

senior ministry position, he led a major capital campaign that renovated the historic church's building. More importantly, he understood that the church was far more than brick, mortar and stained glass and set about expanding the congregation's role in the community through their Social Impact Center. Under Reverend Hamilton's stewardship, the Center, and particularly its Dream Again Program, provided a variety of hands-on programs to help area residents find jobs, learn new skills, continue their education and even purchase and keep homes.

Also under his leadership, the Roxbury Presbyterian Church began a highly successful "Adopt-A-School" program that has been touted as a model of excellence.

Mr. President, if we are known by the fruits of our labor, then Reverend Hamilton's time with us in Boston was bountiful. He was a champion for summer jobs programs for disadvantaged teens; he also helped secure funding for new textbooks for city schools. Yet nowhere was he more effective than in his efforts to secure access to health insurance for all our citizens. For Reverend Hamilton it was a matter of justice. Thanks in large part to his efforts, 98 percent of Massachusetts residents are now covered by health insurance. The program is not perfect and he understood that, which is why he has helped lead the fight to reduce exploding health care costs in our state.

Shortly after coming to Boston, Reverend Hamilton founded the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization which has been tremendously effective in not just raising awareness of pressing social concerns, but bringing together religious and community organizations to actually improve the lives of our neighbors. Because of the GBIO and Reverend Hamilton's leadership, there are more opportunities for at-risk youth, poor families are better educated and equipped to climb the economic ladder, and the rights of workers in nursing homes are better protected just to name a few of their accomplishments.

Mr. President, Reverend Hamilton leaves a lasting legacy in Massachusetts that expands well beyond his former church's Roxbury neighborhood. His impact can be measured in richer and more fulfilling lives, improved access to health insurance, better job prospects and engaged youth who go on to be productive and effective leaders, parents and workers.

Earlier this year, Reverend Hamilton accepted a new position in his words, God reassigned him to a new ministry in California. I join Reverend Hamilton's former congregation and all the people whose lives he touched in thanking him and wish him and his wife, Dr. Rhonda Hamilton, every blessing with their new opportunities in California.

RECOGNIZING MAJOR GENERALS FRANK VAVALA AND GUS HARGETT

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, in December, with the distinguished leadership of the Senators from Vermont and South Carolina, we passed the National Guard Empowerment Act as an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act with truly bipartisan support, as evidenced by its 71 cosponsors here in the U.S. Senate. At the time, we said that the National Guard has performed extraordinary service in the last 10 years alongside their Reserve and Active Duty counterparts as part of a truly integrated total force, but that the changes included by the National Guard Empowerment Act were most important not because of the great work in the past, but because of the essential need for enhanced cooperation in the future.

The Senate recognized that enhanced capabilities for the National Guard, particularly elevating the Chief of the National Guard Bureau as a statutory member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, this Nation's highest military planning body, were essential to meeting the threats of the future. And today I am happy to join my friend from Delaware to recognize two men who played a key role in advocating that point of view here in the Senate, two men who approached an idea widely regarded as a nice, but unlikely thought and helped transform it into a reality. They are Chairman of the National Guard Association of the United States NGAUS, MG Frank Vavala, and his highly capable "battle buddy," the president of the NGAUS, retired MG Gus Hargett.

People around Tennessee know Gus Hargett as the former Adjutant General of our State's National Guard, but also as the person responsible for supervising the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency and the Tennessee State Guard. They also know Gus as the kind of guy to get things done when they really matter. Throughout his career he had a healthy mixture of active duty service with the U.S. Army and the precise sort of duty with the National Guard at the state level or Active Guard Reserve status that we put GEN Craig McKinley on the Joint Chiefs of Staff to strategize for.

With the support of General Vavala and Adjutant Generals around the country, General Hargett provided key guidance for this legislation, answered countless questions, and provided the needed impetus to take it over the top and onto the President's desk. He recognized that this transcended simply advocating for the National Guard, it was an essential step for preparing our country's homeland defense strategy.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I am pleased to join my friend from Tennessee to show appreciation for the efforts of General Hargett and General Vavala. As he says, it is about much more than recognizing good work done, it is about preparing for the natural

and manmade threats to Americans, and I would like to associate myself with his remarks.

My State is particularly blessed to have General Vavala as our world-class adjutant general, providing invaluable leadership to the Delaware National Guard on behalf of our Governor. I think that people who have had just a few minutes to chat with him come away understanding that he is a dynamic force. They would be able to instantly understand how he and General Hargett helped guide a compelling, grassroots campaign of hundreds of thousands of National Guard men and women and their State leadership to make clear to their representatives that their Guard strategy was a national defense concept to be taken seriously. Defense of our homes begins at home, something the National Guard has specialized in for 375 years. At a time when it seems nothing in Washington works right, General Vavala insisted time and again that the voice of the people matters and worked tirelessly to prove it. Congress recognized the wisdom of investing in the National Guard, and responded appropriately, with the most important piece of legislation since the modern, dual-mission National Guard was established in 1903.

Now, the leadership of the National Guard stands ready to support the President and Secretary of Defense in the new strategic guidance released in January. It is clear that tough decisions have to be made in this budget environment and that we will have a military with a different look and operational approach in the future. However, we are confident that the National Guard will not shrink from its responsibility to defend our Nation and its interests around the world as well as meeting every home State emergency and challenge it faces.

We are grateful to GEN Frank Vavala, GEN Gus Hargett, and the members of NGAUS, for the important roles they played in this momentous legislation.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO RAYMOND J. WIECZOREK

● Ms. AYOTTE. Mr. President, today I wish to honor my dear friend, Raymond J. Wieczorek—a distinguished New Hampshire citizen who has devoted a lifetime of service to his city, State, and Nation. After providing decades of community and civic leadership in and around Manchester, he will retire from public office at the end of this year.

Ray is a father and a grandfather who has also been a loving husband. He has served as a soldier, a volunteer, a small businessman, a mayor, and as a member of New Hampshire's executive