

FLEET RESERVE ASSOCIATION CELEBRATES ITS 80TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, November 11 marked the 80th anniversary of the Fleet Reserve Association, FRA, whose original charter was issued in Philadelphia, PA. FRA is the oldest and largest professional military organization representing the men and women serving in, or retired from the United States Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard.

The Fleet Reserve Association is named after the Fleet Naval Reserve program, which allows sailors with 16 or more years of active enlisted service to separate from the Navy, but remain "on call" for periods of national emergency.

From its inception, FRA's purpose was to advocate for sailors' rights. The association started with the efforts of a few enlisted men in 1919, who pooled their monies to send two Navy chief petty officers to testify before Congress on pay reform. Since that time, FRA has established an enviable track record of promoting favorable legislation for members of the Naval Service.

In 1923, FRA's efforts resulted in legislation that allowed WWI veterans to count their commissioned or warrant service toward time requirements for transfer to the Fleet Naval Reserve.

In the 1930's, the FRA helped with legislation that eliminated the requirement for enlisted retirees to pay for rations while hospitalized in Government treatment facilities, mandated death gratuities be paid to the estate of recalled servicemembers who died on active duty, authorized commissary privileges for military widows, and restored reenlistment bonuses.

FRA's "Hospital Rights" and "Widow's Equity" studies also helped foster the creation of the Civilian Health Program of the Uniformed Services, CHAMPUS, in 1966 and the adoption of the Uniformed Services Survivor Benefit Program, USSBP, in 1972.

FRA's 1999 study on military pay also set the stage for the targeted pay hikes for mid-grade enlisted personnel over the last few years, the repeal of the 1986 military retirement system (Redux), authorization of sea pay for junior enlisted personnel, and the reduction of additional "out-of-pocket" housing costs for servicemembers living in civilian housing.

On top of its award-winning legislative advocacy work, the FRA continues to promote community service at their 300-plus branches located throughout the world. In 2004 they awarded \$90,000 in college scholarships and \$75,000 to worthy students who competed in the FRA's Americanism Essay Contest.

Mr. President, I thank the Fleet Reserve Association for its eight decades of service to the men and women of the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard. As we close the 108th Congress, and look ahead toward the 109th Congress, I wish the Fleet Reserve Association continued success and look forward to working with them to support the past, present, and future member of all of

the military services who protect our great Nation.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN LITTLE

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, today I rise to pay tribute to an outstanding staffer who has worked for me for the past 7 years. John Little came to my office as a legislative correspondent in August of 1997 after working on my first Senate campaign. He was a young lawyer who had just graduated from Cumberland School of Law in Alabama and was looking for a job in politics. I doubt at the time that he knew where this road would take him. He continued to work his way up the ladder in my office—becoming a research assistant, legislative counsel, and deputy legislative director. Then last year I asked him to take on the responsibility of being my legislative director. I'm pretty sure he didn't know what he was getting into when he said yes.

Since that time, I have had the privilege to work closely with John and see up close what many people notice when they first meet him. John is one of those people who epitomizes Teddy Roosevelt's adage "speak softly and carry a big stick." In fact, a quotation hangs in his office that says "a closed mouth gathers no feet." While he is often quietly working in the background, John has consistently demonstrated his desire to serve the people of Alabama through hard work and determination. He has served me well throughout his tenure in my office and has earned my respect, along with that of his colleagues, Members of Congress, and countless constituents. I have watched him grow from a young staffer into a strong leader with a sound foundation in policy and the knowledge of the inner workings of Congress.

John has come a long way since his first days on the Hill. I've witnessed many of the accomplishments of his life, both personal and professional. I've seen him learn the ways of Alabama politics, pass the bar exam, staff his first Senate hearing, and meet and marry his wife. In fact, I have to take some credit for his marriage. John met his future wife, Mary Catherine, while he was working for me and she was working for Senator LOTT. Our offices were next to each other at that time, which led to more than one romance and marriage, including that of John and Mary Catherine.

John has worked hard and effectively on a number of important issues. He has contributed significantly to much legislation. His work on the No Child Left Behind Act and on the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, just a few weeks ago, was most noteworthy. John met with education officials, teachers, parents of disabled children, and lawyers to fully understand this important act and how to improve it. At the end he was ably assisted by my legislative assistant, Prim Formby, but I know he was very proud to see this important bill become law. He received great praise, and his work was favorably

mentioned by Senator GREGG and Senator KENNEDY.

