

to preserving the sweetheart deal they have in this country, where they have far too many politicians in the Senate and in the House, far too many of our colleagues, who simply, again, over and over and over, do the drug companies' bidding.

Every other developed country in the world, as I said earlier, gets better priced prescription drugs than we do. Every other developed country in the world gets better prices than we do. That is because these countries do not put up with the grossly inflated drug prices our Nation does. It is because their drug company lobbyists or their drug company media campaigns simply may not be as effective in France and Canada and Germany and Israel and Japan and Mexico, and all over the world, where drug prices are a half or a third or a fourth of what they are here.

We will put up with most anything, it seems, if an industry has deep enough pockets and an army of lobbyists. Prohibiting the Government from negotiating volume discounts on prescription drugs simply makes no sense. The Government negotiates the price of everything else it buys.

When the Architect of the Capitol buys carpeting for the Senate floor—as we look around at this very nice blue carpet here—they do not take the manufacturer's word that a fair price would impair fiber research. We do not say whatever the carpet makers want, we will pay because it costs a lot to do this research to make these rugs beautiful and make this carpet last, when so many feet walk over it.

When the Park Service buys ranger uniforms, it does not take the first bid that comes in. It gets good quality at the lowest price possible.

But with drugs, the President and his allies here in Congress—and we know how much money the drug industry gave to President Bush; and we know the kinds of effective lobbying the drug industry employs in the Senate—the President and his allies here in Congress say the Government must pay any price the drug industry wants to charge.

That policy is more than a mistake; it is a joke on the American people. It is a betrayal of our constituents. The drug companies are laughing all the way to the bank.

We need to pass this legislation tomorrow and let Medicare bargain for the prices that Medicare beneficiaries deserve.

#### REMEMBERING FELIX WILLIAM RIVERA

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the memory of a great Nevada educator and coach, Felix William Rivera. Felix, a physical and health education teacher in the Clark County School District in Las Vegas, NV, was involved in a fatal car accident on February 8, 2007.

Felix proudly lived in the Las Vegas metropolitan area all of his life. He

graduated from Basic High School in 1991 and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas in 1996 with degrees in secondary education and sports medicine and certification in athletic training. As a student teacher, Felix was selected as a Distinguished Student Teacher of the Year Award. He began his teaching career at Swainston Middle School in 1997, and thereafter served as a Physical Education Coach and Athletic Trainer at Western High School and Health Teacher and Athletic Trainer at Desert Pines High School.

Felix went above and beyond his job responsibilities in order to provide students with the opportunity to learn and succeed. He spent countless hours treating students who had limited access to health care. Oftentimes, he would arrive early to school in order to provide treatments, limited therapy, or counseling to students who simply needed a listening ear. Felix had outstanding listening skills and frequently utilized his networking base to connect students with the proper resources. As one of his former students noted, "Not only did Mr. Rivera teach health, he also taught us about life and steps we needed to take in order to become successful." A fellow teacher at Desert Pines High School described him as a "role model for students who took great pride in every lesson that he taught." A teacher and friend further commented on his congenial personality, "He was the kind of person who had an innate ability to get right to the point, an ear-to-ear smile that was contagious and a well-known sense of humor."

It is clear that Felix was a dedicated educator, a role model, and a mentor who left a lasting impression on his students. On April 18, 2007, family, friends, students, and colleagues will honor his legacy by dedicating a mural with the words "hard as steel with a heart of gold" in the training room at Desert Pines High School, where he spent much of his time counseling students. I join in honoring Felix and extend my deepest sympathies to his family and friends, especially his wife and high school sweetheart, Alice "Cookie" Masterson and children, Anthony and Felicia. He is deeply missed and his service and dedication to the students of Clark County will always be greatly appreciated.

#### ARMY MEDICAL DEPARTMENT CENTER AND SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, when I began my chairmanship of the Veterans' Affairs committee this January, I assured my colleagues that we would renew our focus on the need for cooperation and collaboration between the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs. As we look at the way these two entities work together, it is important that we highlight the good work and progress being made. One example of progress

and excellence in collaboration can be found at the Army Medical Department Center and School, located at Fort Sam Houston, which trains Army, Air Force, and VA nurses.

This year, U.S. News and World Report ranked the Army Medical Department Center and School second in the Nation for their anesthesia nursing program. They missed first place by just a tenth of one point, and have improved their score from 3.8 out of 5.0 in 2003, to 4.0 out of 5.0 in 2007. This notable achievement brings added credibility to their already prestigious program.

Since 2004, VA and DOD have partnered to train VA nurse anaesthetists to work in the VA health care system, the largest health care system in the country. The first class of VA nurse anesthetists recently graduated from the Army Medical Department Center and School. Their graduation represents what I hope will be a steady flow of highly qualified VA nurse anesthetists using their skills and knowledge to give veterans the high-quality health care they have earned through service.

I realize that, with the private sector offering six-figure salaries for nurse anesthetists, those who chose to work within the military and VA do so not for personal gain. They stay to respond to the higher calling of caring for servicemembers and veterans in their times of need, and are to be commended for their dedication and their work. In that spirit, I say 'e ho'omaika'i ia'oukou, or congratulations, to the graduates, students, faculty, staff, and others who have worked to make the Army Medical Department Center and School the success that it is today.

#### RECOGNITION OF CANUTE DALMASSE

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, today I honor Canute Dalmasse of Stowe, VT, who is retiring after 36 years of dedicated service to the State of Vermont, working to conserve, protect, and enhance our State's natural resources. His extraordinary contribution to the stewardship of Vermont's natural environment calls for special recognition.

Canute retires as the deputy secretary of the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, overseeing fish, wildlife, forests, parks, recreation, and environmental conservation programs and recently served with distinction as acting secretary. His career began in 1971 as one of the first district coordinators implementing Vermont's landmark Act 250 environmental law that uses a holistic approach looking at environmental, visual, and social criteria to assess potential development impacts. A proven leader and innovator, he has served as director of the Office of Water Resources and commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation.

Canute is an avid boater and angler on Lake Champlain and an unflinching