CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — Extensions of Remarks
August 10, 2010

Mr. SESTAK. Madam Speaker, since assuming office in January 2007, I have had the privilege of working with the Blue Star Mothers of Greater Philadelphia. That group has been in the forefront of countless efforts to support our troops engaged in two protracted conflicts. Though the “all volunteer force” has provided our nation with the most capable and powerful military in our history, it has also shifted the burden of waging those conflicts to a decreasing percentage of our overall population. As a result, the vast majority of Americans benefit from the security wrought by the sacrifice of relatively few families. In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, we are blessed by the work of Marian Moran of Media, PA who leads the Philadelphia Chapter, Daniel Merges of Hanover who leads the South Central Pennsylvania Chapter, Laura Zazworsky of Camp Hill, President of the Central Pennsylvania Chapter, and Sue Donaldson of Easton PA, President of the Lehigh Valley Chapter.

For our families with serving members of the military, it has always been the case that the greatest emotional toll of sending our sons and daughters to war is borne by our nation’s mothers. Since 1943, the Blue Star Mothers of America (BSMA) have stepped forward to offer support, counsel and advocacy on behalf of their children and one another. In addition to the thousands of phone calls, letters, and emails of support that flow daily between BSMA members, they are actively engaged in policy making at the highest level. Their support for H.R. 2647, “National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010”, which directs states to provide both electronic and mail absentee ballots in a timely fashion, is helping to right a long-standing wrong in the provision of absentee ballots for serving members of our military. For years, our men and women in uniform have been denied their vote by inefficient and often indifferent bureaucracies at the local, state, and federal levels. The BSMA is also a tireless morale builder for our troops, providing “care packages” from home, that not only nourish them but offer essential items to mitigate the extremely harsh climates in Iraq and Afghanistan. Most noteworthy is how Blue Star Mothers rally to the side of their sister Gold Star Mothers. When a Blue Star turns to Gold our entire nation mourns. But for the Blue Star Mothers that tragedy is their call to arms. An old Spanish proverb holds that “An ounce of mother is worth a pound of clergy.” Certainly it is a fellow mother who is best qualified to offer comfort when a child has been lost in service to our nation. For over sixty seven years, the Blue Star Mothers have been there for their children, one another, their Gold Star sisters, and our nation.

As the Blue Star Mothers of America gather in Grand Junction, Colorado for their National Convention under the leadership of President Wendy Hoffman, I request that all Americans