

These are gridiron greats who also came upon many lesser known players with stories like Brent's. Mike Moseley, of the Buffalo Bills, suffered knee, neck, and back injuries that forced him to retire early and left him permanently disabled.

Initially, the NFL disability committee granted him benefits. In September 2004, a doctor hired by the NFL ruled that he could do sedentary work, and they cut off his benefits. This reminds me of when I started out practicing law. For a few years, I did insurance defense work. We had doctors that insurance companies would bring in and it didn't matter how bad somebody was hurt, they determined they weren't hurt very badly. That is what this reminds me of. Mike Moseley lost his home, his car, and his savings. His life has been torn apart.

Another example is Brian DeMarco, a lineman for the Jacksonville Jaguars. Similar to Mike, Brian was forced into an early retirement by injury. He was unable to navigate the disability system's redtape—even though his back was broken in 17 different places. Brian and his family were left homeless. He told the Denver Post that the NFL:

is a multibillion dollar business, and guys are giving their quality of life up for this sport. Just a little respect and dignity is all we want.

These stories illustrate a point the statistics confirm. According to one press report, almost two-thirds of former professional football players suffer injuries serious enough to require surgery, and almost half of all players retire due to injury.

But among the more than the 1,000 disability claims filed by former NFL players, about 30 percent have received approval. The rest are thrown in the trash bin, such as my friend from Reno, NV.

Brent Boyd was among the former players who testified before the Commerce Committee this past September. They told us how they feel abandoned and forgotten lost in endless doctor visits and redtape.

Daryl Johnson, who played 11 years as running back for the Cowboys, testified that he retired with 5 years remaining on his contract after suffering a herniated disc.

The Players' Association sent him for an evaluation with one of their doctors—not his own. He was not permitted to even bring his X rays or MRI results. Similar to so many others, his claim was denied.

After the hearing last September, and countless news stories, the NFL and the Players' Association have taken some steps to right the wrong.

Where before their approval process seemed a little more than ad hoc, they now apply standards used by the Social Security Administration to determine disability. We hope it is more effective.

They have also implemented the 88 Plan, which provides funds for a residential care facility or in-home care. The question is, Who are they going to give it to?

Brent Boyd, and so many like him, still suffer the pain of their injuries, still struggle to pay their bills on far less disability assistance than they deserve. Some suffer the inability to think properly because of the head trauma they suffered.

In the coming weeks, I will work with the NFL and the Players' Association and other retirees to ensure progress is being made.

As the bright lights shine on Super Bowl XLII this Sunday—and they are a multibillion dollar business, and they should help these people—I want Brent and his injured brothers to know they are not fighting in the shadows. They deserve a spotlight also.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

STIMULUS MARK-UP

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, last week, Americans saw something many of them thought they might never see: Speaker PELOSI, Minority Leader BOEHNER, and the President working as a team. Republicans and Democrats rose above politics and put the people and the economy first. And on Tuesday, the House passed their compromise stimulus plan by a vote of 385–35. Then all eyes turned to the Senate: Would we put our individual interests aside, or would we throw the whole plan into jeopardy by loading it down with gifts for anybody who came calling?

Apparently the temptation for giveaways was too great for some to resist. As soon as the bill hit the Senate, it started to look a lot like Christmas over here. Chairman BAUCUS added 10 new provisions before the bill was even considered in committee. Three more amendments were added in committee. You could almost hear Bing Crosby's voice coming out of the Finance Committee. And so the stimulus train is slowing grinding to a halt here in the U.S. Senate.

All of this only reinforces my view that the only way we'll get relief to the people soon enough for it to work will be to insist on speed over spending. And the only way to do that is to pass the bipartisan, House-passed bill. That way we can send it to the President for a signature—and get much needed relief into the hands of millions of Americans as quickly as they are now expecting it. This is the only way to pass an economic growth package that doesn't grow the government or raise taxes and that can be signed into law in a timely manner. The other option is to bring it to the floor, where we know it will only grow and slow under the weight of endless additional spending proposals. We need to act quickly. The majority leader called for a bill that is "timely." The House acted quickly. Now it is our turn.

