

and I have expressed this to the Postmaster General, the U.S. Postal Service on many occasions has made a decision that I think, while it may save a few dollars, reduces the service the Postal Service provides and ultimately hastens the day in which the Postal Service has even more challenges remaining viable. One of those was the decision by the Postal Service to close many rural post offices across the country, 130-plus in Kansas.

We have had attendance at more than 90 of the community meetings that revolve around the potential closing of a post office. I have expressed great concern in the committee. I serve on the Committee on Homeland Security, in which this bill originates. During that markup and debate, I expressed concern then and expressed concern on several occasions to the Postmaster General that there is no basis for making an intelligent decision about which post office should or should not be closed. In fact, when citizens across Kansas and across the country attend one of these community meetings, their question to the representative of the Postal Service is, What can our community do? What can I do to make certain our post office remains open and we have the opportunity to receive and have mail delivered from here at the U.S. post office in our community?

In working with the committee, provisions were added to the 21st Century Postal Service Act that create criteria by which these decisions would be made and the community has an opportunity to appeal should the decision be adverse and those criteria not met.

In my view, the Senate should not delay any longer addressing the issue of what we do to make certain the Postal Service is and remains viable today and in the future. It matters, as I say, for a series of reasons but certainly to me as a Kansan who is concerned about what happens to the community, its senior citizens, if there is no longer postal service provided.

I know there are some in the Senate and in the House of Representatives and across the country who want to make certain the Postal Service is operated as a business. I certainly support that concept and believe we ought to do what is necessary to improve the business environment by which the Postal Service conducts its business. There is a long list of those. Some of them are addressed in the legislation that I hope remains pending here in the Senate.

But there is another reason in addition to the need to provide service to Americans that we need to address this issue. I want to make certain the decisions we make today eliminate the need that there ever would be a call upon the taxpayers of the United States to provide taxpayer dollars to support the Postal Service.

I am here this evening to encourage my colleagues but particularly the majority leader to work to find an agree-

ment by which amendments can be offered to this bill so that we do not lose the opportunity we have this week and next to address this issue of making certain we make changes to the Postal Service that allow it to be successful.

I am concerned that, as I understand it, there is no agreement yet that would allow Members of the Senate to offer amendments to this legislation. While the provisions of this bill are important to me and important to Kansans, I also recognize the importance to every Member of the Senate to be able to offer legislation, to have debate, to make certain that our rights are protected. I know that particularly in a sense as a member of the minority, as a Republican in the Senate, but I know that even more as a member of a minority called rural America. I do not want to lose the opportunity in the Senate for me to be able to speak on issues that are important to my constituents and to be able to offer amendments to legislation that is important to a minority of Americans called rural America.

What I am troubled by and what I want to see addressed is the legislation that is pending. I do not want it to disappear because there is no agreement for Members of the Senate, all 100 of us, majority and minority, to offer amendments. So I am asking the majority leader to work with Senators to make certain their amendments are available for consideration in this legislation. Don't put me and other Senators, who care about this legislation, in the position of not being able to support moving forward because the rights of some Senators have been violated in their ability to offer amendments to this piece of legislation.

Again, this matters. The Postal Service desperately needs our attention. The American people who are served by the Postal Service desperately need our attention. We need to set the stage today in which the taxpayers of the United States are protected from any future calls for support for the U.S. Postal Service. We need to make certain in that process, as we pursue this legislation, that the ability of those who live in rural communities, where it is very difficult for the Postal Service to be financially viable, to have access to the Postal Service is not trampled on by the desire to see that only those post offices that are financially viable individually are the ones that remain. In fact, I remind my colleagues that the Postal Rate Service Commission in their study said we could close 3,700 post offices in the United States and save less than .7 percent of the money necessary to put the Postal Service back on a financially sound basis.

This legislation is important. The concepts that are contained in it matter to me as a Member of the Senate who represents a very rural State, Kansas. But I also know how important it is to make sure we do not lose our ability to offer amendments on this legislation or legislation in the future.

