

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

CORPORAL XHACOB LATORRE

Mr. DODD. Madam President, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today to mark the passing and honor the service of Marine CPL Xhacob LaTorre of Waterbury, CT.

Corporal LaTorre died this week of wounds he sustained from a roadside bomb while on patrol in Afghanistan's Helmand province. He would have celebrated his 22nd birthday last Saturday.

Corporal LaTorre graduated from Crosby High School where he was active in the ROTC program. A born leader, he joined the Marine Corps in 2005. He was on his third tour of duty, having served two tours in Iraq and was awarded a good conduct citation and a Purple Heart.

In his too short time, Corporal LaTorre proved himself as a soldier and a patriot. The bravery and dedication he showed as a marine, however, was just one side of his personality. To his friends and family, Xhacob will be remembered as an outgoing and energetic young man with a kind heart, a penchant for mischief, and an infectious sense of humor.

As a young boy, Xhacob earned pocket money by going from table to table at a restaurant, charming patrons and earning a dollar for each joke he told.

That young boy grew into a man of integrity and courage. His service and his sacrifice are a credit to his parents, Daniel and Nicole. I know how proud they are of him, and I hope they know that we grieve alongside them. They, along with Xhacob's wife, Frances, and his young son, Javier, are in our hearts.

It may seem at times a sad irony that our best and brightest young men and women are the ones who go into battle and sometimes do not come home, having given their lives in service to their country. But that is what keeps our Nation strong and free.

All of us in Connecticut and across America mourn the loss of CPL Xhacob LaTorre. And none of us will ever forget the debt of gratitude we owe to him and his family.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the attached articles.

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

FAMILY AND FRIENDS SAY GOODBYE TO
FALLEN MARINE

(By Amanda Raus and Doug Greene)

Family, friends and fellow Marines went to the Chase Parkway Memorial on Wednesday to pay their respects to Corporal Xhacob LaTorre, a proud Marine dedicated to serving his country who lost his life fighting for it.

On Thursday morning, the Patriot Riders were there, with flags to salute the fallen Marine on a bitterly cold December morning.

"It is a very sad day for us," LaTorre's aunt, Carmen Lasalle, said. "May God help us all overcome such a big loss. We will make sure we all teach little Javy the same values we taught you and from Heaven where you will be resting in peace and looking after your son and wife, I hope to feel your smile."

"It's deeply moving, a debt of honor. We're indebted to him for the service he's provided to our country," said Peter Versekas, a former Naval Reserve man on Wednesday.

LaTorre was in his third tour of duty, stationed in Afghanistan, when he was injured by a terrorist bomb in August. He lost both his legs but never lost his spirit. For four months he fought for his life with his wife, Frances, by his side the whole time.

"I got the call he was going to die at any moment. I went running, and I was there, and as soon as I got there, he died," said Frances LaTorre.

Even at the very end, LaTorre was happy. That's how his family always knew him to be. They say he was a fun-loving person who put others before himself.

"He was wonderful, he was always there for everyone. Every person that he touched was special, special to him," said his aunt, Carmen LaSalle.

The people most special and closest to his heart were his family members, especially his 18-month-old son Javier. Frances says he's already a spitting image of his father.

"He looks just like him. He does a lot of the same things his father does," she said.

"To me, it's like he never left. Seeing his son, is seeing him grow up all over again," said Xhacob's brother, Danny LaTorre.

And while they watch Javier grow, they'll remember the dedicated husband, brother, nephew, father and Marine LaTorre was.

"Everybody makes great sacrifices. He made his. I'll always honor and treasure that," said Danny LaTorre.

A funeral service was held on Thursday morning at 10:30 a.m. at the Chase Parkway Memorial. Then Corporal LaTorre will be buried with full military honors at the State Veteran's Cemetery in Middletown.

WATERBURY MARINE DIES IN AFGHANISTAN

WATERBURY (WTNH)—A Marine from Waterbury has died from wounds he received in Afghanistan, the Defense Dept said Thursday.

He's identified as Corporal Xhacob LaTorre, and he was 21 years old.

The DoD says Cpl. LaTorre died Dec. 8th "of wounds sustained while supporting combat operations in Helmand province, Afghanistan."

LaTorre graduated from Crosby High School in 2005. His family still lives in Waterbury.

"I know the city of Waterbury will rally in support of the family and for his dedicated service," said Mayor Michael Jarjura (D-Waterbury).

