

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, today has been an eventful day on the unemployment compensation front. We began the day working with Republican colleagues to put together what we thought was an amendment they would join us in pushing forward. But surprisingly and disappointingly to me, those whom we worked with were unable to join on the amendment.

I am disappointed for a number of reasons, not the least of which is we gave the Republicans what they wanted. It is entirely paid for. The amendment made structural reforms in the unemployment compensation bill, which is something they said they wanted. The amendment includes a proposal, much like that advocated by Senator PORTMAN, that would prevent people from collecting both unemployment insurance and disability insurance at the same time.

Our amendment includes an offset that is PAUL RYAN's offset. It was the same thing we used in the Murray-Ryan budget agreement this body supported a few weeks ago.

So it is totally paid for with something PAUL RYAN suggested and we adopted a short period of time ago. It makes structural reforms they said they wanted—maybe not all of them, but it made structural reforms. It is hard to understand why they cannot take yes for an answer. Maybe it is because they do not want the legislation passed. It is possible.

But I have not given up. I have discussions with a number of Republican colleagues this evening. They said they are going to try to come up with something else. I certainly hope that is the case. We need to understand that there are 1.4 million Americans hurting. It is hard for me to comprehend why something that meets the outlines of what we understood they wanted is not good enough.

Maybe they do not like it because it does not give them an opportunity to—I withdraw that. I think we have had enough talk here today. I am not going to add to that. All I wish to close the Senate with tonight is it is very unfortunate for a lot of people who are truly hurting.

It is paid for with something that is certainly standard around here. We won't be able to use that anymore. States won't be able to use the same money anymore, but it doesn't affect the budget in any way. It doesn't raise the deficit one penny. It sounds as if it is a very good deal to help 1.4 million people.

Explain to somebody who is on long-term unemployment in the State of Colorado, State of Illinois, State of anyplace, and they will say they didn't vote for this because they didn't get to offer unlimited amendments, even though there was a proposal that wouldn't run up the deficit one penny. It was all paid for. It is hard for me to comprehend that. We could explain it to someone, but it is their job to explain it, not mine. My explanation is that it is something the American people want, need, and should have.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

VERMONT ARMY NATIONAL GUARD AWARD

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, as the U.S. mission in Afghanistan winds down this year, one thing can be said with certainty: The dedication and service our men and women in uniform is unparalleled. It will truly be with the thanks of a grateful nation that our troops will finally withdraw from Afghanistan by year's end.

This weekend, that appreciation will be front and center in Vermont, when the 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment, Mountain, will receive the Valorous Unit Award for extraordinary heroism in action, against an armed enemy of the United States, during their 2010 deployment to Afghanistan. The Mountain Battalion, as they are known, led Task Force Avalanche in Paktia, a province in western Afghanistan, and they were responsible for security in an area the size of Delaware so that aid and development efforts could go forward.

In the best tradition of the ever ready Green Mountain Boys, the Mountain Battalion knows a thing or two about operating in mountainous terrain. They are the only unit in the U.S. Army specifically designed to neutralize the enemy in a mountainous terrain—expertise that proved invaluable as they supported seven forward operating bases and combat outposts spread throughout the mountains of Paktia. Upon their arrival in 2010, in advance of the parliamentary elections, they found many unsecure roads and zones. The men and women of the Mountain Battalion helped to neutralize supply lines and occupied formerly safe zones to provide a level of security during the election that increased voter turnout in those districts by 15 percent. In large part because of their efforts, Paktia province held the distinction of being the only province that cycle with zero civilian casualties during the election.

Throughout their deployment, the men and women of Task Force Ava-

lanche formed close partnerships with their counterparts in the Afghan National Security Force, living and operating together. They credit success in increasing proficiency and dedication of these forces in Paktia to the close relationship they forged. When the area of operations was hit hard by flooding, it was the Mountain Battalion and their Afghan partners who were there to respond for the civilians facing devastation. They even dispatched a platoon across the border to Pakistan to help flood victims—a border more often in the news for the crossing of foreign fighters and the Haqqani Network. The Task Force trained more than 50 Afghan National Army medics, who in turn provided care to U.S. personnel as well. These medics are just one part of the lasting contribution left by the Mountain Battalion in Paktia.

