

And, in doing so, let us remember this man who was brought to his rest exactly 88 years ago.

He reminds us of the dear price of freedom—a price which all veterans must be ready to pay.

These men and women put their lives on the line to defend the United States.

We must recognize and honor the enormity of such patriotic devotion.

So let us celebrate the heroes who walk among us—our grandparents, our parents, and our children. Our friends and our neighbors.

Let us honor their sacrifice. Let us express our support, our friendship, and our gratitude for the service they have rendered to their country and all its citizens.

Their stories are woven into the story of this Nation.

These men and women have become a part of something greater than themselves—greater than all of us.

More than two centuries ago, when a tyrant from across the ocean refused to grant basic freedoms to his subjects, a brave few decided to claim it for themselves and for their countrymen.

When Europe was consumed by violence and genocide—when a dictator seemed poised to march across an entire continent—a generation of Americans rose to this threat and joined with our allies to save the world from oppression.

From the hallowed fields of Saratoga and Gettysburg, to the muddy trenches of France, to the rugged Korean peninsula—

From the humid jungles of Vietnam, to the arid sands of Afghanistan, and Iraq, and every theater of combat in between—America's veterans are the valiant protectors of American liberty.

We must never forget our servicemen and women—those who fought bravely and returned home, and those who perished on the field of battle.

Our freedom is their legacy.

And, just as we ask them to make great sacrifices for our Nation, so this country owes them a deep debt of gratitude.

We must give our veterans nothing but the very best.

As a member of the Veterans Affairs and Armed Services Committees, I will work with my colleagues to make sure we keep our promises to those who serve.

This means increasing educational benefits through programs like the Post-9/11 G.I. bill.

It means stepping up impact aid support to military communities.

And it means providing high quality healthcare to every single soldier, sailor, airman, and marine who puts on a uniform.

I will not stand for anything but the best. And I urge my colleagues to join me in renewing this commitment.

These men and women answered the call in America's hour of need.

And now America must be ready to answer in their hour of need.

Colleagues, let us see this Veterans Day as a time to remember—a time to

celebrate the heroes of all wars, and to honor their service and sacrifice.

But let us also see this Veterans Day as a challenge for the future.

Let us see it as a time to keep our promises, and to fight for those who have fought for us.

Eighty-eight years ago, a brave soldier was laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery under the inscription "Here rests in honored glory an American soldier, known but to God."

And although we call him the Unknown Soldier, in reality he is anything but unknown.

He is our countryman—our brother—our protector.

He is every American soldier, past and present.

His sacrifice lives in our freedom. His service is carried on by all those who wear the American flag into combat, and all who perish under its standard.

My friends, this Veterans Day is a time for remembrance and celebration.

It is a time for American heroes.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I rise today to take advantage of a unique opportunity to recognize and thank those who hold the distinguished title of "veteran." It is because of their service, their commitment, and their sacrifice, that our country is what it is today, a great nation which stands for freedom and which shines as a beacon of hope and opportunity to the rest of the world.

Ninety-one years ago today, on the 11th hour, of the 11th day, of the 11th month of 1918, the hostilities of World War I between the Allied nations and Germany, ceased. While the commemoration of this day was originally known as Armistice Day, later being renamed as "Veterans Day," the purpose and intent has never changed. President Woodrow Wilson, in 1919, expressed his thoughts of this day, and they ring as true today as they did nine decades ago:

To us in America, the reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for the victory, both because of the thing from which it has freed us and because of the opportunity it has given America to show her sympathy with peace and justice in the councils of the nations.

In Alaska we have the distinct pleasure and honor of having the largest per capita percentage of veterans of any State in the Union. We call them our neighbors, our coworkers, and our friends. Our communities benefit from the experience and expertise which they have brought home with them from their time in the service of our Nation. Today, while they may wear different clothing in place of a uniform, their service continues as they provide leadership and skill within the State of Alaska.

As we reflect on the service of heroes who have served our country in conflicts past such as World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf war and others, we would be remiss if didn't also pause to honor the

dedication of the men and women who are putting their lives on the line today to protect our freedom. This includes not only those serving in Southwest Asia but also those still in Kosovo, those still standing watch of the Korean demilitarized zone, and those serving and sacrificing in countless other countries and regions around the world.

