

the age of twenty-one, she made the decision to commit her life to the ministry and preached her first trial sermon. Her hard work as a preacher was acknowledged in 1983, when she became the pastor of Tabernacle Baptist Church, making her the first female Baptist Pastor in the State of Delaware. Ten years later, she was given another great honor when the Wilmington Fire Department appointed her as Chaplain for the Wilmington Fire Department. This honor made her the first woman and the first African American Fire Chaplain.

In 1995, she connected her church with the Full Gospel Church Fellowship. This church, now named the Tabernacle Full Gospel Baptist Church, has become the largest affiliate church of its kind in the Delaware area. In 2002, she was named the Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship's District Overseer of the Year. Her success in ministry continued when she became one of the first female bishops in the Full Gospel Church Fellowship International. Fellow clergy refer to her as "Mother" and in September of 2005 she was even listed on Gospel Today's "World's Most Loved Pastors" List, illustrating her respected, humble and revered reputation.

After over 40 years of bringing her love, talents, and enthusiasm to the Baptist ministry, she was appointed Bishop of the Baptist Church for the State of Delaware. I can think of no candidate more deserving of our recognition and praise than Bishop Aretha E. Morton. I congratulate Bishop Morton on an exceptional career of service and dedication.

RECOGNIZING TRAVIS JAMES FOSTER FOR ACHIEVING THE RANK OF EAGLE SCOUT

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, April 16, 2007

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Travis James Foster, a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 264, and in earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Travis has been very active with his troop, participating in many scout activities. Over the many years Travis has been involved with scouting, he has not only earned numerous merit badges, but also the respect of his family, peers, and community.

Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Travis James Foster for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

TRIBUTE ON THE PUBLIC SERVICE OF RON GRIFFIN AND HIS SON, KYLE

HON. SCOTT GARRETT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, April 16, 2007

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, last month, one of my constituents, Ron Griffin, journeyed to Iraq. His son, Kyle,

had been killed while serving in Iraq. Mr. Griffin wanted to meet with men and women who were now serving there and with Iraqi citizens who were living through the war there.

His trip was not sanctioned by our Government. In fact, the State Department and Pentagon tried to talk him out of taking it for fear for Mr. Griffin's safety. But, showing the same determination and commitment that his son and his son's fellow servicemembers demonstrate to the world every day, Mr. Griffin found his way to Iraq any way.

In the face of constant media and political attention on Iraq, sometimes it seems that the negative news dominates coverage and it is easy to forget the many positive acts about which we may never hear. Mr. Griffin is on a mission to show the world how extraordinary the men and women serving in Iraq are and how hopeful they and the Iraqi people are for a better future. He says that what he saw in Iraq can be summed up in three words: "Professionalism. Humanity. Spirituality." And, I would like to share his thoughts on his trip in his own words:

I journeyed to Iraq for this is where my son died helping to free a nation. I came on my own dime without the sponsorship of anyone. I simply desired to experience through my own eyes a sense of what the true reality of life on the ground in Iraq is from the words of and the ability to observe the people who populate the Kurdish area in the northern and eastern portion of Iraq and from our service members wherever I had the honor of meeting with and speaking to the true American Idols of our lifetime.

I went not as some distraught father searching for that elusive feeling of closer that all so many believe that I must attain in order to move on. I abhor that statement. It is not the manner in which I mourn or honor my son and every other Fallen Hero. Each day of my life I endure the numbing sadness that is the reality of Kyle's death while in simultaneously I have been comforted and supported by the fathomless depths of human kindnesses. I am saddened for all those who never had the pleasure of meeting my son, the other Fallen Heroes or any of those other magnificent individuals who have served and serve us this day. You have lost more than I have for I have been honored to have walked among greatness.

I came however with a pre-disposed political bent that is in total support of our mission and for doing whatever and for how long it takes for the successful completion of our mission. Having spent nearing two weeks living among the Kurdish people, journeying from Erbil to Duhok to Barzan and countless locations in between and then traveling from Harbor Gate on the Turkish border in the north down through Mosul, Tikrit and finally to Baghdad with the members of our magnificent military I am today an American father who knows unquestionably and steadfastly that the price my son paid to liberate Iraq was worth every ounce of blood and sweat he sacrificed. However it is not from the political perspective that I have reached that conclusion but rather from the depths of the humanity of the Kurdish people and the majesty in which our military conducts themselves while in service to us.