Also remaining in Afghanistan as a testament to their valor are 2 schools, 4 mosques, a community center, and 22 other projects. The Mountain Battalion is estimated to have contributed \$700,000 into the local economy in money and jobs, and it is further estimated that almost 30,000 Afghans were beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance alone after the floods. Despite having been one of the most chaotic provinces in Afghanistan, our Green Mountain Boys left Paktia a better place for the people who live there, and they did so in partnership with the people who live there.

Through 5 months in Paktia, these men and women led 4,300 combat patrols, 9 air assault operations, and 65 named operations. A total of 600 individuals were awarded combat badges, 26 individuals were awarded the Purple Heart, and, tragically, 2 of these brave soldiers sacrificed their lives. Those who returned home brought with them the wisdom and experience of their deployment. As a Vermonter, I could not be more proud of these men and women. They and the mission they so ably performed help define what valor means.

Importantly, this incredible unit is a National Guard unit. Made up of citizen soldiers from Vermont, Maine, and New Hampshire, the men and women of the 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment, Mountain returned from their distinguished service and went back to their jobs and their neighborhoods throughout Vermont and New England. This story was duplicated repeatedly in Afghanistan and also in Iraq. Because of soldiers like these, today's National Guard is a ready and reliable component of America's fighting force, indistinguishable on the battlefield from their Active Duty counterparts, and trusted with essential missions.

I congratulate the Mountain Battalion of the Vermont National Guard on the Valorous Unit Award. You make us proud. You have given us and you have renewed and built upon an incredible legacy.

TRIBUTE TO LOIS MCCLURE

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I would like to take this opportunity to commemorate the outstanding achievements of Ms. Lois McClure, voted the 2013 Vermonter of the Year by The Burlington Free Press.

I am honored to count Lois among my closest friends. Marcelle and I are constantly inspired by her deep and sustained commitment to Vermont and to those of us who call it home.

As I have worked in public service, I have often looked for guidance in the breadth and depth of Lois McClure's philanthropic work. Year after year, Lois has found just the right points of leverage for her work to make Vermont a better place.

Lois McClure continues to build on a legacy of support for the arts, cultural and historic preservation, and environmental conservation, and yet her most meaningful work may be the help that she has provided Vermonters confronting serious medical problems. Whether or not they recognize it, many, many Vermonters have Lois in their corner as they fight back against cancer and other serious illness.

The Leahy Center for Lake Champlain, the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum, the Visiting Nurses Association, the American Cancer Society of Vermont, Fletcher Allen Health Care, and many other Vermont institutions are able to better serve Vermonters today because of Lois's commitment.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD an article about this exceptional Vermonter who has dedicated her life to improving her community and the lives of those around her.

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

[From the Burlington Free Press, Dec. 31, 2013]

2013 VERMONTER OF THE YEAR: LOIS MCCLURE

The true measure of an act of philanthropy can be taken in the lasting impact of what the initial donation set in motion.

Years after the act of giving, the efforts and institutions Lois McClure has chosen to support continue their good work.

McClure's engagement reflects a broad range, many with a common theme a focus on building a better life for people of all ages in her community.

For her life-long commitment to enriching people's lives in ways big and small, the Burlington Free Press editorial board names philanthropist Lois McClure 2013 Vermonter of the Year.

Over the years, McClure has built a legacy of generosity and caring, started decades ago with her late husband, J. Warren "Mac" McClure, former owner of the Burlington Free Press who sold the newspaper to the Gannett Co. in 1971.

The McClure name can be seen on buildings throughout Burlington and the surrounding area speaking to the long record of giving for which this couple has long been known in this community.

Lois McClure carried on the work after her husband's death in 2004, and clearly made her own mark on her friends and neighbors, as well as people who may never have heard her name. These are just some of McClure's good works.

She continues to serve as a director of the J. Warren and Lois McClure Foundation founded in 1995, which focuses on improving access for Vermonters to higher education and life-long learning.

She is a major benefactor of the ECHO Lake Aquarium and Science Center—Leahy Center for Lake Champlain on the Burlington waterfront, a wonderland to children, especially, who explore what lies beneath the waters of the lake.

The Lake Champlain Maritime Museum named its schooner Lois McClure in honor of her support for the effort to build a replica of a sailing canal boat that plied the Broad Lake in the early 1860s.

