

them are unknown to us, but our gratitude to all of them is no less real.

Women's opportunities continue to expand in South Dakota, in America, and throughout the world. They are leaders in South Dakota, taking on new roles every day in our communities. Cecelia Fire Thunder is one such woman. Cecelia is the first female president of the Oglala Sioux Tribe. She has fought to improve the education of her tribe's children and the health of her tribe's community. This is not Cecelia's first role as a caregiver to her community. Before becoming president, she was a nurse and healthcare provider.

Yet even as we celebrate South Dakota's women of yesterday and today, we live in uncertain times for women. As we honor the women who have helped us throughout history and those who make our country a better place today, it is imperative that we keep our promises to them.

As the 200,000 active American women soldiers return home, we must keep our promise to them to give them access to the health care they need. Four million women are battered in their homes in this country every year. We must keep our promise to them to fully fund law enforcement and violence prevention programs under the Violence Against Women Act. More than 2,500 children will be born into poverty today alone in this country. We must keep our promise to their mothers that every child in every community in this country will receive a quality education. One in four Native American women live in poverty. We must keep our promise to them to make their communities stronger with programs that provide access to quality, affordable housing under the Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Act.

And most importantly, when the women in our communities are vulnerable, we cannot abandon them. We cannot ignore their needs. When we know that the leading causes of death for women are heart disease and cancer—and the average fatality rates for South Dakotans with these diseases are higher than the national average fatality rates—we cannot cut Government support for research that will cure these deadly diseases as the current 2007 budget proposes. We as a community must stand by our promise to women to find a cure for these diseases.

This month we honor the women who protect our values in our homes, in our communities and overseas. This month we thank them for their sacrifices, their compassion, and their leadership. This month we renew our promises to them to continue building a safer, better, more just society for them, for their families and for all Americans.

IN RECOGNITION OF GERALD J.  
LEELING

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize Gerald

“Gary” Leeling for receiving the Colonel Paul W. Arcari Meritorious Achievement Award from the Military Officers Association of America—MOAA—on March 18, 2006.

I have come to know Gary through his service as minority staff director of the Senate Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee, of which I am ranking member. His responsibilities include recruiting and retention, separation and retirement, pay and benefits, personnel policies, military medical programs, and military officer nominations. Gary is highly deserving of this award for his strong staff work on numerous legislative initiatives affecting military people. Whether he is briefing me on pending nominations or changes to numerous defense programs, Gary does so in a professional and committed manner.

Before beginning his service in the Senate in December 1998, Gary was an Army Judge Advocate General's corps officer. During his 28 years of service in the Army, Mr. Leeling served as chief of the Administrative Law Division, Office of the Judge Advocate General of the Army; staff judge advocate for III Armored Corps, Fort Hood, TX; faculty, Industrial College of the Armed Forces; staff judge advocate for 2nd Armored Division, Fort Hood, TX; and deputy staff judge advocate for VII Corps, Stuttgart, West Germany.

Gary received a bachelor of science degree from South Dakota State University and a juris doctorate from the University of South Dakota. He is a graduate of the Judge Advocate General's Graduate Course, the Army Command and General Staff College, and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces.

I consider Gary a tremendous asset that the Senate Armed Services Committee is lucky to have, and I commend Gary on his accomplishments and thank him for his contributions to our country's servicemembers.

PASSING OF RAY MEYER

Mr. OBAMA. Mr. President, I rise today with sadness to note the passing of a college basketball icon, Ray Meyer, the longtime coach of the DePaul University Blue Demons. Mr. Meyer died on March 17 of congestive heart failure at age 92. Although we mourn his passing, I choose to celebrate the memory of a good and decent man and a quintessential Chicagoan.

Ray Meyer had a hardscrabble upbringing on the West Side of Chicago the youngest in a family of seven boys and three girls. His dad ran a wholesale candy business but died when young Ray was only 13. Finding an outlet in competitive sports—baseball, basketball, football, and wrestling—Ray Meyer started to make a name for himself at St. Agatha's Grade School, Quigley Preparatory Seminary, and St. Patrick's Academy.

Coach Ray's earliest mentoring skills led him to the love of his life—Mar-

garet Mary Delaney—when a local priest cajoled Ray into assisting him with the St. Agatha's parish girls team. The “Coach and Marge” had a lifelong love affair in a marriage of 46 years that ended only with Marge's death in 1985 at age 72.

Earning a scholarship to Notre Dame under coach George Keogan, Ray Meyer had a distinguished collegiate career. He graduated on the honor roll with classmates including future Notre Dame president Theodore Hesburgh and future executive vice president Edmund Joyce. Graduating in 1938, Ray was the proud recipient of Notre Dame's Byron V. Kanaley Award for lettermen demonstrating the highest in academic achievement and leadership.

Following graduation, Meyer worked several jobs unrelated to his love of sports. Shortly after his marriage, Ray was offered the job of basketball coach at Joliet Catholic high school, but he refused when the school fell \$100 short of his requirement for an \$1,900 annual salary. But fate intervened when his former Notre Dame coach George Keogan suffered a heart attack and Ray was hired to fill in for the remainder of the 1940–41 season, staying on as an assistant to Keogan until 1942 when DePaul University came calling.

Early in his career, Coach Meyer was blessed with a bespectacled, gangly 6-foot-10-inch center named George Mikan. Mikan, who later was named the outstanding player of the first half of the 20th century, was awkward and inexperienced. Under Ray Meyer's tutelage and his own work ethic, George Mikan turned into a dominating force as one of the first true big men to excel at the college level.

In 1943, Mikan and his DePaul mates played in the 1943 NCAA tournament against the Georgetown Hoyas and a freshman reserve named Henry Hyde the same Henry Hyde who is just now serving his final term in the other body as a distinguished member of Congress from Illinois. In 1945, the Mikan-led Blue Demons won the National Invitational Tournament, which at the time was more prestigious than the NCAA tourney.

Coming to DePaul in 1942, Coach Ray stayed 42 years on the sidelines and another 13 as the colorful radio broadcaster for the games of the school he loved, then coached by his former player and son, Joey Meyer. Ray Meyer's list of coaching accomplishments is truly impressive: 724 victories at 1 school; 55 years of attending all of DePaul's 1,467 games; 37 winning seasons; an NIT title in 1945; NCAA Final Four teams in 1943 and 1979; and membership in the Basketball Hall of Fame. DePaul University recognized the role of Coach and his wife as ambassadors in its expansion to the largest Catholic University in the United States. DePaul named in its campus Fitness and Recreation Center after the coach and the floor at its home court, Allstate Arena, as the “Ray and Marge Meyer Court.”