

people died and thousands were hurt in crashes involving a distracted or inattentive driver.

Along with distracted driving, Mariah's Act addresses NHTSA's two core missions: vehicle safety and highway safety. By improving these areas, we hope to continue to reduce traffic fatalities and reduce damage when accidents do occur.

While I was pleased to hear that the number of traffic fatalities fell 3 percent between 2009 and 2010, there were still over 32,000 traffic fatalities throughout our country in 2011. I believe we can do better to lower the number of deaths on our roadways by consistently improving safety.

Lifesaving protections for children and young drivers are key components of this bill. This is important because motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for all Americans ages 5 to 34. As a parent of two teenagers, I know the fears of first transporting your children, and then seeing them get behind the wheel. Because vehicular accidents are so deadly to our young people, I was pleased to introduce a bill with strong protections for our youth.

Another specific issue that Mariah's Act addresses is a problem we have been facing for a long time, impaired driving. Impaired driving still remains a deadly problem across the country. In 2010, 31 percent of all fatal crashes were alcohol-related, and more than 10,000 people were killed in alcohol-impaired driving crashes. We, as a country, should be taking a strong stance for ending this behavior and Mariah's Act helps develop the laws and technology to do it.

Other provisions in this bill include updates and consolidation of highway safety programs; ensuring emerging electronics and technologies in vehicles are safe; and improved transparency and accountability in vehicle investigations.

Along with NHTSA, the Commerce section of this Highway bill includes provisions of two bills I introduced last year, the Commercial Driver Compliance Improvement Act and the Safe Roads Act of 2011.

The Commercial Driver Compliance Improvement Act will help authorities improve compliance with hours-of-service regulations that keep fatigued commercial truck and bus drivers off the road.

The Safe Roads Act will establish a national clearinghouse for verified positive alcohol and drug test results of commercial motor vehicle operators. This will prevent a bad actor from failing a drug test in one State and simply going across a State line to try to beat the test.

Our safety is compromised everyday by those bad acting truck and bus drivers that are fatigued or under the influence of drugs or alcohol. We needed to strengthen our current regulations to ensure these drivers cannot bypass the law. These provisions are a practical

way to ensure that the commercial driving industry is reducing the number of unsafe drivers on the road.

Last year, there were over 5 million accidents on our roads resulting in over 32,000 lives lost. That is why we need to continue to fine tune highway safety programs to better target prevention, enforcement and oversight. I am pleased that all three of these provisions were included in this Highway bill and that they will help reduce the number of tragedies families face due to automobile related deaths and injuries.

I would like to thank everyone for their input and believe that we have a bill that will complete the goal of increasing safety on our roadways.

TRIBUTE TO INDIANA CHIEF JUSTICE RANDALL T. SHEPARD

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, I wish to recognize Indiana Chief Justice Randall T. Shepard, who is retiring this month after 25 years of distinguished service as Indiana's Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

Justice Shepard was appointed to the Indiana Supreme Court by Governor Robert Orr in 1985 and became Chief Justice in 1987, then the youngest chief justice in the nation. During his career, he has authored nearly 900 civil and criminal opinions and 68 law review articles. His writings have been cited hundreds of times by law journals and other courts, including the U.S. Supreme Court.

Justice Shepard's leadership and idealism are recognized beyond his legal opinions. Under his tenure, the court adopted a more balanced workload of civil and criminal cases and began webcasting all of its oral arguments. In 2001, he created the Courts in the Classroom program, which helps students learn about the judiciary, and was a driving force behind the Indiana Conference for Legal Education Opportunity program which promotes diversity in the legal profession. In 2007, Justice Shepard was appointed by Governor Mitch Daniels as co-chair of the Indiana Commission on Local Government Reform, and several of the Commission's recommendations have been implemented.

A seventh-generation Hoosier, Justice Shepard grew up in Evansville, IN, and graduated cum laude from Princeton in 1969. He received his law degree from Yale Law School in 1972. Among other awards, Justice Shepard has received the Indiana Chamber of Commerce Government Leader of the Year, the American Judicature Society's Opperman Award, and the Indiana Black Expo Lifetime Achievement Award. He has honorary degrees from the University of Southern Indiana, the University of South Carolina, the University of Notre Dame, and the University of Evansville.

