their loved ones die of a heart attack or other cardiac related ailments while selflessly protecting us from harm.

First responders across the country now face a new series of challenges as they respond to millions of emergency calls this year. They do this with an unwavering commitment to the safety of their fellow citizens, and are forever willing to selflessly sacrifice their own lives to protect the lives and property of their fellow citizens. I see no reason to hold up this important legislation—last Congress the House passed Congressman ETHERIDGE's identical language, and only a single, anonymous Republican hold in the Senate prevented its final passage. I am proud that the Senate has chosen to do the right thing and shown its support and appreciation for these extraordinarily brave and heroic public safety officers by passing the Hometown Heroes Survivors Benefit Act. I urge the leaders of the House to follow our lead and pass this legislation.

CLARIFICATION OF SECTION 307 OF H.R. 1298

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, as chairman of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, I want to clarify for the record the intent of Section 307 of H.R. 1298, which we debated and passed a few nights ago. Section 307 amends the Public Health Service Act to provide the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention the authority to ensure that health programs using injection equipment also work to ensure the safety of injections.

This section specifies only that when injections are involved in medical treatment programs of the U.S. Government, CDC should work hard to ensure that injection safety is maximized, including the use of single-use needles and training of health care workers in injection safety.

Since Federal law prohibits Federal funds from being used to provide needles to illegal drug users, I want to make clear that nothing in this section ought to be interpreted to suggest a change in that policy. Since the activities in this section fall under the jurisdiction of the HELP Committee, we will be monitoring the program with great interest.

THE ENFORCEMENT GAP

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, earlier this week, the Americans for Gun Safety Foundation released a report entitled the Enforcement Gap: Federal Gun Laws Ignored, analyzing the Justice Department's commitment to enforcing and prosecuting gun laws. The report examines prosecution data acquired under the Freedom of Information Act from the Justice Department for fiscal years 2000 through 2002. The AGS study reveals a significant gap between the number of Federal gun crimes committed and the number of Federal prosecutions initiated.

The report found that 20 of the 22 major Federal gun laws are rarely prosecuted. The two statutes consistently enforced by Federal prosecutors are laws against the use of a firearm in the commission of a Federal crime and a felon in possession of a firearm. The other 20 laws address other illegal firearm activity, including gun trafficking, firearm theft, lying on a criminal background check form, removing firearm serial numbers, and selling guns to minors.

The statistics in the AGS report are startling. According to AGS, in the fiscal year ending September 30, 2002, Federal prosecutors filed 197 cases for gun trafficking, despite 100,000 guns showing signs of trafficking. Only 27 cases were filed against corrupt gun dealers, even though AGS reports that gun dealers are the leading source of firearms recovered in gun trafficking operations. Prosecutors in 22 States filed no cases against individuals committing the 20 least prosecuted crimes. Across the country, only seven cases for illegally selling a gun to a minor were filed, even though more than 30,000 gun crimes were committed by youths age 17 or under. Only 202 cases were filed for possessing or selling a stolen firearm, despite nearly 140,000 reported gun thefts that year in which the make, model, and serial number of a stolen gun was reported to police. And a mere 98 cases for possessing or selling a firearm with an obliterated serial number were prosecuted, despite thousands of these guns being recovered in just a few cities in one year.

I believe vigorous law enforcement is a critical step toward reducing gun violence. I urge the Justice Department to step up its efforts to prosecute not only people who commit gun crimes but those corrupt dealers who put guns in criminal hands.

ARMED FORCES DAY

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I rise today to honor our military personnel on the occasion of Armed Forces Day.

As a veteran of the Marine Corps, I believe one of the most important things a person can do is serve this great country through the military. Our nation must honor those who take up the call to defend our freedoms and never take for granted those freedoms that all of us enjoy. These freedoms are only because of our veterans and military personnel.

Our active military forces have seen a lot of action as of late. The Guard and Reserve components have seen an increase in their operations as well. The performance of our military men and women has been outstanding. In my home State of Montana, as many as 750 men and women, Active Duty, Reservists and National Guard Personnel are supporting our ongoing operations, both in the United States and overseas. I am especially proud of these folks that have stepped up to the plate and have gone above and beyond the call to duty during these trying times.

Our military has performed honorably in the latest missions with which they have been tasked—the Global War on Terrorism, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. We have seen Americans coming together to support these men and women and their families at home.