Please, Mr. Majority Leader and other Senators, please come together to make certain those rights are protected so this legislation can be fully considered by the Senate.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HAGAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO JUDGE G. WIX UNTHANK

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I rise today in honor of a man who has made a great contribution to our Nation's judiciary system and to his native Commonwealth of Kentucky. The man of whom I speak has valiantly served in the line of duty and justly served in almost every level of our Nation's court system. He is a pioneer in the legal discipline, a patriot through and through, and a dear friend: the Honorable Judge G. Wix Unthank of Harlan County, KY.

Judge Unthank has announced his retirement and will soon bang the gavel for the last time on June 1 of this year, ending a six-decade-long legacy in the legal field. Although his official day-to-day job may be coming to an end, his public service is most likely far from over. Judging by the colorful life he has led thus far, I trust that his passion for the law and the legal system will lead him back inside the familiar walls of the courthouse for many years to come.

The Honorable Judge Unthank is a solid testimony to the attainment of the American dream. G. Wix Unthank proved that with hard work and ambition you can accomplish truly anything. He was born in the small Harlan County, KY, town of Tway in 1923. His father, Green W. Unthank, and mother, Estelle Howard Unthank, were both teachers in the Harlan County school system. Between the two of them, they spent 68 years in the classroom inspiring young men and women to achieve great things. The emphasis placed on education in the Unthank household rubbed off on young Wix, and he graduated from Loyall High School in Harlan County with the class of 1940. That same year he enlisted in the U.S. Army and proudly served in World War II.

Not even having been on this Earth for two decades, the young Mr.

Unthank displayed courage, bravery, and patriotism well beyond his age. While in the service, he was a member of the 509th Paratrooper Battalion. During their training, the unit practiced jumping out of airplanes that flew at heights of 250 to 300 feet. Squad sergeant Ernie Komula of Wix's battalion will never forget how surprised his men were when the planes wouldn't go lower than 2,000 feet once behind enemy lines. Despite the unfamiliar new height, Unthank and the rest of the men didn't think twice about jumping out of that plane and fighting for their beloved country.

After completing a 5-year stint in the Army, in which he received both a Bronze Star and a Purple Heart, he was honorably discharged in 1945. He attended the University of Kentucky for his undergraduate schooling. Then he went on to the University of Miami, where he obtained a J.D. in 1950. Once he had acquired the knowledge his parents had always hoped he would, Wix entered public service in what would turn out to be a prosperous and fulfilling professional life.

Judge Unthank worked as a practicing attorney in Harlan County for a short time before running for the public office of county judge. Throughout his political career, Judge Unthank used the slogan "You'll never be Unthankful with Unthank," and obviously the people never were because he never lost an election.

In the summer of 1980, President Jimmy Carter appointed G. Wix Unthank to the U.S. district court to serve as the presiding judge of the Eastern District of Kentucky. Eight years after his appointment, he assumed the honorable title of senior judge on the U.S. district court.

After many years of successfully running the courts in the Eastern District, Judge Unthank was honored with a portrait unveiling ceremony in Lexington, KY, in 1991 and Pikeville, KY, in 1992. At the ceremonies the judge was honored by his colleagues, family, and friends for the many achievements he had been blessed with throughout his lifetime up until that point. His portrait was hung in the courtrooms of both Lexington and Pikeville, which Judge Eugene E. Siler, Jr., who led the ceremonies, said that he believed were among the best courtrooms in the United States.

Judge Unthank was known for running a top-notch court system. He promoted collegiality amongst the judges and employees of the Eastern District. Under the leadership of Judge Unthank, they were more than just colleagues, they were a family. They enjoyed working together and seeing that the law was carried out equally and justly with each and every case.

Despite the judge's high-ranking senior status, he never shied away from work. He had an unheard-of workload for a senior judge. Day in and day out, he worked through social security cases, bankruptcy appeals, and retire-

ment disputes with hard work and dedication.

The words carved into the front of the Supreme Court Building in our Nation's Capital read "Equal Justice Under Law." That is a standard that we as a country hold up highly and a motto that those in the legal profession look to for guidance in every decision they make. Wix Unthank was no exception to this rule. He understands the importance of equal justice, and he demonstrated an unbelievable amount of integrity both in and out of the courtroom.

