

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

CORPORAL JOSEPH M. HERNANDEZ

Mr. BAYH. Mr. President, I rise today with a heavy heart to honor the life of CPL Joseph M. Hernandez from Hammond, IN. Joseph was 24 years old when he lost his life on January 9, 2009, from injuries sustained from a roadside bomb attack in Jaldak, Afghanistan. He was a member of the 1st Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment of Hohenfels, Germany.

Today, I join Joseph's family and friends in mourning his death. Joseph will forever be remembered as a loving husband, father, brother, son, and friend to many. Joseph is survived by his wife, Alison; his sons, Jacob and Noah; his brothers, Jesse and Jason; his parents, Elva and Jessie; and a host of other friends and relatives.

Joseph joined the Army in 2005 and had been stationed in Afghanistan for 1 month. Prior to entering the service, Joseph graduated from Mount Carmel High School in Chicago, attended the College of the Holy Cross and had entered the mechanical engineering and biology programs at Purdue University in West Lafayette, IN. Joseph was a man of great faith and an active member of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church of Hammond, where he served as an altar boy and was a member of the choir. Joseph had many passions in life: he was a volunteer at the local animal humane society, and his interests ranged from boxing to model airplanes and vintage cars. Above all, Joseph's greatest passion was his family, who he hoped to take to a Chicago Cubs game at the end of his deployment.

While we struggle to express our sorrow over this loss, we can take pride in the example Joseph set as both a soldier and a father. Today and always, he will be remembered by family, friends and fellow Hoosiers as a true American hero, and we cherish the legacy of his service and his life.

It is my sad duty to enter the name of Joseph M. Hernandez in the RECORD of the U.S. Senate for his service to this country and for his profound commitment to freedom, democracy and peace. I pray that Joseph's family can find comfort in the words of the prophet Isaiah who said, "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces."

May God grant strength and peace to those who mourn, and may God be with all of you, as I know He is with Joseph.

RURAL LAW ENFORCEMENT
ASSISTANCE ACT OF 2009

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I rise today to express my support as a cosponsor of S. 150, the Rural Law Enforcement Assistance Act of 2009, introduced by my colleague on the Senate Judiciary Committee, Senator LEAHY. As our Nation copes with economic turbulence, we here in Washington are faced with tough decisions regarding

the Federal budget. Back in our home States, State and local legislators are facing their own tough decisions and are examining drastic cuts to budgets that could impact law enforcement services provided to citizens. These cuts are leaving law enforcement administrators wrestling to do more with less. Unfortunately, we are finding out that these administrators are forced with the only choice of serving their public with fewer officers, less money for training and less money for tools and resources for the more than 800,000 men and women who keep our citizens safe from crime. I fear we have only seen the tip of the iceberg that is our present economic state. Large cities and small towns are seeing the possibility of not filling vacant law enforcement officer positions due to the recent budget crisis. In my home State of Utah, with the exception of a few law enforcement agencies, most of the departments patrol rural jurisdictions. Some of the hardest hit areas by this economic downturn are rural communities. Police agencies in these communities often lose out to larger metropolitan areas for consideration of justice assistance grants. Under the present form of the Department of Justice's Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program, the sheriff's departments and police departments in Utah have seen a 65-percent decrease in justice assistance grant funding received from this program. These areas have their own challenges—issues such as illicit drug use that are not just unique to cities but transcend city limits and have manifested themselves in rural communities in much the same way they do in urban settings.

Press reports in the preceding weeks have been very grim to say the least. Joblessness is on the rise. The combination of revenue losses and budget shortfalls will see an increased demand for services on the part of these rural agencies. These issues will make it challenging to continue to meet the demands of normal calls for service. According to the chiefs and sheriffs in Utah, because of this economic downturn, the cost of everything is going up, including crime.

If passed, the Rural Law Enforcement Assistance Act would level the playing field by reauthorizing the rural law enforcement assistance grant under the Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program. This reauthorization will make agencies located in rural States and populous States with rural areas candidates for this grant assistance. These grants can be used to hire officers, pay for officer training, crime prevention programs, and victim assistance programs. For example, in the coming fiscal year some Utah agencies may not be able to purchase essential items and tools like rape-investigation kits which are critical in the gathering of physical evidence after a victim has been assaulted. Grants awarded under the Rural Law Enforcement Assistance Act

could be used to purchase these kits and other critical tools needed for investigations. As a longtime advocate for victims' rights, I find this troubling that there might be agencies in this country that may not have the necessary budget to purchase essential tools needed to investigate these heinous crimes.

