

Mr. Hernandez stands as a shining example of someone who has truly devoted his life to serving his local community. He earned a bachelor of science in government and a master of education from Texas A&M University. He later obtained his executive fire officer credential from the National Fire Academy. Mr. Hernandez began his fire service career over 30 years ago as a firefighter medic. Throughout his tenure, he worked in every division of fire services, including emergency operations, training, emergency medical service, emergency operations center management, and the fire prevention bureau. He advanced in his job with diligence, applying knowledge from each division to his work. Mr. Hernandez is truly a role model in the fire services community throughout Reno and across the silver State.

In March of 2010, Mr. Hernandez was named Reno fire chief. Along with the position, he gained responsibility for the department's response to fires, natural and manmade disasters, and emergency medical calls. He worked tirelessly to ensure that the Reno Fire Department maintained excellent fire services for Nevada residents, even in some of the most tumultuous economic times. As chief, Mr. Hernandez provided fellow firefighters with the training and tools necessary to keep our local community safe. Mr. Hernandez is also a member of the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Alumni Association, the National Fire Protection Association, and the Nevada Fire Chiefs Association. I am grateful for all Mr. Hernandez has done for the City of Reno.

It is the brave men and women who serve in our local fire departments that help keep our communities safe. These heroes selflessly put their lives on the line every day. I extend my deepest gratitude to Mr. Hernandez for his courageous contributions to the people of Reno and to the silver State. His sacrifice and courage earn him a place among the outstanding men and women who have valiantly put their lives on the line to benefit others.

Mr. Hernandez has demonstrated professionalism, commitment to excellence, and dedication to the highest standards of the Reno Fire Department. I am both humbled and honored by his service and am proud to call him a fellow Nevadan. Today, I ask all of my colleagues to join me in congratulating Mr. Hernandez on his retirement, and I give my deepest appreciation for all that he has done to make Nevada a safer place. I offer him my best wishes for many successful and fulfilling years to come.●

TRIBUTE TO DR. GERALD M. CROSS

● Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, today I recognize Dr. Gerald M. Cross, a dedicated public servant who will be retiring from the Department of Veterans Affairs at the end of August.

Before joining the VA, Dr. Cross served in the U.S. Army for nearly 30 years. While in the Army, Dr. Cross was honored with several awards, including five Legion of Merit medals, the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, USUHS, Commendable Services Medal and the Order of Military Medical Merit. His final Army assignment was as the U.S. Army Forces Command, FORSCOM, Surgeon at Fort McPherson, assembling medical support for overseas operations.

Inspired by his experience working with servicemembers and their families, Dr. Cross began an 11-year career at the VA after retiring from the Army. His work as Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Health and Acting Under Secretary for Health earned him the Exceptional Service Award in 2010, awarded by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Among his many accomplishments, Dr. Cross's work at the VA includes increasing the number of Vet Centers throughout the country, and adding over 1,000 physicians and over 3,000 nurses to the VA staff nationwide, and leading the VA Central Office Task Force that implemented the Suicide Prevention Hotline. His legacy at the VA will live on, helping veterans for years to come.

Dr. Cross is a truly inspirational public servant. I thank him for his many years of serving his country serving those who have served, and I wish him the best in his retirement.●

TRIBUTE TO JOSEPH A. VIOLANTE

● Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I wish to recognize Joseph A. Violante, national legislative director for the Disabled American Veterans, DAV, who will be retiring at the end of this week after over 20 years of service to DAV.

Joe's career of service started long before his tenure at DAV. As a U.S. Marine, he served in combat in Vietnam. Following his honorable discharge from the Marine Corps, Joe began practicing law in California, and in 1990, Joe joined the DAV Washington staff in its appellate work before the VA Board of Veterans Appeals, lending his legal expertise to serve his fellow veterans. Joe became DAV's national legislative director in 1996.

It is an incredible service to defend the United States in combat. Joe went above and beyond that. He came home and started fighting for others who served, helping countless veterans through his work at DAV. Over the past 2 decades, he has played a role in crafting major veterans legislation, and his work has affected policies at the VA, the Department of Labor, the Department of Defense, and other Federal agencies. Joe has helped spur internal VA reforms, establish increases in VA's annual appropriations, expand primary care for veterans, expand the National Cemetery system and establish caregiver benefits for wounded veterans. These accomplishments, just few

of many, will continue to help veterans for years to come.

Joe served as national legislative director for three Presidential administrations and testified at my very first hearing as chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. It was an honor to work with him, and I know I am not alone when I say I am sad to see him go. His retirement is well-deserved, and I wish Joe and his wife Debbie all the best.●

TRIBUTE TO RICHARD DEAN ROGERS

● Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, as a representative of Kansas in the U.S. Senate, it is my honor to celebrate the public service of Richard Dean Rogers, a Kansan who has dedicated his life to serving his community, State, and country. Richard's professional achievements are as plentiful and diverse as they are impressive. Born in Oberlin, KS in 1921, Richard Rogers went on to serve in the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War II and then moved to public life as a county attorney for Riley County, city commissioner and mayor of Manhattan, KS, State representative, State senator in the Kansas Legislature. In 1975, President Gerald Ford appointed Rogers to serve as a U.S. district judge for the District of Kansas, beginning a lasting tenure that will soon reach 40 years.

Judicial colleagues describe Judge Rogers as a role model whose long public life is marked by an amiable spirit, an unpretentious fortitude, and an unmitigated desire for the advancement and protection of all segments of society. Americans thank Judge Rogers for his service and contributions to the State of Kansas and the United States of America and wish Judge Rogers and his wife Cindy well as he moves to inactive senior status on August 7, 2015 and begins a new chapter of his most admirable life.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Pate, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations and withdrawals which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The messages received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 11:43 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed