

and grandfather; a valiant soldier; and a true patriot in every sense of the word—BG Darrell S. Cramer.

Darrell recently passed away, leaving a tremendous void in the lives of all who knew him. Yet his legacy of service, courage, and dedication will serve as an example for many generations to come.

Darrell was born in Ogden, UT, to Orlie and Loretta Stuart Cramer and was the oldest in a family of five. He enjoyed his childhood immensely and excelled in athletics and academics. As a young child he developed a strong interest in aviation which would guide his future life. His dream of flying became a reality shortly after enrolling in a civilian pilot training course at Weber College.

On December 7, 1941, Darrell was listening to the radio at home when he heard the news bulletin that stunned the Nation—Pearl Harbor had been attacked, and the United States was now joining the war. The very next day, he drove to Salt Lake City and visited the recruiting offices of both the Army and the Navy to try to enlist in the Aviation Cadet programs. At that time a recruit was to be at least 20 years old and have 2 years of college, so he was turned away.

Just over a month later the rules were changed, and Darrell, eager to serve his country, immediately enlisted in the Army. He quickly became an excellent fighter pilot candidate and excelled in the training. Thus began a storied and exemplary military career.

The highlights of his military service included many tours of duty beginning in November 1942, when Darrell was sent to the South Pacific area as a P-38 pilot assigned to the 339th Fighter Squadron of the 13th Air Force. The young airman flew in the campaigns of Guadalcanal, New Guinea, and North Solomons and completed his tour of duty with credit for the destruction of a Japanese Zero fighter and Betty bomber aircraft.

In December 1943, he returned to the United States and was assigned to a P-47 combat training school in Abilene, TX. In June 1944, General Cramer was assigned to the European Theater of Operations and flew a P-51 aircraft with the 55th Fighter Group. He finished this tour of duty as a squadron commander with a total of 300 flying hours in 60 missions and credited for the destruction of 11 German aircraft. As such, he joined an exclusive fraternity of fighter ace.

At the end of World War II, Darrell returned home, and shortly after, he left active duty to go into business with his father forming the Cramer and Son Coal Company. He went on to pursue additional business opportunities but couldn't put his love of flying behind him and once again joined the Utah Air National Guard. When the Berlin Airlift began in 1948, he was again called to active duty for Operation Vittles.

When that operation ended, Darrell once again returned to the United

States and began service as director of flying in the Advanced Flying School at Williams Air Force Base in Arizona. This was followed 2 years later with his return to Europe to assume command of the 53rd Fighter Squadron and later the 36th Fighter Bomber Wing in Germany.

This service was followed by assignments in Washington, DC, California, Turkey, Thailand, and Vietnam. In February 1971, General Cramer became the vice commander of the 17th Air Force, Ramstein Air Base in Germany. He was promoted to brigadier general in 1970 and retired from military service in June 1973.

During his many years of military service, Darrell was recognized and awarded many times for his courage and exemplary service to our Nation. His military awards and decorations included the Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit with an oak leaf cluster, Distinguished Flying Cross with an oak leaf cluster, Air Medal with 21 oak leaf clusters, Joint Service Commendation Medal, Air Force Commendation Medal, Presidential Unit Citation emblem with two oak leaf clusters, and an Air Force Outstanding Unit Award Ribbon with an oak leaf cluster. In addition, he was also inducted into the Utah Aviation Hall of Fame and the Order of the Daedalians, a fraternity of pilots.

With all of these accomplishments, Darrell became a larger-than-life figure to all those who knew him. Yet his humble and unassuming spirit was demonstrated in all he did. His greatest accomplishment he always maintained was marrying the love of his life, Mildred "Mick" McPhie. They built a beautiful life together providing a loving, cherished home for friends, children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren to enjoy.

In his later years, Darrell didn't just quietly sit and watch the days go idly by. He found happiness pursuing many hobbies and interests including golfing, skiing, and spending quality time with his brothers and sisters, grandchildren, and friends.