Somewhere in the recesses of my consciousness I am continually reminded that somehow I have been put on this path for a purpose and that could not have been made more perfectly clear than by what I have experienced these past two weeks. I have long bridled under the incessant negativity that the vast majority of the media portrayed as the reality of Iraq. That notion was ripped

from my perspective when I was told outright by the Soldiers that they knew that regardless of how many ribbons they helped cut, schools they opened, or lives they improved on any given day that if one bomb went off in Baghdad the story that would be told would be the boom story. They felt bad for the American people for they would then not be able to share in the joyous satisfaction that the soldiers and the Iraqi people had experienced. They are over that and now so am I. Likewise I was somewhat consumed with the hypocrisy of those who mouth the words of support for the troops while calling their mission a failure and wanting to end it. I thought that such statements were hurting the troops as they served us. I am now ashamed of my lack of insight to what indeed is the reality of Iraq, or at least that part of and the people of that part that I journeyed through. Almost universally the troops told me that they simply do not have the time to be involved in the political aspect of what they are doing for to do so would interfere with the performance of their job and that is the primary mission to every Soldier. It finally became clear to me from my many conversations that while they, like most human beings would most certainly would appreciate the unending support of the American people especially as they endure all the hardships of being Soldiers, they will perform every task assigned to them for they are consummate professionals through and through. They do their job because they are individuals of the highest moral character who have sworn an oath to protect and defend this country and nothing will prevent them from doing just that. To watch them do their jobs is likened to viewing Tiger Woods march through a golf course. The Soldiers just wear different clothes.

Stepping off the plane in Erbil, a city of over 1 million residents and the capital of the Kurdish region, you can not help but be stunned by the majestic vistas, impressed by the precision and competency of the personnel at the airport and be totally astonished by the expansion that is taking place on every section of the now Erbil International Airport and the city itself for you must continually remind yourself that indeed you are in Iraq! The physical part of the Kurdish region is simply breathtaking in its scope and beauty, while the emotional aspect is riveting in its intensity and vibrancy. Freedom permeates from every inch of this land and in that sense of security, optimism resounds. The entire region appears to be one vast construction site with building and improvements going on everywhere. One only has to travel but a few short blocks in any direction and the examples of rapid and real progress stun your senses. I have likewise traveled to the hinterland where the amenities of life are Spartan but in both locations the quality of the Kurdish people bring joy to all those that have the privilege of meeting them. They seem to have been born with a perpetual warm and engaging smile and a sincere and genuine greeting for all those that they come in contact with. Eye contact is never absent from the conversation, nor is the ever-present wry smile that can burst into uncontrolled laughter at any time. One need to only ride down the road from Erbil to Khanzad, a 15 Km drive from central Erbil to experience the joy of these wonderful people. There are endless picnics ongoing during this month of celebration. Children laugh, play and fly their kites, men play music or dance while the women in festive and shimmering colored native dress organize the feeding of everyone.

Each and every conversation is filled with the personal atrocities that they have all endured. Atrocities that they will forever remember and will not allow anyone to forget

but amidst those stories of horror lurks absolutely no seething need for revenge. They know full well that there is no time or place for revenge and recrimination. They live with the horror of yesterday and look to the future with optimism and eternal thanks for the help and support of the American people in helping them gain their total freedom. Thank you and welcome are part of every conversation. From Harbor Gate to Mosul to Tikrit to Baghdad back to Tikrit, with a honored stop at Diyala, to Mosul and then finally back to Erbil I have been simultaneously overwhelmed, stunned and awe struck by the extraordinary professionalism of every soldier I personally meet and those I only had the opportunity to observe without them ever knowing that I was watching. I learned of an organization that cares deeply, profoundly and personally for the well being of every individual within its ranks, while every individual member is willing to sacrifice their very being for every other individual member. That is why they go about what they call their job but what I refer to as their passion with a clarity of purpose that humbles you to your knees. In this organization everyone and I mean everyone knows that they are first and foremost a soldier who is fully trained and prepared to go into battle should the need occur but they likewise perform a multitude of vast ranging tasks that they have been highly trained for to highest possible professional standards. They completely understand their specific task and perform it superbly for they know full well that every individual soldier is equal in their value and importance to the successful completion of the mission.

The words COMPLEXITY and PROFESSIONALISM scream at you as you begin to understand all that is going on all about you. From the formation of a huge truck convoy, to the logistical requirements of a division, to the combat readiness of squadrons of Blackhawks to the coordination of the divergent aspects of public affairs one can not help but be stunned the complexity of our effort in Iraq and most importantly the professionalism in which the effort is carried out.

Accompanying that professionalism is the humanity of these Soldiers who have sacrificed so much for us and of which we sadly know so little. Their stories should be told and retold for they are the heroes that we should be emulating. In Baghdad I was fortunate to be allowed to stay in visitors quarters and was escorted by a National Guard Unit from Kentucky. I like most people had a somewhat diminished view of the National Guard. I got to know these individuals quite well and dramatically experienced that same level of professionalism first hand. I was learning the history of the county in Kentucky where my escort was from when a fire fight broke out across the lake. After a number of minutes of continuous fighting the Sgt's unit was notified that they would be joining the fight. In an instant the calm of the mess was transformed as these soldiers prepared for combat. Three vehicles and 15 men would be heading out to the streets of Baghdad. Everyone knew their job precisely. The guns were mounted as the computers were spun up. Communications were checked and every individual soldier completed their own mental checklist. As if in a heart beat I watched as men did what I initially thought was a transformation from escort to Soldier but what I watched was in fact was a Soldier performing one job and then another, both to the highest professional standards.