The men and women who wear our country's uniform are the keepers of the flame that has been passed down through generations. They are the bearers of our national memory. Each and every veteran and military member understands that the cost of freedom is steep. They were willing to accept that cost, so that we may live in peace. Arlington National Cemetery and veterans' cemeteries across this great land are full of those who understand that ''freedom is not free.'' My thoughts and prayers go out to their loved ones for their loss.

I will continue to do my best to ensure that the United States military has the tools, skills and support needed to maintain its position as the finest fighting force in the world. I will also work to ensure that our veterans receive the benefits that they so richly deserve. It is because of their sacrifices each and every one of us are able to be here today.

God Bless our Military Personnel and God Bless America.

PROPOSED SENATE RULES CHANGE

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, Republican partisans are acting as if Senate Democrats were treating President Bush's judicial nominees the way Republicans treated President Clinton's. That is not the case. We have worked hard to repair much of the damage of Republican mistreatment of President Clinton's nominees. When we led the Senate we moved forward at twice the rate that Republicans had and during our leadership 100 of President Bush's judicial nominees were confirmed. This year we have proceeded to consider and confirm another 25 lifetime judicial appointments. I would understand the partisanship if Democrats had held up consideration of 125 judicial nominees and the Senate had only confirmed two, but just the opposite is true.

I understand the frustration that Senator FRIST feels regarding the continuing impasse over the nominations of Mr. Estrada and Judge Owen. I am sorry that the White House has chosen confrontation over cooperation with the Senate on these matters. It is too bad that this White House will not work with us, as Senator BENNETT and others have indicated was reasonable, in order to provide access to the materials we requested from Mr. Estrada and the Justice Department one year ago today. With respect to the renomination of Judge Owen, I have said that unprecedented renomination of a judicial nominee rejected after a hearing and a fair debate and vote before the Judiciary Committee was ill advised. It remains so.

Along with the other members of the Judiciary Committee, I have voted on the Estrada and Owen nominations. We have not taken the course of prior Republican leadership in which any Senator was allowed to block President Clinton's judicial nominees by use of a secret, anonymous hold. Instead, Democrats acted over the last few years to reform the confirmation process. We have added openness and accountability. What we have not been able to do is obtain a fair level of consultation and cooperation from this White House. We made home State Senators' ''blue slips'' matters of public record. When Republican Senators stymied Judiciary Committee consideration of President Clinton's judicial nominations, they were permitted to do so under the cloak of confidentiality. I changed that in 2001.

The Republican myth of a ''crisis'' in the Senate is punctured by the facts, which show the lowest judicial vacancy rate in 13 years—lower than the national jobless rate of 6 percent.

Court-packing by Presidents of either party is harmful, and I have spoken out often about the need to preserve the independence of our Federal judiciary. The world's emerging democracies envy the judicial independence in the American system, and we should make every effort to defend it, not to undermine it, as the escalating tactics of this administration would do. Just last month the administration and congressional Republicans turned a deaf ear when Chief Justice Rehnquist warned against the assault on the independence of the judiciary when so-called sentencing ''reforms'' were tacked on to a popular bill without hearings or careful consideration.

The White House says it opposes judicial activism, but the President sends the Senate activist nominees. The White House itself pushes results-oriented changes in the rules of the Senate, which is a separate branch of Government. This White House is not satisfied with its subjugation of the House and Senate to its will and removing Congress as a check on the Executive. They also want to pack the independent Federal courts. Republicans are not satisfied with means undermining the independence of the Senate, they are embarked on a course to undermine the independence of the Federal judiciary, as well. They already have convinced Senate Republicans to bend and even break the Judiciary Committee's rules in the handling of judicial nominees. Now they want to change the rules of the Senate itself in a raw bid for unitary government, directed by the White House. The American people and their representatives in the Senate should not let the Senate or the Federal judiciary become mere arms of any political party or any President.

