

Gonzales, and Ron Hollingshead, the Colorado Drug Investigators Association continues to unite into one organization all Colorado peace officers and individuals committed to protecting the State from all drug-related crime. This organization provides comprehensive counternarcotics training for all members in all aspects of drug enforcement and continues to educate and recommend legislation favorable to effective drug enforcement in Colorado. It recognizes the critical importance of information exchange and actively facilitates this communication between members of the association on the movements of drug violators and new and innovative techniques used by either the criminals or law enforcement.

In addition, the Colorado Drug Investigators Association, through cultural, legislative, political, fraternal, educational, charitable, welfare and social activities, fosters an atmosphere of cooperation and information sharing among all law enforcement in Colorado, private industry and the public. I believe the CDIA represents a valuable tool in the fight against drug-related crime and express my appreciation to all association members for their commitment to the safety and security for the citizens of Colorado.

#### LABOR DAY

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, Labor Day is our opportunity to celebrate the millions of American workers who have given, and continue to give, so much of themselves to make our Nation great. I am happy to have had the opportunity to celebrate this Labor Day in Racine, WV, with many old friends. Today, on the holiday especially devoted to the social and economic achievements of the American workforce. I would like to thank all of the miners, teachers, nurses, service technicians, firefighters, police, repairmen, and all those who dedicate their lives to making their communities and their country a better place. As summer is winding down and children are preparing to go back to school, we should all take a moment to appreciate what working Americans do for us.

Honest, hard-working people, with the core American values of faith and family, are what make West Virginia such a wonderful place to live and call home. Miners work long shifts, miles under the ground, often in tight spaces with frigid water up to their knees, to get the coal that provides 50 percent of our Nation's electricity. Yet people rarely think of that when they flip on the light switch. Teachers spend much of their own personal time preparing lesson plans and finding creative ways to teach our next generation. They always go above and beyond the call of duty for their students. Those in public service work day in and day out to get Social Security checks processed and in the mail on time, to manage tax returns, or to deliver basic health services to our citizens. I applaud each and every one of these Americans.

I am glad Congress succeeded, finally, this year in raising the minimum wage to \$6.55, to help our working families. Increasing the minimum wage so it is a living wage is something I have advocated since 1998, and now all of our workers will get the increase they need and deserve to help make ends meet in this struggling economy. This Labor Day I am especially aware of the need to change the direction of our country and that has to start with turning around our economy. It is unfair for hard-working Americans to have to deal with stagnant wages and rising costs for gas, food, and health care with no help. The minimum wage will continue to rise until it reaches \$7.25 in 2009.

These workers are the heart and soul of West Virginia. Opportunities do not come easily to them. They work hard every day to get the things they need for their families—gas, school supplies, and maybe new sneakers or a pair of jeans for the next school year. Before the rise of unions, we did not enjoy a 40-hour work week, the benefits of Social Security, or the right to organize. But West Virginians always fought for the American dream. They have a high regard for quality and strive for excellence in everything that they do. In an unfortunate Forbes survey, West Virginia was listed as one of the least desirable states in which to do business. But that is only because some companies do not yet know the men and women that make up West Virginia's workforce; they do not realize that West Virginia's future and potential is about more than just coal. They do not see the small business owners, the nurses and doctors, the educators, the entrepreneurs, the manufacturers, and artists who keep our State moving and make it so special. They must not have heard that companies from all over the world such as DuPont, Union Carbide, and Phone Poulenc have put plants in West Virginia and tapped into our dedicated work force. Northrop Grumman, MPL Corporation, Orrick, Herrington, and Sutcliffe, that's the real West Virginia—with a bright future fueled by all its abundant resources, the most precious of which are the men and women of our workforce. Our Toyota plant is the fastest growing plant in the history of Toyota Motor Company. It has been named the plant with the most productive workers in all of North America 5 years in a row. This is a testament to West Virginia employees' unmatched work ethic.

As we celebrate Labor Day, we need to remember that it is the commitment and diligence of our workers that makes us great. We as West Virginians are fighters, always have been, always will be, but even fighters need a day off. West Virginians have earned a day of rest.

#### TRIBUTE TO BRENDAN O'CONNOR

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, as we continue to debate national strategy

and the way ahead in Iraq and Afghanistan, there is one thing that is not debatable, and that is the courage and valor of our troops. Today, I wish to honor one of those brave troops, MSgt Brendan O'Connor, a medic in the Special Forces of the U.S. Army.

Master Sergeant O'Connor distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism in action during a fierce battle in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, when his small detachment engaged an estimated 200 Taliban fighters on June 24, 2006. For his heroism, Master Sergeant O'Connor, who held the rank of sergeant first class at the time of the battle, was honored with the Nation's second highest award for valor, the Distinguished Service Cross.