Throughout all of these achievements and life experiences, John maintained his humility and strong work ethic and never wavered in his loyalty to me, my office, or the State. While I have shared in John's accomplishments to this point, his most recent achievement is bittersweet for me. John has accepted the Chief of Staff position with Senator-elect MEL MARTINEZ. This is a tremendous opportunity for John and a testament to his skill and knowledge as one of the finest staff members in the Senate. While I am sad to see him go, I am confident that he will serve Senator MARTINEZ in the same outstanding manner he has demonstrated over the past 7 years. From being elected president of his high school fraternity to serving as my legislative director, John has shown the strength of character and depth of knowledge which sets him apart as a truly great staffer. Phillip Brooks once said, "character may be manifested in the great moments, but it is made in the small ones." I have seen John's character in the small and great moments, and I know that he is ready to face this next challenge. John will be missed. I thank him for his service and wish him all the best in his new endeavor.

THANKING STAFF

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. President, I recently came to the Senate floor to publicly thank my staff. Unfortunately, not all staff names were listed in the RECORD. Therefore, I enter the following names of my staff for the RECORD.

Tracy L. Allen; Laurie G. Armstrong; William O. Austin; Alexis Bar; Victoria Bassetti; Jared J. Bataillon; William Beane; Austina L. Bennett; Crystal M. Bennett; David G. Berard; Sonceria Ann Berry; Joshua L. Brekenfeld; Michael D. Briggs; Erica Buehrens; Derek H. Chollet; Marilyn J. Dixon; Charles R. Dorrier; Paul D. Dryden; Robert W. Elliott.

Justin E. Fairfax; Colette Forrest; Alice D. Garland; Katherine L. Garland; Laura Godwin; Robert Gordon; Steven K. Gryskiewicz; Wanda Haith; Peter Harbage Emma Harris; Kate G. Heath; Robert Hines; Lisa Hyman; Morgan Jackson; Stephanie Jones; Mildred J. Joyner; Jeremy Kyle Kinner; Jeffrey I. Kovick; James R. Kvaal; Miles M. Lackey.

Jeffrey Lane; Louise D. Learson; Lawrence (Andy) Magill; Maureen Mahon; Sharyn J. Malone; Kenneth F. Mansfield; Kathryn J. Marks; John J. Maron; Cory S. Meneses; Heather L. Messera; Sophie Milam; Blair B. Milligan; Joyce Mitchell; Carlos A. Monje; Kevin A. Monroe; Robert Morgan; Matthew L. Nelson; Elizabeth E. Nicholas; Ashley I. O'Bryant; Sacha M. Ostern.

Joseph W. Parry-Hill; Lauren Partner; Elizabeth Pegram; Philip J. Peisch; Sarah L. Pendergraft; Anthony Petty; Aaron S. Pickrell; Lesley Pittman; Sally Bussey Plyler; Mary Margaret Propes; Hunter L. Pruette; Jacqueline F. Ray; Karen A. Robb; David E. Roberts; Judith M. Rossabi; David A. Russell; Craig J. Saperstein; Heidi Schneble.

David G. Sewell; David L. Sherlin; Joseph L. Smalls; Julianna Smoot; Joshua H. Stein; Michael Sullivan; Jonathan Sumrell; Adrian Talbott; Noelle Shelby Talley; Bradford T. Thompson; Cindy E. Townes; Brooke I. Turner; Ann S. Vaughn; Jannice T. Verne; Rebecca Walldorff; Jewell E. Wilson; Jessica F. Wintringham; Andrew A. Young; Lisa E. Zeidner.

COMMENDING VERGENNES FIRE CHIEF RALPH JACKMAN FOR 50 YEARS OF SERVICE

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Ralph Jackman of Vergennes, VT. Mr. Jackman has been reporting for duty as chief of the Vergennes Fire Department for 50 years—since December 1, 1954.

Chief Jackman started with the fire department 8 years before he took over as chief. During his tenure a new station was built, the number of firefighters doubled, the number of vehicles tripled, and the budget more than quadrupled.

Though at 80 years of age Chief Jackman has given up fighting the fires himself, he continues to respond to calls and manage the volunteer department's paperwork and affairs.

I congratulate Chief Jackman and his family for over 50 years of service to the City of Vergennes and the State of Vermont. He has selflessly given so much to his community.

I ask unanimous consent that an editorial that appeared in today's Burlington Free Press be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Burlington Free Press, Dec. 8, 2004]

OPINION: TRUE PUBLIC SERVANT

Rare is the modern-day employee who stays in a job throughout his adult lifetime. In sharp contrast stands Ralph Jackman, who has committed the last 50 years to the Vergennes Fire Department. That surely makes him one of the longest serving fire chiefs in the nation.

Jackman became chief of the department on Dec. 1, 1954, eight years after joining the force. And at age 80, don't expect him to retire anytime soon. Jackman's not actually battling blazes these days, but he's still in the thick of the action by managing the volunteer department's paperwork and overseeing the changes that have brought this fire department into the 21st century.

Among those changes was construction of a new fire station and a doubling of the number of firefighters.

