

project. It is not an earmark for Alaska. It is not even in Alaska. It is a national project, one that was triggered by national defense needs and mandated by treaty between the United States and Canada.

As a treaty obligation, it is not to be discarded lightly. It is unfortunate that some apparently have trouble reading beyond the name and that it has fallen to Alaskans to stand up for the word of honor of the United States to fund this project, but that is just the way it has been. Here again, I am grateful for the support of Senator INHOFE, Senator BOND, and others who have recognized that this is not just a parochial project but one of significance to the entire Nation and one for which the Nation has given its word.

As I mentioned, we have unique needs, unique challenges, and I renew an invitation to all of my colleagues: Come up and visit. Come up and see the State, see for yourself the conditions we have.

I had an opportunity just yesterday to demonstrate that when we talk about Alaska's road system, we use that term lightly. It is not a system; it is a road up and there is a road down and a little connector in between the two, and that is what we have. When we talk about where our roads stretch from, if we were to superimpose Alaska over the rest of the lower 48 States, we would be going from Minnesota down to Florida and across over into California. The area we cover is huge.

So, again, come up and see the conditions that we have. I would be happy to arrange a trip for any Member of the body, no matter where they stand on the issue, and I am not just talking about transportation issues. We will take the Members up and show them ANWR. We will show them the whole State. I am proud of the State, and I am proud of what we have done to preserve and protect our resources while we still build a vital economy. I would be happy to show my colleagues how we are dealing with some of our unique situations and problems.

One such unique situation has been the fact that it is literally impossible to build roads between some communities, even in long-settled areas like in southeastern Alaska where I was born, where a combination of rugged terrain and the separation of the islands have made other solutions necessary. One solution for the area in the southeast was the establishment of the Alaska Marine Highway System, which builds on a core fleet of large ocean-going vessels in service as ferries. It is the only highway possible between communities such as Ketchikan, Petersburg, Wrangell, Sitka, Juneau, our State capital, and many other smaller communities. It is part of the National Highway System.

If the definition of a highway is a facility used by trucks and cars moving from one community to another, this is, indeed, a highway. In fact, it is one that is considerably less expensive

than other options such as tunneling, like we have up in Boston, the "Big Dig," or the combination of bridges and tunnels we see around here.

The last highway bill, TEA-21, contained provisions to fund ferries and ferry terminals in addition to funding received through the National Highway System. I am pleased to say that this bill does as well. In fact, ferry system assistance in this bill is even broader and will help even more States operating ferry systems to do a better job for their citizens.

Now, I have been informed that the finance portion of the bill includes provisions based on two bills which I have previously offered. One of these provisions corrects an inequity imposed on air passengers who live in rural areas where, again, they are unconnected by road and they are forced when they are traveling to fly to a larger airport where they can catch a plane to get somewhere, to reach their final destination. All passengers currently pay a segment fee for air travel, but these rural residents I am talking about are basically forced to pay twice, while passengers who live within driving distance of a larger airport only pay once.

The second measure which I just referenced affects seaplane operators who are not using FAA facilities but currently must pay excise taxes and fees intended solely to support such facilities. This is also an inequity, and my measure will ensure that only those receiving benefits are asked to pay for them.

In addition, it is my understanding that the committee has also included a measure intended to ensure that taxes and fees intended for aircraft carrying passengers from point to point is not incorrectly applied to flight-seeing operations. Senator INOUE has taken the lead on this matter, but it is worth noting that it has significant support among my constituents in Alaska, and I am pleased to see it included.

Finally, let me note that I understand that the Commerce Committee title includes my proposal to establish State grants for motorcycle rider education. As my colleagues may be aware, motorcycle ridership is increasing all the time, and with it the number of motorcycle accidents has also been rising, particularly among the new riders. It is not necessarily the young riders but riders of any age. It is the latter that my proposal addresses. I believe firmly that the best way to prevent injuries is to prevent accidents, and training is the only way to accomplish that goal.

I have worked closely with the Motorcycle Riders Foundation and State motorcycle education administrators to develop this proposal. All too often, we will see new riders, both young and old, simply climb on and hope that they are going to learn by experience. Better training has been shown to drastically reduce the number of accidents suffered by new riders during the critical period in which their learning

curve is the steepest and they are most at risk.