LaTorre leaves behind a wife and son.

In a statement posted on Facebook, Cpl. LaTorre's sister said "Thank you so much for loving Xhacob and for the time you all shared with him. He was unique and will always be with us."

Cpl. LaTorre was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force out of Camp Lejeune, N.C.

Waterbury lowered the flag over City Hall to half staff in Cpl. LaTorre's honor.

Gov. Jodi Rell ordered all flags in the state to be lowered to half-staff until sundown after LaTorre's funeral.

"On behalf of all Connecticut residents, I extend heartfelt condolences to Corporal LaTorre's family and friends," Governor Rell said. "He made the ultimate sacrifice to protect our country and our way of life, and we will honor his selfless service by lowering our flags. Corporal LaTorre is truly a hero."

There was no word on funeral arrangements.

GOVERNOR RELL: FLAGS AT HALF STAFF TO
HONOR FALLEN MARINE

Governor M. Jodi Rell today ordered U.S. and State of Connecticut flags to half staff

to honor a U.S. Marine from Waterbury who was supporting Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.

Cpl. Xhacob LaTorre, 21, died December 8 of wounds sustained while supporting combat operations in Helmand province, Afghanistan. He was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Lejeune, N.C.

"On behalf of all Connecticut residents, I extend heartfelt condolences to Corporal LaTorre's family and friends," Governor Rell said. "He made the ultimate sacrifice to protect our country and our way of life, and we will honor his selfless service by lowering our flags. Corporal LaTorre is truly a hero."

Flags will remain at half staff until sundown on the day of Cpl. LaTorre's funeral. Arrangements are to be announced.

For additional background information, please contact the II Marine Expeditionary Force public affairs office at 910-451-7200.

TRIAL OF LIU XIAOBO

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, I want to briefly draw your attention to an extraordinary trial that took place in Beijing yesterday morning. Mr. Liu Xiaobo is a 53-year-old writer and social critic and one of China's most prominent advocates of democratic reform. After being detained without charges for over a year, he went on trial yesterday morning in a 3-hour proceeding closed to the public. If convicted, Mr. Liu faces up to 15 years in prison. His verdict is likely to come on Friday, Christmas Day.

What was Mr. Liu's crime?

He was tried on charges officially defined as "incitement to subvert state power." Mr. Liu's calls for open elections and free speech were viewed as a threat to the ruling Communist Party.

What precisely did he do that got him into trouble?

He contributed to "Charter 08," a political manifesto calling for human rights and the rule of law in China. The manifesto was posted on line last December and quickly gained thousands of signatures by Chinese workers, teachers, and retired party members. Its name is a reference to Charter 77, a Soviet-era petition by Czech dissidents like Vaclav Havel.

Mr. Liu's crimes are nonexistent. Yet his fate has been predetermined. In short, his trial is a travesty of justice:

Mr. Liu's 3-hour trial was closed to the public. Even his wife was not allowed to attend. She has been relentlessly harassed and unable to speak to him since March.

Officials warned Mr. Liu's supporters to stay away from the trial and not write about it online. Police detained some people who came to the courthouse to show support.

His verdict will be announced on Christmas Day. This is an obvious calculation so that the verdict's announcement will garner less international attention.

According to his brother, one of the two family members allowed in the courtroom, Mr. Liu told the judge that "if he was sent to jail, it might bring others freedom of speech."

I was struck by a report in yesterday morning's New York Times that an unemployed meat plant worker took an 18-hour train ride from his far-flung province to show solidarity outside of the courthouse in Beijing. The worker said he had never met Mr. Liu, but that they had exchanged emails.

He also said proudly that he had signed "Charter 08" and pulled out a copy of it from his backpack and handed it to a courthouse official. The worker's intent was clear: "I am not afraid. I love China. I just want my country to have freedom and human rights."

The trial of Mr. Liu is a sad milestone that has further diminished hopes that China's economic rise would bring about significant political and legal reforms. During the past year, as the Congressional-Executive Commission on China's reporting has shown, the government has tightened restrictions on the Internet, harassed the country's human rights lawyers, and jailed muckrakers, working with grieving parents, blamed shoddy school construction for the deaths of thousands of children during the 2008 Sichuan earthquake.