After awarding the Distinguished Service Cross to Brendan, ADM Eric Olson, the head of U.S. Special Operations Command, hailed the contributions of the Army's Special Forces and said, "Master Sergeant Brendan O'Connor exemplifies the spirit of these warriors."

Leading a quick reaction force during a mission against Taliban leaders, Master Sergeant O'Connor and his team found themselves outnumbered and surrounded by hundreds of Taliban fighters in one of the most hotly contested areas of Afghanistan. After calmly maneuvering his force through enemy Taliban positions, Master Sergeant O'Connor crawled over 150 yards alone through enemy machine-gun fire across an open field to rescue two wounded comrades. Rallying and motivating his severely outnumbered team throughout a day-long battle, he saved the lives of 21 soldiers and prevented his detachment's destruction while inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy.

The heroism of Brendan O'Connor and his team in Afghanistan received national media attention on the CBS News program "60 Minutes," which aired a segment on April 20 of this year, "Ambush in Afghanistan."

Brendan O'Connor comes from a long and distinguished family history of military service to our Nation, with deep roots in the U.S. Army and at West Point. Brendan's father, LTC Mortimer O'Connor, who graduated from West Point in 1953, was killed in action in Vietnam in 1968 while leading men into battle as commander of the 1st Battalion, 2nd Infantry, in the famed "Big Red One," the oldest continuously serving division in the U.S. Army.

A true "warrior-poet", Mort O'Connor was not only decorated several times for valor on the battlefield, but taught English at West Point and earned a graduate degree in English literature from the University of Pennsylvania. A remembrance of Mort O'Connor in a March 1978 West Point Alumni publication recalled his spirit on the athletic fields as a young cadet:

When victorious he would exultantly claim to be descended from ancient Irish warrior kings. And it may be true, for he had in him a wild romanticism, a tragic lilt of heart, which only the Irish have.

Brendan O'Connor's grandfather, and Mort O'Connor's father, was BG William "Bill" O'Connor, a graduate of West Point in 1924. Bill O'Connor served in Europe in World War II, including in the Battle of the Bulge.

And three of Brendan's great-uncles followed their brother Bill to West Point—Richard O'Connor in the Class of 1926, George Brendan O'Connor in the Class of 1936, and Roderic O'Connor in the Class of 1941.

Today, the O'Connor family tradition of military service continues with the next generation. Attending his Distinguished Service Cross award ceremony on April 30th were two of Brendan's cousins, Brian O'Connor, who is now at the Air Force Academy, and Rory O'Connor, who is now at West Point.

We are grateful to families such as the O'Connors, who for generations have answered the Nation's call and worn the uniform with such courage and distinction. There is no finer example of this tradition than MSgt Brendan O'Connor and his heroic action in Afghanistan. I ask unanimous consent to have the full text of his Distinguished Service Cross citation, as well as the narrative that accompanies the award, printed in the RECORD.

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

**CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS TO SERGEANT FIRST CLASS BRENDAN W. O'CONNOR**

For extraordinary heroism in combat as the senior Medical Sergeant for Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha-765 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Panjwai District, Kandahar Province, Afghanistan. On 24 June 2006, during Operation Kaika, Sergeant O'Connor led a quick reaction force to reinforce a surrounded patrol and to rescue two wounded comrades. He maneuvered his force through Taliban positions and crawled alone, under enemy machinegun fire to reach the wounded soldiers. He provided medical care, while exposed to heavy volumes of Taliban fire, then carried one of the wounded 150 meters across open ground to an area of temporary cover. He climbed over a wall three times, in plain view of the enemy, to assist the wounded soldiers to cover while bullets pounded the structure around him. Sergeant O'Connor assumed duties as the detachment operations Sergeant and led the consolidation of three friendly elements, each surrounded, isolated, and receiving fire from all directions. His remarkable actions are in keeping with the highest traditions of military heroism and reflect distinct credit upon himself, the Combined Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan, Special Operations Command-Central, and the United States Army.

**NARRATIVE TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS TO SERGEANT FIRST CLASS BRENDAN W. O'CONNOR**

Sergeant First Class Brendan W. O'Connor, United States Army, distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism in action as the Senior Medical Sergeant for Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha-765 in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. On 24 June 2006, while conducting Operation KAIKA, a cordon and search mission to capture or kill Taliban leadership in Pashmul, Panjwai District, Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, the detachment became engaged

