

not willing to go through the process and see what might happen—see what the public judges as the right decision in whether to confirm or not—they are not doing their jobs.

It may be asking too much when I have seen the partisanship and the head-in-the-sand attitudes and the fight-this-president-at-all-costs views of so many on the other side, but I expect this Senate to put politics aside and give a fair hearing and an up-or-down vote to any qualified nominee because that is our job.

Simply put, we need to do our job.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). The Senator from Nebraska.

HONORING NEBRASKA'S SOLDIERS WHO LOST THEIR LIVES IN COMBAT

Mrs. FISCHER. Madam President, I rise today to continue my tribute to this current generation of Nebraska heroes by remembering those who died defending our freedom in Iraq and Afghanistan. Each of our fallen Nebraskans has a special story to tell. Over the next year and beyond, I will continue to devote time here on the Senate floor to remember each of them in a special tribute to their life and to their service to our country.

Time after time, Nebraska's Gold Star families tell me the same thing. They hope and pray that the supreme sacrifices of their loved ones will always be remembered.

SERGEANT JEFFREY HANSEN

Today I want to celebrate the life of SGT Jeffrey Hansen of Cairo, NE.

Jeff grew up with the heart of a soldier. He enjoyed an all-American childhood, spending time outdoors, hunting, playing football, and staying in shape. Born in Minden, NE, and a 1993 graduate of Bertrand High School, Jeff attended college at the University of Nebraska at Kearney before graduating in 1997 with a bachelor's degree in athletic training.

Over the years, the urge to serve his country tugged at Jeff. He decided to enlist with the Nebraska Army National Guard in January of 2000. A natural leader, he quickly rose through the ranks, serving as an assistant squad leader, fire team leader, and squad leader before his last assignment as a fire support sergeant.

Jeff exhibited outstanding leadership as a member of Troop A in the 1-167th Cavalry of the Nebraska Army National Guard. Friends remember Jeff as an awesome teacher and an amazing mentor. SGT Brad Jessen recalls how Jeff was very soft spoken, but he always had something intelligent to say.

In civilian life, Jeff became a Kearney police officer in 2002, and he later joined the Department of Veterans Affairs Police force in Grand Island. James Arends, who worked with him as a sergeant in the VA Police Service, said, "Jeff was the strong, silent type. He didn't talk a lot, but when he did, people listened."

Jeff was also a loving husband. He met his wife Jenny at a football game at the University of Nebraska at Kearney. Fate brought them together, and they began a natural and a comfortable relationship that blossomed quickly. Jenny excelled at golf in college. Jeff would attend her tournaments, cheering her on as the team progressed to a winning season. Then, after the final round of the 2002 NCAA Division II Women's Golf Tournament, Jeff came up to Jenny on the 18th green where he knelt down and proposed.

That same year, Jeff was promoted to sergeant and recognized for outstanding gunnery marksmanship. Jeff and Jenny also began discussing their future plans. Their talks became more intense when Jeff's unit, the 1-167th Cavalry, was called to duty in Bosnia. Jeff and Jenny wasted no time, and they were married on October 12, 2002. Two days later, Jeff left for Bosnia. After 11 months, Jeff returned home and the two settled down back in Cairo, NE.

A world away, the war in Iraq continued. By the fall of 2005, the American public was hopeful that major military operations in the region would be coming to an end. However, the bombing of the al-Askari mosque in February of 2006 ignited a Sunni-Shia civil war that plunged Iraq deeper into violence. At that time, the American military was operating as a peacekeeping force, but things quickly turned deadly, and the coalition found themselves engaged in dramatic wartime operations.

Jeff's unit arrived in Iraq just before the al-Askari mosque bombing. Operating out of Balad Air Base, his unit, "the Cav," was known for their ability to complete security operations in one of the most violent areas of the country. The days were long, and with each mission they faced imminent danger. All the while, Jeff kept his head in the game and inspired his battle buddies to do the same.

While Jeff was gone, Jenny remained active, and she continued to excel on the golf course. She won the Nebraska Women's State Amateur Golf Championship and qualified for the 2006 U.S. Women's Amateur Open. As she continued to advance, Jenny began thinking about playing the sport professionally, so she wrote to Jeff, asking for his guidance and thoughts on this important new stage—one they would share and navigate on their journey together.

Back in Iraq, Jeff headed out on patrol where conditions worsened with limited visibility. Out of nowhere, Jeff's humvee hit a sinkhole and it flipped, landing upside down in a canal. As this was unfolding, Jeff pushed the other soldiers out of the vehicle, all of whom survived the crash. Meanwhile, Jeff was still in the humvee and critically injured. SGT Brad Jessen remained at the scene, keeping Jeff alive until the medical team arrived. Jeff was quickly flown to Germany for emergency care.

Jenny was at work when the phone rang. "There's been an accident," she was told. "We need you to come to Germany."

It seemed like an eternity before Jenny was able to reach Jeff's side at the hospital in Germany. As soon as she arrived, it was clear Jeff was not going to make it home. He passed away a few days later, with Jenny at his side.

Jenny returned home to Nebraska, saying goodbye to Jeff one last time and bracing for a life without the man she loved.

Shortly after the funeral, a letter arrived. It was from Jeff, and there was a reply to her questions about golf and their future. He had written to tell his wife to pursue her dream. He told her to find the focus and dedication that she yearned for in her life. If there was something she wanted to pursue, he would support her every step of the way.

So Jenny pursued that dream. She competed for and she earned a spot on the Ladies Professional Golf Association tour, and she played in a number of professional tournaments.

But as any Nebraskan can understand, "the good life" pulled her back. Today, she is the mother of three beautiful children. She still reads the letters from Jeff every once in a while, and Jeff is with her every day in her heart.

For his service in Iraq, Jeff was awarded the Iraqi Campaign Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, and the Armed Forces Reserve Medal. He was also posthumously awarded the Bronze Star, the Army Good Conduct Medal, and the Overseas Service Ribbon.

Jeff is survived by his widow Jenny, his father Robert, and his brother Jeremy. Our Nation and all Nebraskans are forever indebted to his service and sacrifice.

SGT Jeffrey Hansen is a hero, and I am honored to tell his story, lest we forget his life and the freedom he fought to defend.

Thank you, Madam President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, I think we are all very touched and moved by Senator FISCHER's remarks and the thoughts of the entire body go out to Sergeant Hansen's family and those he left behind.

I am on the floor today with no better news. We all woke up just days ago to the news of another mass shooting, this time in Kalamazoo. Saturday, another community was changed forever by gun violence. We live it every day in Connecticut, still mourning 20 dead first-graders and 6 teachers who protected them.

In this case, the alleged killer used a semiautomatic handgun to kill six people and injure at least two others