

was also modest about it. He had high expectations for his college years—his teachers did, too. Skip's hard work and determination allowed him to exceed and surpass them all. None of us who knew him were surprised by his success.

We graduated from college and then, as the years passed, we took on the challenges of our lives. For me, a career as a small businessman gave way to a second career in politics. For Skip it was one post, one assignment after another, as his work took him literally all over the world.

So much of what I know about the world and the people of different countries comes from having seen so much of it through my friend Skip's eyes. He first served in Katmandu, the capital of Nepal. He also worked in many parts of the Middle East. As Ambassador, he faced danger and showed a unique kind of bravery in Kuwait when Saddam Hussein's Army took up residence across the street. Through it all, Skip never wavered, and he never lost sight of what he most wanted to do—and that was to serve his country to the best of his ability.

That may sound a bit corny to some, but that's all right. In this day and age we need more like him who are dedicated to God, country and family and who live that philosophy from the heart every day. It's called walking your talk and Skip knows all about that. I know that about him because I know him so well. I canoed with him in the swamps of Georgia. You get to know a lot about someone when it's the two of you sharing the experience of being lost in the midst of some mysterious aspect of God's creation. Those are quiet times that lead to thoughtful reflection and a shared focus on the things that are important in life.

Another of the things we have in common was our incredible good fortune in picking a spouse. Skip and his wife Peggy and I and my wife Diana have built a relationship based on trust, cooperation, communication and understanding. That kind of bond has helped Skip and Peggy to serve their country as Ambassadors overseas and it has helped Diana and me to serve the people of Wyoming here in the Senate.

He and I have sons and daughters who are the same age. His son, Ed, is married to the daughter of the couple who introduced me to my wife, Diana. They met at my swearing-in ceremony. The two dads were part of my wedding. And I was there to see their children's marriage in Wyoming.

He recently had a break in his assignments which brought him back to Washington where he served at the State Department. It was always good to see him and to watch him continue to serve in so many different capacities with the same strength, courage and professionalism he brought to any task. On other assignments here, he worked with the Defense Department as State Department Liaison, with Senator KENNEDY on foreign relations

issues and he has also held several other posts. He has served in the United Nations.

Although he was doing well "back home" Skip wanted to get back on the road and head out for another adventure, another challenge in his life. Now, with the action taken by the Senate today, he has received his next call.

I want to thank all of those who made Skip's placement possible. First, let me acknowledge the efforts of CRAIG THOMAS, my friend and colleague from Wyoming, who held hearings on Skip's nomination. He went beyond the call of duty to get his part of the job done in a timely fashion.

Senator HELMS, too, deserves our appreciation for his expeditious work with the full Committee to get the nomination brought before the full Senate for our consideration.

Now, all those years of planning, preparing, and public service have paid off. For Skip, it means another post in an already distinguished career. For us, it means we have a truly dedicated career officer who will be serving us in Australia. I can't think of a better Ambassador and representative of the people of the United States than Skip Gnehm. He will love being there and Australia will love coming to know Skip. It's another perfect match!

TRIBUTE TO SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE ARMY ROBERT E. HALL

Mr. THURMOND. Mr. President. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Sergeant Major of the Army (SMA) Robert E. Hall, who will retire today, June 22, 2000. SMA Hall's service to our nation spanned more than 32 years, during which he distinguished himself as a soldier, leader, mentor, and advisor to the Chief of Staff of the Army.

A native of Gaffney, South Carolina, SMA Hall enlisted in the U.S. Army in February 1968. During his more than three decades of loyal service to the nation, he has held and served in every enlisted leadership position from squad leader to command sergeant major. He is a combat tested leader, serving in Desert Shield/Desert Storm with the 24th Infantry Division Artillery as its command sergeant major. Before becoming the 11th Sergeant Major of the United States Army, he was command sergeant major of U.S. Central Command, MacDill Air Force Base, Tampa, Florida. He also served as command sergeant major, 1st Battalion, 5th Air Defense Artillery, Fort Steward, Georgia; Commandant, 24th Infantry Division Noncommissioned Officer Academy, Fort Steward, Georgia; the 24th Division Artillery, Saudi Arabia and Iraq; the 2nd Infantry Division, Korea; and First U.S. Army, Fort Meade, Maryland.

