

OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY NCAA DIVISION I BASEBALL CHAMPIONS

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, in the midst of all the serious business that is before the Senate, I and my good friend from Oregon, Senator SMITH, wanted to take a few minutes tonight and talk to the Senate about the great pride and joy that Oregonians are feeling tonight as a result of our terrific Oregon State Beavers who have won the college world series.

Showing incredible determination, they would not give up spirit. After losing their first games in both the tournament and in the championship series, the players at Oregon State and the coaching staff came back. They came back to be the first team since 1998 to lose their first game and go on to win the college title.

Senator SMITH and I are especially proud because in this day of professional sports seeming to be part of every college environment, most of these players are from Oregon. They come from almost every nook and cranny of our State. They come from the Pacific Northwest, and they represent the best values of our State—particularly hard work and a sense that if you just stay at it and you are persistent, you can get the job done.

We want to salute all the players, and particularly three we are going to be losing—three star pitchers: Jonah Nickerson, Dallas Buck, and Kevin Gunderson. They are going on to play professional next season. But we are going to be back in that world series next year.

I get a chance, along with my colleague, to enjoy so much that makes our State special. We try to team up on a bipartisan basis on some issues. But we are particularly thrilled as Oregonians' two U.S. Senators to make sure that the country sees that when you work hard, you play by the rules, and you don't give up, nearly always good things happen.

Tonight, Oregonians are wearing the orange and black of the Beavers.

I want to yield the rest of my time to my friend and colleague because, as Oregonians' two U.S. Senators, we are savoring this moment along with more than 3 million people who represent our State. I yield the remainder of my time to my colleague.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon is recognized.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. President.

I rise proudly with my colleague, Senator WYDEN. We are proud Oregonians every day but especially this day as we celebrate the great accomplishments of the Beavers of our State.

I suppose we are honorary members, neither of us having attended Oregon State, to be now members of "Beaver Nation," as it is known locally.

These great players, these great young men, overcame all the odds to win the college world series and become the NCAA Division I Baseball Champions. In doing so, the Beavers

not only brought home to OSU its first NCAA championship in any sport since 1916, they also became the first northern climate team to win the college world series.

We are very proud of them. They did it with a team full of young men from the greater Pacific Northwest, many of them from Oregon.

Under the leadership of their coach, Pat Casey, OSU made "Beaver believers" of many people—virtually all of Oregon. I think all of Oregon was tuned in yesterday to see their thrilling 3-to-2 victory.

While at the college world series in Omaha, they played eight games, and in six of those games they knew if they lost they went home. Well, they kept winning against all odds, and they come home to Corvallis, OR, champions of this great sport.

I suppose one of the things I look forward to is every year it seems as if an Oregon team gets to participate in what has become a White House tradition. That is when they meet with the President of the United States. I look forward especially this year to being able to not just congratulate the Oregon State University Beavers for this remarkable accomplishment. I look forward to escorting them with my colleague, Senator WYDEN, to the White House to meet America's No. 1 baseball fan, President Bush, for this great traditional ceremony of honoring the NCAA champs.

I stand before you, Mr. President, a "Beaver Believer" and thankful for the good job they did in bringing such distinction to our State.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, Senator SMITH said it very well.

I wanted to wrap up by noting a comment from pitcher Dallas Buck, who was the winning pitcher in the championship game.

When asked about why he stayed at Oregon State instead of going pro out of high school, I quote: "Best decision I ever made." And we happen to think that is the best decision a lot of young people are making in our State, to go to Oregon State University. It is a wonderful university, both for sports and academics.

We are going to salute them, as Senator SMITH has indicated, when we get a chance to join them at the White House with the President. That is what makes this so special for us.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio is recognized.

TRIBUTE TO DENISE WEISENBOR

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, today I commemorate a woman who dedicated her life to helping others: Denise Weisenborn. Living in Parma, OH, Denise was a lawyer and advocate of employment and independence for people with disabilities. Denise, who had muscular dystrophy, used a wheelchair all of her life, but never let that stop her from accomplishing her goals. Denise was 51 years old at the time of

her death on May 2, 2006. She is survived by her mother Mary Lucille and her sister Diane.

