

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

MASTER SERGEANT KENNETH NATHANIEL MACK

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I wish today to honor the life and service of a dedicated marine, MSG Kenneth Nathaniel Mack. On May 5th, 2007, Master Sergeant Mack gave his life in service to his country fighting in Iraq. In his 23 years of service to the U.S. Marine Corps, Master Sergeant Mack proved himself a dedicated marine and a trusted colleague to all who served by his side.

Born in Goldsboro, NC, on December 18, 1964, Kenneth's family soon moved to Texas, where he graduated from Southwest High School in 1982 and attended Tarrant County Junior College in Fort Worth.

While still in college, Master Sergeant Mack joined the Marine Corps Reserves, following his love of country, as well as his interest in automotive repair work. While many of his fellow students considered weekends simply a time to relax, Kenneth chose to spend many of those weekends at military drill in Abilene. In 1991, Kenneth was called upon to serve his country in combat during Operation Desert Storm. It would not be the last time he served on a far-away field of battle.

Following the conclusion of the first gulf war, Kenneth returned home, married his wife Peggie, and started his family. Like so many members of our Nation's Reserve forces, Kenneth worked hard to balance his military service and civilian job with his family life. He succeeded, as evidenced by the lasting legacy of love and compassion that he left behind with his family. He cherished his time with them and was known for always bringing the family together.

In 2004, Kenneth was once again called to serve overseas and deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. After helping to liberate the Iraqi people from an oppressive government regime, Master Sergeant Mack returned home. In March of 2007, he answered his country's call for the third time, returning to serve in Iraq. Sadly, just a few short months later, Master Sergeant Mack was killed by an improvised explosive device while conducting combat operations there.

In honor of his service and his selfless sacrifice, Congress passed legislation earlier this year naming the Wedgwood Station Post Office the "Master Sergeant Kenneth N. Mack Post Office Building." Master Sergeant Mack will be remembered across Texas for his generosity and loving attitude towards children, which extended well beyond his own family. He will also be remembered for his enthusiasm for hobbies such as scuba diving, skydiving, and motorcycle riding; and his love for the U.S. Marine Corps.

MSG Kenneth Mack is survived by his wife, Peggie; his children, Candace, Courtney, Shyquadra, and Nathaniel; his mother, Mahalia S. Mack; and his brothers, Timothy and Robert. It is my honor today to share Kenneth's story,

and pay tribute to his remarkable service and sacrifice for this country, which shall be forever indebted to him.

FEDERAL STUDENT LOANS

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, just last week Congress passed a 1-year extension of the Department of Education initiative to buy back student loans from lenders who have difficulties accessing capital in the tight financial market. I was pleased to support the extension of this program which has injected more than \$1 billion in capital to lenders and has had a hand in ensuring students have access to federally guaranteed student loans in the 2008–2009 school year.

However, the continued need for the Federal Government to prop up student lenders, many of which already operate at a profit, concerns me. Companies making loans through the federally guaranteed program already receive generous subsidies and a guarantee of 95 percent of the value of the loan. While extending the buyback program for another year will provide stability in the student lending market for the 2009–2010 school year, it raises the question of how much Federal funding is too much when there is a cheaper alternative that offers the same Federal loans to students.

That alternative is the direct loan program which issues the same federally guaranteed student loans without reliance on banks and lenders. In addition to cutting out the middleman, the direct loan program is far cheaper for the government to administer. According to the President's most recent budget, the cost to the taxpayer per loan through the direct loan program is \$.77 compared to \$5.25 through the FFEL program.

Iowa State University, the University of Iowa, University of Northern Iowa, Kirkwood Community College, Des Moines Area Community College, and many other Iowa colleges, all issue loans through the direct loan program. I continue to hear from students and financial aid administrators at those schools that the program serves them well. An added benefit of the direct loan program is that in these troubled economic times students at direct loan schools receive their student loans without the worry of whether their lender will be there for them next year. Any college worried about loan availability for their students should immediately sign up for the direct loan program.

But the problem is deeper than any one school or lender. As our economy continues to falter and the cost of college rises, we owe it to our young people and their parents to provide student aid that is reliable, efficient and comprehensive. The Federal student loan program is one of the best investments our country can make. It should be a priority to provide those loans in the most fiscally responsible way possible.

CHINA'S DOUBLE TEN NATIONAL DAY

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou and Ambassador Jason Yuan on celebrating China's Double Ten National Day.

The people of Taiwan should be proud of their freedom, their political system, and Taiwan's strong economy. With good schools, excellent health facilities, and a sophisticated transit system, Taiwan is a model of development for the region. National Day affords us the opportunity to reflect on those successes.

In addition, I want to recognize Taiwan's ongoing efforts to strengthen its ties with China and its continual commitment to constructive relationships with democratic nations throughout the world. Taiwan and the United States have enjoyed a very positive partnership through the years—a relationship that I am confident will continue to benefit our respective citizens.

On this Chinese National Day, I again offer my congratulations to the Taiwanese government and people for their past success and send my best wishes for this year's celebration.

TRIBUTE TO BILL GATES, SR.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize Bill Gates, Sr.'s contributions to civic programs and initiatives that have changed the lives of many in our home State of Washington and across the country. On Friday September 26, 2008, the University of Washington will be holding an event to honor Bill Gates, Sr. and it is my pleasure to share my sincere gratitude to Bill Gates, Sr. for his extensive civic engagement and accomplishments.

Bill Gates, Sr. has a long history of serving others. First as an Eagle Scout and later serving in the U.S. Army during World War II, Bill Gates, Sr. made a conscious choice to lead by example. Bill Gates, Sr. has dedicated his time and efforts to numerous organizations that strive to improve the lives of individuals and families across the Nation and world. His active leadership roles in organizations such as the United Way of King County and the United Way of America; local and national boards of Planned Parenthood; and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation are just a few examples of his passion and commitment to helping others.

As a fellow education advocate, I appreciate the work Bill Gates, Sr. has done to increase the ability of our youth to access and afford a quality education. Bill Gates, Sr. clearly understands the importance of education and he has worked on this issue from many angles: as a chair of a Seattle Public School Levy Campaign, a member of the Board of Regents for the University of Washington, and as cochair of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Bill Gates, Sr. is an integral part of decisions made about influential