

this month, 33 tribes will be recognized with Congressional Gold Medals to celebrate this significant contribution during the Second World War. This recognition is both historic and overdue.

Throughout the military history of the United States, Native Americans have served bravely and honorably. We are grateful to these soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen for their tradition of unwavering patriotism.

As we celebrate Native American contributions to our country, we must also examine the unique struggles faced by these communities and work together to find solutions. I am proud of the significant steps we took earlier this year to confront the long-ignored epidemic of violence against Native women through reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act, a bill I authored with Senator CRAPO. Nearly three out of five Indian women have been assaulted by their spouses or intimate partners. On some reservations, Native American women are murdered at a rate more than times the national average. Those statistics are chilling. Native women are being brutalized and killed at rates that simply shock the conscience.

The Violence Against Women Reauthorization of 2013 addresses this problem directly and provides landmark protections for Native American women. These include expanding the jurisdiction of tribal courts in several ways. First, the law clarifies that tribal courts have the authority to issue and enforce tribal protection orders, a tool that is necessary to stop the escalation of violence. Second, and perhaps most importantly, it recognizes the jurisdiction of tribal courts to prosecute non-Indians who abuse Native women on tribal lands.

More than 50 percent of Native American women are married to non-Native American men. Before the Violence Against Women Act was reauthorized this year, tribal courts were unable to prosecute these men if they committed acts of domestic abuse. The Federal authorities who had jurisdiction were often hours away from tribal lands and ill-equipped to prosecute these crimes. As a result, countless victims were left without protection and offenders were allowed to prey upon women with impunity. As a former prosecutor, I was appalled, and I am proud that we fixed this glaring problem with the enactment of these historic changes.

Beyond resolving jurisdictional issues, VAWA improved the grant making process to Indian tribal coalitions to ensure tribes are better able to respond to domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking. It creates new Federal crimes with tougher penalties for offenses often committed against Native American women and encourages greater cooperation between the Federal Government and tribal governments.

The success of VAWA, and the inclusion of these historic provisions, was the result of years of careful investiga-

tion and creative problem solving. We worked closely with tribal leaders and the National Congress of American Indians and in close consultation with the Indian Affairs Committee. I would like to thank the former chairman of that committee, Senator Daniel Akaka, and current chairwoman MARIA CANTWELL for their cooperation and persistence on these important measures.

Another area of law critical to the protection of civil rights for Native Americans is the Voting Rights Act. I am working hard with members from both sides of the aisle to restore the vital protections of this landmark law, undermined by the Supreme Court's recent decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*.

The Voting Rights Act is the most successful piece of civil rights legislation in this Nation's history. It has worked to protect the Constitution's guarantees against racial discrimination in voting for nearly five decades. It has helped minorities of all races—including Native Americans—overcome major barriers to participation in the political process. For example, in 2008, in Charles Mix County, SD, the Department of Justice found evidence of discriminatory intent by the officials of the county, who had attempted to dilute the voting strength of Native Americans. The Voting Rights Act prevented these discriminatory actions from taking place. It is imperative that we reinvigorate and restore these protections.

In addition to our legislative efforts, we are also making strides in confirming Native American judges to our Federal courts. President Obama nominated Diane J. Humetewa, a Native American woman, to serve on the U.S. district court for Arizona on September 19, 2013. Humetewa, a member of the Hopi Tribe, was the U.S. attorney in Arizona between 2007 and 2009, a position to which she was nominated by former President George W. Bush at the urging of Senator JOHN MCCAIN. If the Senate confirms her nomination, she would become the only active member of a Native American tribe to serve in the Federal judiciary and the first Native American woman ever to serve on the Federal bench.

This month, let us celebrate the Native American contributions that make this Nation better and stronger. And let us renew our commitment to work together with leaders of these sovereign nations to address ongoing challenges to ensure that all who live in this great country are afforded the respect, dignity and opportunities they deserve.

EMPLOYEE BENEFIT RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate the Employee Benefit Research Institute on their 35th anniversary. EBRI was founded in 1978 with the purpose of conducting re-

search on employee benefit plans and distributing that information to the public. Their mission "is to contribute to, to encourage, and to enhance the development of sound employee benefit programs and sound public policy through objective research and education."

