

for the \$9 million renovation of the African Meeting House. But few people have worked harder to make the renovation and rededication a reality than Beverly Morgan-Welch, the executive director of the Museum of African-American History. She has spent more than a decade spearheading the project, and I congratulate her for all her efforts on behalf of the Museum and the Meeting House and for the decades she has spent telling the unique and powerful story of African-Americans. It is an inspiring story about those whose spirits would not be broken by slavery, those who found ways to create families and communities under unimaginably brutal conditions, and those who managed—against all odds—to escape to freedom.

The African Meeting House reminds us that America has come a long way in making good on what Dr. King called “the promissory note” of our democracy—the right to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” to all our citizens. It is a testament to the great strides we have made in outlawing the racial injustice that tainted the ideals of American society and helped make possible the election of our first African-American president and, in Massachusetts, our first African-American governor.

But the African Meeting House also reminds us of the work and the struggle that continues today. If we are to be fully emancipated from the consequences of slavery, we must understand its history, which played out so eloquently, so gallantly and so courageously at the African Meeting House.

DEFENSE LEGISLATIVE FELLOW PROGRAM

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I rise to recognize the Defense Legislative Fellow Program and honor the fellows whom I have come to know well during their service in my office since 2009. These individuals have been among our Nation’s best and brightest and they come to Congress each year to impart their knowledge to Members and their staffs and leave with a better awareness of the political process and the tireless and often unheralded work that congressional staff undertake each and every day. In the past 2 years I have had the pleasure of having three defense fellows work in my office: LTC Brooks Tucker, U.S. Marine Corps; MAJ Vaughan Byrum, U.S. Army; and MAJ Brett Robinson, U.S. Air Force.

As a testament to their abilities, MAJ Vaughan Byrum, a 14-year Army officer, prior enlisted soldier, and veteran of the two deployments to Iraq, is now serving as one of a handful of promising and capable officers representing the Army in the Senate Liaison Office, and Major Robinson is completing his tenure in my office and preparing for another demanding assignment in the Washington, DC, area. As an officer in the Marine Corps Reserve, LTC Brooks Tucker started as a fellow

in my office in 2009, just when I was assigned a spot on the Senate Armed Services Committee. He has served on both my personal office and Veterans’ Affairs Committee staffs, and he has been a tireless advocate for North Carolina’s veterans and Active-Duty families and has been the critical lynchpin in my efforts to help the service-members and families who were impacted by contamination while serving at Camp Lejeune.

I want to express my gratitude to all three of these defense fellows for their service to the U.S. Senate and the people of North Carolina.

Major Byrum came to my office after completing a tough and demanding tour of duty in Baghdad, training and mentoring the provincial police and assisting with the critical transition from coalition to Iraqi responsibility and control. Like many combat veterans whom I have met over the years, Major Byrum is the epitome of professionalism, possesses a warm sense of humor, and conducts himself with humility and impeccable bearing. A graduate of North Carolina A&T University and a leader in the Reserve Officer Training Corps, Vaughan has a heart as big as his linebacker frame. He is fondly remembered by my staff, who went out of their way to welcome him back to the Senate after an interim assignment serving in the Pentagon. His can-do attitude and self-effacing demeanor will serve him well as he works with Senators and staff in the months ahead. I know his wife Andrea and daughter Victoria are very proud of him. I realize the Byrum family has made numerous sacrifices and endured lengthy separations, and they, like so many others in the military, have borne that burden quietly, with courage and grace.

Major Robinson has worked diligently in my Washington office for the past year and ably served the people of North Carolina. Before joining the Senate, Major Robinson served as the special operations program manager for the Air National Guard overseeing the special operations budget supporting over 1,000 personnel and 9 aircraft. As a traditional Air Guardsman, he serves as a C-130 pilot with the Pennsylvania Air National Guard. Prior to his recent assignments in Washington, DC, Major Robinson completed combat deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan and garnered operational experience on the African Continent, Europe, and Asia. A distinguished graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy, he has served as a tactics officer, pilot, and flight commander and is the recipient of numerous personal decorations for meritorious service over his 13 years in uniform.

His tireless work and patient manner has not gone unnoticed, whether it be helping a Vietnam combat veteran receive a long overdue decoration for valor, offering operational perspectives on air operations in Afghanistan and Libya, or working in concert with mili-

tary commanders and civilian leaders in North Carolina to address veterans’ needs.

And to Jori, his wife, who is also an Air Force officer, thank you for your support and sacrifice as you balance the demands and confront the challenges of life in service to this Nation. I enjoyed meeting you and your sons, Grayson and Kiernan, and I know Major Robinson couldn’t do what he does without your love and support.

I have gotten to know Major Robinson and Major Byrum quite well in the past 2 years. For men with so many rich life experiences and career accomplishments to be proud of, they truly epitomize the moniker “quiet professional” and exude a measured demeanor, consistent competency, and genuine modesty that has made them trusted advisers to me and my staff and garnered our admiration and affection. In sum, they are superb examples of the finest military in the world.

From interns in my office to constituents in the State, to all of my staff in North Carolina, Major Byrum and Major Robinson have impressed us at every turn and succeeded in educating us about the honor, tradition, and sacrifices made every day by our service men and women overseas, especially those of the National Guard.

Thank you, MAJ Vaughan M. Byrum and MAJ Brett B. Robinson, for your distinguished year of service to the people of North Carolina and for your continued commitment to protecting our Nation and the prosperity of all Americans.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bill was read the second time, and placed on the calendar:

S. 1917. A bill to create jobs by providing payroll tax relief for middle class families and businesses, and for other purposes.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. LIEBERMAN, from the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, without amendment:

S. 384. A bill to amend title 39, United States Code, to extend the authority of the United States Postal Service to issue a semipostal to raise funds for breast cancer research (Rept. No. 112-97).

EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEE

The following executive reports of nominations were submitted:

By Mr. KERRY for the Committee on Foreign Relations.

*Mari Carmen Aponte, of the District of Columbia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of El Salvador.

Nominee: Mari Carmen Aponte.

Post: El Salvador.

(The following is a list of all members of my immediate family and their spouses. I