

down the road. But that is the way it is.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, would the leader yield for a question?

Mr. REID. I would be happy to yield.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I know the distinguished majority leader has been working very hard to accommodate Senators in a vote. I know he has the support of every member of our caucus in doing that. I believe I heard the distinguished leader say we will come in at 10.

Mr. REID. Yes. If I thought it would help to come in earlier, I would do that. But it would only be—

Mr. LEAHY. The Senator anticipated my next question. I appreciate that.

Mr. REID. We likely cannot do anything until the House votes on the bill tomorrow. We are trying to work through that. I have to say, the House has been extremely cooperative in everything we have done the last few days. I see on the floor my friend, the chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee. She knows how hard this has been and how cooperative the Republicans have been. No one has been more so than the ranking member of the Environment and Public Works Committee, JIM INHOFE. I will always admire JIM INHOFE for the manner in which he approached this important piece of legislation. We pass out accolades on this floor, about everyone, how hard they work, but we would not be able to get this bill done except for JIM INHOFE. Fact.

So I am disappointed we cannot do this tonight. As the chairman of the Judiciary Committee just said, we would stay here tonight on our side until the wee hours of the morning, because we have some things to do. I was scheduled to be in Lake Tahoe tomorrow, but I can't be there. Other people have certainly more important trips than that. But it is one of the issues we have to face with these jobs we have, which are a tremendous privilege, but sometimes we do not have the ability, as a Governor does or the President does, a member of the Court does, to say: This is the schedule. There are 100 different leaders here, each thinking they have the best way of solving the problems of the world, and it takes a while sometimes to work through their opinions.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ROCK ISLAND ARSENAL'S 150TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr. DURBIN. I rise today to celebrate a major milestone for Illinois and

the nation. One hundred and fifty years ago on July 11, 1862, Illinois' own President Lincoln signed an Act of Congress that established the Rock Island Arsenal.

Rock Island started out during the Civil War as a small Union prisoner of war camp which also held and distributed supplies. It has grown into a critical manufacturer of 21st century supplies for our troops in the field. And in doing so, it also serves as the lifeblood of the Quad Cities region that hosts it.

In celebration of its 150th anniversary, I would like to highlight Rock Island Arsenal's impressive history and the impact it has had on the community and the nation.

Rock Island has a long history of producing supplies for our military. It was rifle cartridges and siege howitzers in the Spanish-American War of 1898. In World War I, it was rifles and a variety of personal equipment. By World War II, the Arsenal's emphasis had shifted to artillery production, and workers increased production from 75 artillery cartridges a year to 600 a month during the war. This ability to rise to the challenge for our servicemembers is a theme at Rock Island.

Products weren't the only thing changing at the Arsenal. So were demographics. Everyone is familiar with the image of Rosie the Riveter, as women stepped into the workforce. The Arsenal was no different—32 percent of the workforce was female during World War II.

Yet some of the workers were only teenagers. Squeezing in 40 hours of work while going to school, students were picked up after class and bused to the island. They worked Saturdays too. In a not uncommon story, Arsenal worker Anna Mae said her wartime effort was a family affair. "My mom worked on one side of the island, my stepdad on the other and I was in the middle."

Years after the war ended, Anna Mae returned to work at the Arsenal until retirement. When she learned that her war efforts contributed to her pension, she articulated the selflessness of so many when she said, "I never would have thought (about) that—we were just trying to win a war."

In the Korean War/Conflict, the sense of urgency on the island returned. Crews worked 10-hour days, 6 days a week, and sometimes on Sunday to get weapons and equipment shipped out. For Vietnam, the Arsenal created new products designed to counteract the Viet Cong's guerilla "hit and run" tactics, such as the M102 lightweight howitzer. The Arsenal continued to contribute to systems that meant life or death for the soldiers for the 1991 Gulf War—and then adapted as the military went through a drawdown after the war ended.

But as we all know, that peace did not last long. A little more than 10 years ago, the attacks of September 11th changed our world—and the nation again found itself at war. Again to

their credit, the Arsenal workforce went into overdrive to provide our troops what they needed. Machinist Jeff Roberts recalled, "Everyone's mentality is it's one collaborative effort to get the soldiers what they need as fast as you can."