During SMA Hall's tenure as advisor to the Chief of Staff of the Army, he made individual soldiers' issues a priority, focusing on improving the quality of life for them and their families.

He concentrated on providing servicemen and their loved ones with accurate and timely information so that they could make educated and informed decisions about their future in a transforming Army. His personal efforts provided significant assistance and helped to ensure the successful repeal of the REDUX retirement system. In addition, he helped lay the foundation for pay table reform. This was achieved through regular interviews with both internal and external media sources. He also testified and visited with congressmen more than 19 times during his tenure as Sergeant Major of the Army. In doing so, he established a reputation, trust, and rapport with Congress as a caring leader who conveyed the needs of enlisted soldiers.

SMA Hall's distinguished 32-year career epitomizes the consummate professional soldier. But above all, he is a loving and caring husband and father whose service was enhanced by his wife, Carole, and their three children, Apra, Rea, and Jason.

I am certain that my colleagues in the Senate join me in commending SMA Hall on his dedicated service to the nation and the United States Army, and wish him well in his future endeavors.

GUN SAFETY CAMPAIGN

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, when six-year old Kayla Rolland, from Mt. Morris Township, Michigan, was shot by a fellow classmate, it moved most Americans to tears. Months later, the tears dried and the images faded from view for some, while others turned those tears into action. Of course, the most active group has been the Million Moms, who marched in my home state of Michigan and around the country to demonstrate for safer, more sensible gun laws.

The mothers and others marched on Mothers' Day, 2000 because they are fed up with Congress and our continual failure to pass responsible gun measures that will help protect America's children. Since the school shooting in Colorado, and the more recent one in Michigan, Congress has failed to act, so Americans have started to take gun safety into their own hands. One of those Americans is Joe Yax of Midland, Michigan.

Mr. Yax was driven to action by the school shooting of Kayla Rolland. Yax said he felt nauseated when he first heard news of the shooting, and immediately thought of his own young children, and the unlocked guns he kept at home. Yax told the press that he had always planned to purchase locking devices for his guns, but he never found the time. When young Kayla was shot, not only did Mr. Yax find the time to purchase trigger locks to make his own children safer, Mr. Yax, who is a store employee of the Midwest superstore, Meijer, e-mailed the company's president to see how he could make his community safer.

As a result of that e-mail, Meijer, which does not sell guns, but does sell ammunition, hunting licenses and other supplies, implemented a gun safety campaign at all of their stores. Sporting-good employees now wear buttons reading, "Is your home gun safe? Trigger lock 'em" and trigger locks are displayed prominently at the sporting-goods counter. In addition, Meijer reduced the price of trigger locking devices to encourage more purchases.

I am pleased that Joe Yax took this initiative, and I think he and Meijer should be commended for their efforts. Corporate responsibility is a necessity if we are going to reduce gun violence. Nevertheless, while Mr. Yax did what he could to improve gun safety, it is not enough. It's time for Congress to follow the lead of Mr. Yax and act to make sure our own children—America's children—are safer.

MEDICARE LOCKBOX

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, I am pleased to speak for a few moments to call attention and applaud the actions of the House of Representatives this week in taking a fundamentally important step toward protecting both the Medicare and Social Security programs.

I want all Americans to know that the full House passed Medicare Lockbox legislation—H.R. 3859, sponsored by Representative WALLY HERGER—by an overwhelming 420-2 margin. What months ago some inside the Beltway said was impossible has happened—one chamber of Congress has spoken in an almost unanimous voice to protect the Medicare and Social Security surpluses.

For decades, Congress and the President have used Social Security and Medicare surpluses to finance additional government deficits. Last year, for the first time since 1957, Congress balanced the budget without spending a penny of the Social Security surplus.

When Congress accomplished this important goal, I immediately set my sights on a higher goal—that is, to protect the Medicare Part A surplus in the same manner. So on November 18, 1999, I introduced S. 1962, the Social Security and Medicare Safe Deposit Box Act. The bill the House passed yesterday is very similar to my legislation, and I am encouraged about the prospects of passing the Medicare Lockbox in the Senate and seeing it signed into law.

We need to ensure that the payroll taxes Americans contribute to pay for Social Security and Medicare are used solely to pay Social Security and Medicare benefits. Any surpluses in these accounts should be used to reduce publicly-held debt. It is wrong for Washington to spend this money on additional government programs or to finance additional government deficits.