We have a choice: We can accept Washington politics as usual and spend weeks and weeks arguing over how much more can be added to an already unwieldy bill or we can act right now and deliver a timely economic growth package with bipartisan support that can be signed into law now. We could get a bill down to the President in thirty seconds if we want to. The White House and the House have done their part. Now let's do our part. Let's vote on the House-passed bill, without any further delay.

HONORING OUT ARMED FORCES

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to pause for a moment so I may share with them the story of a soldier lost in battle. On January 5, 2007, MAJ Michael L. Mundell of Brandenburg, KY, and his unit were sent to secure a combat area in Fallujah, Iraq, after an American tank reported being struck by an improvised explosive device.

En route to the scene, a second explosive device went off near Major Mundell's vehicle, tragically taking his life. He was 47 years old.

Major Mundell served in the U.S. Army for over a decade before leaving active service to work as a civilian contractor to the armed forces. In November of 2005 he again volunteered for active duty. His wife Audrey tells us that Mike once told a friend "he was going over there to fight them so they couldn't come over here and hurt his children."

For his bravery in service, Major Mundell received numerous medals and awards, including two Meritorious Service Medals, the Bronze Star Medal and the Purple Heart.

Mr. President, Major Mundell was one of those who may have been born in one of the other 49 States but became Kentuckian by choice. Born in Pittsburgh, he grew up in Canonsburg, PA.

As a child, Mike developed a passion for military service. He wanted to grow up and drive tanks. When he was three, he handed his father an encyclopedia and asked him to read it to him.

His family says this began his lifelong love of reading. As an adult, he enjoyed Civil War history, and would often read more than a book a day. He also enjoyed mysteries and thrillers, and read through the Bible three times.

In 1977, Mike graduated from Canon-McMillan High School, home of the Big Macs. His wife Audrey liked to tease him that his high-school mascot was named after a hamburger, but Mike made his school proud on the football field.

Mike went on to graduate from Washington-Jefferson College in 1981 where he majored in history, participated in ROTC and played soccer.

After graduation, Mike realized his lifelong goal of becoming an Army officer when he received his commission as a second lieutenant. Assigned to Fort

Knox, KY, for officer's basic training, Mike became a Kentuckian—that is, when he was not spending 3 years in Germany working as a tank officer.

In 1984, while stationed at Fort Knox, Mike met Audrey, a student at Elizabethtown Community College, through a mutual friend. He was attracted to her red hair; she liked that he was handsome and intelligent. They were married in 1985 and had four children: daughter Erica and sons Ryan, Zach, and Dale. Mike had a special relationship with all of his children and made each one feel as if he or she was his favorite.

Mike raised his family in Brandenburg and was a devoted fan of the Pittsburgh Steelers. He liked to watch historical documentaries, and his favorite movies were the war films "Glory" and "Patton." As a soldier, "strategy and tactics—that was his thing, and he was extremely good at it," says Audrey. "He was so intelligent."

After over 11 years of service, Mike left active duty in 1992 and went on to become a private contractor to the Armed Forces working at Fort Knox. Then in November 2005, he volunteered to again don the uniform.

"Mike was offered the chance to go to Iraq and do administrative work, but he said he would refuse to go if they were going to simply stick him behind a desk," said Audrey.

Assigned to the 1st Brigade, 108th Division, based out of Spartanburg, SC, Major Mundell was tasked with training the Iraqi Army. His tour of duty started on Father's Day of 2006.

Mike wrote e-mails often to his friends and family, sometimes exhibiting his robust sense of humor. In an e-mail dated June 23, 2006, he tried to describe the Kuwaiti heat.

