

I withdraw the pending motion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion is withdrawn.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning with Senators allowed to speak therein for a period of up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO GERALD W. HAYES

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I rise today to honor a man well respected throughout south central Kentucky, Gerald W. Hayes. Mr. Hayes has faithfully served citizens in parts of south central Kentucky through his commitment to the Warren Rural Electric Cooperative Cooperation, RECC, and its members for 40 years.

Hayes was born in humble circumstances in Simpson County under the roof of his grandmother's farmhouse. After 4 years in Butler County, the Hayes family settled in Richardsville, located in Warren County. Mr. Hayes attended Richardsville Elementary School and later, Richardsville High School, where he played point guard on the basketball team.

As a promising young man, Mr. Hayes married his childhood sweetheart, Karen Smith, in December 1966. Two years later, on May 6, 1968, Mr. Hayes began his work for Warren RECC.

He entered as a chainman and quickly exceeded expectations, being promoted to groundman in the same year. By 1969, Mr. Hayes had worked his way up to apprentice lineman and acquired the nickname "Squirrel" for his prodigious ability to climb poles. Mr. Hayes' physical talents were not the only thing that went noticed at Warren RECC. His relentless hard work and dedication earned him a promotion to line frontman just 1 year later.

From here, Mr. Hayes continued to impress. His tenacity and loyalty led to his eventual promotion as successor to Wilmuth Deweese in 1990 as district manager of the Warren RECC Leitchfield office. In 2000, Gerald accepted the position of president and CEO of Warren RECC, taking on the responsibility of leading a company he had already committed to for 32 years.

The Warren RECC mission statement claims "safety, integrity, value, and innovation" as their guiding principles. Mr. Hayes has worked relentlessly to see that these values are upheld and not forgotten. On May 6, 2008, Gerald will honorably retire from his position as CEO, 40 years to the day he began work as a chainman. Mr. Hayes's wife Karen, their four children Laura, Leah, Lisa and Landon, and their seven grandchildren have proudly supported him throughout his career, and are the foremost reason Mr. Hayes has been able to achieve so much.

Warren RECC has been providing quality electrical service to south central Kentucky residents for 70 years thanks to Mr. Hayes' constant and faithful service. He is a truly outstanding Kentuckian, and I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Mr. Gerald W. Hayes for his 40 years of outstanding and loyal service.

NATIONAL PEACE CORPS WEEK

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, on March 1, 2008, the Peace Corps celebrates its 47th year of operation. I congratulate all past and present volunteers and staff members on 47 years of international service and I welcome many more years to come.

Since 1961, the Peace Corps has served as a creative and productive outlet for U.S. citizens to spread some of the very best of our society—our desire to help those less fortunate than ourselves—around the world. The year 2007 was no exception.

I am proud to recognize that the spirit of that movement is still strong in America's youth, and our young at heart. Last year witnessed the highest number of volunteers since 1970, with 8,079 volunteers serving in 74 countries as of September 30th.

The Peace Corps is expanding in breadth as well as numbers, with a new program opening in Cambodia. Also in 2007, Ethiopia welcomed the Peace Corps back after 8 years, making it the 10th nation that is also a focus country for the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief to host volunteers. In fiscal year 2007, over 1 million people affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic were assisted by Peace Corps volunteers and their activities.

Constantly rotating their personnel, the Peace Corps is well accustomed to adapting to and taking advantage of new ideas, thinking, and technology. In the coming year PeaceWiki will launch, allowing volunteers to share experiences and information with each other. They are even creating an online "role-play" game to teach middle schoolchildren about international service.

Many people mistakenly believe the Peace Corps is only about helping those distantly removed from our daily life here in America. This could not be further from the truth. Peace Corps volunteers return with a sense of accomplishment and the skill sets to that are often desperately needed or in short supply here in the United States. Volunteers have had to learn approximately 250 different languages and dialects, not to mention how to handle different cultures with dexterity and ease. Twenty-two percent of all current volunteers serve in predominantly Muslim countries.

Returned volunteers' paths after service are as varied as their tours. They include Assistant Secretary of State Christopher—Chris—Hill, who served in Cameroon in the 1970s, several of my colleagues in Congress,

CEOs and founders of major companies such as Netflix and The Nature Company, authors, journalists, teachers, government employees, and businessmen.

Volunteers often return to service later in life as part of the Peace Corps Response, which sends former Corps members to assist in crisis and natural disasters around the world for brief intervals. Over 200 served in our own country after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Across the globe, 36 intrepid Alaskans currently serve their country as members of the Peace Corps. I would like to take this opportunity to extend a special thank you to them in particular. Whether they are in El Salvador, Ghana, or Kazakhstan, I know they are not only fulfilling the Peace Corps' mandates of providing trained personnel to developing nations and promoting cross-cultural understanding, but they are also learning important life lessons which will be a credit to them in their future endeavors and to our State. I look forward to welcoming them back to Alaska as I do all who choose to serve our Nation abroad.

POST-9/11 VETERANS EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE ACT

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, this Chamber has recently been consumed by discussion of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Obviously, we don't all agree on this issue. But there are a few things that I think we can agree on.

We can agree that the brave men and women serving their country overseas and at home are doing a superb job. We can agree that we have the finest fighting force the world has ever known. And we can agree that our veterans deserve benefits for the sacrifices they make and the risks they take while serving their country.

For nearly 65 years, one of those benefits has been affordable access to a college education when they return from war. Commonly called the GI bill, this benefit is widely recognized as one of the best pieces of legislation ever passed by Congress. Unfortunately, for many Oregonian citizen soldiers this benefit has remained just out of reach.

Oregon has no large active duty military bases, and most Oregonians who serve their country do so in the National Guard or Reserves. They stay trained and ready, and when our nation needs them they fight bravely. But when the fighting is over, they return to their communities and their jobs. And, all too often, their sacrifice is not rewarded the way it is for members of the active duty force.

An active duty soldier can collect GI bill benefits even after they leave the military. However, if a member of the Oregon National Guard wants to attend Portland State University after fighting in Iraq for a year, he or she must