

great personal sacrifice and tremendous dedication, you secured our future. And while we sometimes take our way of life for granted, the veterans of the Korean War remind us that, as their Korean War Commemoration Flag proclaims, "Freedom is not free." Without the dedicated service and sacrifice of the soldiers we celebrate in this, the Year of the Korean Veteran, our nation would not be able to enjoy the freedom and prosperity that we too often take for granted. So, on behalf of later generations of veterans, like myself, and on behalf of all the citizens of South Dakota and all Americans, thank you for your lasting contribution to our nation's greatness. You, the veterans of the Korean War, are true American heroes, and we salute you.

Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President I have a poem written by my constituent Dee M. Tramontina of Buck Hill Falls, PA.

I rise today so that I might call special attention to the thoughts and observations of my constituents who would like to accord proper recognition to those brave Americans who sacrificed, fought and died in the Korean conflict.

I would like to recognize both Dee M. Tramontina and Albert Tramontina, Jr., who, on behalf of the Monroe Chapter of the Korean War Veterans Association, have shared a poem with me concerning the conflict which ended 50 years ago.

I would like to call attention to this historic anniversary by asking that Dee's poem be printed in the RECORD.

THE "FORGOTTEN WAR" NO MORE

(By Dee Tramontina)

Some have made the grave mistake
Of calling Korea the forgotten war
But you can bet that none of them
Had to storm the Inchon shore
I am also very positive it's memory
Sadly stays with all of those
That at the Chosin Reservoir
They shivered, fought and froze
Perhaps you know of someone
Who fought among the ranks
And saw the awful, bloody terror
Of "Old Baldy" or the Yalu River banks
Be assured that a foggy memory
Would be a relief to maintain
For those that charged up the hill:
"Heartbreak Ridge" it seems, in vain
We can be sure that there are some
To this very day can still
Hear the horrors of the battle
We know as "Pork Chop Hill"
Definitely an everlasting imprint
Of the 38th parallel has been burned
Into the hearts and minds of families
Of the many heroes that never returned
We are coming up on fifty years
Since Panmunjom brought peace
In honor of those that fought there
May the memory never cease

VA POLICY

Mr. GRAHAM of Florida. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the attached article from the Gainesville Sun be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the Gainesville Sun, July 19, 2003]

PERVERSE VA POLICY

There is something perverse about the Bush administration's push to cut medical services for veterans at a time when America is fighting a war in Iraq with the help of tens of thousands of reservists and guard members.

Most of those citizen soldiers will come home to once again take up their non-military lives and careers. And those who do develop service-related illnesses and injuries (anybody remember Gulf War Syndrome?) will invariably turn to a Veterans Administration medical facility for care.

In the North Florida-South Georgia region alone, about 5,600 reservists have been called to service for the current conflict. When they come home, some may require the care available at the Lake City VA Medical Center. But even if none do, that medical center already treats about 36,000 area veterans.

And yet, a VA reassessment group—perversely called the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services, or CARES—has called for services to be eliminated or scaled back at the Lake City VA and 19 other veterans facilities around the nation.

In response to a directive from Washington, local VA officials have, albeit reluctantly, submitted recommendations that would involve turning the Lake City medical center into an outpatient clinic, transferring 230 nursing home patients to private facilities—assuming adequate facilities can even be found in the largely rural region—and/or transferring patients to Gainesville's VA.

The objective would be to save perhaps \$6 million a year by eliminating jobs and operational costs at the Lake City VA center. That seems like a false economy in light of the thousands of veterans who depend on the center for care.

Fred Malphurs, director of the North Florida-South Georgia Veterans Health System, was clearly not enthusiastic about complying with the directive to identify cuts. "The benefits would be, in my opinion, marginal at best," he told The Sun last week.

Whatever the perceived "benefits" of closing down or drastically cutting back on Lake City's services, the impact on area veterans would be negative to the extreme. It also seems a bitter pill for veterans to have to swallow at a time when thousands of area reservists and regular military personnel (read future veterans) are still risking their lives and their health fighting a war half a world away.

Nationally, the VA does have a problem with underutilized facilities. We just have a difficult time believing that Lake City's VA center is one of them.

Florida is a magnet for retirees, many of them veterans of past conflicts. We would think that if anything, the demand for veterans medical services is rising, not falling, in the Sunshine State.