From the national perspective, this highway bill is a good bill. It is not perfect, but few things are. I would prefer to see more streamlining and permitting processes for highway projects. I would like to see more flexibility for States. I would like to see a bill with the funding level that we approved last year. The leaders of each one of our key committees have done yeoman's work—and again, I want to commend the chairman—on phenomenally difficult issues. I believe at the end of the day we have before us a good bill, the best bill possible. I pledge my support for it and urge my colleagues to do the same.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, the Senator from Alaska named a list of things she would have preferred to see in the bill. As I thought of each one of them, I agree with each one. Of course, the Presiding Officer is also a member of the committee, and we know there are a lot of diverse needs in States. It is not a perfect bill. There are a lot of things I would rather have in it, but it is a consensus. It was give-and-take, and that is the way the system is supposed to work.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. INHOFE. I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period for morning business with Members permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes.

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

HONORING LESLIE SATCHER

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, in 1988 Leslie Satcher picked up her belongings and left her home in Paris, TX, bound for Nashville. With a meager \$100 in her pocket, she abandoned all that she had known in her young life, and headed to the Music City driven by her dream of being a country-music star.

Almost 2 decades later, that dream is a reality.

Today, Leslie Satcher is one of Nashville's most sought after song-writers. She has emerged as a glowing success under one of the world's brightest country-music spotlights.

At her core, Leslie Satcher is a woman of humble ambition. Her work is shaped by unyielding faith and limitless passion for music. Critics describe her writing as "emotionally persuasive, yet understated and artful." Indeed, she has found her success not by abandoning her homey roots but by embracing them.

Her lyrics are laced with plain spoken yet insightful observations about love and life. And despite her tremendous success, she has always remained true to her creative vision, never losing hold of the simple joys of writing and singing music.

Leslie has come a long way since her first venture into recording at the “hear-your-own-voice” attraction on Music Row and in front of audiences at the Bluebird Cafe. The Dallas Morning News has described her as “one of the most in-demand tunesmiths in Music City.” And her personal, painful and poignant compositions have been covered by a wide-range of artists including Reba McEntire, George Jones, Vince Gill, and Randy Travis.

Most recently she has concentrated her efforts on not only penning some of today’s top hits, but singing some of them, too. In fact, she’s in Washington, DC this week to give a special performance to honor our Nation’s injured troops at Walter Reed Army Hospital.

Mr. President, Leslie Satcher is a self-made music success story. She is also one of my most favorite artists—and that’s saying something coming from Nashville!

One of her sayings is that “you don’t decide to be an artist, you are an artist.” I could not agree with her more. She has much to be proud of—and it’s evident in her songs and lyrics that she not only remembers but cherishes her roots. I am proud of all she has accomplished and honored to call her a friend.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SERGEANT MICHAEL BARKEY

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I rise this evening to pay tribute to a young Ohioan who lost his life while serving our Nation in Iraq. PFC Michael Barkey was killed on July 7, 2004, when enemy fire caused the vehicle he was riding in to overturn. He was 22 years of age.

I had the opportunity to meet Michael’s family and to talk to them about their extraordinary son. They shared their memories with me—memories of Michael lighting up the room with his infectious smile and causing others to laugh at his antics. An editorial in the Canton Repository from July 9, 2004 says it best:

Michael Barkey’s family and friends have a long time of mourning ahead of them. But it is a testament to his vibrant personality and strong character that as the news of his death began to sink in, their memories of him made the people who loved him smile and laugh.

Michael’s vibrant personality, touched the lives of all who had the privilege of knowing him. As the fourth of six children of Hal and Julie Barkey, Michael learned at a young age that he loved to make people laugh and that he was good at it. When his older sister Jennifer had her first child, eight year-old Michael quipped that since he was an uncle at 8, he would be a grandma before age 30. His mother Julie could only laugh at her young son when he flubbed his words. She liked to call him a ham.

Every member of Michael’s family has fond memories of him. Growing up, Michael and his brother John loved to

wrestle each other and—though he wouldn’t do it for anyone else—sister, Therese, remembers how Michael would dance around for hours to entertain her and her friends. Youngest brother Tony recalls a time when Michael popped out his false tooth in church to shock a small child. Cousin Joe Mitchell remembers when they went to Myrtle Beach together and saw an attractive woman. Michael and another man argued for so long about who would speak to her first that she walked away. All who met Michael were touched by his witty humor.