The President's charges about obstruction would be easier to understand if the numbers themselves did not disprove them. The President and some Republicans in the Senate seem to be suffering from confirmation amnesia. The Democratic-led Senate confirmed 100 of his judicial nominees, acting far faster than Republicans did with President Clinton's nominees. We have confirmed another 24 this year for a total so far of 125 and achieved the lowest judicial vacancy rate in 13 years. The vacancy rate on the Federal bench today is 5.3 percent, which is lower than the national jobless rate of 6 percent. Unemployment has soared, the deficit has soared, crime is on the rise for the first time in a decade—about the only thing that has gone down significantly over the last 2 years is Federal judicial vacancies. Yet the White House complains that it has not been able to bully the Senate into rubber-stamping every one of the White House's ideological choices. Democratic Senators have cooperated to improve the process so that it has worked much more smoothly for President Bush's nominees than Republicans allowed for President Clinton's nominees.

The fact is that 125 have been confirmed, and two have been held back. You would not know that by listening to the President's remarks last Friday or to Republican talking points or various attack ads now being broadcast around the country in a partisan effort to intimidate Senators.

Democrats held hearings on more nominees faster than Republicans had and proceeded on controversial nominations. We have cooperated this year in bringing many controversial nominations to the floor for votes. When Republicans controlled the Senate during the last Democratic administration, they blocked more than 60 judicial nominees. And they were blocked not with cloture votes in the light of day, but sometimes by a single, anonymous Republican objection. And yes, there were also Republican filibusters of President Clinton's nominees.

The answer for handling the remaining controversial nominees is not reckless rhetoric or undermining the Senate's independence by changing its rules so that the independence of the Federal judiciary can become a victim to partisan court-packing. The answer has to start with the President, where the process begins. Despite his earlier promises, the President has been a divider and not a uniter in choosing many of his nominees, who would roll back the hard-won rights of workers, women, minorities and consumers, and who would side with the big polluters over communities when it comes to clean air and water. Several of his choices have divided the American people, and they have divided the Senate. We have drawn a line with a few of his most extreme choices. Drawing that line has been the responsible response to this President's divisive nominations for lifetime positions on the Federal courts.

This President campaigned saying he wanted to change the tone in Washington. He has—for the worse. The White House has adopted the rabid partisanship of House Republicans. The President of the United States has sunk to name-calling, extreme rhetoric and partisan campaigning against the Senate and individual Senators, which is not helpful to the process or to the institutions of our government.

The answer is for the administration to work with the Senate, as earlier Presidents have done. The process starts with the President, and the buck stops with the President.

Here on the Senate floor, when Senators have opposed the most divisive of the President's nominees with whom he is seeking to pack the courts and ideologically tilt them, we have done so on the record. We have debated and put forth the considerations and reasons. That, too, was something all too often missing from the years in which Republicans defeated judicial nominees through stealth tactics. We have voted on the record in vote after vote required by Republican cloture petitions.

Unfortunately, in the case of Mr. Estrada, the administration has made no effort to work with us and resolve the impasse. Instead, there has been a series of votes on cloture petitions in which the opposition has grown and from time to time the support has waned. Recently, there have been press reports indicating that Mr. Estrada had asked the White House months ago to withdraw his nomination. I understand his frustration. If this administration is not going to follow the practice of every other administration and share with the Senate the government work papers of the nominee—the very practice this administration followed with an EPA nominee in 2001—then I can understand him not wanting to be used as a political pawn by the administration to score partisan, political points. That the administration has not acceded to his reported request but has plowed ahead to force a succession of unsuccessful cloture votes and to foment division in our Hispanic community for partisan gain is another example of how far this administration is willing to go to politicize the process at the expense of its own nominees.

The frustration with these two difficult nominations should not obscure the work that the Senate leadership has done to correct some of the abuses of power earlier this year and pave the way for votes on the nominations of Jeffrey Sutton and Judge Cook to the Sixth Circuit and John Roberts to the DC Circuit. There were more votes against the Sutton nomination than the number required for a filibuster, but there was no filibuster of that nomination. Just as there was no filibuster of the controversial nomination of Mr. Tymkovich to the Tenth Circuit or of the controversial nomination of Judge Dennis Shedd to the Fourth Circuit. All three of these circuit court nominations were controversial and opposed by many Americans and many Senators.