Denise spent her entire life overcoming obstacles and then exceeding all expectations. Even though she was unable to attend school, Denise had tutors help her at home during her younger years. As a student at Maple Heights High School, Denise was able to take part in classes while she was home. In 1972, Denise graduated as class valedictorian.

She carried on this legacy of academic success by majoring in foreign languages at Cleveland State University, graduating summa cum laude in 1976. Denise then attended Cleveland Marshall College of Law, where she served as an interpreter and finished in the top 20 percent of her class in 1980. She passed the bar exam later that year. These accomplishments were just the beginning of the amazing things Denise Weisenborn would accomplish throughout her life.

Denise worked in Columbus as an education lawyer for Ohio Legal Rights Services, where she helped families of children with disabilities get the educational services they needed. She presented a federal case, *Roncker v. Walter*, in the U.S. Court of Appeals Sixth Circuit. Eventually, the severity of her disability made a 40-hour work week very difficult, and she moved back to Cleveland to be closer to her supportive family.

She continued to give her talents to help people with disabilities by serving on the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council, the Governor's Council on People with Disabilities and the Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission.

She also was an area representative for Assistive Technology of Ohio in the Cleveland area, where she developed medical equipment loan programs for medical goods and adaptive equipment, as well as compiling a directory of service providers.

Firmly believing that people with disabilities should be able to live independently, Denise moved from her parents' home to a federally-subsidized apartment building in Parma for people with physical disabilities and urged officials to build additional homes of this kind. Denise also called for home-based employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

She was a champion of a program called "Choices," funded through the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council, where volunteers provided encouragement and community support to people with disabilities who lived in nursing homes but wanted to live independently in the community.

Many people were skeptical that this program would work, but Denise believed in the project. As a result of her leadership, hundreds of Ohioans with disabilities are now living independently in community settings. Denise's advocacy has helped so many people in both their personal and professional lives.

Denise was a person of great faith, dedicating a substantial portion of her time to helping others in their own spiritual journeys. She demonstrated this commitment through her work with Rainbow Girls and the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship at college. She served as a counsel and Bible study leader for the Billy Graham Crusade in Cleveland and organized and led Bible studies for church youth. Denise once said, "Of all my experiences, the one which has had the most profound influence on my life, and for which I will be eternally joyous, is the time I gave my life and opened my heart to my Savior, Jesus Christ. Much of my time each day is spent in talking to my Friend and studying His Word."

Denise was a gifted lawyer. She volunteered her talents to non-profit agencies that helped people with disabilities. She served on the board of commissioners of a large state agency that helped people with disabilities. And she lobbied the state and federal government for the betterment of people like herself.

For all these efforts, this attorney with 26 years of experience earned about \$5,000 per year. It is a sad irony that although Denise was learned in the law, it was the law—and not her disability—that kept her from earning a living. For Denise, however, having a low income was an act of survival. Denise's health care was covered by Medicaid. Denise had muscular dystrophy. It affected her speech; her voice was soft and quiet, making it difficult to hear her in a crowded room. She relied heavily on assistive technology for independence. She used a power wheelchair for mobility and operated her computer by pointing a laser at an on screen keyboard. She required 24-hour personal attendant care and too frequently her life was interrupted by extended and expensive stays in the hospital when her health declined.

Given the severity of her disability, there were no other options for her. The law in Ohio prevented her from earning more money without losing her health care. She was given a Hobson's choice—she had to choose between making a living and living at all.

This is why Denise Weisenborn spent the last years of her life fighting for a Medicaid Buy-In program in Ohio. These programs, allowable in States under federal law since 1999, give people with disabilities the right to earn more money, and pay premiums to the State to help cover their health care costs. Medicaid Buy-In removes the powerful, institutional disincentive for people with disabilities to work.

If Ohio had a Buy-In program, Denise Weisenborn could have been even more independent by earning a living, helping Ohio cover her health care costs, and paying taxes.

Simply put, she could have been a lawyer. It is the independence for which she fought and wanted so deeply, and it is shame that Ohio did not give

her that chance before she passed away.

It is something that I think those of us who reside in Ohio should think about and consider. It would be a fitting tribute to her life for us to take the appropriate action in Ohio to change the status quo. and to give people like Denise the opportunity to move forward and to work and not have to give up the health care, not have to give up the support that enables them to live, not have to make the choice Denise had to make.

