

proceed to a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SPECIALIST JOSEPH A. FORD

Mr. BAYH. Mr. President, I rise today with a heavy heart to honor the life of the brave Army Specialist from Knox, IN, Joseph Ford, 23 years old, died on May 10, 2008, in Al Asad, Iraq, from injuries sustained when his vehicle overturned during a training operation. With an optimistic future before him, Joseph risked everything to fight for the values Americans hold close to our hearts, in a land halfway around the world.

A lifelong Hoosier, Joseph graduated from Knox High School in 2003. His teachers and friends recall a young man with a thirst for knowledge and a generous spirit. Shortly after finishing high school, Joseph joined the Indiana National Guard and was stationed in New Albany. Joseph was fiercely dedicated to serving his country and disciplined himself to meet the high standards of military fitness. He enrolled in the University of Southern Indiana, where he studied history, a passion he had since high school. In June, Joseph married his wife, Karen, of Evansville, IN.

Joseph traveled to Georgia in December with his National Guard unit for training before he left for his first deployment in Iraq. He was scheduled for deployment through 2009 but planned to return this summer to celebrate his first wedding anniversary with Karen. Assigned to the 1st Squadron, 152nd Cavalry Regiment, Army National Guard in New Albany, IN, Joseph served as a turret gunner with the Indiana National Guard's 76th Infantry Brigade in Iraq.

Today, I join Joseph's family and friends in mourning his death. Joseph will forever be remembered as a loving husband, son, and friend to many. He is survived by his wife Karen; his parents Sam and Dalarie; his brother Matthew; and his sister Abbey Ambrose.

While we struggle to bear our sorrow over this loss, we can also take pride in the example he set, bravely fighting to make the world a safer place. It is his courage and strength of character that people will remember when they think of Joseph, a memory that will burn brightly during these continuing days of conflict and grief. Today and always, Joseph will be remembered by family members, friends, and fellow Hoosiers as a true American hero, and we honor the sacrifice he made while dutifully serving his country.

As I search for words to do justice in honoring Joseph's sacrifice, I am reminded of President Lincoln's remarks as he addressed the families of the fall-

en soldiers in Gettysburg: "We cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here." This statement is just as true today as it was nearly 150 years ago, as I am certain that the impact of Joseph's actions will live on far longer than any record of these words.

It is my sad duty to enter the name of Joseph A. Ford in the official RECORD of the United States Senate for his service to this country and for his profound commitment to freedom, democracy, and peace. When I think about this just cause in which we are engaged, and the pain that comes with the loss of our heroes, I hope that Joseph's family can find comfort in the words of the prophet Isaiah who said, "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces."

May God grant strength and peace to those who mourn, and may God be with all of you, as I know He is with Joseph.

HONORING ALPHA COMPANY 641

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, Alpha Company, 641 Aviation Regiment is an Army National Guard company that operates C-23 Sherpa cargo airplanes. Headquartered in Portland, OR, the company has detachments in Oklahoma, Washington, and South Dakota. Commanded by MAJ David Doran, the company consists of 44 soldiers and 10 C-23 airplanes. The Oregon soldiers that are part of the company hail from all around the State of Oregon: Portland, Salem, Pendleton, McMinnville, La Pine, Hermiston, and Dallas. The company deployed to Iraq from October 2007 to May 2008.

The story of Alpha Company, 641 Aviation Regiment is as complex as the 44 personalities that comprise the company. It is a mixture of experienced combat veterans on their second or third tour and young and eager soldiers experiencing their first deployment. The youngest is 21; the oldest is 54. There are married fathers and unmarried bachelors. There are full-time guardsmen and traditional National Guard, who split time as electricians, students, civilian aviators, and aspiring attorneys. Identifying with "Ducks," "Beavers," "Huskies," and "Sooners," the dynamics of this hodgepodge is sometimes surprising, generally humorous, and always fascinating.

From Oregon to Oklahoma and Washington to South Dakota, the soldiers in this company have interacted with individuals from all across the country, with equal parts of Midwest know-how and Northwest can-do. As a result,

those from Oregon have learned the right way to eat grits, and those from Oklahoma have learned 20 different words to describe "coffee." Each person in this company has brought a unique perspective and fresh batch of life experiences to share with the group. Everyday, a new story begins with "back when I was a kid . . ." or "on my last deployment . . ." This company brought together a cross section of America, fresh with an unflinching sense of duty, deep-seated pride in their job, and an unquenchable drive to get that job done.

