

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

STAFF SERGEANT RICHARD P. RAMEY

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Army SSG Richard Ramey, from Perry Township, in Stark County, OH. He died on February 8, 2004, when his convoy was attacked in Mahmudiyah, Iraq—a village 20 miles south of Baghdad.

Richard lived life well. He made good choices. He never took the easy path. He never shied away from a challenge.

That is what drew him to the military. He pursued a career as a soldier knowing the possible dangers. Richard took on one of the most risky jobs in the Army. He took on the responsibility of explosive ordnance disposal. This meant, simply, that if someone found a bomb on the side of the road, or in a building, or anywhere, Richard's task was to disarm it.

Many of us would wonder why he volunteered for such a dangerous position. But Richard would have a simple answer. He did it to protect and ensure the safety of his comrades and the Iraqi people. He did it because he was never afraid to do what needed to be done.

Richard was born on November 6, 1976, to loving parents, Jerry and Julie Ramey. Jerry can still remember looking at Richard when he was in the hospital baby room. He could not help but laugh at Richard's curly brown hair with its frosted tips.

As a boy, Richard was known for hanging around the Perry Township fire station where Jerry was a volunteer fire investigator. Richard loved the excitement of the fire station and being there spending time with his dad.

At Perry High School in Massillon, OH, Richard made a lasting impression on all who met him. English teacher and assistant football coach Bob Kilpatrick remembered Richard as:

A good guy—a solid citizen. He came to class with his work done, came to practice ready to practice, and came to the game ready to play.

Richard was a great football player with an even greater work ethic. As an offensive guard and tackle, he was known for his hard hitting and determination to play despite an injury to his shoulder. Richard's coaches remember that even at practices in the summer heat, he would always be smiling.

Speaking of smiling, Richard was known for his sense of humor. One time, he described eggs as "liquid chickens" to his teacher—a proclaimed vegetarian. The teacher swore off eggs shortly thereafter.

Richard loved the outdoors. He loved to camp, hike, explore caves, and climb. He especially loved to fish. Richard's friends fondly recall how he always caught bigger fish than they did no matter what kind of bait they used or what kind of fishing pole they had.

Richard had the same passion for the military that he did for the outdoors.

Even as a youngster, Richard's parents knew he would join the military. On Halloween, he would dress up as Rambo or G.I. Joe. Friends remember that at sleepovers, Richard would make them watch his favorite movie, "Red Dawn"—a film about foreign armies taking over the United States.

In third grade, Richard's teacher asked the students to write a sentence about what they wanted to do when they grew up. Richard responded, "I will go to war and fight if I have to"—a motto he carried with him throughout his all too short life.

After high school, Richard joined the Army and entered the service on his mother's birthday. He carried on the military tradition of his family. His dad served 4 years in the Navy, and grandfather Bernard Richard, Sr. fought in World War II, notably at the Battle of the Bulge.

While Richard's mother knew that her son would follow his beliefs and do what he felt he needed to do, all she asked was that he call her every week—and he did. She said that "Richard loved to do his job. No matter where it would take him. He really felt deeply that he wanted to protect people who couldn't protect themselves." She understood that it took a special person to do what Richard did.

Richard's comrades loved him. They trusted him with their lives. And they had fun together. SSG Max Voelz, a member of Richard's unit, remembers the stories Richard would tell and the pranks he loved to play on people. In one instance, Richard filled an officer's room with balloons from the floor to the ceiling.

Richard served at the White House, in Kosovo, and in Egypt before his unit was transferred to Iraq. While in Iraq, he witnessed several tragic events. In December, Richard watched helplessly as one of his comrades and closest friends was killed while trying to defuse a bomb. Clearly shaken and understandably "numb," Richard called home for support from his parents. Shortly thereafter, Richard found himself in close proximity to another exploding bomb. Shrapnel hit his face and ruptured his eardrum. Through it all, Richard's unit became very close. They were family, both at home and in Iraq.

Despite these difficult times, Richard did not lose sight of his ultimate goal—to help those who could not help themselves. And that is why he was determined to continue his career in the military. While overseas, he enlisted for 6 more years and was looking forward to his next assignment in Alaska. His mom and dad were planning on driving him there.

Richard Ramey always will be remembered for his bravery and dedication to helping make the world a safer place. In the words of his father, Richard lived 80 years in 27—and in those 27, he made a difference.

