

For six weeks, Gucciardi slept by her son's bedside in the hospital and prayed daily in the chapel at UVM. The local Italian community warmly welcomed them, she recalled, and offered support. "I just always said I would give back for what was given to us," she said.

FAMILY RECIPES

Scraping the fat and caramelized bits from a pan of roasted Italian sausage into her sauce pot, Gucciardi explained that she has taken family recipes and "made them my own over the years."

She grew up in Haverhill, Mass., with an Italian-American father and a French-Canadian mother, but her mother learned to cook Italian from her mother-in-law. Gucciardi's paternal grandmother, "a great cook," Gucciardi said.

After frying the onions and garlic in the sausage fat ("You just get such flavor from that," she explained), Gucciardi added tomato paste and canned Italian tomatoes along with a little water and generous amounts of dried parsley and basil, which would come fresh from her garden in the summer, she said.

"I never measure anything," she added apologetically.

Luckily for her fans, Gucciardi taught a series of cooking classes in the mid-'80s for which she had to write down her recipes. It was in that class that Gucciardi met John Varricchione, in whose Burlington kitchen she was cooking last week.

Varricchione, 66, a retired teacher and football coach at Rice Memorial High School, grew up in the center of Burlington's Italian community where, just like in Gucciardi's family, his paternal grandmother taught his French-Canadian mother to cook family favorites.

"But I never got my grandmother's recipes," he said with regret.

Last week, Varricchione and his wife, Joanne, helped Gucciardi form meatballs while her sauce simmered on the stove. The Varricchiones' 3-year-old grandson, Carlo Pizzagalli, popped in and out of the kitchen to visit with his grandparents and "Mama Goose," as he called her.

The cooks used a small ice cream scoop to measure out each meatball, a tool Gucciardi said she adopted years ago when student-athletes helped her to produce meatballs for fundraising dinners during which they would feed more than 800. "I had it down to a science," she said proudly.

Gucciardi watched her helpers with a kind but careful eye. "If they have any cracks in them, I reject them," she said, explaining that they would fall apart in the sauce.

As they worked, the scent of meatballs and simmering sauce filled the kitchen. "I can smell those meatballs cooking," said Gucciardi happily.

"That's always a good thing," agreed Varricchione.

The first batch of meatballs emerged from the oven, brown and sizzling, and the second batch went in. Gucciardi stirred a generous pinch of sugar into her sauce to balance the acidity of the tomatoes.

When the meatballs had cooled a little, Carlo tasted one and gave his full approval, followed by a big hug for the cook.

The next generation had fallen in love with the cooking of Mama Gucc.

MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, Monday, May 27, is Memorial Day—the day Americans set aside to honor the brave men and women in uniform who have made the greatest possible sacrifice for their country.

Memorial Day was informally begun by MG John A. Logan, the head of an organization of Union Army Civil War veterans, in 1868. It is believed Major General Logan chose a date in late May because flowers would be in bloom all over the country. He asked the Nation to decorate the graves of the war dead with flowers.

Mr. President, 1.1 million Americans have died defending the country in our Nation's wars. Freedom as we know it—here at home and around the world—would not exist without their heroism.

The Commonwealth of Kentucky has played a vital role in this Nation's defense during our history. I am honored to represent Kentuckians in the Armed Forces, including those stationed at Fort Knox, Fort Campbell, the Blue Grass Army Depot, and members of the Reserves and Kentucky National Guard.

At Fort Knox, the Memorial Day ceremony this year will continue a tradition of honoring the memory of one particular fallen soldier. This year, that soldier is PFC David P. Nash of Daviess County, KY.

While serving in Vietnam on December 29, 1968, 20-year-old Private First Class Nash valiantly rolled on top of an exploding grenade to save the lives of three other soldiers. We must not forget the deeds of Private First Class Nash, or the many other men and women in uniform who gave their lives in service.

Memorial Day is a day to honor their memories, and to let their loved ones know our country has not forgotten them. I know my fellow Kentuckians agree that we are honored to fly the flag which these brave heroes sought to protect.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I rise to recognize the importance of Memorial Day, a day that means so much to me, the Nation, and those I represent in Alaska. For many Alaskans, Memorial Day means the unofficial beginning of summer, sunlight, and enjoying the great outdoors.

But let us never forget the deep, true meaning of Memorial Day. It is about taking time to pay respect, and appreciating the sacrifices of men and women who have defended the rights and privileges we enjoy today. On this solemn day in which Americans unite to remember our Nation's fallen, we also pray for our military personnel and their families, our veterans, and all who have lost loved ones.