Denise Weisenborn led a full and personally enriching life. She fought for people with disabilities and their right to find and sustain employment and to live independently. She dedicated her life to service, and Ohioans with disabilities are much better for her efforts. They are much better for the fact that she lived.

Mr. President, I continue to keep the family and friends of Denise Weisenborn in my thoughts and prayers.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

LANCE CORPORAL DAVID MENDEZ RUIZ

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, this evening, I come to the floor to pay tribute to a brave Ohioan, Marine LCpl David Mendez Ruiz, who was killed on November 12, 2005—the day after Veterans Day—by a homemade bomb while conducting combat operations in Iraq. He was only 20 years old.

Ronald Reagan once said:

[S]ome people live an entire lifetime and wonder if they have ever made a difference in the world. The Marines don't have that problem.

The family and friends of David Mendez Ruiz will indeed never doubt the great difference this young man made in the world—both as a marine, as a friend, brother, and son.

David was the youngest of eight children, born to Maximiliano and Miriam Mendez. The family moved to the United States from Guatemala when David was 6 years old.

At David's funeral, the service began with the Guatemalan national anthem, followed by "The Star-Spangled Banner." David had a profound respect for his roots and a great love and appreciation for the United States—the country for which he would eventually give his life. David's parents instilled in him at an early age a deep reverence and love for God and for his country.

David was baptized at and was a member of Cleveland's House of Praise and Prayer, where he was like a son to Eli and Amy Ramos, the church's youth pastors. Before leaving for his second tour of duty in Iraq, David gave Eli a sound system for his car as a gift to repay him for all the times he had spent with him through the years. He wanted Eli to remember him each time he listened to Christian music on his stereo. As Eli has said:

That's the way it is. Each time I get into my car, and I put that music on really loud,

I remember David. David was a youth full of life, and that is why we all fell in love with him.

Indeed, David was full of life and so dedicated to his faith. He regularly attended Sunday church services in Iraq, even though he was thousands of miles away from his home church.

Family and friends remember David as a friendly, honorable, compassionate, and courageous man. They describe his huge smile that hid his eyes and brightened a room upon his entry. David was known for having a heart that couldn't say no to someone in need and a love of God and a love of country that motivated him to join the Marines in the first place. David loved being a marine.

He had spent almost 8 months in Iraq, returned home, and broke his back during a snowboarding accident. After recuperating, David left to return to Iraq on the Fourth of July. At David's funeral, close friend Brandon Joffre, who went to high school with David at the Greater Cleveland Christian Academy in Middleburg Heights, told mourners that David had always dreamed of joining the service. This is what he said:

He always wanted to be in the military, real hard core, definitely born to be a marine. That's the thing. He was killed, but he was killed doing something he loved.

He wanted to be there. I expected to grow up and [have] our kids hang out [together], and I'd see him get married and all that. It's hard. Every time I see a picture of him with that smile, I want to cry.

Gillian Newman, a friend of David's since elementary school, told those gathered at the funeral that she loved watching movies with David. They would have great fun trying to remember the lines from the movies, even months later. Most of all, she says that she loved his kind spirit. "We could challenge him to a game of pool 150 times, and he could beat us every time and never say, 'I told you [so].'"

David's friend Brandon also shared that sentiment:

David lived a very honorable life and accomplished a lot in such a short period of time. Words do not describe how proud I am of David. God had a plan for David's life, and David served him well. He was always happy, always had a smile on his face. He made friends everywhere he went.

Fellow Marine Marcial Rodriguez, wrote the following words about David:

When I heard the news last November that U.S. Marine David Mendez Ruiz, a Hispanic immigrant from Cleveland, died in Iraq, my thoughts were a little strong. I felt pride, but at the same time, anger—pride because David was fulfilling a dream like many young people, to serve by fighting in the U.S. Marines. Even though some people criticized him, he kept serving his country.

He lost his life without surrendering to anything, fighting for his country, for a just cause, with honor. I feel anger because many Hispanic young people like us struggle to give Hispanics a good name so that Americans don't think we only cause problems—so that Americans can see that we too, the Hispanic people, contribute our grain of sand, like David's sister Sandra said. . . . That's how David wanted to live his life—with pride, in peace.