As North Florida becomes a more desirable destination for retiree vets, demand for care at the Lake City VA center is only going to grow.

SALUTE TO THE 109TH ENGINEERING BATTALION

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, today South Dakotans will welcome home the 109th Engineering Battalion of the South Dakota National Guard. This unit, headquartered in Sturgis, was among more than 20 Guard and Reserve

units from my State called to active duty in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. On March 23, it became the first South Dakota unit to enter Iraq, and was the only South Dakota unit to operate in Iraq during the early days of combat.

Today, these soldiers and their achievements become a part of South Dakota's military heritage. Like those who served in the two world wars, in Korea, in Vietnam, and in numerous other places, this new generation has answered the call. They have offered to make every sacrifice, including life itself, to protect our freedom and security. We must never forget them or the honor with which they served.

The 109th Engineering Battalion is a headquarters battalion of 39 members, responsible for the management of several other units in carrying out engineering missions. The 109th was a critical part of our Nation's efforts in Iraq, completing a wide variety of missions, from force protection, to mine clearing, to construction of the Cedar II Logistical Support Area. The unit managed the activities of the 68th Engineering Company, the 95th Firefighters, the 520th Firefighters, and the 562nd Firefighters.

After being stationed in Kuwait during the month leading up to the conflict, the 109th moved to Tallil Air Base in southeastern Iraq, just outside of al Nasiriyah, where some of the war's most fierce fighting occurred. When the members of the 109th arrived at their destination, Logistical Support Area Adder on Tallil Air Base, they found an encampment that was quickly filling up with soldiers from the Army, Air Force, Marines, and from the British military. Force protection would be essential to guaranteeing these troops a swift victory over the stiffening opposition in the region.

At LSA Adder, the 109th oversaw the preparation of the battlefield for combat, preparing fighting positions, constructing guard towers, building a 3-mile protection berm around the perimeter, establishing supply routes, and building two Patriot Missile launch sites. In addition, the 109th managed the establishment of critical life support structures for the camp, including a water well, nuclear-biological-chemical (NBC) decontamination sites, a major Convoy Support Center, latrines, showers, and roadways.

I am proud to welcome home the members of the 109th Battalion and to commend them on a job well done. All of us know about the tremendous courage and commitment of the infantry soldiers and others who engage the enemy directly. But often we don't recognize the vital efforts of those units behind the scenes—units like the 109th that prepare the battlefield, provide medical care, establish life support services, and transport supplies. Their work ensures the success of our front-line troops and helps to hold casualties to a minimum. In 3 short weeks of fighting, the United States military

was able to overthrow a tyrannical regime that had reigned in Iraq for 45 years and utterly vanquish its military, with very few casualties. Support units like the 109th were the backbone of this effort.

The 109th Engineering Battalion participated in a mobilization with few precedents in South Dakota history. Nearly 2,000 Guard and Reserve troops were called to active duty in our State, by far the largest mobilization since World War II. At the time the fighting began, units from more than 20 communities had been called up, from Elk Point in the south to Lemmon in the north, from Watertown in the east to Spearfish in the west. Indeed, our State's mobilization rate ranked among the highest of all the States on a per capita basis.

In addition to the service of the 109th, I want to acknowledge the sacrifices and dedication of the families who stayed home. They are the unsung heroes of any mobilization. They motivate and inspire those who are far from home, and they, too, deserve our gratitude.

Today, I join these families and the State of South Dakota in celebrating the courage, dedication, and success of the members of the 109th Engineering Battalion, and I honor their participation in this historic event in our Nation's history. Welcome home. Thanks to all of you for your hard work, your sacrifice, and your noble commitment to this country and its ideals.

LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2003

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the need for hate crimes legislation. On May 1, 2003, Senator KENNEDY and I introduced the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act, a bill that would add new categories to current hate crimes law, sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society.

I would like to describe a terrible crime that occurred in Los Angeles, CA. On September 12, 2001, two Spanish-speaking women were harassed and beaten by another patient in a doctor's office. Believing the women to be of Middle Eastern descent, the attacker verbally and physically assaulted the women in retaliation for the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the United States. As the attacker struck the women, she yelled "You foreigners caused all this trouble."

I believe that Government's first duty is to defend its citizens, to defend them against the harms that come out of hate. The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act is a symbol that can become substance. I believe that by passing this legislation and changing current law, we can change hearts and minds as well.