Alpha Company operates the C-23 Sherpa, which is the least understood and most underestimated aircraft in the Army inventory. With its boxy dimensions, it has assumed the moniker "BOX CAR." As unsightly and unusual as it may be, pound for pound and passenger for passenger, this rat-nosed aircraft has moved more parts and people around Iraq than most other military airframes. The crews who fly the Sherpa will tell you that what it lacks in looks, it makes up for in dependability. The Sherpa is the unsung, unappreciated, and unassuming aircraft that gets it done, around the clock. Whether it is a box of widgets or 14 soldiers going out on R&R leave, this aircraft and its crews make it happen.

In October 2007, Alpha Company mustered and deployed to Balad Air Base in Iraq. The unit quickly assumed the mission and took over all Army fixed-wing cargo operations under Multi-National Forces-Iraq. This expansive support covered Mosul, Kirkuk, and Basra, in addition to a dozen smaller air bases throughout the country. From passengers to blood to ammunition, Alpha Company flew six aircraft per day to get as much moved as possible. This amounted to two aircraft above and beyond the mission requirement. Alpha Company implemented the first fully standardized night vision goggle flight program, greatly increasing aircrew survivability by operating in hours of darkness. This also enhanced the performance capabilities of the C-23 by operating in generally cooler temperatures.

The company's support of Other Coalition Forces-Iraq, OCF-I; Special Operations, was instrumental in the timely transportation of sensitive cargo and detained personnel. The company increased existing support by 100 percent and developed mission support into Baghdad. This mission had not existed prior to Alpha Company's arrival. It filled a crucial gap in aviation support for OCF-I and was pivotal to ongoing combat operations. LTG Stanley McChrystal, head of special operations in Iraq, cited the unit for their dependable and outstanding service to OCF-I.

In April 2008, the unit surged to increase its operational tempo by 100 percent to support combat operations in

and around Basra. During the 2 weeks at the height of the operation, Alpha Company flew 377 hours, more hours than ever recorded by a C-23 company in a 2-week period. By the end of April, the company was preparing to redeploy back to home-stations, families, and loved ones. For their meritorious performance of duty and courage over the dangerous skies of Iraq, the company earned 4 Bronze Star Medals, 7 Meritorious Service Medals and 38 Air Medals. During their 6 months in Iraq, the company flew over 4,000 flight hours, moved over 9,000,000 pounds of cargo and over 20,000 passengers, more than any other C-23 company in a 6-month period since the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Alpha Company's accomplishments are extraordinary and truly reflective of the distinguished service and dedication of America's citizen soldier. The State of Oregon is profoundly proud and deeply grateful for their sacrifice and commitment. It is with great pride that I honor their service today and enter their accomplishment into the RECORD.

NATIONAL MILITARY APPRECIATION MONTH

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I am proud today to ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing the National Military Appreciation Month. As a co-sponsor of the bill that designated May as the National Military Appreciation Month in 1999, I ask my colleagues and fellow Americans to honor, remember, and thank the generations of American military personnel and their loved ones, whose sacrifices have brought us the liberties that we enjoy today.

This May, the National Military Appreciation Month acknowledges a number of important milestones that highlight the best traditions of our Nation's military history: Loyalty Day, May 1, VE Day, May 8, Military Spouse Appreciation Day, May 9, Armed Forces Day, May 17, and Memorial Day, May 26. These special dates during National Military Appreciation Month provide reminders of the invaluable contributions that our military personnel and their loved ones have made throughout the course of our Nation's history. Every man and woman who has worn the uniforms of our armed services, and every person who has supported their endeavors deserves our gratitude and respect. Their contributions continue to protect and promote the values that define the United States.

During this month of remembrance, I am continuing my work to ensure that our servicemembers and veterans receive the honor and care they rightly deserve, and that those serving in war can return home soon.

In the Senate, I am working for concurrent receipt for our retired military

personnel so that disabled veterans can receive the benefits they deserve. With Senators LIEBERMAN, BOND, and OBAMA, I have also championed efforts to improve mental health care and services for Active Duty military and veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. I proudly support Senator JIM WEBB's new GI bill, S. 22, to vastly improve educational benefits for our newest generation of servicemembers and veterans. We must all remain committed to ensuring that our military members, veterans, and their families are taken care of.