I appreciate this opportunity to recognize Justice Shepard, and I wish him every continuing success as he pursues new challenges and opportunities.

RECOGNIZING CIRCUS SMIRKUS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to pay tribute to Circus Smirkus, the award-winning international touring youth circus based out of Greensboro, VT. A treasured Vermont institution, renowned well beyond our borders, this year Circus Smirkus is celebrating its 25th anniversary.

Circus Smirkus was founded by Rob Mermin, who ran away to join the circus at the age of 19 when summer camps for aspiring performers did not exist. Upon moving to Greensboro in 1987, Rob started the program to promote the culture and skills of the circus and to inspire youth to enter the arts and experience the adventure of a traveling show.

Today Circus Smirkus is the only youth circus in America to put on a full-season tour under its own big top, a 750-seat, one-ring, European-style circus tent. Every summer, a company of talented troupers, ages 10 to 18, arrives and rehearses the show at Smirkus's headquarters in the Circus Barn in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom. Then 30 young clowns, aerialists and acrobats take the show on the road, staging more than 70 performances across New England in just 7 weeks.

The program is a complete immersion in circus life, including long hours, rigorous training, and daily chores. Most graduates—known as Smirkos—describe their experiences as life-changing and as having forged some of their most cherished memories. The young performers come from as far away as Mongolia, New Zealand, and Siberia. Since its founding the circus has fostered youth exchanges with more than 25 nations.

Marcel Marceau, the famed French mime, broke his silence to call Circus Smirkus “an absolutely wonderful task: to bring children hope for the future, to create an entirely new form of circus and make it universal.” He was so right. I see the skill they develop in young performers and the joy they bring to every audience—including Marcelle and me when we take our grandchildren each summer in Vermont. I wish Circus Smirkus the best for this special milestone season and in all the years to come.

TRIBUTE TO REVEREND HURMON E. HAMILTON, JR.

Mr. BROWN of Massachusetts. Mr. President, I wish to recognize the Reverend Hurmon E. Hamilton, Jr. of Roxbury, MA, a remarkable pastor, teacher and leader. Reverend Hamilton grew up in Louisiana, the son of a preacher. He attended Grambling State University and went on to earn a Master of Divinity Degree from San Francisco Theological Seminary.

In 1994, Reverend Hamilton began his career in Massachusetts when he was elected Senior Pastor of Boston's Roxbury Presbyterian Church. In this

senior ministry position, he led a major capital campaign that renovated the historic church's building. More importantly, he understood that the church was far more than brick, mortar and stained glass and set about expanding the congregation's role in the community through their Social Impact Center. Under Reverend Hamilton's stewardship, the Center, and particularly its Dream Again Program, provided a variety of hands-on programs to help area residents find jobs, learn new skills, continue their education and even purchase and keep homes.

Also under his leadership, the Roxbury Presbyterian Church began a highly successful "Adopt-A-School" program that has been touted as a model of excellence.

Mr. President, if we are known by the fruits of our labor, then Reverend Hamilton's time with us in Boston was bountiful. He was a champion for summer jobs programs for disadvantaged teens; he also helped secure funding for new textbooks for city schools. Yet nowhere was he more effective than in his efforts to secure access to health insurance for all our citizens. For Reverend Hamilton it was a matter of justice. Thanks in large part to his efforts, 98 percent of Massachusetts residents are now covered by health insurance. The program is not perfect and he understood that, which is why he has helped lead the fight to reduce exploding health care costs in our state.

Shortly after coming to Boston, Reverend Hamilton founded the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization which has been tremendously effective in not just raising awareness of pressing social concerns, but bringing together religious and community organizations to actually improve the lives of our neighbors. Because of the GBIO and Reverend Hamilton's leadership, there are more opportunities for at-risk youth, poor families are better educated and equipped to climb the economic ladder, and the rights of workers in nursing homes are better protected just to name a few of their accomplishments.

Mr. President, Reverend Hamilton leaves a lasting legacy in Massachusetts that expands well beyond his former church's Roxbury neighborhood. His impact can be measured in richer and more fulfilling lives, improved access to health insurance, better job prospects and engaged youth who go on to be productive and effective leaders, parents and workers.