The President's recent comments took the Republican Chairman of the Judiciary Committee to task for, among other things, not holding a hearing on the nomination of Judge Terry Boyle. I understand that Chairman Hatch is following a longstanding tradition of the Senate in not proceeding with a nomination that is opposed by a home State Senator. After all, it was Senator Helms' opposition to Judge Beaty and Judge Wynn, as well as to Roger Gregory and a number of others, that has led to there being numerous vacancies on the Fourth Circuit. Having honored Senator Helms' objections, Chairman HATCH would be seen as hypocritical and partisan if he were to ignore the concerns of Democratic home State Senators. Among the difficulties the chairman of the Judiciary Committee has faced since 2001 are the high number of judicial nominees of this White House that do not have home State Senator support. So when the President attacks the Senate for not having acted on nominations that the White House knows does not have the support of home State Senators, he is not being fair to the Senate, to the chairman or to the nominees. The White House knows that judicial nominations do not proceed without the support of home State Senators. Yet this administration continues to belittle the role of home State Senators in the advice and consent process and ignore the important role they have long played in Senate consideration of judicial nominees.

Another example is the nomination of Judge Carolyn Kuhl to the Ninth Circuit. This is a nomination that is opposed by both home State Senators. Proceeding on such a nomination is unprecedented. Yet Senate Republicans have forced the nomination out of the Judiciary Committee on a party-line vote after knowing that Senator FEINSTEIN and Senator BOXER both oppose confirmation.

The last time the Senate voted on a nomination opposed by both home State Senators was only because the Republican caucus ambushed the nomination of Judge Ronnie White of Missouri on the Senate floor in 1999 after one of the Missouri Senators switched from supporting the nomination to opposing it the day of the vote. They proceeded without telling the administration, Senate Democrats or the nominee of the change of position and a number of Republican Senators who had previously voted in favor of the nomination changed their positions, as well, and the nomination was defeated on the only party-line vote to defeat a judicial nominee in Senate history of which I am aware.

With respect to Senator FRIST's resolution, S. Res. 138, I look forward to the work of the Rules Committee on this proposal. Initially, I would observe that voting on judicial nominations is unlike Senate consideration of legislation in the way that imposing capital punishment is unlike any other criminal sentence. It is final and irrevocable. A bad statute once enacted can be amended or repealed. A bad judge is on the bench for life and will continue to affect American's rights, our freedoms and our environment in case after case for decades to come, long after the President who appointed that judge is gone. Given that dimension, I believe Senator FRIST got his proposal upside down by seeking to exempt judicial nominations from Senate debate rules. It is more important that there be a higher level of confidence and certainty that a judicial nomination being considered for a lifetime appointment be the right person for the job, be a person of fairness, impartiality, judgment and someone committed to our constitutional values. The rights of women, minorities, consumers, workers and those concerned about the environment should not be sacrificed to political expediency and the independence of our federal courts should not be lost to ideological court packing by this administration.

Others will no doubt point out that Senator FRIST voted against a proposal in 1995 to revise the Senate filibuster rules. I have pointed out in other statements how many Republicans supported the filibusters against President Clinton's executive calendar nominees, including the judicial nominations of Judge Marsha Berzon and Judge Richard Paez, the last most recent double filibuster in 2000, and the nominations of Judge Rosemary Barkett and Judge H. Lee Sarokin. In addition, recent Republican filibusters succeeded in defeating the nominations of Dr. Henry Foster to be Surgeon General and Sam Brown to be an ambassador. Republicans have not been shy about using filibusters to defeat the nominees of the most recent Democratic President or stall legislation some of them oppose. Just last year, in their tributes to Senator Thurmond, Republicans extolled his use of the filibuster and his setting a record for the longest individual filibuster in Senate history. What they left out of their tributes was the fact that Senator Thurmond had filibustered civil rights legislation.

Others may also point out how many Republicans have proposed supermajority requirements. Not only have Republicans abandoned their commitment to fiscal responsibility and their call for a balanced budget, they have forgotten that they insisted in recent years on three-fifths requirements to raise the debt ceiling or have taxes apply retroactively. Senator CRAIG and Senator MILLER currently support a proposal, S.J. Res. 2, to require a balanced Federal budget that includes a three-fifths rollcall vote of each chamber to increase the debt limit. Last year Senator SESSIONS introduced a measure, S.J. Res. 11, cosponsored by Senators CRAPO, KYL, FITZGERALD, HAGEL, INHOFE and SHELBY to require a two-thirds vote of each House in order to increase any tax. Of course, in the 105th Congress, along with former Senators Ashcroft and Abraham, who are now Cabinet secretaries in this administration, Senators ALLARD, BENNETT, BOND, BROWNBACK, BURNS, CAMPBELL, COCHRAN, COLLINS, CRAIG, DEWINE, DOMENICI, ENZI, FRIST, GRASSLEY, GREGG, HAGEL, HUTCHISON, INHOFE, KYL, LOTT, LUGAR, MCCAIN, MCCONNELL, NICKLES, ROBERTS, SANTORUM, SESSIONS, SHELBY, SMITH, SNOWE, SPECTER, STEVENS, THOMAS and WARNER all cosponsored S.J. Res. 1 which would have required a three-fifths majority requirement to raise the debt ceiling.