This is what he said: "Turn on a blow dryer, point it at yourself and stand there," he wrote. "And stand there. And stand there. Throw some dust from the vacuum in the air every once in a while. Voila! You are experiencing Kuwait."

Other e-mails described tense times. Take the one he wrote on July 24, 2006, about one of the first times he found himself under fire. "All of the sudden . . . BOOM! . . . our radios were filled with shouts of 'incoming!'" he wrote. "We took three mortars in close."

Later in that same e-mail, however, Major Mundell made clear that despite the danger, he was committed to his duty. He wrote:

This is the most intense, most REAL thing I have ever done in my life.

My thoughts and prayers are with Major Mundell's loved ones today, including his wife, Audrey; his daughter, Erica; his sons Ryan, Zach and Dale; his sister and brother-in-law, Deanna and Ken Sofranko; his nephew, Kenny Sofranko; his niece, Taylor Sofranko; his grandmother-in-law, Jesse Edge; his mother-in-law, Carolyn Cundiff; his brother-in-law, Steve Cundiff; his sisters-in-law Angie Allen and Sandi

Stout; and many other beloved family members and friends.

Major Mundell's funeral service was held January 14, 2007, at the chapel in Fort Knox. The funeral procession was a mile and a half long, and the Mundell family was overwhelmed at the outpouring of support from the community for their lost husband, father, brother, and friend.

Recalling a conversation with her youngest child, Audrey tells us what his son Dale said upon seeing the crowds. "Dale asked me, 'All of this for my dad?'" Audrey says. "And I told him, 'Yes, all of this for your dad.'"

Mr. President, like the hundreds in Fort Knox that day, this Senate wishes to express its deepest gratitude to MAJ Michael L. Mundell for his service. This man, who his wife Audrey describes as "a soldier through and through," gave everything he had to protect his family and his country. Our Nation will forever honor that sacrifice.

STAFF SERGEANT JOHN E. COOPER

Mr. President, I wish today to pause in memory of a fallen soldier, SSG John E. Cooper of Flemingsburg, KY. Staff Sergeant Cooper was lost on January 15, 2007, in Mosul, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device set by terrorists went off near his humvee. He was 29 years old.

This was Staff Sergeant Cooper's second tour of duty in Iraq. For his bravery in uniform, he received numerous medals and awards, including the Non-commissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon, the Combat Infantryman Badge, the Bronze Star Medal, and the Purple Heart.

Staff Sergeant Cooper, an Army veteran of over a decade, knew from an early age that he wanted to dedicate himself to serving his country. "He wanted to be a soldier from the third grade on," says his mother, Janice Botkin. "And he was strong enough to pursue his dream of being in the military."

As a child, John had many interests. In middle school, he became fascinated with Native American culture and found it to be a part of his own family. "He learned about the Trail of Tears and this sparked his interest in Native Americans," says his mother Janice, who is herself of Native American heritage. John later went to several family reunions at Serpent Mound, a Native American site in Adams County, OH.

In high school, John was active in Future Farmers of America and the drama club. He enjoyed being outdoors. The youngest of four children, he loved to spend time with his brother Terrance and his sisters Sherri and Susie.

Because he was the youngest, John got teased a lot, but as the baby of the family, his siblings also spoiled him quite a bit. For instance, every year the Cooper family would travel to Kings Island, an amusement park in nearby Cincinnati.

John graduated from Fleming County High School in 1995, and that September at age 18, fulfilled his childhood aspirations by enlisting in the Army.

"I remember that he would go running along the country roads to build himself and be ready to pass his physical training when he went into basic," says his sister Sherri Springate. "We're all so proud of him."

As a soldier, he could "go places and do things he wouldn't be able to do if he stayed around here," says his mother Janice.

A skilled marksman, John served in the Army for 11 years and dedicated himself to making it a career. "He really liked being a military person," says Janice.

Over those 11 years, Staff Sergeant Cooper was deployed to Afghanistan, Korea and the Sinai Peninsula. He had his first tour of duty in Iraq and went to London.