As Americans from across the Nation pay tribute to our military this month, I offer my appreciation and admiration for all the men and women who have contributed to the history and traditions of the U.S. Armed Forces.

THE FARM, NUTRITION, AND BIOENERGY ACT OF 2007

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I have sought recognition to discuss my reasons for voting for the conference report to H.R. 2419, The Farm, Nutrition, and Bioenergy Act of 2007. Also known as the 2007 farm bill, this legislation determines America's agriculture and domestic nutrition policy for the next 5 years. It has received substantial criticism because of subsidies paid to farmers of five major commodities or crops: corn, cotton, rice, soybeans, and wheat. On April 29, 2008, President Bush called the legislation a "massive, bloated farm bill" and has said he would veto it. The bill has also drawn criticism from taxpayer advocacy groups.

The 2007 farm bill conference report scores at \$307 billion over 5 years. However, this increase is fully off-set with customs users fees that are collected by the Border and Transportation Security Directorate—formerly the U.S. Customs Service—of the Department of Homeland Security for processing passengers, conveyances and merchandise entering the United States. The White House has agreed that this bill does not include any tax increase.

During my tenure in the U.S. Senate, I have fought hard for agriculture and nutrition programs in Pennsylvania. However, I do have concerns with direct payment subsidies for farmers where the amount is not based on the price of the commodity and, more importantly, with large, almost endless, payments to producers. In 2006, Riceland Foods, Inc. located in Stuttgart, AR, received \$7,710,705 for rice, soybean, wheat, and corn production. In 2006, the top 10 recipients of direct subsidies for production of corn, cotton, rice, soybeans, and wheat were, in order of rank, Iowa, Illinois, Texas, Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, Arkansas, Indiana, North Dakota, and Missouri. Pennsylvania's agriculture producers are not the recipients of these large subsidies, as Pennsylvania is a major

producer of milk, Christmas trees, and specialty crops, which include mushrooms, apples, and fruits and vegetables. My home State ranks No. 1 in the production of mushrooms, No. 4 in the production of apples and freestone peaches, and No. 5 in the production of milk and grapes in the U.S. Pennsylvania ranks 32 out of 50 in terms of Federal Government agricultural payments, despite the fact that agriculture is PA's No. 1 industry.

These large subsidies were a major concern when I voted against the 2002 farm bill conference report, even though the bill contained crucial programs for Pennsylvania, including the milk income loss contract, MILC, and conservation and nutrition programs. It would be my preference that we move toward a free market for agriculture.

While this legislation is not perfect, it is a much better alternative to an extension of the 2002 farm bill or the reversion to nonexpiring provisions of primarily the Agriculture Adjustment Act of 1938 and the Agriculture Act of 1949—permanent law. The 2002 farm bill did not include any reforms of program subsidies and the 1938 and 1949 laws are drastically different from current policy, inconsistent with current farming, marketing, and trade agreements, and would mandate higher subsidy rates and land controls.

I have reviewed the pending conference report to determine its benefits for the entire country, not just Pennsylvania where I have heard from many constituents and stakeholders expressing their support. This bill is not perfect, but it still moves America in the right direction. Our Nation, like Pennsylvania, will on the whole benefit from the 2007 farm bill. It makes key reforms to subsidy programs which I will discuss more in detail later. In addition, this legislation includes funding for domestic nutrition programs, conservation programs, programs to help rural America, and the milk income loss contract, MILC, program for America's dairy producers. For the first time, the farm bill would extend assistance to specialty crop producers through marketing and research programs.

This conference report includes significant subsidy reforms. Under current law, producers are not eligible for payments if their adjusted gross income, AGI, exceeds \$2.5 million. In the final 2007 farm bill, a producers' non-farm income may not exceed \$500,000 in order to receive a payment. Further, a producers' farm income, or AGI, cannot exceed more than \$750,000 in order to receive a payment. One key reform is the elimination of the so-called "three-entity rule," which enabled a farmer to collect twice the maximum payment limit amount by setting up multiple businesses on the same farm. The White House was influential in this