

This is the West Virginia that embraced me and later my family. These are the people who helped to give me a true sense of purpose and shape me deep into my core.

This Senator is incredibly proud of our coal miners that do the hardwork of mining the coal that provides the Nation with its electricity and of our steel workers who forged the tracks for our Nation's railroads, the girders for our skyscrapers, and the bridges that span the country; I am proud of those West Virginians who are now building planes, trucks, and doing cutting-edge research into disease prevention and biometrics; of those West Virginians who have dedicated themselves to be our communities' guardians as first-responders, or in the National Guard; and of those in our State who have entered into public service—especially our teachers—and of those rural health care professionals who provide essential and life-saving services to some of our most vulnerable.

And of course, our entire State is tremendously proud of those West Virginians who have earned the honored title of veteran.

Emblazoned on our State flag is our motto, "Mountaineers Are Always Free." It is in that spirit that West Virginians have always answered the call of duty in our country's time of need.

Earlier this week, the Senate honored Frank Buckles, the last surviving soldier from World War I, who now lives in Charles Town. As a teenager, he went to war to defeat the Kaiser, and he was imprisoned by the Japanese for 3½. He is truly a living legend, a touchstone to our past, and we are so proud to have him in WV.

West Virginia's sons and daughters have fought on the Korean peninsula, in the jungles of Vietnam, the mountains of Afghanistan, and the desert of Iraq—and in conflicts in between.

We always have a special place in our heart for our Gold Star Mothers—and for those who gave their last full measure of devotion and now rest in fields that were once made infamous by war.

I could go on and say many more flattering things about our beloved State, our people, and our future, but as West Virginians we know that we are truly blessed. Perhaps that is why humility is one of our greatest virtues, because we know that no matter what challenges we face, as a State we will stand together, harness our "can-do" spirit, and overcome them. That is what we do. We are fighters, in every sense of the word.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

STAFF SERGEANT TYLER E. PICKETT

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute and express our Nation's deepest gratitude to a remarkable young soldier and his family. I was saddened to receive word last week that on June 8, 2008, Army SSG Tyler E. Pickett of Saratoga, WY, was

killed in the line of duty while serving our country in the war on terrorism. Staff Sergeant Pickett died from injuries he sustained when his unit came under attack by enemy forces using improvised explosive devices in Kirkuk Province, Iraq. He was serving his second tour of duty in Iraq, and had also served a tour in Afghanistan.

Staff Sergeant Pickett served with the 2nd Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, of the 10th Mountain Division out of Fort Drum, NY. He moved to Wyoming at the age of 14 and joined the Army shortly after his graduation from Saratoga High School in 1999. His mother said that serving his country in the Army was always a part of his plan. He came from a family with a strong history of military service, and he knew what he wanted to do. He made friends everywhere he went, and it didn't matter where he was—he was always touching someone's life. He looked forward to retiring from the service one day and spending his life in the mountains of Wyoming.

It is because of Tyler Pickett that we continue to live safe and free. America's men and women who answer the call to service and wear our Nation's uniform deserve respect and recognition for the enormous burden that they willingly bear. They put everything on the line everyday, and because of them and their families, our Nation remains free and strong in the face of danger.

This past weekend, Americans celebrated Flag Day. Like so many before him, Staff Sergeant Pickett fought under the flag of the United States of America. He fought and died for the Republic for which it stands. Words cannot express the gratitude we owe him.

In the book of John, Jesus said that, "Greater love has no man than this, that he lay his life down for his friend." SSG Tyler Pickett gave his life, that last full measure of devotion, for you, me, and every single American. He gave his life defending his country and its people, and we honor him for this selfless sacrifice.

Staff Sergeant Pickett is survived by a loving family including his wife Kristin and their children, his mother Sheri Peterson and father Ed Pickett. He is also survived by his brothers and sisters in arms of the U.S. Army. We say goodbye to devoted family man and an American soldier. Our Nation pays its deepest respect to SSG Tyler E. Pickett for his courage, his love of country, and his sacrifice, so that we may remain free. He was a hero in life and he remains a hero in death. All of Wyoming, and indeed the entire Nation, is proud of him. May God bless him and his family and welcome him into his home on high.