By the time of his second deployment to Iraq, he was assigned to the 2nd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division based out of Fort Bliss, TX. John enhanced his leadership skills by attending the Primary Leadership Development Course and Air Assault School.

Staff Sergeant Cooper's family is in my thoughts and prayers now as I share his story with the Senate. He will be forever loved and remembered by his mother, Janice Botkin; his father, Michael Cooper; his stepfather, Roger Botkin; his sisters, Sherri Springate and Susie West; his stepbrothers Roger Botkin, Jr., and Robert McMillan; his stepsisters Bonita Botkin and Sherry Hilterbrandt; his aunt, Teresa Gates; his grandparents James and Lillian Burke; and many other friends and family members.

On January 28 of last year, Staff Sergeant Cooper's family held a memorial service for John at his alma mater, Fleming County High School. People came from as far away as Indiana, Ohio, and West Virginia to pay their respects to this fallen infantryman, and they lined the entrance to the school with American flags in hand.

The example John set for the other soldiers was so remarkable that when the "History Channel" joined his unit to capture documentary footage, they selected John's story to follow out of 4,000 men and women. "They were impressed with his leadership qualities and caring for the men that served under him," says his mother Janice.

The "History Channel" is still working on the documentary, but they screened some of its footage at a memorial service for Staff Sergeant Cooper in Texas. I am glad they recognized and were able to capture on film the character and abilities of the soldier called "Coop" by his Army buddies.

I am sure John's family feels the same way. They and everyone who was lucky enough to know John already realize he was a true hero who was dedicated to his country. Now his heroism

has been documented and preserved for all to see.

"We're very proud of John, what he did, and who he was," says John's mother.

I want her to know that this Senate expresses its deepest gratitude for SSG John E. Cooper's life of service. And we express our deepest gratitude for the Cooper family, for raising a soldier and patriot who answered the call in his country's time of need.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will now conduct a period for the transaction of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The senior Senator from Montana is recognized.

THE GREATEST GENERATION

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, a few minutes ago, the minority leader urged the Senate to simply pass the House stimulus bill with no amendments, saying it will be a Christmas tree, so pass it with no amendments.

I don't think the Senate wants to deprive 20 million American seniors of a rebate check. I don't think the Senate wants to deprive a quarter of a million disabled veterans of a rebate check. That is what would happen if we were to follow the advice of the minority leader. He would deprive 20 million American senior citizens from getting a rebate check under the stimulus plan. He would deprive a quarter of a million disabled vets from receiving a rebate check under the plan. I don't think the Senate wants to do that.

I think the Senate wants to make some very modest changes to the House-passed bill, if 20 million seniors is modest. We can argue if it is modest. I think it is very important. I think the American public would very much prefer that the Senate make some modest changes to the House-passed bill so those stimulus checks can be sent out very quickly.

We on this side do want speedy passage of the stimulus package. The majority leader has indicated we will take this up on Monday, a few days from today. My hope and expectation is that it will be passed on Monday. Remember, not too long ago, the President and the leadership in Washington, DC, were saying: Gee, let's get those stimulus checks out by February 15. This is January 31. We can get this done very quickly, in a matter of several days, maybe sometime near the end of next week, well before February 15.

We want to move quickly. We want to not load up the stimulus package. Loading it up too much will cause delays, but we on this side of the aisle strongly believe that 20 million seniors should get rebate checks and a quarter of a million veterans get rebate checks.

They will not get those checks under the House-passed bill. That is why I do not think we should willy-nilly accept the House bill which will deprive 20 million seniors and a quarter million disabled veterans of those rebate checks.

They came of age in the Great Depression and during World War II. Of them, Tom Brokaw wrote:

At the end of the twentieth century, the contributions of this generation would be in bold print . . . it is a generation that, by and large, made no demands of homage from those who followed and prospered . . . because of its sacrifices. It is a generation of towering achievement and modest demeanor, a legacy of their formative years, when they were participants and witness to sacrifices of the highest order.