In Massillon, OH, this past February, hundreds of soldiers, firefighters, police, Boy Scouts, sailors, and family

and friends paid their final respects to this American hero. Outside the church and along the funeral procession, many more braved the cold to show their support to the Ramey family by waving flags and holding signs. At Perry High School, a memorial plaque and photograph hangs in the hall as tribute to the school's brave alumnus.

Richard will forever live on in the hearts and minds of all those who had the privilege of knowing him, including his parents Jerry and Julie, sister Sarah, and brother-in-law, Nicholas. The Reverend Thomas Dyer, who spoke at Richard's funeral service, said it best:

[Richard] goes on in our memory with the powerful lesson to each one of us—to make of ourselves the best we can—to make a difference in our home and community.

Indeed, Richard made the best of himself and, in doing so, made a very real, very lasting difference in this world.

STAFF SERGEANT LESTER "BUDDY" KINNEY, II

Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to a young Ohioan who lost his life in the service of our country—a young Ohioan who dedicated himself to preserving the safety of his family, his friends, the Iraqi people, and his fellow Americans.

Army SSG Lester Kinney II was known to his family and friends by a nickname that exemplified his outlook on life, as well as the way he treated all who had the privilege of knowing him—and that nickname was "Buddy."

Buddy was born on February 28, 1976, and grew up in Muskingum County, OH. His mother, Barbara, fondly remembers his love for animals, classic cars, Johnny Cash, and blue-grass music. As a young boy, Buddy loved to play pranks on people, especially on Halloween, greatly increasing the popularity of his family's Zanesville home on the holiday.

Buddy attended John Glenn High School, where he played baseball and basketball. Described as "everybody's kid," Buddy was the kind of guy you wanted on your team. He was always a team player. And he was always in a good mood and could get along with anyone—and everyone. People liked Buddy Lester. As his former high school principal, Gary Lucas, said:

Everybody would be glad to have him as their son. He's the kind of kid you'd be glad to take home to meet your parents.

After graduating from high school in 1994, Buddy enlisted in the Army. His mother recalled that Buddy had always liked the "Be All You Can Be" commercials and was determined to join the Army from the time he was just 8 years old.

Buddy Kinney served in Afghanistan for most of 2003, where he earned a number of awards and decorations for his service and leadership. These include the Bronze Star, Expert Infantry Badge, Combat Infantry Badge, Army Service Ribbon, Army Commendation Medal, Good Conduct Medal, Parachutist Badge, Jumpmaster, and Air Assault Badge.

As a section leader in Afghanistan, Buddy was proud that after more than 150 movements in that dangerous country, none of the soldiers under his direction were ever injured.

Clearly, Buddy was one of this country's finest soldiers. However, he was more than just a great soldier—he was a family man and a model big brother.

Kurtis Bennett loved his big brother. He looked up to him. He respected him. He wanted to be like him. When Kurtis' father passed away, Buddy became the male figure in his life. Kurtis quickly learned that he could count on his brother Buddy for anything.

Kurtis fondly remembers how supportive Buddy was of his decisions. When Kurtis graduated from high school, he told his big brother that he was thinking of taking a year off before going to college. Buddy thought that was a good idea. However, the military recruiters came calling and Kurtis decided to sign up. Buddy was proud of his younger brother and helped him decide on joining the Army because of the opportunities it would provide. Buddy was only a phone call away when Kurtis went through basic training. When the two were serving overseas, Kurtis would make sure to call his brother whenever he could.

Buddy Kinney had big plans for his life. He married the love of his life, Marisa, on November 24, 2001. Though their married life together was short, it was rich and meaningful. He loved Marisa dearly.

Buddy's military career also brought him great fulfillment and meaning. He made 58 jumps as paratrooper, only 2 jumps away from earning a gold star above his parachute wings. He was known for making the best of his opportunities. While stationed in Alaska, Buddy learned to ski, and while in Hawaii he learned to surf. Buddy was proud of his service and believed in what he was doing.

After his service in Iraq, Buddy was hoping to become a warrant officer and a helicopter pilot. But, tragically, Lester "Buddy" Kinney's dreams were cut short. This country lost one of its finest on January 27, 2004, when a roadside bomb exploded while Buddy was conducting a dismounted patrol near Iskandariyah, Iraq. He had been assigned as the section leader to Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, based out of Fort Bragg, NC.