ETHIOPIA

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, Ethiopia has increasingly been an active participant in the international com-

munity and a leader on the African continent—as a charter member of the United Nations, a cofounder of what are now the African Union and Inter-governmental Authority on Development, and a key partner in combating international terrorism. After decades, and some would say centuries of civil strife, the 1994 Constitution and election of the coalition Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front, EPRDF, in 1995 seemed to herald the beginning of an era of peace, democracy, and development. Efforts to reform the economy and political dynamics, while slow, reversed the devastating impact of the Derg and gave the people of Ethiopia some hope that a robust democracy was really taking root. In fact, in the runup to the 2005 elections, there was a deliberate and significant opening of political space—which included broad media coverage of opposition parties, relatively unimpeded access for opposition candidates to their constituents, and live televised debates between opposition candidates and ruling party incumbents. But in the aftermath of that May 2005 election—which ended in a deeply flawed process and aggressive tactics against the opposition—the ruling party has ratcheted up its rhetoric while backtracking significantly on its commitment to democracy. A newly proposed bill, called the Charities and Societies Proclamation, is the most recent indication of this backsliding.

Indeed, for years, the U.S. State Department has reported "widespread human rights abuses" in its annual country report on Ethiopia. Among the most consistent violations listed are the intimidation, beating, abuse, and arbitrary arrest and detention by Government security forces of journalists, opposition supporters, union leaders, and others who dare to challenge the ruling party. Some of the more egregious examples associated with the growing opposition began in 2005 and include the arrest and prosecution for capital offenses of 131 major opposition leaders and the arbitrary detention of 30,000 to 50,000 civilians without charge. The ruling party also forcibly closed opposition political offices that same year and kept them closed through the eve of local elections this past April. Such conduct is a clear violation of regional and international human rights laws, to which Ethiopia is a signatory, and directly contradicts the country's own Constitution, still only 12 years old.

Over the past year, I have become increasingly concerned by reports coming out of the Ogadan region of Ethiopia regarding military attacks on civilians and Government blockades of essential humanitarian and commercial supplies. National and international aid organizations with field missions in the area describe security forces burning villages and Government officials ordering entire village populations to move to specific "resettlement" locations that lack sufficient

food, water, medical services, and sanitation facilities. Despite the numerous credible reports coming out of the region, the Ethiopian Government has denied that such violations may be occurring and has refused to even investigate these allegations and/or permit independent assessments of conditions in the region. Such stonewalling only further undermines the rule of law and the Government's obligation to protect its civilian population.

The aid organizations now struggling to keep these Ethiopian civilians alive, as well as national and international human rights defenders, democracy advocates, independent journalists, and humanitarian organizations seeking to consolidate and extend peace, democracy, and development in Ethiopia, are already facing cumbersome bureaucratic rules and sometime succumb to self-censorship to avoid Government reprisals. The Ethiopian Government's new law, if passed in its current format, would make it almost impossible for these groups and individuals to continue their important efforts. Under the Charities and Societies Proclamation, non-Ethiopian organizations would be prohibited from engaging in democracy, human rights, good governance, or conflict resolution activities, and national civil society groups would have to forgo foreign funding and submit to strict Government regulation.

To reaffirm and facilitate Ethiopia's commitment to and progress towards democratic development, eliminating extremism, good governance, combating HIV/AIDS, improving agricultural productivity, and reducing chronic hunger, the U.S. Government has provided billions of dollars worth of assistance in recent years with more than \$700 million already in fiscal year 2008. The majority of this support is delivered through U.S.-based nongovernmental organizations that offer essential services and supplies to civilians as well as valuable technical assistance and resources to strengthen Ethiopian institutions and infrastructure. The new restrictions and regulations would severely limit or even prohibit much of this assistance and should cause the United States as well as other international donors to reconsider whether contributions to Ethiopia can further democracy, development and accountability.

The Ethiopian Government claims the new regulations are aimed at improving the accountability and transparency of civil society organizations operating in Ethiopia. But what the provisions would actually do is erode the Government's own accountability and transparency by impeding these organizations' ability to serve their essential watchdog functions. This is not the time or place for tighter controls. Instead, the Ethiopian Government should support improvements in the quality and capacity of these groups, which are vital to the country's continued political, economic, and social development.

