

all gun sellers at gun shows to conduct a Brady criminal background check on prospective purchasers. We could take up and pass S.34, the Denying Firearms and Explosives to Dangerous Terrorists Act of 2011, which would close the “terror gap” by authorizing the Attorney General to deny the transfer of a firearm when an FBI background check reveals that the prospective purchaser is a known or suspected terrorist. These are commonsense measures that would protect the American people by reducing firearm violence in our society.

Mr. President, it was over a month ago that a woman named Nina Gonzalez stood at the second Presidential debate and asked President Obama and Governor Romney a simple question: What would they do to keep assault weapons out of the hands of criminals?

So, as the 112th Congress returns, we have some important unfinished business. There are few tasks before us more important than enacting measures that would help prevent tragedies like the ones occurring far too often around our Nation.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SERGEANT JOSEPH A. RICHARDSON

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, the Nation has lost a brave patriot who died defending freedom. Sergeant Joseph A. Richardson, who grew up in Algona, IA, was killed during a patrol in Paktika province, Afghanistan on November 16, 2012. He was clearly an accomplished, professional soldier as evidenced by his numerous awards, including: the Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart, Army Commendation Medal, Army Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal with Campaign Star Iraq Campaign Medal with Campaign Star, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, NATO Ribbon, and the Combat Infantry Badge.

SGT Richardson’s family released a statement that described Joe as someone who “lived his life full of energy and with passion for everything he did.” They also said that, “He loved his job; he loved fighting for his country and our freedom.” In fact, he demonstrated this by re-enlisting for six more years in the Army shortly before his untimely death. His love of country and willingness to serve marks Joseph Richardson as one of our nation’s finest citizens, and his noble sacrifice immortalizes him among the ranks of our most honored war dead. We owe SGT Richardson and all those like him who have fallen in the name of liberty our infinite gratitude.

We ought also to remember his family in our prayers, including his wife Ashley, his mother, Ginette, his father, Greg, and many other family and friends who will feel his loss very deeply. As those closest to Joseph Richardson remember the life of their loved one, it is incumbent on all Americans to preserve his memory and to reflect

on the enormous price he and other like him have paid to preserve our free way of life.

VERMONT’S CITIZEN OF THE YEAR, ANTONIO POMERLEAU

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, today, the Vermont Chamber of Commerce will recognize the philanthropic contributions of a longtime Vermonter: Antonio Pomerleau. Businessman, community developer, humanitarian all these terms apply to one of Vermont’s most celebrated citizens. As I said in a statement to the Senate earlier this month, Marcelle and I are also fortunate to call him family.

But Tony’s family extends beyond the Pomerleaus. It has come to encompass the State of Vermont, and his generosity has touched the lives of thousands of Vermonters.

This weekend, The Burlington Free Press published a story about Tony’s legacy. His is a quintessential success story. From stockboy to economic magnet, Tony has become one of Vermont’s most prominent businessmen. Along the way, he has donated millions of his own money to help Vermonters recover in the wake of such natural disasters as Tropical Storm Irene, to help renovate and restore mobile home parks for residents, and, notably, to celebrate the contributions and sacrifices of the many members of the Vermont National Guard and their families.

Few Vermonters have had such a footprint on Vermont’s economic and social landscape. Antonio Pomerleau’s contributions make him a Vermonter of the Year in 2012, but his legacy will benefit generations of Vermonters to come.

I ask unanimous consent that The Burlington Free Press article, “Tony Pomerleau: The Art of the Dealmaker,” be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[The Burlington Free Press, Nov. 25, 2012]

TONY POMERLEAU: THE ART OF THE DEALMAKER

(By Candace Page)

NEWPORT—Tony Pomerleau leans on his cane and steps into Mill River Furniture on Main Street, just in time for its grand opening ceremony. A dozen people converge on him, filings drawn to a magnet.

The mayor greets him. City councilors introduce themselves. Two local reporters quiz him about the fate of the city’s only grocery store if plans go forward to redevelop his strip mall into a hotel and convention center. The head of the downtown association calls him over for a ribbon-cutting photo. “We need you Tony, right in the middle,” she says.

The 95-year-old, white-maned shopping center king of Vermont is in his element, back in his native town with a captive audience. He holds court for nearly an hour while the furniture store owner whose event this is left in the background.

“I was 12 when I started work here,” Pomerleau begins by recalling his days as a stockboy and window dresser when this

building was a J.J. Newberry’s five-and-dime. “I had a knack for windows. This is where I started my success. I learned the customer has to see the merchandise if you want to sell.”

Today, he owns the building. “I put \$400,000 into it to fix it up,” he says, his words carrying the French-Canadian inflection he has never lost.

He jokes that store owner Skip Gray was “kinda chicken” about moving to Main Street from a much smaller store in the Pomerleau shopping center. His eyes sparkle. He laughs along with the audience at his own jokes.

In a voice graveled by age, he detours into stories that have become his stock in trade. The anecdotes reel off as if from a tape recorder, told and retold in almost exactly the same words.

“It’s not what you pay for something, it’s what you can get for it,” he tells the cluster of people, citing a real estate deal 40 years in the past. “I made \$237,000 in 90 days” he says of a tract of farmland bought, subdivided and sold for three times what he paid.

He laments the just-announced closing of the Eveready battery plant in St. Albans. The company’s problem, he says with finality, is that they didn’t change with the times by developing new products.

“You gotta do something different from the other fellow,” he says. “There’s a time limit on everything—except me.” The line draws a chuckle from his clutch of listeners, as it always does.

Grace, the youngest of Pomerleau’s 10 children, glances up from browsing among bedroom sets.

“He does love an audience,” she says.

“See the smoke coming out?”

On a late November night, the outside of Pomerleau’s big house on DeForest Heights in Burlington is a neon carnival of Christmas.

Light-bulb-lit reindeer charge across the west lawn pulling a sleigh of presents. Shoulder-high candy canes stick from the north lawn. Christmas lights cling to the eaves and swathe the trees in all directions.

Pomerleau opens the door for guests and pads down a hallway in his slippers to point through the windows of his home office.

“That’s a new one this year,” he says with childlike pleasure, pointing to a lighted train on the north lawn.

“See, the wheels go around,” he says, as lights on the train blink to mimic movement. “See the smoke coming out there. Isn’t that cute?” More lights blink.

As a very young child, Pomerleau spent four or five years—the time varies in the telling—in a kind of iron corset after a bad fall when he was two. His father’s Barton farm burned. The family moved to Newport. The Depression struck. His father’s grocery burned.

In his telling, young Tony went to work barely out of elementary school, making deals, subcontracting the mowing of lawns and washing of cars to other kids or out-of-work men and taking a hefty cut of the pay.

His stories of childhood Christmases are happy ones, of horses and sleighs lined up outside the church for midnight Mass, the bells as the sleighs jingled home, the sound of carols.

But there is another memory as well. He walks into the living rooms and leans against the piano, its top invisible under the rows of photos of his children.

“I was 12 or 13. One day I heard my father say to my mother, ‘This is the first Christmas I can’t afford any presents.’ I went down to the bank and took out \$25—that was money in those days—to give him.”

“I came from nothing,” he often says, setting the backdrop for stories of his successes.