

They carry on another tradition that echoes throughout our history: After their military service was done, they returned home, quietly and modestly, and continued to serve their communities.

The American people believe that supporting our troops doesn't stop once they leave the military. Just as no member of our Armed Forces would leave a comrade behind on the battlefield, we must not leave our veterans and their families behind on the battlefields of injury and disease. We must be strong advocates for veterans' health care and be concerned about the Vietnam veterans who were exposed to agent orange. We must remain committed to ensuring that those veterans and their families receive the care and support they have earned.

The men and women who served our Nation a half century ago upheld the highest ideals of America and of the American Armed Forces. Our Vietnam veterans were then, and remain today, heroes who deserve our respect and our gratitude.

Mr. KING. Mr. President, this month marks the 50th anniversary of the introduction of U.S. ground troops in the Vietnam war, and I would like to recognize our Vietnam era veterans who dedicated their strength and service to defend freedom and democracy across the globe. In honor of this anniversary, the Secretary of Defense coordinated various events to thank and honor all veterans of the Vietnam war. A well-deserved welcome home ceremony will be held in Presque Isle, ME, on September 26, 2015, to recognize and commemorate the lives of those who fought so bravely.

For nearly 20 years, the Vietnam war occupied the American collective conscience. American involvement initially focused on assisting French forces to counter the Vietminh communist revolution. However, in 1964 the Gulf of Tonkin incident dramatically shifted American perspective, and on August 7, President Johnson drafted and Congress unanimously approved a resolution authorizing direct military intervention in Vietnam.

Throughout the war, the United States deployed over 2.7 million servicemembers to Vietnam, and over 8 million Americans served in uniform during the Vietnam era. More than 58,200 Americans lost their lives and more than 150,000 were seriously wounded during the conflict. I would like to honor those brave Americans who sacrificed so much for their country. Their contributions to our Nation will never be forgotten.

Maine played a crucial role in the war effort. With one of the highest percentages of veterans per capita in the nation, the Vietnam war's legacy still resonates in Maine today. Close to 48,000 people from Maine served in Vietnam, and nearly 350 Maine servicemembers were killed or went missing in action during the war. Our veterans' unwavering patriotism, courage, and

resilience fully demonstrate the fortitude of American character and our Nation's commitment to democracy worldwide.

On this 50th anniversary of the Vietnam war, I would like to join the Secretary of Defense in recognizing the brave Americans who served overseas, as well as those on the homefront whose unrelenting support was invaluable to those overseas. Our veterans have made countless personal sacrifices in protection of our freedoms, and I am proud to honor and thank them for their service to our great Nation.

BEING A TOLERANT AND ACCEPTING COUNTRY

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, in recent weeks two of the leading contenders to be President of the United States called into question the devotion of American Muslims to this great country, and one even outrageously suggested that being Muslim precludes you from being President. I denounce this. It is in violation of Article VI of the Constitution and in violation of our Country's basic principles.

Everyone that serves in public office from President to the Senate must uphold the Constitution. Article VI of the Constitution explicitly states:

All debts contracted and engagements entered into, before the adoption of this Constitution, shall be as valid against the United States under this Constitution, as under the Confederation.

This Constitution, and the laws of the United States which shall be made in pursuance thereof; and all treaties made, or which shall be made, under the authority of the United States, shall be the supreme law of the land; and the judges in every state shall be bound thereby, anything in the Constitution or laws of any State to the contrary notwithstanding.

The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the members of the several state legislatures, and all executive and judicial officers, both of the United States and of the several states, shall be bound by oath or affirmation, to support this Constitution; but no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.

There are 3 million American Muslims in our country. They teach in our schools, they work in our hospitals, and they attend our universities. Their children play on the same playgrounds and go to the same schools. They are able to do this because one of our founding principles on which our country was established was freedom of religion. It is on that basis that the United States should strive to be a tolerant and accepting country where differences are understood and diversity is celebrated. This is not the America some leading candidates for President imagine. They are perpetuating an undercurrent of bigotry by suggesting that American Muslims can't be President because of their religious beliefs. Not only is this contrary to our American values, it defies the U.S. Constitution.

TRIBUTE TO MARY BEHRENS

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, the Wyoming Nurses Association is honoring Casper nurse practitioner Mary Behrens with the 2015 Lifetime Achievement award. I am delighted to congratulate Mary on this tremendous honor.

Following in the footsteps of her mother, Mary pursued her passion for service by completing her RN at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1964. She practiced as a nurse in Madison while her husband Jerry finished his medical degree and residency. She remained in Madison as Jerry served our Nation as a physician treating wounded soldiers in Vietnam. In 1973, the couple moved to Casper, WY. Folks in Wyoming are fortunate that Mary chose to dedicate her career helping others in our State. She is truly an innovator, leader, and mentor for many nurses in Wyoming across the Nation and around the world.

The list of Mary's accomplishments and awards is long. She was active on the American Nurses Association board and is a board member of the University of Wyoming's Friends of the Fay W. Whitney School of Nursing. She is one of only three Wyoming nurses to be nationally recognized as a fellow of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners, FAANP. Her leadership in this area is incredible.

In 2005 she was a member of the American delegation to the World Health Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland, where she testified on the national nursing shortage. In addition, through her involvement with the Friendship Bridge program, Mary is credited with helping to establish an education pathway for nurses in Vietnam. Her efforts to develop a modern baccalaureate curriculum have had a tremendous impact on the global scope of nursing, particularly in Vietnam and neighboring countries.

Mary's civic service is not at all limited to her profession. In fact, she has an established history as a public servant for both Casper and Wyoming. Mary served on the Casper city council and as mayor of Casper. She was also a Natrona county commissioner and a representative in the Wyoming State Legislature. This experience, and her intense desire to make change, has made a profound impact on our State. Mary's extensive activity in shaping public policy truly stands alone, as few people possess such a wide breadth of policy knowledge, leadership skills, and passion for the nursing profession.

It is fitting that the Wyoming Nurses Association is honoring Mary Behrens with their most prestigious award. Countless patients and nursing students have benefitted from her leadership and care. The nursing profession is stronger because of Mary's enthusiastic advocacy.

Please join me in thanking Mary Behrens for her lifetime investment in nursing. Bobbi and I are truly fortunate to call her our friend.