I had the privilege of meeting Buddy's family and some of his friends at a service held in his honor. Each remembers Buddy's smiling face and positive attitude. I was particularly moved by a letter that his comrades from their service in Afghanistan wrote. It read in part:

We could not ask for a better friend or leader. From the dusty mountains of Afghanistan to the hot, flat desert of Iraq, we will always have a seat open for you.

We will always have a place for Buddy in our hearts. He will be cherished forever in the memories of his be-

loved wife Marisa, mother Barbara, stepfather Jack, brother Kurtis, sister Jodi, grandmother Nita, and many aunts, uncles, cousins, comrades, and friends.

Lester "Buddy" Kinney is an American hero, and may we always remember the sacrifice he made for us and for our country.

Mr. President, I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TALENT). The Senator from Ohio yields the floor.

Who seeks recognition?

The Senator from Nevada is recognized.

(The remarks of Mr. REID pertaining to the introduction of S. 2822 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

ROADBLOCK TO PROGRESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, it is after Labor Day so the campaign rhetoric is in full bloom. One thing we have already heard and continue to hear is this charge of a "do-nothing" Congress. And in yet another great paradox unique to this town, we find those who complain that the Senate is not driving ahead and are themselves the roadblock to progress.

For a year and a half we have seen a stall ballgame for the ages, an effort to run out the clock on this session practically before it began. We have seen unprecedented obstruction by a determined minority. Sadly, tactics not employed since the founding of the Republic have become commonplace in this body. We have seen tactics employed not only against highly controversial items but against noncontroversial, broadly supported items, too.

The CARE Act, which provides numerous tax improvements to assist and empower those who run, contribute, and benefit from our charitable organizations passed the Senate 95 to 5. No Democratic Senator voted no. Yet our colleagues on the other side of the aisle refuse to let this bill go to conference and, therefore, it lies near death.

Fortunately, I understand that the IDEA bill, which reforms and enhances the funding of education for disabled children—which passed the Senate 95 to 3—may well be going to conference tonight. If so, that is excellent movement in the right direction.

The Workforce Investment Act, which authorizes the worker training programs for young people, dislocated adults, veterans, Native Americans,

seasonal workers, and migrant workers, passed the Senate last year by unanimous consent. No one objected. Yet this bill also has not been able to go forward. Think about it. Bills virtually with no voiced opposition are being stopped by a silent and shadowy force, and the American people are being denied better jobs, better education, and a more compassionate society all because of a pattern of obstruction.

I think the practitioners of this obstruction owe an explanation to the American people as to why they are blocking these widely supported bills that they previously voted for on the Senate floor.

Fortunately, the majority leader's extraordinary effort and patience has enabled much to be done in spite of the obstruction. We have passed tax cuts to get the economy going again, and it sure is going again. We have passed a Medicare prescription drug benefit that is giving seniors an immediate helping hand with a full comprehensive benefit to start in about 15 months. We have passed a Do-Not-Call Registry and the Healthy Forest Act, the partial-birth abortion bill, and the NATO enlargement treaty. But that was last year. What about this year?

We passed into law a pension relief and stabilization plan for private sector businesses, workers, and their retirees. We passed into law a BioShield Act to improve countermeasures from biological, chemical, and other terrorist attacks. We passed into law the Unborn Victims of Violence Act and also a Defense appropriations bill, as well as a supplemental for operations in Iraq.

So much has been accomplished, but much more can and should be done. I call on our colleagues to allow us to move forward on the Workforce Investment Act and CARE right now so we can have an America with workers trained for the modern workplace, a better educational environment for our children, and a more compassionate safety net for our citizens.

I yield the floor.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I want to make a brief statement. I have already spoken today on the issue Senator MCCONNELL has presented to the body. It was done earlier today by the distinguished junior Senator from Pennsylvania on the CARE Act, a bill that the minority wants to become law. But as I said to the Senator from Pennsylvania through the Chair, there are other ways of doing this than to conference. I have a list of a series of bills that have passed in this body, have been negotiated between the House and the Senate, and that did not go to conference. I don't know the exact number, but scores of bills passed. The same thing could be done with the CARE Act. The same could be done with the Workforce Investment Act.

I say to my distinguished counterpart, the senior Senator from Kentucky, that the risk for Republicans is