For decades criminologists and economists have debated the link between crime and the economy. Some researchers have concluded that there is a ripple effect from the economy and it radiates out and displays itself in the form of increased calls for service, increased domestic violence, and increased property crimes. Presently, we do not have current crime statistics for 2008, but I will use a less scientific method: it is called listening to the professionals who each and every day answer the calls for police services in these rural areas. They tell me that they are seeing an increase in burglaries, domestic violence, emergency mental health committals, and more calls for service. Some agencies are down in personnel numbers. However, these law enforcement professionals are forging ahead doing the very best they can with whatever means they have. They are not looking at these grants as a free pass to purchase frivolous big-ticket items that have little to do with their agency's mission. These administrators tell me they are hopeful this act will pass so that they can continue to serve the rural communities who have come to expect the most basic of police services as a right guaranteed by the Constitution in "ensuring domestic tranquility."

My colleagues in this Chamber have taken great pains to examine and discuss a way to lead our country out of this crisis and get our economy moving again. We should be scrutinizing Government spending in this tight economy. But I cannot think of a better form of economic stimulus than making justice assistance grants available to rural communities and metropolitan areas alike. However, rural agencies currently find themselves on the outside looking in under the present JAG formula. The reauthorization of the Rural Law Enforcement Assistance Act would give rural agencies a better opportunity at receiving this grant assistance.

In closing, I quote the Greek philosopher Plato who said the following about communities: "The community which has neither poverty nor riches will always have the noblest principles."

This Nation is one large framework of communities and was founded on some of the noblest principles ever recorded in history. Some of our citizens choose a city lifestyle, and some have selected a rural small town life. Crime does not distinguish between urban and rural. The more than 800,000 men and women who make up the law enforcement community that keep our streets

safe in metropolitan cities and Main Street USA know this firsthand. One of the viscous subplots of this economic turmoil is that crime and the need for police services undoubtedly will increase. The small town rural police department may be the only Government entity that answers the phone in the middle of the night when a citizen has just lost a job and is contemplating suicide. A sheriff's deputy or police officer dispatched to the scene might be the only direct intervention that this citizen has with a government service. If there are not enough deputies or officers to go around, the response to this cry for help may be delayed or, worse yet, might not get there in time. When you reframe this issue relative to the scenario that I just laid out, it troubles me deeply and impresses upon me just how much our rural law enforcement community needs this reauthorization.

REMEMBERING HARRY ROBERTS

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, today I wish to honor the life of a true Wyoming gentleman, a public servant, a veteran, a father to five girls, and—I am privileged to say—a friend.

Kearsley Harrison Roberts, better known to us as Harry Roberts of Kaycee, WY, died today, January 28, 2009, in Vero Beach, FL.

Harry Roberts was really a renaissance man, the kind of which are the lore of Western legends.

He was a Yale-educated sheep rancher, a Navy veteran of “the greatest generation,” an expert in public education—successfully elected statewide as Superintendent of Wyoming’s public schools, a leader in Wyoming economic policy, and most of all he was a caring father.

I think we can imagine what brought him the most joy his family and of course, his five spirited daughters Mandy, Joan, Sheila, Ginny, and Susan.

Harry led quite a ranch crew. Picture five girls growing up on the Wyoming wildlands in the same area where Butch Cassidy and the Hole in the Wall Gang stowed rustled livestock and outran the law.

This was north central Wyoming, Barnum, a small community near Kaycee where to this day more rodeo cowboys than any one town in the West call home.

They call this part of Johnson County, WY, Outlaw Country, and after an eastern education, it inspired one western soul to work a sheep ranch for the love of the Wyoming way of life.

Harry Roberts found home and heart on this ranch, and today, I like to think of him back on his range, with the great western sky warming his big, signature smile.

Wyoming’s Harry Roberts was the genuine Wyoming gentleman.

He was also the proud father-in-law to this body’s beloved former colleague, U.S. Senator Craig Thomas. Harry’s daughter Susan Roberts Thom-

as married Craig Thomas and the two were inseparable in life.