The Senate was not designed by the founders or the Constitution to be a strictly majoritarian institution. To the contrary, the genius of the Framers at the Constitutional Convention was to construct a House of Representatives, structured on majoritarian principles with representatives voting on behalf of relatively equal numbers of constituents, and the Senate using different principles. The Senate has always had two Senators for each State regardless of size. Thus, small States like Vermont and Rhode Island and less populous States like Wyoming, Idaho and Alaska each have equal representation with California, Texas and New York. The Senate and the House are not the same and were not intended to be the same. They were designed to be complimentary institutions of government to form a balanced legislature. I understand why proposals like S. Res. 138 might appeal to newer Republican Senators and to former House Members who are now Republican in the Senate but I fear it would represent another ill-advised step to change the Senate into a second House of Representatives. The Constitution did not assign the advice and consent role to the House but to our distinctive body, the Senate. The Senate has many distinctive traditions including, to me, one of the most significant—that smaller States have a larger role to play in the Senate than in the House.

It is a bit ironic, to say the least, that an administration that was selected with less popular vote than the Democratic Presidential candidate because of a court decision and the workings of the electoral college is now pressing so vociferously to change the Senate rules and allow judicial and executive branch confirmations approved by the barest of ''majorities''—of only those Senators present and voting at the time the Republican Senate majority chooses to call the vote.

In addition, given the Senate's structure, the administration's pretense that somehow the votes of a majority of Senators shows that a majority of Americans favor a nomination may not be factually accurate. For example, Senate Republicans have complained bitterly and resentfully about the Senate's failure to end debate on the nomination of Judge Owen. But the Senators who have voted to end debate represent less than 50 percent of the population of the United States and the Senators who have voted not to end

that debate represent the majority of the American population. Now, put that way, the decision of the Senate on this controversial nominee hardly seem anti-democratic.

I respect the role of the Senate and the ways in which it has traditionally functioned on behalf of the American people. Any rule or practice can be used for ill, of course. For instance, the Senate grants significant authority to committees and to chairs of committees to determine the Senate's agenda and business. Traditionally, when a committee votes down a nominee, that nomination does not go forward. We have made one recent exception for the nomination of Judge Bork to the Supreme Court. That led to a heated battle on the Senate floor that resulted in that nomination ultimately being rejected by the Senate. Never in our history has the Senate or an administration simply overridden the judgment of the Judiciary Committee. That is what this administration chose to do when it renominated Judge Owen after her nomination had been thoroughly and fairly considered last year.

Finally, I am troubled that the administration and Senate Republicans are so intent on changing the rules and procedures and practices of the Senate in so many ways to gerryrig the process in favor of the administration's most extreme, divisive and controversial nominees. That was not the motivation behind the amendment of rule 22 in 1975 that I supported. It used to be rare that judicial nominees would receive so many negative votes and engender so much opposition. In accordance with the consultation and cooperation that prevailed between administrations before this one and Senators from both parties, it was a rarity to have a contested nomination or to have close votes. That this administration is so fixated on forcing through the Senate nominees that do not have the support of more Senators is alarming in itself.

Consensus, mainstream, qualified nominees will get the support of not just a bare majority of Senators voting but the overwhelming majority of Senators. Thus, Judge Prado, and Judge Gregory, and Judge Raggi were confirmed with overwhelming bipartisan support. So, too, I am confident that Judge Consuelo Callahan will be the second Hispanic nominee of this administration to a circuit court to receive the strong support of Democratic Senators, when the leadership decides to schedule a vote on her confirmation. The 125 judicial confirmations to date are by and large conservative nominees but many enjoyed the strong bipartisan vote of Senators from both parties.