As I have said many times before, I am not in the business of speculation, so I would not testify to the character of Judge G. Wix Unthank if I was at all unsure of it. Therefore, with the utmost certainty, it is my pleasure today to stand and honor the Honorable Judge G. Wix Unthank for his tremendous contribution to his profession, his community, the Commonwealth of Kentucky, and the United States of America, and I ask my Senate colleagues to join me in paying tribute to a brave veteran, a wise jurist, and a confirmed patriot of our great Nation.

CONGRATULATING STEPHANIE THACKER

Mr. MANCHIN. Madam President, today I wish to congratulate Stephanie Dawn Thacker, a native of Hamlin, WV, on her confirmation to the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals.

It is my privilege and my honor to speak on her behalf, and I am so proud she was confirmed. I would like to thank my colleague Senator JAY ROCKEFELLER for nominating such a qualified jurist.

Stephanie Thacker's impressive background and extensive list of accomplishments in both the public and private sectors make her an exceptional judge for the 4th Circuit. She is renowned in our State for her mastery of the law and of the courtroom, and I have no doubt that she will make a highly successful Federal judge.

Ms. Thacker has dedicated much of her career to fighting some of the worst offenses in our society. As a trial attorney, Deputy Chief of Litigation, and Principal Deputy Chief, she spent several years prosecuting cases on Child Exploitation and Obscenity at the Department of Justice. Her outstanding work and leadership earned her a number of honors at the Department of Justice, including four "Meritorious" Awards and two "Special Achievement" awards.

Her impressive performance in prosecuting the case of United States v. Dwight York earned her the Attorney General's "Distinguished Service" award, one of the Department's highest honors. She was also a recipient of the Assistant Attorney General's award for "Special Initiative" and "Outstanding Victim and Witness Service."

Prior to her service at the Department of Justice, Ms. Thacker worked

with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of West Virginia, where she prosecuted a wide variety of criminal cases, including money laundering and fraud. While at the U.S. Attorney's Office, Ms. Thacker participated on the trial team prosecuting United States v. Bailey, the first case ever brought under the Violence Against Women Act.

Since 2006, Ms. Thacker has been a partner at the law firm of Guthrie & Thomas in Charleston, West Virginia. There, she has concentrated on cases involving product liability, environmental and toxic torts, complex commercial defense, and criminal defense.

Ms. Thacker was a model student in both her undergraduate and legal studies. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Business Administration, magna cum laude, from Marshall University, and her J.D., Order of the Coif, from West Virginia University College of Law. While at West Virginia University she was a recipient of the Robert L. Griffin Memorial Scholarship and Editor of West Virginia Law Review's Coal Issue. She has also recently been named "Outstanding Female Attorney" by WVU Law's Women's Caucus.

Ms. Thacker's wide-ranging expertise in civil and criminal matters, her impressive track record in the courtroom as both a prosecutor and a defense attorney, and her outstanding academic accomplishments will make her a first-rate addition to the 4th Circuit. I am proud to call her a fellow West Virginian and I am pleased that she has finally been confirmed.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO KIKKAN RANDALL

• Mr. BEGICH. Madam President, I wish to recognize Kikkan Randall, an Olympic athlete and World Champion Nordic skier from Anchorage, AK. On March 18, 2012, Kikkan was awarded the Joska crystal globe as the Cross Country World Cup sprint champion, recognizing her as the world's top sprint ski racer. She clinched the sprint title in Drammen, Norway, despite breaking a binding and skiing on one ski for part of the race. Nevertheless, Kikkan secured the sprint title with a World Cup record that included four podium finishes. This victory makes Kikkan the first American to win a World Cup Nordic skiing title since Bill Koch in 1982.

Kikkan made her Olympic debut in the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. Since then, she has represented the United States in the 2006 and 2010 Winter Olympics. In 2010 Kikkan finished eighth in the sprint competition, registering the best ever Olympic finish for a female American Nordic skier.

Kikkan has been a role model for thousands of young athletes through her extensive community involvement and encouragement of a healthy and active lifestyle. She has worked with young athletes and trained with her