

JOHN EDWARDS

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my retiring colleague from North Carolina, Senator JOHN EDWARDS.

Senator EDWARDS was the first in his family to attend college, working his way through North Carolina State University and later earning his law degree from the University of North Carolina. Afterward, JOHN EDWARDS established himself as a distinguished and successful lawyer. These accomplishments alone are quite striking and aptly demonstrate the intelligence and determination of Senator EDWARDS.

During his time in the Senate, Senator EDWARDS served on four committees: Health, Education, Labor & Pensions, the Judiciary, the Small Business & Entrepreneurship, and the Select Intelligence. He continually championed for issues affecting the daily lives of regular people in North Carolina and the nation.

I am sure Senator EDWARDS will find success in any endeavor he now chooses to undertake and I join with my colleagues in wishing him the best.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent there now be a period of morning business, with Senators speaking up to 10 minutes each.

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

A PRAYER FOR THANKSGIVING

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, in a matter of days, families across this Nation will gather around the table to celebrate Thanksgiving, that quintessential American holiday on which we pause to give thanks for our many blessings as a Nation and to celebrate that most precious gift of all, the love and fellowship of our families and friends.

There will be many empty chairs at the table this year as America observes the second Thanksgiving holiday since the invasion of Iraq. As many as 140,000 U.S. military personnel are currently serving in Iraq and another 20,000 in Afghanistan.

What that means in human terms is that tens of thousands of American families will be sitting down to a somber Thanksgiving dinner, their prayers of thanksgiving tempered by their fears for the safety of their loved ones.

Others, the families and loved ones of the more than 1,200 American troops who have been killed in Iraq, will sit down to a dinner seasoned with sorrow, the empty chair at the table a wrenching reminder of the terrible cost of war.

Whatever one believes about the justification of the war in Iraq, it is an indisputable fact that the troops on the ground, and their families and friends here at home, are bearing the heaviest burden of the President's decision to go to war. And on holidays like Thanksgiving, when family and friends are

held especially close to the heart, the weight of that burden becomes especially hard to bear.

It is easy to talk about war in the abstract. It is easy for the President and his military advisers to point to the steady progression of U.S. victories against the insurgents in places like Falluja and Mosel as evidence that we are winning the war in Iraq. It is easy to be armchair quarterbacks in a bloody battle raging halfway across the world. But as anyone knows who has visited wounded troops at Walter Reed Army Hospital, who has gazed into the eyes of young widows or grieving parents, or who has read the poignant stories of the fallen, there is no such thing as war fought in the abstract or battles waged in statistics.

War, to those who must fight it and to their loved ones who must endure it, is painfully real and painfully present at the table, on Thanksgiving and on every other day of the week for the duration of the conflict—and sometimes for long after the fighting has ceased. These are the men and women on the front lines of the battle, and it is they whom we must salute and thank for their sacrifice.

I was struck by an article in the November 14 edition of the Los Angeles Times on the psychological toll that the war in Iraq is taking on U.S. soldiers and Marines. According to the newspaper, the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research has found that 15.6 percent of marines and 17.1 percent of soldiers surveyed after returning from Iraq reported suffering from major depression, generalized anxiety, or post-traumatic stress disorder.

Even more disturbing, the article predicted that the reported statistics were only the tip of the iceberg. According to the Times article:

Army and Veterans Administration mental health experts say there is reason to believe the war's ultimate psychological fallout will worsen. The Army survey of 6,200 soldiers and Marines involved only troops willing to report their problems. The study did not look at reservists, who tend to suffer a higher rate of psychological injury than career Marines and soldiers. And the soldiers in the study served in the early months of the war, when tours were shorter and before the Iraqi insurgency took shape.

The Los Angeles Times went on to quote Dr. Matthew J. Friedman, a professor of psychiatry and pharmacology at Dartmouth Medical School and the executive director of the VA's National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder: "The bad news is that the study underestimated the prevalence of what we are going to see down the road," he said.

What a chilling forecast. One has only to look at the video footage of the house-to-house, mosque-to-mosque combat in Falluja to understand the tremendous psychological stresses on the young servicemen who form the vanguard of our assault against the insurgents in Iraq. One has only to read of the wary convoys of soldiers and Marines who are tasked to traverse the

treacherous stretches of deadly Iraqi highways day after day after day, or to edge their way into labyrinthine alleys of Baghdad's most dangerous neighborhoods, to understand the sheer psychological hell of the war in Iraq.

