

or if you prefer I wait for another person to come to the floor. I can do that or I can do it now.

I will withhold. I ask unanimous consent that as soon as the leader is finished, I be recognized again to make my motion.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Republican leader is recognized.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Texas.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

CAPTAIN ERIC D. TERHUNE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise to pay tribute to one of our bravest warriors who gave his life to defend us. U.S. Marine Corps CPT Eric D. Terhune of Lexington, KY, was conducting a security patrol in the Farah Province of Afghanistan on June 19, 2008, when he was killed by enemy small-arms fire. He was 34 years old.

For his heroism in service, Captain Terhune received several awards, medals and decorations, including the Strike/Flight Air Medal, the Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal, two National Defense Service Medals and the Armed Forces Service Medal.

Those who knew Captain Terhune would describe him as a man committed to serving his country and proud to wear the uniform. In fact, as his uncle, David Terhune, puts it, since Eric was born in a Naval hospital in Quantico, VA, where his father was on active duty, "Eric was born a Marine."

Eric was also committed to his faith. When family members expressed worry about his dangerous job, he told them, "If I live, it's wonderful. But if I die, it's absent from the body and present with the Lord."

Eric was raised in Lexington, attended Tates Creek Presbyteria Church and studied at Wheaton Academy in Wheaton, IL. As a kid he was active in everything from Cub Scouting and Boy Scouting to soccer and Little League baseball.

Eric was also a competitive swimmer who loved to hunt and scuba dive. As a marine, he would dive to collect shells and sharks' teeth in the many places the Corps sent him.

Once on a sail boat trip with his family, when it was Eric's turn to do the dishes after dinner, he came up with a creative cleaning method—he threw them in the ocean, put on his scuba gear, and retrieved the dishes from the water.

Upon high school graduation, Eric enlisted in the same branch his father and grandfather had once served in, the Marine Corps. After 4 years as a non-commissioned officer and a reconnaissance sharpshooter, Eric dreamt of becoming a Naval aviator like his dad.

This required a college degree. So with some encouragement from his grandparents, Daniel and Joy Terhune, he used his GI bill benefits to enroll at Morehead State University.

At Morehead, Eric made the honor roll and competed on the varsity rifle team. "There [was] no doubt . . . when Eric turned in his targets from a rifle match, who pulled the trigger," his uncle David says. "He was an expert sharpshooter."

Upon graduation, Eric received his commission as a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps. He then spent a year at Naval Air Station Pensacola and earned his coveted wings of gold.

Eric flew the CH-53 Sea Stallion helicopter during his first tour in Iraq. His friends in the Corps nicknamed him "D-Ring," after the D-ring located overhead in the helicopters he flew to be pulled in case of emergency.

His fellow marines spoke highly of Eric. His commanding officer, LTC Richard D. Hall, says,

"D-Ring," as we all affectionately called him, and [as] was his aviator's call-sign, was a Marine that everyone liked; and I mean everybody. He had a gracious and kind personality that was truly infectious; so much so, that I too became infected by his wonderful persona.

MAJ Darby Wiler was Eric's staff platoon commander at The Basic School, where newly commissioned marine officers are sent for weapons, tactical, and leadership training. Major Wiler says, "Eric's work ethic was unparalleled amongst his peers."

"Even in the midst of the most unpleasant circumstances that The Basic School had to offer, he was always upbeat, motivated, and ready to go," the major adds.

Eric volunteered for a second tour of Iraq, which he completed last November. When his ship, the U.S.S. *Denver*, arrived in Pearl Harbor, he was allowed to give one family member the honor of joining him and his crew for the final leg of the voyage home to San Diego. Eric chose his grandfather.

"That trip halfway across the Pacific Ocean together, eating together in the ward room, watching ships operations from the bridge, showing his grandfather how to shoot an M-16, how to shoot a .50 Caliber machine gun . . . this was the greatest of bonding experiences for both of them," says Eric's uncle David.

"Eric has told me many times what a blast it was to share those days with Dad. For Dad, it was an indescribable joy to see his grandson performing as a Marine and standing tall as a Christian officer."

After his two tours in Iraq, Eric expected to return to training to qualify as a helicopter pilot. But then he learned the Marine Corps was short of forward air controllers—an important position, responsible for directing other aircraft in close air support and requiring substantial experience.