At Canal Fulton Northwest High School, Michael excelled both academically and athletically. He loved to play basketball and football. High school football coach, Vic Whiting, remembered that after their last game, Michael—then a senior—couldn’t bring himself to take off his uniform. High school friends said that “Mikey,” as they called him, was always the center of attention and a natural leader.

After high school, Michael enlisted in the National Guard so that he could pay his way through the University of Akron, where he earned an associate’s degree in fire technology. His dream was to become a firefighter, but his unit was called to go to Iraq. Michael believed strongly that he was needed to secure freedom for others, that he was needed to help the Iraqi people.

Answering the call of duty was not new in the Barkey family. Michael’s grandfather, Edmund, served in Europe during WWII; father, Hal, is a Navy veteran of the Vietnam war; brother, Todd served in Operation Desert Storm; and brother, John, was an Air Force firefighter stationed in Qatar during Operation Enduring Freedom. Michael was proud to follow in what had become a family tradition.

Michael and the rest of the 1484th Transportation Company trained in Indiana before being sent to Kuwait and then on to Iraq. Michael had been in the National Guard for 4 years. Soon Michael developed the reputation of being able to lighten the mood despite the chaos around them. Captain Curtis Brown, commander of the Company said that Michael was “a remarkable young man who had the gift of making you see the good in a bad situation. He was a master of the gift of laughter.”

One young soldier, in particular, can attest to that. Specialist Jesse Hensel was Michael’s bunkmate and best friend. The two were inseparable—whether they were lounging in their room or lifting weights. Jesse and Michael were like brothers and they argued like brothers. The only thing they agreed on was that Jesse was better looking and Michael was the better dancer.

Michael knew that his family worried about him while he was away. He sent home recordings and pictures—all of which Hal and Julie treasure. One picture in particular always brings a smile to the Barkey family’s faces. In it, Michael is lying on the desert, pull-

ing up his shirt to reveal grains of sand arranged in the shape of a smiley-face on his stomach.

Jesse accompanied his best friend on his final trip home. He said that Michael was everything he wanted to be—as a person and as a soldier. Jesse noted at a service honoring his friend that during the trip home, “I sat by Mike the whole way home and I did a lot of talking. It was the first time Mike didn’t talk back. I love him with every piece of my broken heart.”

In Michael’s hometown of Canal Fulton, OH, thousands of residents came to show their support for the Barkey family. Some waited nearly two hours to pay their respects to Michael. The funeral mass was a celebration of the life of this extraordinary soldier—and Julie Barkey would have it no other way for the son who brought so much light into the world.

Jennifer Barkey, Michael’s older sister wrote the following remembrance letter to provide comfort to the family:

Know that [Michael] was truly an uncommon man. Grieve for the incredible man, husband, and father he would have become. Know that following the example of our father, he stood up for what he believed. His conviction was such that he was willing to die for it.

We know that Michael is in heaven, continuing to spread the laughter he did while on earth. And perhaps the Barkey family is right—Michael is still cracking jokes, exchanging war stories with his grandfather, and is now the patron saint of Cheetos or hamburgers, which were his favorite foods.

Michael will never be forgotten.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF JOHN GREENO

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I speak to honor the memory of the late John Greeno, Bald Mountain heliport manager with the Mi-Wok Ranger District of Stanislaus National Forest. Mr. Greeno was a 21-year veteran of the U.S. Forest Service who dedicated his life to his family, community, and Nation. He was killed in a tragic helicopter crash in Texas on March 10, 2005, while on volunteer assignment to conduct a prescribed burn in Sabine National Forest.

John Greeno was born on June 2, 1952 in Redwood City, CA, and was raised in the town of Independence, CA. He embarked upon his career with the U.S. Forest Service in 1979 as a temporary employee on the Inyo National Forest. His love for firefighting and the U.S. Forest Service led him to the Stanislaus National Forest where he would eventually rise to the position of Helitack superintendent. During his 21 years of service, John earned the respect and admiration of those with whom he worked for consistently going above and beyond the call of duty. He led by example and was considered a mentor by subordinates. John regularly volunteered for assignments like the one that claimed his life in Sabine