They did—in a unique way. The Arsenal has the Department of Defense's only vertically integrated metal manufacturing capability. It has the only remaining foundry in the U.S. Army. It means that raw materials can go in one side and come out the other as very intricate finished products. It does this with a number of materials, including stainless steel, carbon steels, and titanium. The result—new equipment to better protect our troops, especially on short notice.

We all know how devastating improvised explosive devices (IEDs) were to U.S. troops in Iraq and continue to be to servicemembers in Afghanistan. In 2006 and 2007, our nation had fallen short in armor kits for Humvees and other ground vehicles to protect our troops. I urged then-Secretary Gates to use Rock Island's production capability to get these kits to our troops faster. Secretary Gates agreed. Rock Island became the single largest producer of these armor kits. Talk about saving lives.

Lieutenant General Raymond Mason, Army's Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics, recently noted, "It was critical that we had (the organic industrial base), along with our manufacturing capabilities at our arsenals at Watervliet, Rock Island and Pine Bluff. This allowed us to expand for wartime demand . . . " He also added, "By ensuring we maintain a core level of work, we then retain expandability capabilities if something else happens in the world."

As I look to the future, I would say that is exactly what we are doing at Rock Island. Earlier this year, I introduced the Army Arsenal Strategic Workload Enhancement Act of 2012, with the support of Senator MARK KIRK, Senator GRASSLEY, Senator HARKIN, and the Senators from New York and Arkansas.

The bill does just what General Mason was describing. It would create a strategic plan to ensure arsenals receive the workload they need to keep workers' skills sharp for whatever the future may hold.

We worked with Senator LEVIN and Senator MCCAIN on this. I was pleased that major portions of our bill were included in the report accompanying the National Defense Authorization Act, which was voted out of the Armed Services Committee last month.

But the Arsenal isn't complacent. They are partnering with private industry interested in working with titanium and other lightweight metals at the Quad-City Manufacturing Lab which opened in 2010. In these times of tough budget decisions, these partnerships enable Rock Island to sustain itself at no cost to the government

through a Working Capital Fund. Just like the private sector, the Arsenal is out there competing for work—and winning it. They have signed agreements with Sivyer Steel, Mack Defense and others.

But Rock Island is about more than just production—it is also the bedrock of the Quad-City region as the area's largest employer. One example of family commitment to the Arsenal is Jeff Roberts, a machinist at Rock Island. His great-great-great-great grandfather was a master carpenter at Rock Island in the 1860s and helped build the island's iconic Clock Tower. Working at the Arsenal for our men and women in uniform gave Jeff a clear understanding of, as he described it, "what you're doing and why you're doing it." He added, "I've never had the job satisfaction I have now until I came here."

Jeff's experience is replicated all across the Arsenal. The island has more than 70 military and private sector organizations as tenants. Over the years, the Arsenal has welcomed the Army Corps of Engineers, Army Sustainment Command, Joint Munitions Command, and Army Contracting Command, among others. Most recently, Rock Island welcomed the headquarters for First Army, which is in charge of mobilizing, training and deploying our Army Reservists. It may not always have the glitz of a front-page story. But their collective dedication shows how central Rock Island is to the support of our military, every day.

Rock Island Arsenal is a large and vibrant installation, with a rich history and an impressive array of ongoing activities. Rock Island Arsenal has made remarkable contributions over the past 150 years. It has served us through our difficult times and will continue to do so in the future.

I thank those who serve at the Arsenal today and those who have served in the past. And also to those who have joined me in honoring Rock Island Arsenal in its 150-year anniversary celebration.

INDEPENDENCE DAY 2012

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I rise today to commemorate our Nation's Independence Day.

Over 230 years ago, a collection of very brave and thoughtful men put their names and lives on the line to support a visionary idea, writing:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

Today we honor those patriots who crafted our country's identity, and we appreciate every man, woman, and child who has shared it, refined it, and lived it. There is a reason why the rest of the world looks to America as a bold

leader, and it began in Philadelphia on July 4, 1776. It continues nationwide today in our independent spirit, our ambition, and our sense of generosity, and we certainly see that in my home State of Alaska.