For over two centuries, brave men and women have laid down their lives in defense of our great Nation. These heroes have made the ultimate sacrifice so we may uphold the ideals we all cherish. Ordinary men and women of extraordinary courage have, since our earliest days, answered the call of duty with valor and unwavering devotion. America's sons and daughters have served with honor and distinction, securing our liberties and laying a foundation for lasting peace.

Memorial Day officially began nearly 100 years before Alaskan statehood, but even in our territorial days we had Alaskans who fought on our own soil against foreign enemies—one of the few States that can say such a thing. It is because of those early successes—and the success of Alaskans from then to those deployed today—that we salute our flag.

Although we may not be able to fully measure the cost of our heroes' sacrifice, we can commit ourselves to preserving their memory. So on Memorial Day 2013, I ask that we honor our fallen heroes, comfort the loved ones of those we lost, and carry on our lives in a manner that is worthy of their sacrifice. May God continue to bless our great Nation.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, as Memorial Day 2013 approaches, as our fellow Americans are making plans to have cookouts, enjoy the outdoors, and spend precious time with their loved ones, I believe we should remember that the reason we are able to enjoy these moments is because of the military servicemembers who have given "the last full measure of devotion" in the service of our great Nation. From the American Revolution to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, brave young men and women have always answered the call to fight for our country and for our freedom. They have made many sacrifices, and as we remember in particular those who have fallen, I am inspired by their courage and dedication to freedom. The death of each one of these service men and women represents not only a tragic loss to their loved ones, but to their community and to the country.

This Memorial Day should be observed as a time for all Americans to reconnect with our history and core values by honoring those who gave their lives for the ideals we cherish. In addition to remembering the servicemembers who have fought and died in our Nation's wars, I believe that we must also take care of the servicemembers and veterans who are still with us. There are, regrettably, serious issues that still need to be addressed with regard to our military and veteran communities. Active-Duty military and veteran suicides are at record rates, Veterans Administration disability claims continue to be severely delayed, programs that assist discharged servicemembers transition to civilian life are still inadequate, and many of our servicemembers and veterans still lack the healthcare they need—and are entitled to—after a decade of war. I believe that we in the Congress must do everything we can do to remedy these problems. As George Washington famously said "The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive veterans of early wars were treated and appreciated by our Nation." I believe this statement has added weight and meaning and truth with our

Nation's movement to an all-volunteer military after the Vietnam War.

With fewer than 1 percent of our Nation's population on active military duty, the gap between those who have served in uniform and those who have not has never been greater. These differences in life experiences have led to misguided perceptions of how each group views the other. The widening of this "civilian-military gap" makes it less likely that our servicemembers and veterans will properly reintegrate back into our society, and less likely that our best and brightest will pursue military service. As a society, we must address the problem. If we can't care for the service men and woman and their families who have made so many sacrifices on our behalf, then holidays such as Memorial Day end up having little relevance. One veteran I recently met with said to me, "I fought proudly for my country in Afghanistan, but when I came back I didn't feel like I came back. I'm still waiting to feel like I came back." No American who has worn the uniform of this country should have to feel this way.

Memorial Day is a day we Americans hold close to our hearts because in the sometimes hectic pace of our daily lives, we can forget just how fortunate we are. Memorial Day reminds us. Throughout this holiday weekend we will see many American flags and flowers adorning the graves of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our Nation. I will especially remember in my thoughts and prayers the 127 Marylanders who have been killed in our most recent conflicts, and I will remind myself that our freedom isn't free. And I will remember that the best way to honor their ultimate sacrifice is to ensure that we are unwavering in our support to care for those who do return to us wounded, ill, and injured. This Memorial Day, let us affirm our commitment to those who have returned from the fields of battle as the best way to honor their fallen comrades.

PUERTO RICO

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, it is important for the United States to continue its efforts to promote a close relationship with Puerto Rico and its citizens. That includes supporting a fair and democratic process for Puerto Ricans on the perennial and controversial issue of statehood.

I commend Puerto Rico's new Governor Alejandro Garcia Padilla on his work to tackle the current challenges facing the island, particularly on the economic front. Congress has long supported reciprocity between Puerto Rico and the United States, with very positive results. When the Puerto Rican economy flourishes, trade with the United States increases, helping promote job creation here at home.

I am disappointed the most recent budget proposal submitted to Congress by the White House recommends \$2.5

million in fiscal year 2014 to conduct yet another referendum on Puerto Rico's political status. Allocating U.S. taxpayer dollars for this purpose is wasteful and unnecessary, since a plebiscite was just held in Puerto Rico last November on this very question.

The vote on Election Day specifically called for Puerto Ricans to express their views on the island's political status. Its backers sought to show that popular support exists for turning Puerto Rico into a State. But it is widely acknowledged that the ballot was not developed in a fair and inclusive manner. It instead presented statehood alternatives with a predetermined result in mind, to force Puerto Ricans toward an option they have rejected time and again, and to stack the deck in favor of statehood.