We will learn the court's verdict and its jail sentence for Mr. Liu on Christmas Day. I call on China's leaders to demonstrate compassion and genuine commitment, not just in words but in deeds, to the rule of law and fundamental rights by dismissing the case against Mr. Liu. In doing so, the Chinese Government would be recognizing the serious procedural flaws that have taken place in this case. It would also signal to the rest of the world that the Chinese Government is committed to developing the rule of law and upholding international human rights standards.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Saunders, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting nominations which were referred to the Committee on the Judiciary.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

Enrolled Bills Signed

At 9:52 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Ms. Miller, the Clerk of the House, announced that the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. HOYER) has signed the following enrolled bills:

H.R. 3819. An act to extend the commercial space transportation liability regime.

H.R. 4314. An act to permit continued financing of Government operations.

The enrolled bills were subsequently signed by the Vice President (Mr. BIDEN).

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bills were read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 1147. An act to implement the recommendations of the Federal Communications Commission report to the Congress regarding low-power FM service; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

H.R. 2489. An act to authorize a national cooperative geospatial imagery program through the United States Geological Survey to promote use of remote sensing data; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

H.R. 3224. An act to authorize the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution to plan, design, and construct a vehicle maintenance building at the vehicle maintenance branch of the Smithsonian Institution located in Suitland, Maryland, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

MEASURES READ THE FIRST TIME

The following bills were read the first time:

H.R. 3961. An act to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to reform the Medicare SGR payment system for physicians and to reinstitute and update the Pay-As-You-Go requirement of budget neutrality on new tax and mandatory spending legislation, enforced by the threat of annual, automatic sequestration.

H.R. 4154. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to repeal the new carryover basis rules in order to prevent tax increases and the imposition of compliance burdens on many more estates than would benefit from repeal, to retain the estate tax with a \$3,500,000 exemption, to reinstitute and update the Pay-As-You-Go requirement of budget neutrality on new tax and mandatory spending legislation, enforced by the threat of annual, automatic sequestration, and for other purposes.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. CARDIN (for himself, Mr. WARNER, Mr. WEBB, and Ms. MIKULSKI):

S.J. Res. 25. A joint resolution granting the consent and approval of Congress to amendments made by the State of Maryland, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the District of Columbia to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Regulation Compact; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. INOUE (for himself, Mr. REID, and Mr. AKAKA):

S. Res. 387. A resolution urging the people of the United States to observe Global Family Day and One Day of Peace and Sharing on January 1, 2010; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 619

At the request of Ms. SNOWE, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. LAUTENBERG) was added as a cosponsor of S. 619, a bill to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to preserve the effectiveness of medically important antibiotics used in the treatment of human and animal diseases.

S. 891

At the request of Mr. BROWNBACK, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 891, a bill to require annual disclosure to the Securities and Exchange Commission of activities involving columbite-tantalite, cassiterite, and wolframite from the Democratic Republic of Congo, and for other purposes.

S. 1076

At the request of Mr. DODD, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. 1076, a bill to improve the accuracy of fur product labeling, and for other purposes.

S. 2781

At the request of Ms. MIKULSKI, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2781, a bill to change references in Federal law to mental retardation to references to an intellectual disability, and to change references to a mentally retarded individual to references to an individual with an intellectual disability.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 387—URGING THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES TO OBSERVE GLOBAL FAMILY DAY AND ONE DAY OF PEACE AND SHARING ON JANUARY 1, 2010

Mr. INOUE (for himself, Mr. REID, and Mr. AKAKA) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 387

Whereas in 2009, the people of the world suffered many calamitous events, including devastation from tsunamis, terror attacks, wars, famines, genocides, hurricanes, earthquakes, political and religious conflicts, diseases, poverty, and rioting, all necessitating global cooperation, compassion, and unity previously unprecedented among diverse cultures, faiths, and economic classes;

Whereas grave global challenges in 2010 may require cooperation and innovative problem-solving among citizens and nations on an even greater scale;

Whereas on December 15, 2000, Congress adopted Senate Concurrent Resolution 138, expressing the sense of Congress that the President of the United States should issue a proclamation each year calling upon the people of the United States and interested organizations to observe an international day of peace and sharing at the beginning of each year;

Whereas in 2001, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 56/2, which invited "Member States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and all the peoples of the world to celebrate One Day in Peace, 1 January 2002, and every year thereafter";

Whereas many foreign heads of State have recognized the importance of establishing Global Family Day, a special day of international unity, peace, and sharing, on the first day of each year; and

Whereas family is the basic structure of humanity, thus, we must all look to the stability and love within our individual families