We see it in communities large and small, as we solve problems and work together to make life better and the future brighter. Today, we take a moment to realize that we do all this without thinking about it—and that few other countries in the world can boast the same.

But as we take a moment to appreciate all that we have, we must never forget the cost of freedom. Thousands have given their lives to secure the blessings of liberty. Men and women in uniform are serving bravely overseas, enduring tremendous sacrifice, while countless others guard our shores, protect our interests abroad, and defend our skies here at home. Their burden is shared by the families who endure empty spots at the dinner table, missed birthdays, and absence from special moments like a child's first steps. Freedom is indeed perishable and we are grateful for those who safeguard our liberty for our children and grandchildren.

As Americans, we honor our veterans and the freedoms they defend. We speak our minds and we think big thoughts—bounded only by the limits of our imagination.

On this Independence Day, I am honored to represent Alaska in the United States Senate.

Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, I rise today in the tradition of patriotic celebration to recognize 236 years of American independence. The Fourth of July is not only a proud and inspiring symbol of our nation's independence, but of our undeniable strength and unity. As we celebrate Independence Day this year, I am thankful for our forefathers' struggle to afford us freedom and liberty which we enjoy today.

As the first battles of the Revolutionary War broke out in April 1775, many colonists were skeptical of complete independence from Great Britain. By the middle of the following year, tensions and hostility were high. As revolutionary sentiment spread, so too did the colonists' desire to become liberated from Great Britain.

On July 2, 1776, the Continental Congress voted in favor of a resolution for independence. Two days later, our Founding Fathers adopted the Declaration of Independence, marking the United States' break with Great Britain. In 1870, the U.S. Congress instituted July 4th as a federal holiday. As Americans, we are proud to celebrate this important national holiday, a symbol of our patriotism and freedom.

On the eve of this celebration, we also pay tribute to today's heroes; America's brave men and women in uniform who have fought tirelessly to protect and preserve the very freedom afforded to us by our Founding Fathers. Their perseverance in the face of

adversity is a testament to the strength of the greatest military in the world. We are proud to honor our veterans, active duty soldiers, and military families for their grave sacrifices made for the safety and security of this great nation.

Next week, as we gather with family and friends, let us reflect on the trials and tribulations of our nation's path to independence and the everlasting impact of this defining moment in America's history. With appreciation for the freedoms we enjoy today, I ask my colleagues to join me in commemorating the birth of our Nation's independence.

CONGRATULATING THE 2012 NATIONAL ASSOCIATION

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to commend three outstanding Vermont companies that were recently singled out for recognition at the 2012 Fancy Food Show in Washington, D.C. These vendors were among the select 110 Silver Finalists for the show's coveted Specialty Outstanding Food Innovation, soft, gold awards, widely considered to be one of the top honors in the specialty food industry. The soft Awards, from the National Association for the Specialty Food Trade (NASFT), recognize the best in specialty food and beverage and are a coveted industry honor. This year's contest was the most competitive in the history of the awards, with a record 2,520 entries.

Two of the vendors, Vermont Butter and Cheese Creamery, located in Websterville, and Big Picture Farm L3C, located in Townshend, won the gold soft in their categories, while Grafton Village Cheese, located in Grafton, represented Vermont proudly as a finalist in the category for outstanding cheese or dairy products for their new cheese, Cave Aged Leyden.

Vermont Butter and Cheese Creamery's owners, Allison Hooper and Bob Reese, deserve well-earned congratulations for winning three gold soft Awards, including Best Product Line, Best Cheese or Dairy Product for their aged goat cheese Bonne Bouche, and Best Perishable Food Service Product for their Sea Salt Crystal Cultured Butter. Allison and Bob's extraordinary achievement demonstrates, beyond a doubt, that Vermont Butter and Cheese Creamery has succeeded at building a high quality, superior brand that reflects the values and ethos of Vermont.

Congratulations are due as well to Big Picture Farm's owners, Louisa Conrad and Lucas Farrell, for winning a gold soft Award in the Confectionary Category for their Farmstead Goat Milk Caramels. When I met this young couple last week, I was taken with their energy and excitement for both their goats and their award winning caramels. Earlier this year, Louisa and Lucas received a U.S. Department of Agriculture Value Added Producer Grant which helped them expand their farm, hire additional staff members,