He also appreciated computer technology and used it to modernize his work in genealogy and family history. He spent many hours serving in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' Family History Program. He shared his knowledge and helped many search for their own ancestors.

As the wonderful, strong military leader General George S. Patton once said, "It is foolish and wrong to mourn the men who died. Rather we should thank God that such men lived."

While I don't believe it is foolish for many to mourn the loss of this great man, I do believe that many do thank our Heavenly Father that BG Darrell S. Cramer lived and that he provided such a powerful example of courage, service, and love for generations to follow.

COURT SECURITY IMPROVEMENT ACT

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, earlier today the Senate passed S. 378, the Court Security Improvement Act, with overwhelming, bipartisan support. With this legislation, we in the Senate acted for the third time in a year to better protect our Federal judges from institutional and physical threats.

For the past several years, I have introduced and sponsored legislation to extend the authority for Federal judges to redact relevant portions of their financial disclosure statements if they have been threatened. The authority to redact portions of judges' financial disclosure statements expired last year.

The redaction authority bill passed by the Senate last year would have extended the redaction authority without interruption and expanded it to judges' families. It struck the right balance by preserving congressional oversight to prevent the misuse of this redaction authority, which has been a matter of some concern.

I was disappointed that the House of Representatives failed to act on this legislation that passed the Senate last November but I am pleased that the new House of Representatives was able to pass it earlier this year. I continue to support an extension of redaction authority for threatened judges and am glad that the Senate is passing that measure, H.R. 1130 today. I trust that the President will sign it into law without delay.

U.S.-RUSSIAN ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP

Mr. LUGAR. Madam President, I wish to congratulate Secretary of Commerce Carlos M. Gutierrez on his recent trip to Moscow, Russia. The Secretary delivered an important message to the Russian Government and Russian people: "While political issues between our nations tend to garner the most headlines, economic interests should not be ignored. U.S.-Russia commercial ties are stronger and more dynamic than ever before, providing stability to our overall relationship." I couldn't agree more with this assessment.

The United States and Russia business relationship is expanding significantly. Last year, U.S. exports to Russia increased by 20 percent to \$4.7 billion in a broad range of merchandise and service markets. The American Chamber of Commerce in Russia recently conducted a survey of American business in Russia. They made some interesting findings:

Half of the American companies surveyed report sales increases of 200 percent in Russia from 2001 to 2005.

Ninety-seven percent of U.S. companies in Russia project continued growth in sales during the next three years.

Ninety-two percent of U.S. companies in Russia believe that continued

commercial engagement with Russia is positive for American business, and 86 percent believe that Russia's membership in the WTO will bring new opportunities for them.

Profitability of two-thirds of American companies in Russia is on or above target.

Seventy-five percent of Russian employees of American companies in Russia view the United States positively, compared to 47 percent of employees in Russian-owned companies.

The people of Russia and the United States stand to benefit a great deal from this expanded relationship. The Secretary also focused on those areas where improvement is needed, including, stronger accountability, enforcement of intellectual property rights and and anticorruption efforts.

The U.S.-Russia relationship is critical to the security and prosperity of both countries and the international community. In recent months the bilateral relationship has been dominated by disagreements and confrontation on a number of important issues. American and Russian leaders must reverse this trend. I congratulate Secretary Gutierrez in making a strong step forward in the right direction.

I ask unanimous consent that the text of a speech he delivered at the American Chamber of Commerce's Annual Investment Conference in Moscow on April 4, be printed in the RECORD at this point.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

Thank you for inviting me to this Conference.

Minister Gref, Ambassador Burns, it is an honor to join you in opening this conference. This is my second trip to Moscow as Secretary of Commerce. It has been nearly two years since my first visit and I'm pleased to be here today to discuss economic growth and opportunity between Russia and the United States.

As you know, this year marks the 200th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Russia. Though there have been times of great challenge during that history, we are now poised to enter a new era of commercial engagement which will strengthen our ties, grow our economies and create prosperity for our citizens.