Yet Senate Republicans at the behest of the administration want to grant even more power to the administration by encouraging the President to nominate more controversial nominees. I respectfully suggest that the better way to proceed would be for the White House to work more closely with Democrats and Republicans in the Senate to identify consensus nominees who will not generate a close vote and do not need special rules in order to be considered.

I thank the majority leader for working with the Democratic leader and assistant leader to make what he himself recognized as progress over the last weeks. With some cooperation and consideration from the administration we could accomplish so much more.

RECOGNITION OF NATIVE AMERICAN CODE TALKERS

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, throughout the military history of the United States, Native Americans have served their country above and beyond the call of duty. Although they have served in many capacities, perhaps none has been more valuable than the services they have provided as code talkers. Today, I rise to support and cosponsor S. 540, a bill to authorize the presentation of gold medals on behalf of Congress to Native Americans who served as code talkers during foreign conflicts.

During World War II, the Sioux Indians volunteered their native languages, Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota Sioux, as codes. The Sioux code talkers worked tirelessly around the clock to provide information, such as the location of enemy troops and the number of enemy guns, which saved the lives of many Americans in war theaters in the Pacific and Europe. U.S. military commanders credit the Sioux with saving the lives of countless American soldiers and with being instrumental to the success of the United States in many battles during the war.

Today I would like to acknowledge the following distinguished gentlemen: Eddie Eagle Boy, Simon Brokenleg, Iver Crow Eagle Sr., Edmund St. John, Walter C. John Bear King, Phillip ''Stoney'' LaBlanc, Baptiste Pumpkinseed, Guy Rondell, Charles Whitepipe, and Clarence Wolfguts.

During the D-Day invasion and afterwards in the European theater, the 4th Signal Division employed Comanche code talkers to help the Army develop a code, which proved to be unbreakable by the Axis powers, and which was used extensively throughout Europe. This code was instrumental to winning the war in Europe and saved countless lives. The time has come to honor the Comanche code talkers for their valor and service to the United States. Today I would like to acknowledge the brave accomplishments of Charles Chibitty, Haddon Codynah, Robert Holder, Forrest Kassanovoid, Willington Mihecoby, Perry Noyebad, Clifford Otitivo, Simmons Parker, Melvin Permansu, Dick Red Elk, Elgin Red Elk, Larry Saupitty, Morris Sunrise, and Willie Yackeschi.

During the first year of World War I, when Germany had deciphered all Allied codes, and Allied forces were suffering from heavy casualties, 18 Choctaw Indian soldiers were recruited on the battlefield to use their native language as a new code. This code, which was never successfully deciphered by the Germans, was thereafter used widely throughout the war and was instrumental in the movement of American soldiers, the protection of American supplies, and the preparation for assaults on German positions.

The Choctaw code talkers were highly successful and saved many lives and munitions. Their contribution is just another example of the commitment of Native Americans to the defense of the United States, as well as another example of the proud legacy of the Native Americans. The original 18 Choctaw code talkers have already been honored by a memorial bearing their names located at the entrance of the tribal complex in Durant, OK. Now I would like to continue to honor their legacy by urging my colleagues to vote affirmatively for S. 540.

MEMORIAL DAY

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I rise today to reflect on this year's Memorial Day commemorations and the importance of this holiday in American life.

As I attend Memorial Day parades and commemorations, I'm struck by the spirit of national unity on display because I know that across Michigan—and across our Nation—our fellow Americans are taking part in similar gatherings where we take the time to reflect on our history and the sacrifice that brought us to where we are today.

Memorial Day is unique among American holidays. On Memorial Day we do not honor a particular date or event—a battle or the end of a war. On Memorial Day we do not honor an individual leader—a president or a general. On Memorial Day we do not even honor ourselves—at least not in the present tense.

On Memorial Day we pay homage to the thousands and thousands of individual acts of bravery and sacrifice that stretch back to the battlefields of our Revolution and are on display today in the deserts of Iraq and the mountains of Afghanistan.

We honor the brave men and women who answered their Nation's call to duty. And—making that ultimate sacrifice—never returned to their families and loved ones.

As part of this year's Memorial Day commemorations, I have been paying special respects to our Korean war veterans because this July marks the 50th Anniversary of the armistice that ended that war.

Notice I said Korean war. I did not say ''the Korean Conflict.'' I did not call it a police action. I've met too many Korean war veterans. I've heard too many of their stories.

It was the Korean war.

About 2 million Americans served on active duty with the United States