IN SUPPORT OF U.S.-CHILE AND U.S.-SINGAPORE FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS

Mr. HAGEL. Mr. President, I rise today to support the U.S.-Chile and U.S.-Singapore Free Trade Agreements, which are now before the Senate. These agreements are the first to be considered under the expedited Trade Promotion Authority, TPA, procedure that Congress passed last year. Ratification of these agreements will provide significant benefits to agricultural producers and the U.S. economy. Strong bipartisan votes will send an important message that the U.S. Congress is strongly committed to growing the U.S. economy and helping American farmers and workers succeed in an ever-growing competitive global marketplace.

Both the U.S.-Singapore and U.S.-Chile free trade agreements will level the playing field for U.S. products and farm goods. Specifically, both agreements will eliminate the use of subsidies on agricultural exports, a major step forward for U.S. agriculture in WTO negotiations. There is a clear link between a healthy agricultural sector and trade. More than 43,000 Nebraskans hold jobs related to agriculture exports. Nebraska ranks fourth nationally in exports of agricultural products—an estimated \$3.14 billion in 2002. In 2002, Nebraska farmers and ranchers saw increased international sales of corn, soybeans, and wheat, and depend on the ability to export their products to the rest of the world for continued growth.

The U.S.-Singapore free trade agreement will strengthen an important relationship and serve as our first free trade agreement with an Asian nation. Singapore is a critical ally in Southeast Asia in the global war on terrorism. Singapore is also an important economic ally. It is our 12th largest trading partner. This free trade agreement will provide expanded opportunities for trade and investment and will increase job opportunities here at home. It will benefit American firms in many sectors, including those in the banking/financial industry and in professional services. Under the agreement, 100 percent of U.S. goods and 92 percent of Singaporean goods will have duty-free status immediately. The free trade agreement further ensures that Singapore cannot increase its duties on any U.S. product.

The U.S.-Chile Free Trade agreement will be the first between the U.S. and a South American nation. Under this agreement, American farmers, workers, and businesses will benefit from improved and expanded access to the Chilean market. More than 75 percent of U.S. farm goods will enter Chile tariff-free within 4 years, with all tariffs being phased out within 12 years. This agreement will eliminate tariffs on corn and most distilled spirits in 2 years. It will immediately eliminate tariffs on pork and pork products, soybeans, and many other agricultural

products. Access for beef on both sides will be completely liberalized over 4 years. Overall, this agreement will immediately remove tariffs on more than 85 percent of U.S. exports. The U.S.-Chile agreement will provide momentum to the ongoing negotiations in the Free Trade of the Americas and global trade talks. Bilateral agreements, such as this agreement with Chile, are essential because they provide benefits immediately and help the U.S. keep pace with the 16 global competitors, including the EU and Canada, who already have preferential trade agreements with Chile.

Free trade provides the basis for economic growth and democratic governance in developing countries. Free trade promotes American values around the world. It underpins a global economic order that is essential to our own economic security. Agreements like those before us today will help the U.S. to reap the benefits of free trade and gain access to emerging markets, creating new jobs and higher incomes for Americans. Ninety-six percent of the world's consumers are outside of U.S. borders. Foreign market access is essential for the continued growth and viability of the U.S. economy. International trade is an essential component of growth and opportunity in our global economy. The U.S. must be a leader, not a follower, in the global marketplace.

I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of the Chile and Singapore Free Trade Agreements.

THE BEGINNING FARMERS AND RANCHERS TAX INCENTIVE ACT OF 2003

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I recently joined Senator HAGEL of Nebraska in introducing legislation that is important to the survival of farm families and rural America. Our bipartisan legislation, called the Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Tax Incentive Act, provides significant capital gains tax breaks to encourage retiring farmers and ranchers to sell their farm property to others who will continue to use the property in the farming business. Identical legislation has been introduced in the House of Representatives.

As many of our colleagues know, the economic well-being of many rural communities across the country is at a crossroad. Over the past several decades, jobs on family farms and in Main Street businesses in small towns have been disappearing from the Nation's Heartland. Rural communities are facing an out-migration crisis of epic proportions. Senator HAGEL and I have been working at the Federal level to adopt fiscal policies that will give rural America the tools and funding it needs to reverse the out-migration problem. One of the challenges for stabilizing and revitalizing our rural communities is to ensure that the Federal Government backs strong farm policies