

jobs that offer better working conditions elsewhere.

At our recent subcommittee hearing on military construction and veteran affairs appropriations, Secretary Shulkin acknowledged that the VA has seen cases of documented whistleblower retaliation, and that is important, because it means that Secretary Shulkin is going to have to be vigilant so that this new legislation is not abused. In his mind, he is not seeking this legislation so that the VA can fire employees without any reason or to allow supervisors to abuse them, and I hope that is how this plays out in practice across the country, but there is going to be more risk for a workforce of 360,000 that is decentralized, where decisions are made locally, and so we will be vigilant with him and will hold Secretary Shulkin accountable for any wrongdoing.

We are still left grappling with the challenge of recruitment and retention, and unfortunately, this legislation does not address it, and it may make addressing it even harder. With nearly 50,000 vacant positions across the VA workforce, Congress needs to get a handle on this issue because these vacancies risk undermining the delivery of services and care to our veterans who rely on the VA. We can and need to do better by them.

Thank you.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE IDAHO NATIONAL LABORATORY'S ADVANCED TEST REACTOR

• Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, my colleague Senator JIM RISCH joins me today in recognizing the Idaho National Laboratory's achievements in 50 years of operation of the advanced test reactor. The success of the scientific mission of the advanced test reactor is a pride of Idaho and of the entire American nuclear science community.

The advanced test reactor is a unique system designed to support multiple different experiments simultaneously. It can serve as a nuclear "time machine" by testing the stresses of nuclear power 20 times faster than conventional systems. It is currently involved in research to convert weapons-grade nuclear material to reactor fuel. This will strengthen American energy independence.

The U.S. Navy's nuclear propulsion program is a key customer of advanced test reactor research. It is one of many ways in which Idahoans contribute to our national security. The advanced test reactor is also the only American source for a particular isotope known as Cobalt-60. Cobalt-60 is vital for its use in modern brain cancer treatments and is saving the lives of Americans every day.

Beyond these good works, the advanced test reactor is available to our universities. Our next generation of

scientists has access to this unique system on the condition that their research be published for the benefit of the American public. Through this and other efforts, the Idaho National Laboratory works to support current and future generations.

Congratulations to the dedicated men and women of the Idaho National Laboratory. They are the embodiment of American scientific achievement and leadership in nuclear research.●

RECOGNIZING TONGUE RIVER WINERY

• Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, this week I have the distinct honor of recognizing the team at the Tongue River Winery, in Custer County, for having the skill, patience, and dedication required to produce quality wines on the high plains of eastern Montana. Despite a difficult growing climate, this humble, family-run operation has successfully combined vineyard and winery functions and has received numerous awards and recognition for their efforts.

The married couple of Bob and Marilyn Thaden, along with their son Josh, are the team that makes the Tongue River Winery successful; 2017 marks the fifth consecutive year that the Tongue River Winery has won the Granite Peak Award. This award is presented to the top Montana winery at the Northwest Wine Summit.

For Bob, this year marks his 50th anniversary making wine. It has also been about 50 years since he met his wife, Marilyn, so it comes as no surprise that, when asked about winemaking, he compares the process of selecting good grapes to courtship. Bob reflected, "it's like courtship, plant the wrong one and you will regret it for a long time; take your time, choose carefully, so not to be disappointed later on." Bob has selected wisely in both endeavors. His advice on being thoughtful and patient can be applied to many other areas of life.

In the years ahead, I wish Bob, Marilyn, and Josh all the best as they continue to cultivate and create uniquely Montana wines. For their efforts, I raise my glass to the team at the Tongue River Winery.●

225TH ANNIVERSARY OF BUCKSPORT, MAINE

• Mr. KING. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the 225th anniversary of Bucksport, ME, an active town set along the banks of the Penobscot River. The town has a long and proud history dating back to the late 1700s, and I am pleased to join with Mayor David Keene, town officials, members of the Bucksport Historical Society, and residents as they gather for a founder's day celebration to honor the town's history.

First settled in 1763, Bucksport was incorporated in 1792 and named for its original surveyor, Colonel Jonathan

Buck. However, Bucksport's history begins long before the 18th century. The town's first known inhabitants were the prehistoric "Red Paint People" who were discovered through an archaeological dig in the late 19th century. Originally known as the territory of the Penobscot Abenaki Native Peoples, the town of Bucksport today encompasses an area surveyed by Colonel Buck in 1762. After returning in 1763, Colonel Buck built the first sawmill, store, and home, and by 1775, there were a total of 21 families living there. During the Penobscot Expedition in 1779—notably one of the greatest defeats in American naval history—the British overtook and burned the town. As a result, in 1783, the town was resettled and named Buckstown Plantation, later changed to Buckstown, and finally renamed Bucksport in 1817.

Bucksport's history is deeply engrained in the papermaking industry. In 1930, Bucksport's Maine Seaboard Paper Company opened its doors as the first paper mill on the Penobscot River. The mill and the town have experienced significant changes as the paper industry has declined, with the paper mill finally closing its doors in 2014. Despite these hardships, the town of Bucksport has opened new doors both through creative uses of the former mill site, as well as by capitalizing on the town's deepwater port, rail service, and location at the intersection of two loops of the "three Ring Binder" broadband network. The resiliency of the town is a testament to its residents' hard work, innovation, and commitment to Maine.

Bucksport is home to nearly 5,000 people and continues to grow. Bucksport is centrally located 18 miles from three major employment centers and is also home to numerous cultural and arts organizations like Northeast Historic Film, the Alamo Theater, and the Lighthouse Arts Studio. The town also features the Downeast Waterfront Walkway, a mile-long walkway along the Penobscot River with views of Fort Knox and informational panels that detail Bucksport's important past, as well as its potential for the future. I am proud to commemorate 225 years since the incorporation of Bucksport, a town that has greatly contributed to Maine's economic prosperity and a community known for providing the unique Maine experience.●

200TH ANNIVERSARY OF UTICA, MICHIGAN

• Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the 200th anniversary of the city of Utica, MI. The bicentennial celebration is a historical benchmark for Utica, as well as the State of Michigan.

Located in Macomb County and often referred to as a small town with city amenities, Utica residents have always prided themselves on their high level of community involvement, rich heritage, and family-oriented values. After 200