McClure, along with her husband, have long been enthusiastic supporters of the Shelburne Museum, and she has made generous gifts to organizations ranging from the Burlington Community Land Trust to the Vermont Historical Society.

Following a \$1 million donation to the Visiting Nurse Association in 2006, McClure told the Free Press, "I get a kick out of donating money and seeing that money make a difference." Yet among all her giving, the realization of a temporary home for cancer patients and their families who are receiving treatment at near-by Fletcher Allen Health Care perhaps became McClure's signature project.

The American Cancer Society's Hope Lodge opened in Burlington in 2008, named the Lois McClure-Bee Tabakin Building in honor of McClure and her long-time friend who each lost a daughter to cancer.

The call for nominations for Vermonter of the Year asked readers to "Think of someone who has made a difference this year or through a lifetime of work; someone who stepped up in a time of need or proved to be a leader; someone whose acts or accomplishments embodied the best of Vermont."

McClure has been nominated by readers many times over the years. In 2006, Jane Osborne McKnight wrote in a particularly telling nominating letter, "I have never met Lois, but have admired her good works for many years. . . . She has personally enriched our cultural life in Vermont and furthered our understanding of Vermont history. These are good deeds that will be felt, undoubtedly, for many generations."

McClure has lived a life that embodies the best qualities of a Vermonter who looks out for her neighbor and lives for the betterment of her community.

The Burlington Free Press' imminent departure from the College Street building it has occupied since the 1830s creates an appropriate occasion to give McClure the applause she deserves. The paper once owned by McClure's family is moving soon into new quarters on Bank Street.

McClure has built a legacy of making a real difference to many people.

The Burlington Free Press names Lois McClure—a friend to Vermonters, today and for generations to come—2013 Vermonter of the Year.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER TWO RANDY L. BILLINGS

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, on December 19, 2013, Chief Warrant Officer Two Billings gave the ultimate sacrifice to our country while serving as a U.S. Army UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter pilot in support of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. Chief Warrant Officer Two Billings' sacrifice brings great credit upon his family, his home State

of Oklahoma, and his country. On January 9, 2014, a U.S. flag was flown above the U.S. Capitol in honor of CW2 Randy L. Billings and for his sacrifice to our Country."

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

HOCKEY WEEK IN FAIRBANKS

● Mr. BEGICH. Mr. President, I wish to recognize Hockey Week in Fairbanks, a terrific annual celebration that takes place every winter. It has become so popular it will run for 10 days, from January 31 to February 9, 2014. During our long Alaskan winters, we welcome entertainment that celebrations like this offer and the outdoor and indoor activity that hockey represents.

Ice hockey has long been a popular sport all over Alaska, with leagues that run all year for players of all age groups. Due to the commitment and interest of players, coaches, and boosters, a Fairbanks Hockey Hall of Fame was established to honor those who helped develop the sport in Interior Alaska. Because of the foresight and enthusiasm of the hall's board, they also sponsor hockey week.

The activities during 2014 hockey week are varied. There is the popular "Wear Your Jersey to School Day," tournaments for youth, puck shooting, a contest for the best backyard rink, ice sculptures with hockey themes, and much more. Typical of the civic spirit of the organizers and partisans, they sponsor reading programs in elementary schools and conduct blood donation drives as well, during the week.

This year, the organizers have attracted a major exhibit. The outreach program of the Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto will send artifacts from its collection to be on display in Fairbanks and, later, in Anchorage. Fans will see jerseys, sticks, skates, and many other items belonging to some of the greats who have played professionally.

Each year, the celebration seems to top the previous year's. One of the reasons it does is because of the major force behind the event: Randy Zarnke, the president of the Fairbanks Hockey Hall of Fame. The year after he wrote a book about Fairbanks hockey pioneers in 2005, he started this remarkable celebration. I am happy to add my thanks for his leadership.●

TRIBUTE TO MARIE AND JOHN NOLAN

● Mr. JOHANNIS. Mr. President, I wish to congratulate Marie and John "Jack" Nolan of Lincoln, NE, on their 70th wedding anniversary. Their commitment to one another and their devotion to family and faith are an inspiration.

Jack Nolan and Marie Barrett met in Pennington, NJ, where Jack and Marie's brothers were classmates at Pennington Prep School. Jack and