The United States needs to work with our partners—both on the continent and off it—and strongly oppose the imposition of this new proclamation to protect the gains Ethiopia has made in recent years and pave the way for further consolidation of growth and democracy. If passed in its current format, this bill would have a devastating impact on our foreign policy objectives and Ethiopia's development as a robust democracy. And, even if revised and amended, passage of this bill would still send a negative message, that of a government desperately seeking to hold on to power and dismantle any groups that might expose its failures or limitations. We must stand with the people of Ethiopia and with the principles that Americans hold dear.

WORLD REFUGEE DAY

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, today, on World Refugee Day, we recognize the millions of innocent people who are living as refugees due to violence, unrest, and natural disasters. Each day, refugees struggle to survive in an unstable environment where they are often unable to further their education, make a living for themselves, or obtain adequate health care.

The struggles refugees face are unimaginable. Being forced to flee your home, often to encounter precarious, crowded living conditions in a strange place, is particularly treacherous for women, given the pervasive problems of sexual abuse, beatings, and sometimes torture. Displaced people who make it to refugee camps have often already survived extremely difficult situations as they cling to the hope that they will one day be able to return to their homes.

Protracted conflicts and humanitarian crises increase instability and negatively impact the livelihoods of refugees we have seen this in countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, eastern Chad, Jordan, and Syria. In each of these countries and in many other places around the world, national and international nongovernmental organizations confront challenging circumstances to meet the basic needs of refugees and protect their human rights. The international community and host governments must make it a priority to ensure support and access for these groups so that they can serve vulnerable refugee populations. Every time a refugee dies from an easily preventable disease or from living in unsanitary conditions, we are failing to live up to our collective responsibility.

But we cannot accept disaster response as the only option. We must be working harder to create systems that anticipate and prevent conflicts from arising so we can stop mass displacement before it even begins. We need to use all our resources to prevent such crises from occurring.

As we recognize World Refugee Day, we acknowledge the strength and sur-

vival of refugees, and we commit not just today, but every day, to work towards creating a world where governments fulfill their basic responsibility to protect their citizens.

BOY SCOUTS AT THE LITTLE SIOUX SCOUT RANCH

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I wish to honor the Boy Scouts who recently lost their lives at the Little Sioux Scout Ranch in Iowa. As the Midwest continues to experience devastating storms that have shocked us all, I would like to take time to remember four young boys from that area who were recently laid to rest. Josh Fennen, Sam Thomsen, Ben Petrzilka, and Aaron Eilerts were all Boy Scouts of America. These young men were remembered as boys who were loved by their families, on their way to becoming young men, and above all Scouts. As an Eagle Scout myself, I share a deep connection with these boys from Iowa and Nebraska, along with all Scouts throughout America. The path to becoming an Eagle is much like the path our future leaders should take, and although the lives of these four young boys were ended abruptly, they were on that path.

As I recall the Scout motto of "Be Prepared," I can't help but to think of the emergency drill these Scouts practiced the day before the tornado or how the Scouts moved swiftly to assist with their first-aid skills the 48 who were injured. The Scouting community has suffered a great loss. My thoughts and prayers go out to the families, friends, and Scouts whose lives were touched by these four boys.

TRIBUTE TO COLONEL GREGG P. OLSON

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, today I pay tribute to Col. Gregg Olson, USMC, who will complete his 2 year tour of duty with the United States Marine Corps' Office of Legislative Affairs on June 24, 2008. I have had the pleasure to work with Colonel Olson on many occasions. In his role as the Director of the Marine Corps' Senate Liaison Office, he has provided superb support, acting as the principal conduit for information between the Marine Corps and many members of the Senate. His affable personality and attention to duty contributed to a highly successful relationship between the United States Senate and the United States Marine Corps. Though he will continue his service to the Marine Corps and the country, he will be sorely missed.

A native of Rhode Island, Colonel Olson attended the United States Naval Academy, and received a commission as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps in 1985. His career as a Marine officer has been exemplary, serving with distinction in every post he has been assigned. Prior to his assignment to the United States Senate, he served two tours in Iraq,