in the in-depth training this week at the Vet Con.

I have known Judge Vance Day since my first year in the Oregon House of Representatives. Vance and I have worked on numerous projects together for the betterment of Oregonians over the years. Judge Day is a collaborative leader who is well known in his work with World War II veterans. Leading an exceptional team of professionals, Judge Day launched the Marion County Veterans Treatment Court in October of 2012. Just recently, Judge Day’s Vet Court team competed for and was awarded a three year federal grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance. As a result of this funding, and the broad base of community support for the vet court, Judge Day believes that his team can grow the program to service sixty veterans at any given time. Judge Day is a principled and visionary leader—a true Oregon pioneer in every sense of the word.

We also want to recognize The Honorable Tracy Prall. Judge Prall has served on the Marion County Circuit Court since 2003. Judge Prall grew up in Keizer, Oregon and

hails from a family of veterans. Her father and uncle served in the Vietnam War, and her maternal grandfather lost his right arm over North Africa in the early days of World War II while serving as a navigator on a B-17 Flying Fortress. Judge Prall’s family service in the military extends back to the Revolution through her ancestor Captain Samuel Newell, a Virginia patriot. Judge Prall is part of the team being trained this week and serves as the judicial officer who steps in for Judge Day when he is unable to preside over the Marion County Veterans Treatment Court.

E’lan Lambert is the Court Coordinator for the Marion County Veterans Treatment Court. We have been told that E’lan is a navy veteran who served in the Vietnam era and has been involved in veteran’s issues for years, even starting a non-profit organization, Partnership for Veterans at Risk, some years ago.

The Mentor Coordinator for the Marion County Veterans Treatment Court is Steve Koyen. Also a navy veteran of the Vietnam era, we understand that Mr. Koyen has a wealth of knowledge and experience he brings to this volunteer position. Mr. Koyen is nearly done with his Mentor Bootcamp at the Vet Con, and as I said before, the mentor aspect of these courts is such an important part of their success. Mr. Koyen should be given a “shout out” for the fine volunteer work he is doing.

Deputy District Attorney Bryan Orrio is the prosecutor on the Marion County team and he is here attending the Vet Con, as well. We understand that Marion County District Attorney Walt Beglau selected Mr. Orrio not only because of his skill and experience as a prosecutor, but for his passion for veterans and the heritage they represent. Without the support of District Attorneys like Ed Caleb and Walt Beglau, veterans courts like Klamath and Marion County would not be free to thrive and grow. Mr. Orrio is one of those hard working Oregonians laboring to ensure our legal system keeps us safe, but fairly dispenses justice.

Attorney Tom Sermak is also in attendance at the “Vet Con” conference this week. Mr. Sermak is the Executive Director of the Marion County Public Defender’s Office and serve on the vet court team as one of the defense attorneys. We’re told that Mr. Sermak has a long and distinguished history as a public defender in what is most typically a very adversarial system. Mr. Sermak’s dedication to this new type of court—a non-adversarial, collaborative court—demonstrates his commitment to seeking justice for all through whatever creative means possible.

The final member of the Marion County team attending the Vet Con is Austin Herman. Mr. Herman is the team’s Parole and Probation Officer. It is Austin who does the daily contact and visits with the veteran defendants. We’re told he is an affable and highly competent law enforcement officer who deeply cares for the program and the veterans it serves. Sheriff Jason Myers should be commended for his support for the court, but even more so for assigning Austin Herman to the team.

Mr. Speaker, we are ever so grateful and proud to be associated with the patriots in Klamath and Marion County circuit courts who have established veterans treatment programs of such high quality. Judge Day told me recently that “our soldiers are victors, not victims. They fought and bled for the liberties we

enjoy. It is our task to fight for their freedom now—freedom from mental and physical pain, freedom to return home healthy, freedom to enjoy the legacy of their sacrifice.” We could not agree more.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 9, 2013

Mr. GRAVES of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, December 4, I missed a series of rollcall votes. Had I been present, I would have voted “yea” on Nos. 618, 619, and 622. I would have voted “nay” on Nos. 620 and 621.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. MICHELE BACHMANN

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 9, 2013

Mrs. BACHMANN. Mr. Speaker, on November 20, 2013, during rollcall 593 on H. Res. 420—Providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1900) to provide for the timely consideration of all licenses, permits, and approvals required under Federal law with respect to the siting, construction, expansion, or operation of any natural gas pipeline projects, and for other purposes, the vote was incorrectly recorded as “no.” I intended to vote “yes.”

HONORING CYNTHIA LEIGHTON

HON. STENY H. HOYER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 9, 2013

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the long and influential career of Ms. Cynthia Leighton.

For twenty years, I have had the distinct honor of serving as co-chair of the Congressional Fire Services Caucus. During this time I have met so many dedicated men and women from outside the traditional ranks of the fire service who are passionate about the health and safety of our Nation’s firefighters and first responders. Cynthia Leighton is among those individuals, and truly strives to assist and protect those who keep our communities safe and secure.

As a fire service liaison from Motorola and Motorola Solutions for the past twenty-eight years, Cynthia has been the company’s go-to person on issues facing first responders, always willing and able to hear concerns, answer questions, and provide assistance—whether the inquiry comes from a local firefighter or a national fire organization, such as the Congressional Fire Services Institute or the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation. Each year at both the annual National Fire and Emergency Services Dinner and the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service, she is often behind the scenes making sure that the event organizers have the proper resources they needed for a successful program.