The Medicare lockbox will wall off the surpluses in the Social Security

and Medicare Part A Trust Funds, barring Congress from even considering a budget that used Social Security or Medicare surpluses to finance deficits in the rest of the government; only a three-fifth vote in the Senate and a majority in the House could override the new rule.

It will impose discipline and clarity on the spending practices in Washington. If Congress or the President wants to spend Medicare Part A or Social Security surpluses, Congress will need to have a separate vote to suspend the Lockbox protections in order to do so.

Not only have nearly all Republicans and Democrats in the House endorsed the Lockbox concept; Vice President AL GORE announced several weeks ago that he, too, supports erecting a wall of protection around the Medicare surplus. His support is welcome, and his assistance in helping to pass this measure is eagerly anticipated.

I urge the leadership on both sides of the aisle to agree to call up and pass the Medicare Lockbox. By doing this, we will send the powerful message that protecting both Medicare and Social Security is our highest priority.

It is essential that we make this change. Social Security is scheduled to go bankrupt by 2037. Medicare is projected to become insolvent even sooner, in 2023. It is vitally important that we ensure that the government not spend monies dedicated for the trust funds that sustain these essential programs.

While protecting the Medicare surplus seemed to be an unattainable goal just a few short years ago, this goal is now within our reach. In addition to funding the government for fiscal year 2000 without spending a penny out of the Social Security trust fund, CBO's new projections will demonstrate that we will have enough revenue available to protect the \$22 billion Part A Medicare surplus as well.

It is imperative that we limit spending this year so that we do not dip into the Medicare surplus in FY 2001 and in years to come.

Both Medicare and Social Security are funded out of payroll taxes specifically delineated for their respective purposes, and are supposed to be reserved for those purposes. If there are surpluses in these accounts, if these accounts take in more money than is necessary for their stated purposes in a specific year, then that money should not suddenly be available for general government spending.

Any and all surpluses in those two accounts should be reserved for their stated purpose, or be used to help shore up those accounts. The Medicare Lockbox promotes honest accounting, and requires the government to use funds for their advertised purposes.

Lockboxing Social Security and Medicare surpluses is an essential first step in securing the long term financial solvency of Medicare and Social Security.

The Medicare Lockbox will change the way business is done in Washington. I commend the House and Congressman HERGER for taking the first step in protecting the Medicare Part A trust fund.

The House bill is not perfect, but it will protect all of the Medicare Part A and Social Security trust funds. It also has the support of 420 members of the House of Representatives. The overwhelming support for the Medicare lockbox in the House should send a powerful signal to the Senate to take up and pass this bill.

Passing this law will be the next step on our journey to secure the long term solvency of Social Security and Medicare.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Wednesday, June 21, 2000, the Federal debt stood at \$5,653,964,505,301.84 (Five trillion, six hundred fifty-three billion, nine hundred sixty-four million, five hundred five thousand, three hundred one dollars and eighty-four cents).

One year ago, June 21, 1999, the Federal debt stood at \$5,589,358,000,000 (Five trillion, five hundred eighty-nine billion, three hundred fifty-eight million).

Five years ago, June 21, 1995, the Federal debt stood at \$4,898,069,000,000 (Four trillion, eight hundred ninety-eight billion, sixty-nine million).

Ten years ago, June 21, 1990, the Federal debt stood at \$3,177,422,000,000 (Three trillion, one hundred seventy-seven billion, four hundred twenty-two million).

Fifteen years ago, June 21, 1985, the Federal debt stood at \$1,761,470,000,000 (One trillion, seven hundred sixty-one billion, four hundred seventy million) which reflects a debt increase of almost \$4 trillion—\$3,892,494,505,301.84 (Three trillion, eight hundred ninety-two billion, four hundred ninety-four million, five hundred five thousand, three hundred one dollars and eighty-four cents) during the past 15 years.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE TASK FORCE CHIEF PROSECUTOR INVESTIGATES VICE PRESIDENT GORE REGARDING CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I want to share some thoughts tonight about a major development concerning the investigation involving the financing of the Vice President's 1996 reelection campaign. First, however, I would like to say that this matter should have been over some time ago, but the Attorney General declined to appoint an Independent Counsel. The Justice Department attorneys who were involved in the investigation of the campaign financing matter have recently testified before the Subcommittee of the Judiciary Committee, which is chaired by Senator SPECTER and of which I am a