EBRI has fulfilled its mission and purpose for 35 years in a nonpartisan and unbiased manner. That is why EBRI's research staff is frequently asked to testify before Congress, including several times before the Finance Committee. EBRI produces trustworthy analysis on both health and retirement issues. EBRI does not take policy positions and they do not lobby—they provide us with just the facts without spin. When it comes to retirement and health policy, EBRI is an indispensable source of expert data. And that is why both Members and our staff on Capitol Hill depend on their expertise and reliability.

I salute EBRI and its staff for 35 years of exceptional work and look forward to their continued help in the future.

TRIBUTE TO GARY OSTROSKE

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, today I wish to ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Mr. Gary Ostroske, who retired on July 1, 2013, as President and CEO of the United Way of Southeast Louisiana. Mr. Ostroske has been an integral part of the United Way Worldwide system for 40 years and has served as President and CEO of the Southeastern region for the past 25 years.

Throughout his tenure at the United Way, Mr. Ostroske implemented important changes to a wide breadth of programs to improve the lives of residents of Southeast Louisiana. Mr. Ostroske has worked tirelessly to provide citizens with quality healthcare, education, and human services and has undoubtedly provided many opportunities for residents of Southeast Louisiana to succeed and improve their lives.

As the President and CEO of United Way of Southeast Louisiana, Mr. Ostroske worked collaboratively with community organizations and Greater New Orleans leaders to create innovative ways to deliver critical services to Southeast Louisiana residents. Through these community partnerships, Mr. Ostroske strengthened United Way's impact and allowed it to play an integral role in crafting a strong economic agenda for our region.

Mr. Ostroske's unwavering leadership in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Isaac and the Deepwater Horizon oil spill was truly remarkable. Mr. Ostroske's diligent efforts to rebuild our region after these disasters ensured our region's renewed sense of vitality and economic strength.

Upon his retirement, Mr. Ostroske is looking forward to volunteering in our community and spending time with his wife of 35 years, Mary Ann and his family—their son, Peter Ostroske, president of O Look!, an internet company

based in São Paulo, Brazil and their daughter, Jenny Ostroske Luke, who is a veterinarian, married to Fletcher Luke. Gary and Mary Ann are the proud grandparents to Jenny and Fletcher's children—Ellis and Myles.

Mr. Ostroske's service to the people of Louisiana has been truly extraordinary and serves as an inspiration to us all. It is with my greatest sincerity that I ask my colleagues to join me along with Mr. Ostroske's family in recognizing his dedicated service to the people of Louisiana, as well as wishing him well in his retirement.

HOLT INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, Senator WYDEN and I wish to recognize Holt International Children's Services during this year's celebration of National Adoption Month.

On July 27, 2013 we celebrated the 60th anniversary of the end of the Korean war. By signing the armistice agreement, the border between the Koreas near the 38th Parallel was established. It was in the wake of this armistice that Holt International Children's Services first began its compassionate work, and today continues to be a leader in the field of adoption and child welfare issues.

Harry and Bertha Holt of Eugene, OR were of humble means—Harry a lumberjack and a farmer and Bertha a nurse. In 1954, the Holts went to a small high school auditorium to view a film about Amerasian children living in South Korean orphanages. Moved by the film, their faith and a firm belief that all children deserve permanent, loving homes, the Holts began their lifelong mission in 1955 to revolutionize intercountry adoption.

At the time, there were no laws allowing children to immigrate to one country from another for the purpose of adoption. Overcoming legal and cultural barriers, Mr. and Mrs. Holt sought families for children orphaned by the Korean war. The Holts persuaded Oregon U.S. Senator Richard Neuberger to introduce legislation titled "The Relief of Certain Korean War Orphans." The legislation became law on August 11, 1955, enabling the Holts to adopt eight Korean war orphans: Joseph Han, Mary Chae, Helen Chan, Paul Kim, Betty Rhee, Robert Chae, Christine Lee and Nathaniel Chae. With this act of love and the founding of their agency—Holt International Children's Services—two farmers from rural Oregon became pioneers in international adoption.