Today, we also mourn. We mourn those veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice in the defense of freedom. This year, Alaska lost several members of our military community in the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts. I extend my heartfelt sympathy to the families of our fallen service members.

Finally, I would like to recognize a group who often isn't honored enough: the families and loved ones of America's veterans. These are the folks who have had to see their loved ones sent away to war zones and who worried about their well being every second, of every minute, of every day until they returned. These are the folks who have had to singlehandedly manage the household and deal with the car, the washing machine, or the heater invariably breaking the second that their spouse departed. These are the folks who firsthand deal with the invisible scars and injuries of war, such as PTSD, when their loved one comes home. The family members of our veterans are heroes who bravely serve our Nation and rightfully deserve our recognition.

I am honored to have the opportunity to stand among my colleagues here on the Senate floor and proudly state that while we know that words cannot express the gratitude that a grateful nation has for its veterans, with a common voice we want to say thank you.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO THE MARINE CORPS

Mr. BURRIS. Mr. President, 234 years ago today, a group of American patriots gathered to found a new branch of the Armed Forces.

They organized and trained a robust fighting force that has distinguished itself time and again in the years since that day.

In 1805, these brave warriors were ordered into battle by President Jefferson. They fought for safe passage of American ships and American citizens, defending our fledgling nation against a grave new threat.

In fact, they carried this fight halfway around the world to the city of Derne, on the shores of Tripoli.

And 40 years later, at the height of the Mexican-American War, this fighting force again proved their bravery.

They charged enemy positions at Chapultepec Castle, eventually capturing the enemy capital, and leading U.S. forces into the very halls of Montezuma.

In these defining moments, from the halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli, the legend of the United States Marine Corps was born.

Since the early days of our Republic, the Marines have been at the forefront of America's defenses.

And in every subsequent conflict from the days of the Revolution to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan these brave warriors have proven their mettle, and put their lives on the line to defend our freedom.

For their sacrifice, their bravery, and their heroism, they deserve the praise and thanks of a grateful nation.

So, to every man and woman who has worn the uniform of the U.S. Marines: we thank you. And we owe you our very best.

As a member of the Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committees, I am inspired by stories of those who serve almost on a daily basis.

And I will work with my colleagues to make sure this country keeps its commitment to these fine individuals.

So this Veterans Day, as the Marines celebrate 234 years of distinguished service and brave sacrifice, let us all offer our utmost gratitude and support to all of those in uniform.

Mr. BENNETT. Madam President, as we approach the commemoration of Veterans Day, I rise to speak in recognition of veterans across the country, but particularly those in Utah. In doing this, I wish to be careful to not allow the regularity of this topic diminish its significance or make our veterans seem ordinary. Those who know them best know they are anything but.

When speaking of our veterans, perhaps we remember news clips of heroic jungle rescues, a frozen, rocket-blasted hill, or soldiers fighting bravely in the searing heat of the desert. We rightly celebrate them for what they did, but more than that—let us celebrate them for who they are.

As meaningful as words of praise may be, they often are all we give to our veterans. It is too rare when we can present our veterans with a gift—a concrete reminder that this Nation honors those individuals who fight to keep us free. Today, I am especially pleased to recognize the opening of the George E. Wahlen Veterans' Nursing Home in Ogden, UT. On November 19, officials and the public will gather to commemorate the opening of the nursing home and present this impressive facility to the veterans of northern Utah. As with any major accomplishment, the list of people to thank stretches long, including public officials from local, State, and Federal Government, particularly State Representative Brad Dee and State Senator Pete Knudson who sponsored the legislation that made this all possible. However, I would also like to recognize two Utah veterans, whose contributions made this project a reality.

Terry Schow is a Vietnam veteran and the director of the Utah Department of Veterans Affairs. His efforts to reach out to his fellow veterans are not confined to his professional obligations. Rather, his passion and unmis-

takable tenacity give power to his fundamental belief that kind words simply are not enough when it comes to caring for our veterans. Determined to make sure that all veterans receive the support they deserve, Terry was instrumental in seeing that no bureaucratic or logistical obstacle prevented the creation of the veterans' nursing home.