He has also seen destruction and death. Jackman recalls in 1948 following a fire engine on the way to a blaze, and watching the engine crash into an oncoming car, leaving firefighter Lee Schroder dead.

His most memorable blaze was the Feb. 24, 1958, fire that destroyed much of downtown Vergennes. He was an eyewitness to an event that shaped the spirit of a small Vermont city.

His devotion to his community was honored last weekend at a gathering that drew Gov. Jim Douglas and Vergennes Mayor Kitty Oxholm.

The nation came to understand the depth of that commitment on 9/11, when so many of

New York City's firefighters lost their lives trying to save victims of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centers. Vermont firefighters don't face that extreme scenario, but they put their lives on the line every time they roll to a scene to protect their neighbors.

Jackman recently said, "Being chief is just a privilege and an honor."

However, it is the people of Vergennes who have been honored by his 50 years of service to their community.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

FINAL THOUGHTS ON THE INDIAN HEALTH CARE IMPROVEMENT ACT AMENDMENTS OF 2003

• Mr. CAMPBELL. Mr. President, I am pleased to provide for inclusion in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, the final cost estimate for S. 556, the Indian Health Care Improvement Act Amendments of 2003 prepared by the Congressional Budget Office.

This estimate had not been completed in time to be filed with the Senate Report No. 108-411 on S. 556 that was filed on November 17, 2004.

S. 556 would reauthorize the Indian Health Care Improvement Act which sets forth the statutory framework for the Indian health system and was first enacted in 1976. The act was reauthorized in 1992. The goal of the 1976 act, as amended, is to raise the health status of Indians to achieve parity with that of other Americans.

American Indians and Alaska Natives rank at or near the bottom of nearly every health indicator when compared to the general U.S. population. Health studies indicate disproportionately higher mortality rates of alcoholism, between 670-770%; tuberculosis, 650%; diabetes, between 318-420% accidental injuries, 280%; suicide, 190%; and homicide, 210%, than other populations.

With the basic goals of the Act unrealized, the need for reauthorization grows greater. S. 556 would have provided an additional set of improvements to the Indian health care system—most notably, for facility construction, access to care through Medicaid cost-sharing waivers, and long-term planning through the establishment of a bipartisan commission to study the Indian health care system.

The reauthorization bill has been a work in progress since the 106th Congress when I introduced a bill to reauthorize the act. I have introduced a bill to reauthorize the act in every subsequent Congress. Over the course of the past three Congresses, the Committee has held eight hearings on the reauthorization with four hearings held in the 108th Congress alone.

I was particularly pleased to have Secretary Thompson testify before the Committee on July 21, 2004, regarding the administration's views on the proposed legislation. At this hearing, the Secretary expressed enthusiastic support of the proposed legislation and his desire to see it enacted this year.

This show of support was particularly important because we had been anticipating the administration's view for several months and were fast coming to the end of the 108th Congress.

At the hearing, Secretary Thompson committed his staff to immediately begin meeting with the bill committee staff to work on the bill. Much effort to advance this legislation had already been put forth by committee staff, tribal leaders and the Indian health community. With department staff working alongside committee staff, we anticipated swift passage of the bill.

However, swift passage did not happen and I am disappointed that the reauthorization did not get enacted this year. The committee staff worked diligently along with the administration and Indian tribal leaders until the very end of this Congress to finalize the bill for passage.

I believe that, in addition to the changes made prior to July, 2004, the committee was quite responsive to the department's concerns and suggestions in revising the bill.

In particular, the provisions for Medicare and health professional shortage areas were not included in the reported bill. The committee modified the establishment of creative funding programs such as the revolving loan funds and opted for studies for this type of funding mechanism instead—at the request of the administration.

There was substantial discussions at the eleventh hour regarding provisions governing urban Indians and non-eligible individuals. I believe the Federal responsibility to provide health care applies to individual Indians living in the urban centers, especially when it is remembered that Indians reside in urban areas primarily as a result of the Federal policy of relocation during the first half of the 20th Century.

In addition, in the course of negotiations, we were made aware of concerns dealing with the Veteran's Administration drug supply schedules and services to non-eligible individuals. A limited scope of services to certain non-eligibles has been a part of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act for years. Nevertheless, the Department and some tribes have different views of the scope of services.

In any event, the matter is being addressed in the courts. Any resolution we could offer would be better served by reviewing the decision of the courts and then thoroughly examining the matter instead of fixing what has not been determined by the courts to be a problem.

Likewise, I am concerned with what may be a desire to rollback the gains tribes have made in implementing the Indian Health Care Improvement Act and the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act.

The underlying policies and plain language of the both statutes should not be ignored and the commitment to self-governance needs to be respected when enacting any Indian legislation.