The Pentagon keeps a daily log of U.S. military troops killed or wounded in Iraq. As of this morning, November 19, the Pentagon reports that 1,214 American troops have been killed in Iraq and another 8,956 wounded, more than half of them so severely injured that they could not be directly returned to duty. Barely more than halfway through the month, November 2004 has already turned into the second deadliest month for American military forces since the United States invaded Iraq in March of 2003. Where and when will the carnage end?

The casualty statistics are heart-breaking enough, especially on the cusp of what is supposed to be one of the most joyful seasons of the year. But they do not represent the whole story. The Defense Department does not tally the walking wounded, those soldiers and Marines who return home from duty physically fit but emotionally scarred, sometimes for life. These men and women are also casualties of the war in Iraq, and they and their families may suffer just as deeply as those whose wounds are plain to see. Modern medicine has come a long way in mending the broken bodies of soldiers wounded in combat, but I fear the military still has a long way to go in identifying and mending the broken psyches of otherwise healthy veterans.

And so on this Thanksgiving, I hope that all Americans will take a moment to pray for the safety of our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, for the eternal salvation of those who have died in service to their country, and for the speedy recovery of all who have been wounded, including those who are suffering from the invisible ravages of emotional wounds. I also hope that Americans will take a moment to pray for the families and loved ones of all those who have been called to duty in the battle zones of Iraq and Afghanistan. We cannot fill the empty chair at the table, but we can offer an abundance of love and support for our neighbors and friends whose lives have been upended by the war, and we can pray most fervently that our troops will be returned home quickly, and that their families will not have to endure another Thanksgiving without them.

Praise Almighty God for His kindness, His love, His mercy. Thank Him. I yield the floor.

CONGRATULATING THE CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, Senator LIEBERMAN and I extend congratulations to the Center for Excellence in Education, and its president, Joann DiGennaro, for the achievements of its educational programs to nurture young

scholars of careers of excellence and leadership in science and technology.

The Center's Research Science Institute, held on the campuses of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the California Institute of Technology, are nationally recognized for promoting this nation's competitive future in math, science, engineering and technology and for encouraging international understanding among future leaders. To date, over 1,500 U.S. students, including students from the U.S. Department of Defense Overseas Schools and student representatives from 46 nations have benefited from the Center's programs. They remain the only U.S. programs sponsored at no cost to students, who are competitively chosen to attend. The Center boasts of more winners and honorees of the Intel Talent Search competition than any other U.S. organization.

The USA Biology Olympiad has been sponsored in this Nation by the Center for 2 years. Over 5,000 students competed in the Center's USABO this past summer, from which four outstanding high school students represented the U.S. in the International Biology Olympiad in Australia. For the first time in the 15-year history of the IBO, a four-member team was awarded four gold medals.

We are proud that the Center for Excellence in Education has encouraged talented U.S. high school students to succeed in one of the premier world scientific competitions, and would like to take this opportunity to congratulate each one of the Gold Medalists:

Kay Aull, Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, Alexandria, VA
ZeNan Chang, Santa Monica High School, Santa Monica, CA

Clinton Hansen, Oneida High School, Oneida, NY

Brad Hargreaves, Caddo Parish Magnet High School, Shreveport, LA

We also congratulate the two coaches of the USABO:

Dr. Alan Christensen of George Mason University, and

Dr. William Stuart of the University of Maryland.

We appreciate this opportunity to recognize the Center for Excellence in Education for its 22 years as an outstanding nonprofit educational organization. The late Admiral H.G. Rickover, father of the nuclear powered submarine, can be proud of the organization which he established in 1983.

NATIONAL AMERICAN INDIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize National American Indian Heritage Month, an important celebration that acknowledges the tremendous contributions of native peoples to our Nation.

In 1990, President George H. W. Bush approved a joint resolution designating November 1990 "National American Indian Heritage Month." The origins of this celebration, however, can be

traced back to 1915, when the Annual Congress of the American Indian Association directed its president to call upon the Nation to observe a day honoring Native Americans. In 1916, New York became the first State to declare an official American Indian Day.