My visit this week reflects the considerable and growing value the U.S. places on our business ties with Russia, and our desire to find new ways to bring greater economic opportunity to the people of our countries.

While political issues between our nations tend to garner the most headlines, the economic relationship is a great untold story.

U.S.-Russia commercial ties are stronger and more dynamic than ever before. This creates great opportunity for our future.

In the past two decades, Russia has begun to reap the benefits of engagement in the global economy and take a place as one of the world's great economic powers.

Today, Russia's nearly \$1 trillion economy is in its 9th straight year of growth, and the Economic Development Ministry reported 8.4 percent growth in the first two months of this year. That is impressive.

With inflation below 10 percent, an 11 percent increase in real disposable income within the past year, early debt repayments and

budget surpluses, Russia's economy is indeed on the rise.

As the economy continues to grow, so does U.S. business. I know later today you will hear from executives of companies such as Alcoa, Boeing, Coca-Cola and Motorola. Their presence at this conference speaks to the growing environment for business and investment here.

According to some recent surveys, 84 percent of foreign companies active in Russia report being successful in meeting their goals; 95 percent plan to expand.

Consistent with these figures, current bilateral trade and future prospects for U.S. businesses in Russia are expanding significantly.

In 2006, U.S. exports to Russia grew 20 percent to \$4.7 billion. This growth is occurring in a wide range of merchandise and service categories, suggesting that Russia's growth is having a positive impact in purchasing power.

Importantly, the growth in our trade is a two-way street:

In 2006, Russian exports to the U.S. were more than \$19 billion, 30 percent more than in 2005.

Russia is, for the first time, beginning to take on a notable direct investment profile in the United States, with investments in mining, steel-manufacturing, and retail-petroleum, helping support American jobs and supply American consumers. Russia's direct investment in the U.S. is \$3 billion. The U.S. has \$11 billion invested in Russia.

As big as these numbers sound, they are actually quite small for two countries our size. Indeed, we are just getting started.

The next step for Russia is World Trade Organization accession. Russia is the world's largest economy not yet in the WTO.

The United States has been working side-by-side with Russia to achieve WTO membership. Last November, Minister Gref and U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab signed a bilateral market access agreement.

Now Russia, working multilaterally with the U.S. and other WTO members, has the opportunity to take the necessary steps to bring this process to a close, and enable its economy, companies and people to fully participate in the world market.

Many U.S. multinationals regard Russia as a strategic market.

At the same time, their perception is colored by what they hear about political issues such as energy security and a challenging business climate.

Expansion of Russian commercial engagement with America and globally requires transparent markets that embrace foreign and domestic competition.

As the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development noted in its 2006 economic survey of Russia, "Greater openness is essential to monitoring, accountability and anti-corruption efforts."

The U.S. and other economies have greatly benefited from openness, transparency, competition and adherence to the rule of law. Democratic institutions fostering economic freedom and rule of law offer the best mix of economic and social justice.

We believe that companies and economies benefit from the accountability provided by a vibrant media and independent courts. They serve to ensure government agencies responsible for upholding the rules of commerce carry out their duties properly and evenhandedly.

As Russia becomes more prominent on the global stage, creating and maintaining a level playing field that encourages competition will attract more investment and ensure that Russian companies can successfully thrive at home and abroad.

It is crucial for Russia, just as it is for the United States, to maintain an open business

climate for capital, goods and services moving back and forth with its trade and investment partners.

Transparency and predictability in regulations and laws governing investment would send positive signals to potential partners in both our countries. Capital allocators look for secure, predictable markets, and they watch with concern where uncertainty exists.

In every country with an aspiration of attracting capital, business law should be applied consistently across companies and never selectively.

Building in predictability, transparency and reliability for investors will give Russia a competitive advantage.

