

I want other Senators to know of Mr. Gazaryan and Mr. Vitishko, and hope that calling attention to them and their work might cause the Russian authorities to recognize that their responsibility is to uphold the law and protect the environment on behalf of the Russian people, not to persecute Russian citizens who have the courage to do so themselves.

LOVING v. VIRGINIA ANNIVERSARY

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, on June 12, 1967, during a period of significant political and racial tension in our Nation, the Supreme Court issued a unanimous landmark decision in *Loving v. Virginia* that overturned laws banning interracial marriage. This decision ushered in a transformative moment in American history. As we approach the first anniversary of another landmark Supreme Court decision in the *Windsor* case, we should remember the foundational work that was laid when the Supreme Court came together nearly 50 years ago to uphold the civil rights of all Americans to marry the person they love.

In writing for the majority in *Loving*, Chief Justice Earl Warren declared “the freedom to marry, or not marry, a person of another race resides with the individual, and cannot be infringed by the State.” My wife Marcelle and I had been married just 5 years at the time, and on that June day, we were overwhelmed with pride and joy for the many couples affected by this historic decision. Now married for over 50 years, I cannot bear to imagine a world where I would have been prohibited from marrying the person I love because of something beyond my control.

As I reflect on the landmark *Loving* decision, I am filled with pride for my home State. Throughout history, Vermont has taken a leadership role in America’s journey to build a more just society. Vermont was the first State in the Union to outlaw slavery, and Vermonters offered shelter to runaway slaves seeking refuge while in transit to Canada—serving as one of the last stops on the Underground Railroad. Vermont was also the first to adopt universal manhood suffrage, regardless of property ownership.

It is because of this history that it is not surprising that Vermont has been at the forefront of our Nation’s march toward marriage equality: Vermont was the first State to provide civil unions back in 2000, and on April 7, 2009, Vermont once again led the Nation by granting marriage equality for the first time through democratically elected officials on a bipartisan basis instead of through the courts.

This is not to say that it was easy. The initial move toward civil unions fomented heated debate among Vermonters and throughout the Nation. But several courageous leaders, such as the late Republican U.S. Senator from Vermont Bob Stafford,

showed us the way, and their advocacy for equality was powerfully moving. Like many Vermonters, I listened to advocates, friends, and neighbors who reminded me that love and commitment are values to encourage and not to fear. I continue to be inspired by the inclusive example set by Vermont.

Five years ago Vermont’s State Legislature passed the Marriage Equality Act, which provided marriage equality for all Vermonters. Since then, more than 3,700 same-sex couples have married in the State of Vermont, 19 States and the District of Columbia have marriage equality, and the Supreme Court has decided a landmark case on the issue of same-sex marriage.

One year ago this month, the Supreme Court struck down section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act, which defined marriage for purposes of Federal law as “only a legal union between one man and one woman.” The Court concluded that the law deprived couples of equal liberty as protected by our fifth amendment. All Americans deserve equal justice under the law, and Marcelle and I celebrated this important decision, which honored the *Loving* decision and pushed the Nation farther on its path toward equality.

In 2007, on the 40th anniversary of the *Loving* decision, Mildred *Loving* reflected on her life and weighed in on the issue of marriage equality. She said:

Surrounded as I am now by wonderful children and grandchildren, not a day goes by that I don’t think of Richard and our love, our right to marry, and how much it meant to me to have that freedom to marry the person precious to me, even if others thought he was the “wrong kind of person” for me to marry. I believe all Americans, no matter their race, no matter their sex, no matter their sexual orientation, should have that same freedom to marry. Government has no business imposing some people’s religious beliefs over others. Especially if it denies people’s civil rights.

I am still not a political person, but I am proud that Richard’s and my name is on a court case that can help reinforce the love, the commitment, the fairness, and the family that so many people, black or white, young or old, gay or straight seek in life. I support the freedom to marry for all. That’s what *Loving*, and *loving*, are all about.

As chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I have made civil rights a priority of our Committee’s agenda and a priority in the Senate. I often hear from those who think that the struggle for civil rights is over—that this issue is one for the history books. If only that were true. If only every American could marry the love of their life and have that union recognized. If only hate groups stopped targeting communities based on their sexual orientation, race, religion, or national origin. If only racial discrimination in voting was a thing of the past, but it is not. We must keep up the fight on our path toward a more perfect union.

This month we celebrate and honor the real love behind both the *Loving* and *Windsor* decisions. Their fight to be with the one they loved spans dec-

ades, but their lessons stand the test of time. They are the kinds of Supreme Court rulings that future generations will point to when they consider the Supreme Court’s most notable decisions. The march toward equality must and will continue until all individuals—regardless of sexual orientation, gender or gender identity, race, ethnicity, religion, or disability—are protected and respected, equally, under our laws.

TRIBUTE TO ROBERT L. WILLIAMS

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, for several years now I have had the distinct pleasure of knowing Robert L. “Bob” Williams. Bob hails from Independence, KY, and is a member of our Nation’s Greatest Generation. Like so many in that generation, he answered the call of duty and fought valiantly in the Second World War. I rise today to honor his service to this country.

Early on the morning of June 6, 1941, Bob was among the first Allied paratroopers dropped into Normandy as a part of Operation Overlord, on the historic day of D-day. Several hours later, the largest amphibious assault in the history of war would commence. For the time being, however, Bob and his fellow paratroopers fought behind enemy lines, securing the roads and bridges that were vital to the operation’s success. You could say that these men constituted the tip of the sharpest sword this Nation has ever thrust into battle.

The airborne soldiers’ mission that day was extremely dangerous—simply making it to the battlefield through the barrage of German anti-aircraft fire was a feat in itself—yet Bob displayed remarkable courage under fire. Upon landing, an enemy machine-gunner placed 12 bullet holes in his baggy pants pockets. Undeterred, Bob continued to fight that day, and for 10 more days until he was seriously wounded on June 16.

Since the war’s conclusion, Bob has done his part to keep alive the memory of those who served. On the 50th anniversary of the D-day invasion, he joined 18 fellow veterans in re-creating their parachute jump into Normandy. He has also written a book containing his, and other veterans’ stories from the war. Most recently, Bob was honored to be inducted into the Kentucky Veterans Hall of Fame in March of this year.

As the Second World War drifts further and further into the past, it becomes increasingly important that we remember the sacrifices made to secure victory. So today, I ask that my U.S. Senate colleagues join me in honoring Robert L. Williams and his service to his country during the great battle to make the world safe for democracy that was World War II.

Mr. President, the Lexington Herald-Leader recently published an article detailing Bob Williams’ and other Kentucky World War II veterans’ stories