

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.

Mr. President, and Members of the Senate, David demonstrated his commitment to service in so many ways, but his long record of awards speaks for itself. He received the Combat Action Ribbon, the National Defense Service Medal, the War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, the War on Terrorism Service Medal, and two Sea Service Deployment Ribbons. David also received the Purple Heart Medal.

David Mendez Ruiz was a young man who exemplified courage under pressure and who always strived to make life a little better for those around him. The Greater Cleveland Christian Academy has set up a scholarship in his memory, so that his legacy can live on through the education of other students. There is no better way to carry on the memory of this brave young American who lost his life while fighting to ensure that we can continue to enjoy freedom and opportunity.

Mr. President, David Mendez Ruiz is a true hero and proved his unwavering allegiance to the United States in the most selfless way—by giving his life in service to our country. My wife, Fran and I continue to keep David's large and wonderful family and his many friends in our thoughts and in our prayers.

Mr. President, I see my colleague on the Senate floor. I have about 10 more minutes.

STAFF SERGEANT KENDALL IVY II

Mr. President, this evening I would like to speak in honor of Marine SSgt Kendall Ivy II, a 28-year-old Ohioan who lost his life on May 11, 2005. He was killed by a roadside bomb while serving our country in Iraq.

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I rise today to honor Marine SSG Kendall Ivy, II, a 28-year-old Ohioan who lost his life on May 11, 2005. He was killed by a roadside bomb while serving our country in Iraq.

A native of Galion, OH, Kendall was a well-known football and baseball athlete at Galion High School, where he graduated in 1995. He joined the military right after high school, applying these athletic skills of teamwork to the Marine Corps. After the military, Kendall was planning to continue his education and become a history teacher and coach.

Most important to Kendall was his family, consisting of his wife, Lee Ann, sons, Caleb and Harrison, daughter, Reagan, and parents, Raymond and Venita "Kay" Ivy. Additionally, Kendall is survived by three brothers, a sister, and their spouses: Kenneth and Charlotte Ivy, Kathy and Doug Shifley, Kevin and Michelle Ivy, and Keith and Becky Ivy. Lee Ann was 5 months pregnant with their son Gabriel at the time of Kendall's death.

Kendall and Lee Ann first saw each other in middle school. Lee Ann said that after she met him, she spent the greatest 14 years of her life. Kendall and Lee Ann got married young. Kendall once told her, "What if we wait and then die in our late twenties? We

would miss out on so much married life." Indeed, Kendall Ivy was a true family man. He learned of Caleb's birth when he was pulled out of formation on the flight deck of an aircraft carrier. Kendall loved his two boys, but the birth of his daughter changed his life, Lee Ann said. He was very much a family man and was looking forward to coming home and spending time with all of them.

Venita says that her son was "destined to be a Marine." From the age of 3, he wanted to wear the gold eagle, globe, and anchor insignia of the Corps. He made that happen, becoming a staff sergeant while planning a career in the Marines. He served in the United States Marine Corps for 10 years. Venita said her son told her he "wanted to serve this country, that we need to be over there in Iraq so they can be free like we are."

Kevin Ivy also remembers his younger brother's dream of becoming a marine, saying:

He lived life to the fullest. He was kind-hearted. He loved his country. He loved his president. He believed in what he was doing. Each and everyone of these fine young men and women is in a dangerous situation. But my brother understood that, and he was willing to lay down his life for the cause of freeing these people.

Kendall Ivy was loved dearly not only by his family, but also by those who had the privilege to serve with him. Marine CPT Dave Handy wrote the following statement on an Internet tribute site to Kendall:

I was then Staff Sergeant Ivy's platoon commander for a short time and remember him leaving the Marine Corps to seek new adventures. I was ecstatic to hear that such a fine leader of Marines had rejoined the Corps and then brought to tears to hear of his death. I remember him as a ruthless enforcer of standards, a superb example for young Marines, and a patient mentor for all around him. All officers should have been so lucky as to serve with enlisted leaders of Staff Sergeant Ivy's superior caliber. My thoughts and prayers are with his family and I look forward to seeing him again on the streets of heaven. Semper Fidelis.

On the same tribute site, Aric Wells of Nashville, TN, said:

To my friend. To his wife and children. I am deeply sorry. To all who did not have the privilege of knowing Staff Sergeant Ivy, let me tell you that we have lost a great man. A man with morals and convictions that did not waver. A man who would give the shirt off his back to help you out. Staff Sergeant Ivy would go to bat for you when others would turn their backs. He was a damn good man and always a Marine. I will always remember him.

Indeed, Kendall Ivy was deeply loved by all those who knew him. At Camp Ripper, Iraq, a new gym was opened on August 1, 2005, named the "Staff Sergeant Kendall H. Ivy II Memorial Gym." His presence is felt daily by those like SGT Johnny A. Noguera, the gym manager. Sergeant Noguera said:

Everyone wants to make this place as nice as possible, especially for the Marines who knew Staff Sergeant Ivy. When I was growing up in South America, one of my father's friends had a son who was a Marine. He was

so proud of him and he seemed to have this aura around him. That's how Staff Sergeant Ivy was and that's what I wanted to be. I know that many people miss him and they look at this gym as a direct reflection of their love for him. This is why I stress to the guys who work here to keep this place in order so we can properly pay homage to the man who it's named after.

The Marines who attended Kendall's funeral remembered going to the gym with him, then not being able to persuade him to leave. At the end of the workout, Kendall would then ask if his arms looked any bigger. Lee Anna says that her husband "was worse than a woman about his hair and weight."

To end, I would like to quote Sergeant Downing, who wrote a few words about Kendall on the Internet tribute site. He writes:

I served with Staff Sergeant Ivy in Weapons Company, 1st Battalion, 6th Marines. Someone once said, 'the best compliment you can give is to say he was a good Marine.' Well, Staff Sergeant Ivy was a damn good Marine!

Kendall Ivy epitomized not only the meaning of a good Marine, but also of the ideal son, husband, and father. My wife Fran and I continue to keep the family and friends of SSG Kendall Ivy in our thoughts and prayers.

I yield the floor.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. THUNE). The Senator from Illinois.

IRAQ

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, let me start by acknowledging my gratitude and respect for the Senator from Ohio for coming to the floor of the Senate at this late hour and telling these touching stories about these men and women who have served our Nation so well and have given their lives in service to our values and this great cause of making America safe. As of today, 2,524 of those stories could be told. That is the number of American service men and women who have died in Iraq as of today.

It is a day of special significance in my State of Illinois. We have reached the number of 100, 100 brave men and women from the land of Lincoln who have given their lives in service to our country, 100 Illinois families who have lost a loved one, a child, a parent, a spouse, a brother, a sister.

Abraham Lincoln, in the midst of the Civil War, consumed with grief over all of the death, said of those who died that they gave "the last full measure of devotion." It is a reminder to all of us that when we discuss policy in the Senate, it does not always have a direct impact on the lives of those we represent. But when we vote on foreign policy, on the issue of war, we are making decisions that cost lives. We should never forget that. That is why this is more than just another job or another profession. This is, indeed, an awesome responsibility.

Last week we completed the debate on where we will go in Iraq. It was not