While we are mindful of countries' interests in protecting so-called "strategic" aspects of their economies, policies which seek to cordon off broad segments of an economy are policies that carry risks of their own to a nation's economic strength. Russia's challenge will be to pursue "strategic sectors" while welcoming and encouraging foreign capital and avoiding protectionist policies.

Protectionism often has the unintended consequence of limiting access to capital, technology and know-how, and sheltering companies and entire industries from competition that sparks innovation and drives efficiency.

Protectionism doesn't protect jobs—the only thing that does is to compete, innovate and grow.

The United States and Russia should have a stronger partnership in areas such as energy, aerospace, transportation infrastructure, and high technology, to name some examples.

There have been tremendous technological advancements from which Russian companies could greatly benefit.

Russians and Americans, like the rest of the world's people, stand to benefit from stronger enforcement of intellectual property.

Around the globe we have seen that stolen intellectual property is not only an economic hazard, stifling innovation technological innovation, and discouraging works of culture in music and the arts, but also a health hazard.

The World Health Organization estimates that 10 percent of global medicine is counterfeit. Tough IP enforcement will protect Russian businesses and their ideas, like this country's resurgent film industry, and it will also protect Russian people.

Russia is doing better from an economic standpoint than it has ever done before. However, from my discussions with American business leaders, it is clear to me that there remains much unrealized opportunity.

This foregone potential is an opportunity cost upon Russia's consumers, entrepreneurs, producers and workers, even as it also represents unmet potential for Russia's suppliers, clients and customers.

With the maturity of our bilateral relations, we can afford to be frank and honest with one another about issues on which we disagree, in the economic realm as well as other areas.

It is important that we speak up when we find ways to unlock untapped potential for expanding and building upon our commercial and political relationships in ways that would serve the mutual interests of our two nations.

We have come too far in building a new foundation based on cooperation and mutual interests to turn back the clock. There is much work to be done, but the foundation has been laid for the future of U.S.-Russia relations to include economic growth, prosperity and opportunity for both our peoples.

I believe we are entering a new era of collaboration and prosperity for our two great

nations, and I thank AmCham Russia for your leadership and commitment to that future.

EARTH DAY

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I commemorate April 22—Earth Day 2007, a day set aside to celebrate gains we have made in improving the environment and to renew our commitment to protect our planet.

Earth Day was established by Senator Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin and was first celebrated in 1970. Senator Nelson firmly believed that education was the key to changing people's attitude about the environment. Since then, the Earth Day celebration has spread throughout the nation and to the rest of the world, with more and more people getting involved in efforts to clean and nurture the environment.

Despite Earth Day's popularity and the many programs that were created to improve the health of the planet, our world is still wrought with environmental problems. We still face many pressing issues such as global warming, protecting our coastal waters from over-fishing, and preserving America's most precious resource lands from the Alaskan Tongass Rainforest to the Redrock lands in Utah, to our own Chesapeake Bay.

Today, we face a serious and growing threat from global warming. Recently I told the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee about the immediate threats that global warming poses to Maryland. A significant part of Maryland is in low-lying areas that would be inundated if global temperatures keep rising. The National Flood Insurance Program has designated more than 12 percent of Maryland as a special flood hazard area, and an estimated 68,000 Maryland homes and buildings are located within a flood plain.

We are already seeing the effects. About a third of Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge on the Eastern Shore has been lost to sea level rise in the past 70 years. Smith Island, situated in the Chesapeake Bay, has lost 30 percent of its land to rising sea levels since 1850.

I have long supported a comprehensive, environmentally friendly energy policy that emphasizes increasing the availability and use of renewable energy, as well as promoting greater energy efficiency. Energy efficiency and renewable energy will reduce America's dangerous dependency on foreign oil while also dramatically reducing greenhouse gases.