"He had a lot of conversations with his dad—'What do you think about this Afghanistan thing?'" David recalls. "His dad laid out the pros and cons, and Eric said, 'Look, if you're in the Marine Corps, you don't duck the fight.'"

Eric volunteered and was deployed to Afghanistan in April of this year with the 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force, based out of Twentynine Palms, CA.

"We have heard numerous reports of him volunteering to take the place of some of his friends who had a wife and children," David says.

Eric brought the same work ethic he carried with him throughout his career to Afghanistan. CPT Carlos R. Cuevas who served alongside Eric in Afghanistan, remembers when he first met Eric.

"I believe the first thing he asked me was, 'Hey, Captain Cuevas, can you tell me where the armory is and who I need to talk to get my weapon?'" the captain remembers. "As a fellow captain and Marine . . . I can tell you his professionalism and enthusiasm for his job was readily apparent," the captain says.

"He loved being a pilot, a Marine, and most of all serving alongside his fellow Marines."

Eric couldn't write or call his family often from Afghanistan, but they were always happy when he did. On June 16 he sent what would be his final e-mail.

"He wrote and addressed each of his cousins by name, encouraging them, affirming them, giving advice to them," says David. "And [he] expressed his longing to join us at our next family gathering."

Three days after that e-mail, Mr. President, Eric was killed. And although nothing we say here today can alleviate the pain of his family, I know my colleagues join me in expressing our deepest sympathies to them for their tragic loss.

We are thinking of Eric's father and stepmother Paul and Carleen Terhune; his grandparents Daniel and Joy Terhune; his uncle and aunt David and Dotti Terhune; many beloved family members, including Dr. and Mrs. Oliver Jeromin, Dr. and Mrs. Richard Colquitt, David W. Terhune, Jr., Rebecca Joy Terhune, Bea Hansgen, and many others.

I will leave the final words to Eric's uncle David, who describes his nephew this way. Eric "was, in the best sense of the word, an officer and a gentleman and a patriot," David says. "I always admired his strength and his power, but he was also gentle at the same time."

Mr. President, this U.S. Senate honors CPT Eric D. Terhune as an officer, a gentleman, and a patriot. We are grateful for his years of service to our Nation and his great sacrifice. And we send our profound thanks to the Terhune family for giving their country this heroic marine. It is only by men such as he that every American can stand tall and free.

STAFF SERGEANT CHRISTOPHER N. HAMLIN

Mr. President, I rise to also honor another fallen member of our Armed Forces. This Nation is honored to have the finest arsenal of freedom in the

world in our Armed Forces. Today I pay tribute to one of those brave warriors, SSG Christopher N. Hamlin of London, KY.

On May 4, 2007, Staff Sergeant Hamlin was tragically killed after an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle as he was conducting combat operations in Baghdad. A soldier since 2001, who had deployed to Afghanistan, Kosovo, and on multiple tours to Iraq, he was 24 years old.

For his heroism during service, Staff Sergeant Hamlin received several awards, medals, and decorations, including the National Defense Service Medal, the Army Achievement Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, the Purple Heart, and the Bronze Star Medal.

Chris packed a lot of life into his too short 24 years. Friends and family members remember his dedication to the uniform, his love of eating crab legs, and his enjoyment watching NASCAR. He was also a writer and sometimes a poet, who would send his work to friends back home from Iraq.

"Make every day count!" Chris once wrote. "Appreciate every moment and take from it everything that you possibly can, for you may never be able to experience it again."

Those words, and others, from Chris's pen were remembered at his funeral service in London.

"He never quit at anything," says his mother, Autumn Hamlin. "He said that he wanted to travel the world and not watch it on television. He wanted to be right there."

Chris grew up in Laurel County, KY, and liked hunting and fishing. At North Laurel High School, he was on the basketball, cross country and track teams and active in Junior ROTC, and he showed his eagerness to help others at a young age.

"He'd be hanging around, waiting for basketball practice to start and he'd help the janitor clean the school," says CDR Kenneth Vanourney, his ROTC instructor.

"In basic training, he did a lot to help the other soldiers complete their training," adds Chris's stepfather, Otis Johnson. "He was already physically fit and he would finish the course early and go back to encourage the others to complete [it]."

Chris graduated from high school in 2001 and enlisted in the Army soon after, heading to Fort Benning, GA, for basic training. Eventually, Chris trained as a sniper and took first place in his training class while earning a near-perfect shooting score.