Over the next few weeks Americans will argue over and eventually vote for their choice as to who is going to get the title of "AMERICAN IDOL". They will watch transfixed as young athletes perform at the highest possible level to gain the title of Na-

tional Champion of College Basketball. Millions will flock to the baseball stadiums of America to watch in awe as their teams begin their long journey to be named as The World Champions of Baseball. All that should pale before your eyes for those Wondrous Warriors who seek not the accolades but unselfishly protect your very freedoms have already earned the right to be crowned as World and National Champions and are in fact "THE TRUE AMERICAN IDOLS" for everyday they place their lives on the line for us.

"CONGRATULATING THE NATIONAL JROTC MIDDLE SCHOOL CHAMPIONS OF T.C. MARSH JUNIOR HIGH"

HON. PETE SESSIONS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, April 16, 2007

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to proudly recognize T.C. Marsh Junior High School as the home to the National Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) Middle School Champions. Thirty-five of the school's 217 unit members qualified for the competition which was held on March 31 in Dallas. Under the guidance of teacher David Bates, the students competed against units from all over the country. Bates served for the army as a corporal in the First Calvary. As a former Florida Gator football player, Bates coaches W.T. White varsity softball and football teams and until this year, coached 8th grade football, basketball and baseball at T. C. Marsh. I congratulate David Bates and the students of T.C. Marsh Junior High School for their well-deserved victory and wish them all the best in future endeavors.

HONORING HISPANIC VETERANS OF WORLD WAR II

HON. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, April 16, 2007

Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California. Madam Speaker, I proudly join my colleagues today to pay tribute to the contributions of Latinos who served in our Armed Forces during World War II. As we were painfully reminded by the complete omission of Hispanics from a PBS documentary on World War II, the important contributions of Latinos, native born, as well as immigrants, are too often overlooked and forgotten.

From the American Revolution, a victory that established our Nation; to the Civil War, a victory that preserved our Nation; to the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Hispanics have played an instrumental role.

From Hispanic business owners to day laborers to the growing number of Hispanics in executive level positions, Hispanics are ingrained in the fabric of our strong Nation. As the largest and fastest growing minority in the United States, Hispanic participation in all segments of society is not only essential but apparent. It should not be surprising, then, that Hispanics also serve our nation in one of its most patriotic duties—the heroic defense of our country.

During World War II, Hispanics served in greater proportions than any other minority in the U.S. Armed Forces with the number of Hispanics serving likely peaking at well over 400,000. Although proper record keeping of Hispanics in the armed forces was not kept until after World War II, we have a multitude of accounts of Hispanic participation. One famous example is Company E of the 141st Regiment of the 36th Texas Infantry Division, which was made up entirely of Spanish-speaking Americans. For their notable service they were awarded 1,685 Bronze Stars, 492 Silver Stars, 31 Distinguished Service Crosses, 12 Legends of Merit, and 11 Soldier's Medals.

One individual example is Staff Sergeant Ysmael R. Villegas. A California native, he served in the United States Army during World War II. At the Battle of Luzon in the Philippines, he stepped up to lead his squad in a counterattack of the enemy and single-handedly cleared five installations of heavy machineguns. Upon taking the sixth and final area of firing, and at only twenty-one years old, Staff Sergeant Villegas was killed in action. For his bravery, President Harry Truman posthumously awarded him the Medal of Honor.

There are countless stories of heroism like Staff Sergeant Villegas'. Hispanics disproportionately earned more Medals of Honor in the 20th Century than any other major subgroup. From the Civil War to the Vietnam War, there have been thirty-nine Hispanic Americans who have received the Medal of Honor. Twenty-two of them sacrificed their lives in combat in service to the United States Navy, Army, and Marines.

According to the latest Census, there are over 1.1 million living Hispanic veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces. And this number is expanding. Since November 2006, 25,300 Hispanics have been deployed for service. According to the Department of Defense, Hispanics have endured the most deaths for a minority group in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. Our country honors their service as well as those who have served in the past.

I encourage all Americans to take the opportunity to recognize and continue to learn about the role Hispanics played in World War II and throughout our nation's history. It is an integral part of the American story. Without these contributions and sacrifices, America would not be what it is today.

TRIBUTE TO MRS. CINDY CARLSON

HON. PETER J. VISCLOSKY

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, April 16, 2007

Mr. VISCLOSKY. Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I stand before you today to honor Mrs. Cindy Carlson upon her retirement from her position as Secretary for Sub-District 5, District 7 of the United Steelworkers. I have known Cindy for many years, and she is one of the most involved citizens I have ever known, especially when it comes to her service to the United Steelworkers. Cindy has been a member of the staff at District 7 for an astonishing 31 years, and her contributions to the organization are immeasurable. For her efforts and many contributions to Sub-District 5,