Finally, I wish to speak of the late George Wahlen. A World War II veteran and recipient of the Medal of Honor, George passed away on June 5, 2009, just 5 months before completion of the facility that he fought so hard to establish. Along with several of his colleagues, George made the repeated trek to the Capitol building in Salt Lake City, UT, to persuade legislators of the need to provide funding for a veterans' nursing home in northern Utah. It is noteworthy that in fighting for the needed funding, George never sought any personal benefit. He never knew the nursing home would be named in his honor. Instead, at a time when he could have retired and spent his life in comfort and quiet, he chose to take up this cause, a symbol of his dedication to the service of his fellow veterans. After numerous meetings, phone calls, and hearings, the persistence of George as well as dozens of other veterans paid off when on January 24, 2008, the State House, and later on February 29, 2008, the State Senate voted unanimously to advance all funding for the construction of the facility. This measure was then signed into law by Governor Jon Huntsman, Jr. on March 18, 2008.

For George Wahlen and Terry Schow, their work for their country and fellow servicemen did not end when they became veterans. These two men have inspired many of us in Utah by their integrity, character, and passion to ensure our country returns the favor for the many sacrifices made by our servicemen and women. You see, it is not that George or Terry or any number of veterans did this one single thing or that. What sets them apart is the character which leads them to do it again, and again. When honoring our veterans this Veterans Day, let us not forget their valiant acts of courage—but may we always remember their character.

As a Senator, I am acutely aware of the many issues that face veterans. I am sure each of us would like to give them more. But, while much remains to be done, let the George E. Wahlen Veterans' Nursing Home in Ogden, UT, stand as undeniable evidence that America is a nation that honors its veterans.

STATUS OF THE HIGHWAY PROGRAM

Mr. GREGG. Madam President, last month, efforts by Senate Democratic leaders to add roughly \$250 billion to the U.S. debt over the next 10 years by increasing Medicare payments to physicians were put off by arguments from other Democrats that the cost of the proposal should be offset so as not to

burden future generations with more debt. A series of press releases, editorials, and op-eds declared the proposal to be fiscally irresponsible and the Democratic leadership foolish for trying to take it up as a standalone bill. And yet, a Senate highway bill that would add roughly \$150 billion to the U.S. debt over the next 10 years remains below the radar and far more likely to be approved.

The last highway bill, SAFETEA-LU expired at the end of September 2009. But highway programs, like much of the rest of government, continue to operate by virtue of the continuing resolution, CR, now in place through December 18, 2009. Until the authorization committees can agree on how to underwrite the \$500 billion over 6 years that they desire in highway spending, a CR or another legislative vehicle will carry a highway programs extension. Meanwhile, the highway trust fund is already insolvent and cannot support baseline spending levels equal to the highway program levels in fiscal year 2009, much less an authorization bill amounting to half a trillion dollars.

The House and Senate authorizing committees advertise they are simply arguing over the length—3 months v. 6 months v. 18 months—of a “clean” extension. A clean extension, however, already exists in law in the CR and can be perpetuated indefinitely. The authorizers really want to combine a highway extension bill with an increase in highway spending authority above the fiscal year 2009 level for contract authority.

The various “clean” extension bills being advocated by the highway authorizers are anything but clean, and they are certainly not extensions. For example, the latest Senate version to be hotlined on October 26 is a massive highway expansion bill—it would increase spending authority by \$20.8 billion over the CBO baseline in 2010 and in every year after that.

Madam President, \$20.8 billion per year over the baseline is a lot of money. Why so much? Because authorizers set, back in 2005, the overall 5-year net level of highway spending in the last authorization bill, SAFETEA-LU, by rescinding \$8.7 billion on the day that bill expired—September 30, 2009. They had always planned to repeal that rescission before it occurred, but failed to do so. They are so irritated by the failure to avert the rescission that they propose to re-enact the funds—twice!

I will ask that a table showing the components of the \$20.8 billion above the CBO baseline be printed in the RECORD at the end of my statement.

CBO projects that limiting highway spending to the fiscal year 2009 program level, as the CR does, will exceed the gas tax revenue to the highway trust fund by \$87 billion over the next 10 years. If Congress continues to cover trust fund shortfalls as it has been—by transferring money from the Treasury's General Fund—then \$87 billion of