Over the years, our Nation has moved toward a greater appreciation of the role of native peoples in American cultural, social, political, and economic life. This is reflected not only in the celebrations around the country associated with National American Indian Heritage Month, but also by the opening of the Museum of the American Indian as part of the Smithsonian Institution earlier this year.

As we celebrate the rich heritage and continuing contributions of native peoples this month, it is also important to acknowledge the challenges that many native communities face today. As a member of the Indian Affairs Committee, I am all too familiar with these challenges, and I believe we must empower native communities so every member can reach his or her full potential. That means respecting the sovereignty of tribes, strengthening education, improving health care, and enhancing economic opportunities for native peoples.

I look forward to working on these issues in the 109th Congress, and I hope my colleagues will join me in celebrating National American Indian Heritage Month.

JUAN GABRIEL

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize Juan Gabriel as one of Mexico's leading vocalists and songwriters. He is well known internationally for his musical talent and as a leader of philanthropic causes.

Born Alberto Aguilera Valadez, Juan Gabriel is a six-time Grammy nominee, twice inducted into the Billboard Latin Music Hall of Fame. He has entertained sold-out audiences throughout the world, and last Sunday—November 14, 2004—he played to an energetic and enthusiastic crowd at Mandalay Bay Events Center in Las Vegas.

Juan has sold more than 30 million copies of his own albums. He is also a successful producer who has worked with artists such as Rocio Durcal, Lucha Villa, Lola Beltran, and Paul Anka.

Mr. Gabriel has reflected that "My hope for a better world and my love for music are my inspiration." And he has lived by those words, using his fame and success to establish SEMJASE, an organization that provides living assistance and schooling for orphaned and underserved children in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico.

I hope my colleagues will join me in thanking Juan Gabriel for sharing his tremendous musical talents with the citizens of Las Vegas this past week, and for his passion and commitment to help the less fortunate through charitable programs such as SEMJASE.

HONORING OUR ARMED SERVICES

SPECIALIST ALAN J. BURGESS

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, the United States of America was founded on a passion for freedom, personal liberties, and equality for all its citizens. In a fierce battle for freedom and independence, the citizens of this new world cast off the shackles of tyranny and built for themselves a land of hope and promise. So fervently held were the beliefs and ideals of this country, that a son of New Hampshire, GEN John Stark, reminded us of the price of our liberties with his admonishment to "Live free or die." The heroes and Founding Fathers of that long ago time have been joined by another noble son of New Hampshire, SP Alan J. Burgess of Landaff. It is in his memory that I rise today to honor Alan for his service and supreme sacrifice in the continuing defense of this country and for his relentless defense of freedom.

Specialist Burgess demonstrated a willingness and dedication to serve and defend his country by joining the National Guard after this country was attacked in September 2001, and we had begun the task of destroying the enemies of our country. Just as many of America's heroes have taken up arms in the face of dire threats, Alan too dedicated himself to the defense of our ideals, values, freedoms, and way of life. His valor and service cost him his life but earned him a place on the roll-call of honor within the pantheon of heroes this country has produced.

Following basic training, Alan joined his comrades in 2nd Battalion, 197th Field Artillery Brigade, Army National Guard as a Military Policeman and began training for his deployment to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. From this unit's home base in Woodsville, NH, he would deploy in March 2004 to Iraq in pursuit of those who would threaten our way of life.

During his all too brief career, Alan accumulated a significant list of accolades and experiences which testify to the dedication and devotion he held for the Army, his fellow soldiers, and his country. Alan's expertise contributed greatly to his unit's successes and cemented his place as a participant in the great endeavor known as America. Alan was recognized for his service by the Bronze Star Medal, the Purple Heart Medal, the Good Conduct Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Army Service Ribbon, and the Army Reserve Overseas Service Ribbon.

I offer Alan's family my deepest sympathies and most heartfelt thanks for the service, sacrifice, and example of their soldier, SP Alan Burgess. Alan exemplified the words of Daniel Webster who said, "God grants liberty only to those who love it, and are always ready to guard and defend it." Because of his efforts, the liberty of this country is made more secure.