When Chris's enlistment was up, he reenlisted. The excellence he brought to his job was rewarded as he rapidly advanced in rank.

"In my 30 years in the Army, there have only been a handful of infantrymen reach noncommissioned officer in five years or less," says BG Joe Orr, who spoke at Chris's funeral service.

The Brigadier General adds:

I have met very few five-year soldiers who have been on as many deployments as Chris.

He believed in what he was doing. Not only serving his Nation, but serving the people of Afghanistan and Iraq. He will live on in our Army for years and years.

Chris's Army experience will also live on in the house of his grandmother, Zola Hamlin. Chris often sent her mementoes of his experiences around the world, including currency from the Holy Land, a tiny model of the Eiffel Tower, and a plastic bottle of sand from Normandy Beach with a picture of Chris standing on the beach taped to the front. "We've always been real close," Zola said.

Chris's stepfather Otis said Chris talked to him about perhaps attending the University of Kentucky after returning home. He was considering a career in law enforcement or as a corrections officer.

In Iraq, Commander Vanourney said Chris's caring nature came through as he made an effort to learn the names of the children who gathered around the American troops. He told me: "I think we're making a difference," the commander recalls.

Our sympathies go out to the many loved ones that Chris leaves behind today as I share his story with my fellow Senators. We are thinking of his mother, Autumn Eve Hamlin; his father, Ronnie Veach; his stepfather, Otis Johnson; his grandparents, Zola Lewis Hamlin and Thurman Jerome Hamlin; his aunt, April Hamlin Young; his uncle, John Hamlin; his five half sisters, and many other beloved friends and family members. Chris was predeceased by his aunt, Dovey Lewis Hollins.

In a letter that Chris sent home to his family from Iraq with advice for the people he missed back home, Chris wrote:

Everyone dies . . . but not everyone lives. Life may not always be the party we hoped for, but for the while we are here, we should dance. Right now I'm in Baghdad patrolling the streets day and night, and I'm proud of my job.

This Senate is also proud of the job SSG Christopher N. Hamlin did. We honor his service and his great sacrifice, and we extend to the Hamlin family the thanks of a grateful nation for lending their country this fine patriot and soldier.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Texas is recognized.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST— H.R. 6842

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 6842, a bill to restore second amendment rights in the District of Columbia. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed, and a motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

This is the bill that was passed by the House last week by an over-

whelming margin, and I move my unanimous consent request.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, reserving the right to object.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois is recognized.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this is an attempt to write the DC gun laws and to take away the authority of the elected government of the District of Columbia to write its own laws relative to firearms consistent with the new Supreme Court decision. If the Senator from Texas were making such a proposal for the city of Dallas or the city of Houston or the city of San Antonio, it would have some credibility because that is her State. But to make this request that we would overrule the power of the elected government of DC to implement the Supreme Court decision is inappropriate.

On behalf of Senators who have signed a public letter in opposition to the bill that passed the House, Senators LAUTENBERG, FEINSTEIN, MENENDEZ, MIKULSKI, AKAKA, JACK REED, TED KENNEDY, JOHN KERRY, CHRIS DODD, HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON, BEN CARDIN, and myself, I object.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, let me just respond by saying that it is the prerogative of Congress to make laws that are directly appropriate for the District of Columbia. I have been on the DC Appropriations Subcommittee; I actually was chairman when Senator DURBIN was ranking member, so he knows well that we pass laws for the District of Columbia because it is the District of Columbia, and we all appropriate money for the city to function. We have introduced this bill because the District of Columbia failed to protect the second amendment rights of the citizens of the city over which Congress has the ultimate responsibility.

It is entirely within the role of Congress to address an issue where a city is not protecting the constitutional rights of its constituents, over which the Congress has the authority. It would not be the same in the city of Chicago or the city of Dallas or other cities in our country. The District of Columbia is a unique city in that it is overseen by Congress. Congress has acted in the past over many issues where the District has fallen short, and I would say Senator DURBIN and I have done quite a bit to strengthen the government of the District of Columbia and make it more financially responsible.

So I am disappointed that the Senator has objected. I have submitted for the RECORD a letter to Senator REID from 47 of our Members who asked Senator REID to let this bill come forward because, in fact, the District of Columbia acted—and I waited. I did not pursue this until the District of Columbia City Council acted because I hoped