Susan, I speak for so many here in this Chamber and for all of Wyoming when I say our thoughts and prayers are with you today and with your entire family.

We grieve, as we did for Craig, the natural end of a purposeful life.

We recall a man who served his State, his country, and his family selflessly.

And we say, we remember Harry, as we do Craig, because of what he did and how he did it always with distinction and with honor.

Harry is and always will be a proud and patriotic member of the “greatest generation.”

In fact he was what sailors call a “plank owner.”

At that time, a “plank owner” referred to an individual who was a member of the crew of a ship when that ship was placed in commission. As part of the vessel decommissioning and disposal process, the Navy formerly removed a small portion of the deck as a traditional reminder of the time when “wooden walls and iron men” were a key part of the Navy.

In Harry’s case, it was a boat—a submarine in fact.

After his military service Harry worked and lived in Wyoming, eventually running for superintendent of Public Instruction in 1967. Harry was known as a reformer of course and someone who cared deeply for Wyoming children.

In 1970, in one of the closest races in Wyoming’s history, Harry lost a race for Wyoming’s lone U.S. House race losing by only 608 votes to Teno Roncalio.

Harry was a leader in our State on issues that went well beyond education. He served as director of the Wyoming Heritage Foundation and counted many successes during an especially exciting and challenging time in our State’s history.

It was at the Heritage Foundation that my wife, then Bobbi Brown, first met Harry and learned so much under his guidance for several years.

Harry personified the Wyoming Heritage Foundation’s mission for a strong, prosperous, diverse and sustained economy for the citizens of Wyoming. His goals and initiative are felt to this day.

More recently after his retirement, he returned to Washington often to visit his daughter Susan and to see his son-in-law Craig Thomas.

Susan became a teacher of course, following in the footsteps of her father who held the profession so highly.

It was in May of 2004 that Senator Thomas hosted a very special reception along with Vice President Cheney here in Washington.

Craig invited Harry and his fellow “plank owners” to be recognized along with the dedication of the National World War II Memorial on the National Mall.

It was a special occasion to acknowledge and pay tribute to the duty, sacrifices, and valor of all the members of the Armed Forces of the United States who served in World War II.

And it was also for Harry and his fellow sailors.

I have talked to several folks who were there that day. I know the pride that Susan and Craig felt for their father, for his service, and for his example.

I will end now with the Navy Hymn, a song and a benediction that Harry would have heard often at sea in service to our country. I will recite the first and last verse.

Eternal Father, Strong to save,
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
Who bid’st the mighty Ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep;
O hear us when we cry to thee,
for those in peril on the sea.
O Trinity of love and power!
Our brethren shield in danger’s hour;
From rock and tempest, fire and foe,
Protect them where-so-ever they go;
Thus evermore shall rise to Thee,
Glad hymns of praise from land and sea.

REMEMBERING THE SHURRAB FAMILY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, we have all seen the photographs of houses, schools and other civilian infrastructure destroyed in Gaza, and the reports of civilian deaths, including over 400 children, and many thousands more injured. Behind each of these statistics is a story of a family tragedy. I want to take this opportunity to talk about one that has touched the lives of Vermonters, and which should cause each of us deep concern.

Amer Shurrab is a recent graduate of Middlebury College, which is located not very far from my home in Vermont. Amer is also a Palestinian, whose family was living in Gaza during the recent Israeli invasion. His father, Muhammed Kassab Shurrah, is a farmer who grows fruits and vegetables on a small plot of land.

On January 16, Amer’s father and brothers were returning home with provisions from their farm during the 3-hour humanitarian cease-fire that was in effect that day. Although there was apparently no indication that the route was unsafe for a civilian vehicle carrying civilian passengers, Israeli soldiers fired from a civilian house at their car as it passed for reasons that remain unknown. In a panic, Amer’s brother, Kassab, already wounded, got out of the vehicle and was shot a total of 18 times and died a short distance away. Israeli bullets also hit Amer’s father and younger brother Ibrahim, who were unable to leave the car to get medical attention because Israeli soldiers refused to allow movement in or out of the area.

Muhammed tried everything he could to save his son Ibrahim, who was bleeding to death before his eyes. He phoned a hospital with his cell phone, but the hospital told him the Israeli Army was