Closer to home, we must continue to focus our efforts on restoring the Chesapeake Bay. The Bush administration's budget proposes drastic cuts to vital initiatives, including environmental education, funds to upgrade wastewater treatment plants, and several farm bill conservation programs that help farmers reduce nutrient runoff from entering the Bay. The budget

resolution that I helped draft and the Senate passed last month restores many of those dangerous cuts, but we still have much work ahead of us to assure that these critical Federal programs are fully funded.

Earth Day celebrations serve as important reminders that we cannot take our natural resources for granted. I urge all Americans to join together to protect, preserve, and restore the planet's natural treasures.

RURAL VETERANS HEALTH CARE IMPROVEMENT ACT

Ms. SNOWE. Madam President, I am a proud cosponsor of the Rural Veterans Health Care Improvement Act. Increasing access to veterans' health care facilities is essential to recognizing the realities that exist on the ground today, not only for veterans living in rural areas of my home State of Maine, but for the millions of veterans living in remote areas across our broad land. I applaud Senator SALAZAR for introducing this legislation at a time when so many of our veterans receive their health care through the VA and nearly half of today's active duty military servicemembers and tomorrow's veteran population list rural communities as their homes of record. Once again, I commend Senator SALAZAR for his continuing resoluteness and advocacy for our veterans.

Our legislation will work to expand upon the Veterans Benefits, Health Care, and Information Technology Act of 2006, which passed the Senate with my support at the end of the 109th Congress. Under that legislation, the Veterans Affairs Office of Rural Health was created in order to enhance access to VA medical facilities for veterans living in geographically remote areas.

First off, our newly proposed legislation tasks the Office of Rural Health with developing demonstration projects that would broaden the access to health care in rural areas by way of partnership between the Department of Veterans Affairs, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and the Department of Health and Human Services at access hospitals and community health centers. Second, this bill calls on the Office of Rural Health to establish between one and five Centers for Excellence to be based at VA medical centers to research ways to improve health care for rural veterans.

While increased outpatient care services in Maine and other underserved areas is a good step forward, it is only half of the equation. Veterans must also be able to get to the facilities, and while programs such as the Disabled American Veterans Transportation Network are to be commended, they simply cannot take care of all the transportation needs of all the patients who require VA health care.

Therefore, our legislation would task the Director of the Office of Rural Health to create a program that would provide grants of up to \$50,000 to veterans' service organizations and State veterans' service officers to assist veterans with innovative travel options to VA medical centers. Additionally, this legislation directly addresses the inequitable travel reimbursements currently provided to veterans for their travel expenses to VA medical facilities, an issue which I have brought up to the VA Secretary Jim Nicholson in the past. Under current law, veterans with a disability of 30 percent or more are entitled to 11 cents per mile, a rate that has not changed since 1977. In order to put an end to this unjust practice, our legislation would provide critical assistance to veterans traveling long distances to VA health care facilities by reimbursing them at the Federal rate of 48.5 cents per mile.

Establishing new facilities and transportation networks in Maine, as enumerated within the provisions of our legislation, would give rural veterans better access to the veteran health care system and deliver on the promise America has made to our men and women in uniform. But as rural veterans will tell you, there is a long way to go, and we must redouble our efforts to ensure that the VA secures the necessary resources for all rural regions across Maine and throughout the Nation.

Furthermore, I have nothing but the utmost respect for those brave Americans who served in uniform with honor, courage, and distinction. The obligation our Nation holds for its veterans is enormous, and it is an obligation that must be fulfilled every day, by invoking the indelible words of President John F. Kennedy, who stated:

As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.

Undoubtedly, these words still speak truth today, at a time when over 600,000 courageous men and women have returned from combat in both Iraq and Afghanistan. It is now up to Congress to do everything in its power to answer our veterans' call, to ensure that they receive the benefits that they rightly earned and rightly deserve. I strongly urge my colleagues to support this legislation. Our veterans deserve nothing less.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

CONGRATULATING THE SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM

- Mr. THUNE. Madam President, today I honor the South Dakota State University women's basketball team. In only their third season as Division I competitors, the Jackrabbits made it to the quarterfinals of the Women's