That is what Tom Brokaw wrote in his book "The Greatest Generation." The men and women of that generation and the one that followed are now America's seniors. These are the seniors the Finance Committee is fighting for and trying to help with the economic stimulus bill reported yesterday.

America's seniors are acquainted with sacrifice. As Brokaw wrote:

They know how many of the best of their generation didn't make it to their early twenties, how many brilliant scientists, teachers, spiritual and business leaders, politicians and artists were lost in the ravages of the greatest war the world has seen.

They fought for their country, our American seniors. They gave a lifetime of labor, they gave a lifetime of service, they paid a lifetime of taxes, and they contribute to the economy today. But 20 million of these seniors would not get a check in the House-passed stimulus bill. Twenty million American seniors would get a check in the Finance Committee substitute.

These 20 million seniors would be left out of the House-passed tax rebate. Why? Because they do not have at least \$3,000 in earned income, as in wages, or enough taxable income to meet the test set up by the House bill. In contrast, the Finance Committee plan would allow almost all seniors to receive at least \$500. They would have to show they received at least \$3,000 in Social Security income on their 2007 tax return.

Many American seniors live on fixed incomes. Some earn some wages, some make some money, but many American seniors live only on fixed incomes—their Social Security benefits. Many struggle to pay their medical bills. Many struggle to pay their heating bills, especially as energy costs are going up so high. Drug prices are going up too. Seniors deserve to be included in any rebate program.

When we are contemplating distributing stimulus checks broadly across most American families, it would be wrong not to include 20 million seniors of the greatest generation. A rebate to seniors works for America's economy too. It is not just the right thing to do, but it works for our economy and here is why. Economists agree consumer spending fueled by tax rebates can

boost America's economy, and Americans over age 65 are responsible for 14 percent of all consumer spending. Let me repeat that. Americans over age 65 are responsible for 14 percent of all consumer spending.

Look at this chart to my right. It indicates something very simple, very basic, and very important—and not simply from an economic standpoint but also doing what is morally right for our seniors as well as from an economic perspective. Americans over age 65 spend 92 percent of their income in any given year. That is represented by this horizontal bar on the top in the blue. I will say it again. Americans over age 65—that is what this line represents—spend almost all their income in any given year. They spend 92 percent of their income in any given year.

Now, contrast that with a household headed by a person a little older, over age 75. They spend an even higher percentage of their income—98 percent. That is higher than any other demographic group over the age of 25. Seniors spend the money they receive; much more than any other demographic group over the age of 25.

Other Social Security recipients can benefit too. In 2006, 18 million Americans received Social Security disability benefits, or survivor benefits. Widows, widowers, and disabled veterans—disabled Americans—can qualify for an equal tax rebate, too, under the Finance Committee plan. Millions of them would get nothing under the House plan.

The Finance Committee bill also provides benefits to another group of Americans who have sacrificed for their country: disabled veterans. Once again, the House left them out. The House said no to a quarter of a million disabled veterans. They said no rebate checks if you are a disabled vet and if you don't have significant earned income. Under the House bill, more than a quarter million disabled vets would receive no rebate. Why? Because they have no obligation to file a tax return.

The Finance Committee bill would provide rebate checks for these quarter of a million disabled veterans. The Finance Committee bill would get rebates to disabled veterans receiving at least \$3,000 in nontaxable disability compensation. That is it. The House forgot about that. They forgot about a quarter of a million disabled vets. The Senate plan makes them eligible to earn the same \$500 rebate as wage earners and Social Security recipients—the same. The Department of Veterans Affairs would distribute the rebate.

My colleagues know America is once again at war. Many of my colleagues have visited with wounded soldiers who have come home from wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In fact, my colleague from Kentucky a few minutes ago made a very moving tribute to several fallen soldiers from his State of Kentucky. Many of my colleagues have, as