Today, Holt International strives to uphold Harry and Bertha's vision of finding loving homes for children regardless of race, religion, ethnicity or gender. Holt is committed to finding families for children, not children for families, an important distinction that sets the tone and priorities for Holt. Since the 1955 act, Holt has placed 49,630 children from 31 countries with

families in all 50 States. As the oldest intercountry adoption agency, Holt is the only organization that has more than three generations of adult adoptees.

Holt continues to play an active and vital role in establishing policy and practice for intercountry adoption. In 1993, Holt adoptees Susan Cox and David Kim were members of the U.S. delegation to the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption, an agreement which sets international standards for intercountry adoption that protects the child, the birth family and the adoptive family. Later, in 2008, Holt was a leading advocate in ensuring U.S. ratification of the Hague Convention treaty. Holt believes that adoption is a life long experience and has been at the forefront of developing post adoption services to ensure that adoptees grow and develop to their fullest potential.

In addition to these monumental accomplishments, Holt International has become much more than an adoption agency. When considering a child's future, Holt always keeps the child's best interest at the forefront of every decision. For some children adoption is the only option, but Holt realizes that it is not the first option for children without families. Holt believes that it is best if children can stay with their birth family. Over the years, Holt has worked to develop and maintain programs overseas to give orphaned, abandoned and vulnerable children safe and nurturing environments in which to grow and thrive. These overseas programs include initiatives directed at family preservation, nutrition support, child and maternal health, income generation, assisting children with special needs, and shaping and establishing intercountry child welfare systems. Through these initiatives, Holt impacts approximately 30,000 children each year and helps to ensure that children at all stages of need are provided for in an effort to avoid the separation of families.

In November, as National Adoption Month is celebrated, it is appropriate to recognize Holt International Children's Services for its diligent efforts and accomplishments in the field of child-welfare and intercountry adoption that have impacted thousands of children in the U.S. and around the world.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

CHARACTERPLUS

• Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, today I wish to honor CHARACTERplus, an organization based in my State of Missouri, which helps build strong school communities where students feel valued and can succeed. As a former classroom teacher, I appreciate the work CHARACTERplus does to help educators instill positive character traits in students—such as responsibility and respect—by teaching, encouraging and living these values at school.

Created by Sanford N. McDonnell in 1985, CHARACTERplus is the largest community-wide character education organization in the country. More importantly, because of the efforts of CHARACTERplus, Missouri leads the Nation in character education.

Currently more than 75 school districts across several States are members of CHARACTERplus, which serves more than 330,000 students and 29,000 teachers at 645 schools to transform school climate.

Member districts and schools have unlimited access to professional development, national experts, the most current research on social, emotional and character development, skill training modules, survey tools to access school climate and opportunities to network with others in the field.

Each year, the Character Education Partnership, CEP, recognizes schools that have demonstrated a commitment to character education by naming them a National School of Character. In 2013, CEP chose 29 schools, 9 of which were members of CHARACTERplus, making Missouri the national leader in character education.

Those schools include Independence Elementary in the Francis Howell School District; Jefferson City Academic Center in the Jefferson City School District; Beasley Elementary, Bierbaum Elementary, Hagemann Elementary, and Mehlville High School in the Mehlville School District; Chesterfield Elementary and LaSalle Springs Middle School in the Rockwood School District; and Discovery Ridge Elementary in the Wentzville School District.

CHARACTERplus also works closely with the Missouri Department of Secondary and Elementary Education on several projects and runs the State School of Character Awards.

I would like to congratulate CHARACTERplus for all of their hard work and commend them for helping the State of Missouri be a leader in character education.●

TRIBUTE TO LARRY WILCOX

• Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota. Mr. President, today I wish to offer my heartfelt congratulations to Larry Wilcox who is retiring as superintendent of the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home in Hot Springs, SD. The retirement is effective November 14, 2013.

Born in Burke, Larry grew up in Winner, SD. After graduating from Winner High School in the mid-1960s, Larry joined the South Dakota Army National Guard. He remained in the National Guard for nearly four decades, including 26 years in the Medical Services Corps. A Gulf War veteran, Larry rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel before retiring in 2003.

Larry's service to our State continued when he was named superintendent of South Dakota's only State Veterans Home in May 2004 by Maj. Gen. Michael