The first part of the ballot asked whether or not Puerto Rican voters wanted to continue their territorial status. The second portion then provided three different non-territorial alternatives: statehood, sovereign free associated state, or independence. Keeping the island's current Commonwealth status was not even listed as an option in the second round.

As expected, a slim majority—nearly 51.7 percent of the 1.9 million who voted—opted for changing the current status. However, in response to the second question, 834,191 voters chose statehood, 498,604 left the second question blank, 454,768 selected sovereign free associated state, and 74,895 favored independence. Any way you slice it, 1,028,267—or nearly 55 percent—of the Puerto Ricans who traveled to the polls voted for options other than statehood.

As Congresswoman NYDIA VELÁZQUEZ, the first woman of Puerto Rican heritage elected to the United States House of Representatives, correctly pointed out: "Casting a blank ballot is part of traditional form of objecting to an unfair process in Puerto Rican political history." In accordance with this tradition, the Commonwealth Party in Puerto Rico adopted a resolution calling on Puerto Rican voters to protest last November's plebiscite process by casting blank ballots.

When you include the nearly half a million voters who left the second question on the ballot blank, it is clear—despite the claims of some statehood proponents—that a majority of voters do not support statehood for Puerto Rico. In fact, more than 1 million, or nearly 55 percent, of Puerto Rican voters who participated in the plebiscite actually demonstrated support for something other than statehood.

A concurrent resolution was adopted last week by the legislature in Puerto Rico stating that the plebiscite on November 6, 2012, portrayed a false majority in favor of statehood and prevented an accurate vote on the option of Commonwealth status. I ask unanimous consent to insert into the RECORD the text of that resolution.

THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF PUERTO RICO COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO THE CAPITOL

We, EDUARDO BHATIA-GAUTIER, President of the Senate, and JAIME R. PERELLÓ-BORRÁS, Speaker of the House of Representatives,

CERTIFY

That the Senate of Puerto Rico and the House of Representatives of Puerto Rico approved in final vote Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 24, introduced by Messrs. Nadal-Power and Rosa-Rodríguez and Co-sponsors Messrs. Fas-Alzamora, Tirado-Rivera, Bhatia-Gautier, Dalmau-Santiago, Torres-Torres; Mmes. López-León, González-López; Messrs. Nieves-Pérez, Pereira-Castillo, Rivera-Filomeno, Rodríguez-González, Rodríguez-Otero, Rodríguez-Valle, Ruiz-Nieves, Suárez-Cáceres, and Vargas-Morales and that the same reads as follows:

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To inform the President and the Congress of the United States about the results of the plebiscite held on November 6, 2012, and support the request of the President of the United States of America for the Congress to appropriate \$2.5 million to the State Elections Commission for a federally-sponsored plebiscite after conducting the appropriate voter education campaign, which incorporates all options, including the enhanced Commonwealth, based on the principles of fairness and equality; to authorize the disbursement of funds; and for other purposes.

STATEMENT OF MOTIVES

On November 6, 2012 a plebiscite was held in Puerto Rico along with the general elections. The results of such plebiscite were inconclusive because none of the options on Puerto Rico's political status that received a majority of votes. Said plebiscite consisted of two separate questions, formulated by the preceding pro-statehood government administration, which favored statehood for Puerto Rico, in order to portray a false majority in favor of statehood and prevent such formula from competing against the Commonwealth option that had been favored by the people of Puerto Rico in all previously-held plebiscites.

The results were the following: the first question asked voters whether or not Puerto Rico should maintain its current form of political status. Nine hundred seventy thousand nine hundred ten (970,910), that is, fifty-one point seven percent (51.7%) of the people voted "NO"; whereas eight hundred twenty-eight thousand seventy-seven (828,077), that is, forty-four point one percent (44.1%) of the people voted "YES." However, a total of sixty-seven thousand two hundred sixty-seven (67,267) voters cast a blank ballot, which accounted for three point six percent (3.6%) of voters.

The second question asked voters to choose from options that excluded the current political status. Statehood received eight hundred thirty-four thousand one hundred ninety-one (834,191), or forty-four point four percent (44.4%) of the votes cast; sovereign free associated state received four hundred fifty-four thousand seven hundred sixty-eight (454,708), or twenty four point three percent (24.3%) of the votes cast; and independence received seventy four thousand eight hundred ninety-five (74,895), or four percent (4) of the votes cast. However, such question received a total of four hundred ninety-eight thousand six hundred four (498,604) blank votes, which accounted for twenty-six point five percent (26.5%) of the votes cast. These results should not surprise us, since the preceding Legislative Assembly approved the