with an estimated 200 Taliban fighters. MSG Thomas Maholic led a patrol from the detachment's perimeter to secure a compound situated on key terrain. As the assault began, a large Taliban force counterattacked, flooded the battlefield, and immediately separated the assault element from SSG Matthew Binney's support by fire position, creating two distinct detachment elements outside the perimeter, each isolated, surrounded, and receiving enemy fire from all directions. SSG Binney and SGT Joseph Feurst were seriously wounded at the support by fire position. SFC O'Connor volunteered to lead a quick reaction force to reinforce MSG Maholic in the compound, and recover the two wounded soldiers. SFC O'Connor departed the detachment's perimeter under heavy enemy fire, with SFC Mishra, eight Afghan soldiers and an interpreter. By employing fire and maneuver, SFC O'Connor destroyed an enemy machinegun position, broke out from the encircled patrol base, and evaded enemy fighters that were now swarming toward the compound. After link-up with MSG Maholic, SFC O'Connor was directed toward the support-by-fire position. He led his small relief force along a wall that provided cover from the heavy volume of machinegun and rocket-propelled grenade fire, as they evaded attackers and broke out from the encircled compound. At the end of the wall, he encountered an open field, 80 meters across to a small building, which was the next available covered position. The flat field was covered by enemy grazing fire from three directions. He established a support-by-fire position to suppress enemy machinegun fire and began to crawl, alone, across the field, leaving a third isolated element amid the chaos of the battlefield. Afghan soldiers attempted to follow him but turned back under the extraordinary volume of fire. As bullets impacted all around him and cut the grass directly over his body, he quickly realized that his cumbersome load was creating too large a target for the enemy. He returned to the cover of the wall and removed his body armor and assault pack. Informed that Apache gunships were en route to strafe the area he was attempting to crawl through, SFC O'Connor attached an orange panel to his back in order to mark himself as a friendly element to the pilots. Without hesitation he immediately resumed crawling the 80 meters across the field, in plain sight of the enemy, toward his two wounded comrades. He moved slowly, just inches below the enemy fire, miraculously escaping injury from hundreds of Taliban machinegun rounds. He jumped over a wall into a vineyard and moved forward along mounds of dirt, with bullets impacting all around him each time he exposed himself. He continued moving alone, for 150 meters, yelling for SSG Binney. Once again, he evaded enemy fighters that were as near as 3 meters, and were firing over a wall and shouting insults and threats at the surrounded position, and made contact with his wounded teammates. SFC O'Connor fought with his personal weapon, performed life-saving measures on the two wounded soldiers in the open, exposed to enemy fire, shielding the casualties from debris and shrapnel with his own body, and gave instructions to begin the evacuation. As an Afghan soldier assisted SSG Binney, SFC O'Connor picked up SGT Feurst and began carrying him, unassisted, back to the cover of the small building 150 meters away. He dodged rocket-propelled grenade and machinegun fire, while methodically maneuvering from one covered position to another, without the benefit of his protective body armor, carrying the unconscious SGT Feurst. He climbed over a two meter high wall, into the building, as bullets pounded the wall all around him. The fright-

ened Afghan soldiers were unable to assist in lifting SGT Feurst over the wall, which required SFC O'Connor to climb back over the wall in the face of heavy, accurate, enemy fire. He lifted and pushed SGT Feurst over the wall, assisted SSG Binney over by offering his own body as step, and climbed over a third time himself, while a storm of bullets began disintegrating the structure around him. As Apache gunships suppressed the enemy, SFC O'Connor led the group from the surrounded building, while still under fire, back toward the quick reaction force. He then led his entire force back toward MSG Maholic's compound. He engaged enemy fighters and broke through to link up with the last of the isolated elements. Inside the compound, he learned that MSG Maholic had been killed. SFC O'Connor assumed duties as Detachment Operations Sergeant and continued coordinating the defense of the compound against renewed Taliban attacks. He supervised all medical treatment of the casualties, coordinated the medical evacuation flight and organized the movement of ammunition from the resupply aircraft. After nightfall, under SFC O'Connor's leadership, the group broke out once again from their isolated location and moved undetected through Taliban positions to reunite all friendly elements at the detachment's patrol base. SFC O'Connor's extraordinary actions, performed at tremendous risk of life, successfully rescued two wounded comrades, saved the lives of 21 soldiers, and prevented his detachment's destruction. He consolidated four friendly elements, each isolated and surrounded by an aggressive, numerically superior, and well armed enemy force during the confusion of combat, and brought all soldiers to safety. The heroic accomplishments of Sergeant First Class Brendan W. O'Connor reflect great credit upon himself, the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan, Special Operations Command-Central, and the United States Army.

### TRIBUTE TO LINDA LONG

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I wish to recognize a former staffer, Linda K. Long, for her wonderful contributions to my office and to the State of Tennessee.

Linda began her career with Senator Fred Thompson in 1995 and joined my staff on January 21, 2003, where she soon distinguished herself as one of the best constituent services representatives in the State of Tennessee.

Linda was a wealth of knowledge when it came to working with constituents and their problems. Although she took a very "no nonsense" approach to her job, she was very compassionate and always made time to listen to constituents and console them even if she could not help them with their issue.

Linda is loved and respected by people throughout west Tennessee. In fact, she served two terms on the Madison County Commission from 1994 to 2002. There is no doubt that Linda went above and beyond to help all constituents. She was tough, but fair, and always had time for anyone who asked for assistance through my office. Linda retired on February 29, 2008, and we miss her already.