Earlier this year, Reverend Hamilton accepted a new position in his words, God reassigned him to a new ministry in California. I join Reverend Hamilton's former congregation and all the people whose lives he touched in thanking him and wish him and his wife, Dr. Rhonda Hamilton, every blessing with their new opportunities in California.

RECOGNIZING MAJOR GENERALS FRANK VAVALA AND GUS HARGETT

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, in December, with the distinguished leadership of the Senators from Vermont and South Carolina, we passed the National Guard Empowerment Act as an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act with truly bipartisan support, as evidenced by its 71 cosponsors here in the U.S. Senate. At the time, we said that the National Guard has performed extraordinary service in the last 10 years alongside their Reserve and Active Duty counterparts as part of a truly integrated total force, but that the changes included by the National Guard Empowerment Act were most important not because of the great work in the past, but because of the essential need for enhanced cooperation in the future.

The Senate recognized that enhanced capabilities for the National Guard, particularly elevating the Chief of the National Guard Bureau as a statutory member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, this Nation's highest military planning body, were essential to meeting the threats of the future. And today I am happy to join my friend from Delaware to recognize two men who played a key role in advocating that point of view here in the Senate, two men who approached an idea widely regarded as a nice, but unlikely thought and helped transform it into a reality. They are Chairman of the National Guard Association of the United States NGAUS, MG Frank Vavala, and his highly capable "battle buddy," the president of the NGAUS, retired MG Gus Hargett.

People around Tennessee know Gus Hargett as the former Adjutant General of our State's National Guard, but also as the person responsible for supervising the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency and the Tennessee State Guard. They also know Gus as the kind of guy to get things done when they really matter. Throughout his career he had a healthy mixture of active duty service with the U.S. Army and the precise sort of duty with the National Guard at the state level or Active Guard Reserve status that we put GEN Craig McKinley on the Joint Chiefs of Staff to strategize for.

With the support of General Vavala and Adjutant Generals around the country, General Hargett provided key guidance for this legislation, answered countless questions, and provided the needed impetus to take it over the top and onto the President's desk. He recognized that this transcended simply advocating for the National Guard, it was an essential step for preparing our country's homeland defense strategy.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I am pleased to join my friend from Tennessee to show appreciation for the efforts of General Hargett and General Vavala. As he says, it is about much more than recognizing good work done, it is about preparing for the natural

and manmade threats to Americans, and I would like to associate myself with his remarks.

My State is particularly blessed to have General Vavala as our world-class adjutant general, providing invaluable leadership to the Delaware National Guard on behalf of our Governor. I think that people who have had just a few minutes to chat with him come away understanding that he is a dynamic force. They would be able to instantly understand how he and General Hargett helped guide a compelling, grassroots campaign of hundreds of thousands of National Guard men and women and their State leadership to make clear to their representatives that their Guard strategy was a national defense concept to be taken seriously. Defense of our homes begins at home, something the National Guard has specialized in for 375 years. At a time when it seems nothing in Washington works right, General Vavala insisted time and again that the voice of the people matters and worked tirelessly to prove it. Congress recognized the wisdom of investing in the National Guard, and responded appropriately, with the most important piece of legislation since the modern, dual-mission National Guard was established in 1903.

Now, the leadership of the National Guard stands ready to support the President and Secretary of Defense in the new strategic guidance released in January. It is clear that tough decisions have to be made in this budget environment and that we will have a military with a different look and operational approach in the future. However, we are confident that the National Guard will not shrink from its responsibility to defend our Nation and its interests around the world as well as meeting every home State emergency and challenge it faces.

We are grateful to GEN Frank Vavala, GEN Gus Hargett, and the members of NGAUS, for the important roles they played in this momentous legislation.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO RAYMOND J. WIECZOREK

• Ms. AYOTTE. Mr. President, today I wish to honor my dear friend, Raymond J. Wieczorek—a distinguished New Hampshire citizen who has devoted a lifetime of service to his city, State, and Nation. After providing decades of community and civic leadership in and around Manchester, he will retire from public office at the end of this year.

Ray is a father and a grandfather who has also been a loving husband. He has served as a soldier, a volunteer, a small businessman, a mayor, and as a member of New Hampshire's executive