

But a little poem I learned as a child from my Uncle Jimmy perfectly captures how I feel about the American flag even now:

It's only some stripes of red and white.
It's only some stars on a field of blue.
It's only a little cotton flag.
Does it mean anything to you?
Oh yes it does,
For beneath its folds
Our people are safe at land and sea.
It stands for a land where God is still king,
And His truth and His freedoms are free.
So let us love it well
And keep it pure as our banner of liberty.

This “little cotton flag” is displayed proudly in our homes, in our schools, in our businesses, over the Capitol and the White House, in parades and ball-parks, on the field of battle, and on the graves of the heroes who fought in those battles.

It has flown from the tops of mountains, from the 9/11 rubble of Ground Zero, over the scarred wall of the Pentagon and from the surface of the moon—not once, not twice, but six times.

May our beautiful flag ever wave, and may God ever bless the country for which it stands.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

CONGRATULATING SCOTT BLACKMUN

• Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, today I would like to congratulate Mr. Scott Blackmun of the U.S. Olympic Committee, USOC, on recently being named Sports Business Journal’s 2013 Sports Executive of the Year. Scott has shown real leadership as the chief executive officer of the United States Olympic Committee, a position in which he has served for the past 3 years. He has represented Colorado with distinction on that committee, and he fully deserves this recognition for his work and commitment to international athletic excellence.

Scott has revamped the U.S. Olympic Committee since his appointment in 2010, bringing results both on and off the field of competition. Under his leadership, the USOC has been able to partner with several new sponsors, negotiate a revenue-sharing agreement with the International Olympic Committee, and oversee a U.S. Olympic team that won the most Gold Medals at the 2012 London Olympic Games. Scott also served the USOC capably in multiple previous capacities a decade ago.

A hard worker of high integrity, Scott previously served as chief operating officer of Anschutz Entertainment Group, a major presenter of sports and entertainment events. An accomplished attorney, Scott’s skill and work ethic have made him an invaluable asset in the Colorado legal community. I know Scott personally, having worked with him in the past, and I know him to be a diligent yet passionate advocate for clients and causes alike.

It is a privilege to recognize and commend the accomplishments and career of Scott Blackmun. This award is a testament to his commitment to the USOC and to his country. We are proud to be able to say that he is a Coloradoan, and I want to extend my sincere congratulations to Scott, his wife Ann, and their three children.●

GREAT ALLEGHENY PASSAGE

• Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, Saturday, June 15, 2013, marks the completion of the Great Allegheny Passage. This 150-mile trail provides an uninterrupted, nonmotorized passageway for travelers to hike or bike from Cumberland, MD, to Pittsburgh, PA. The Great Allegheny Passage connects to the C&O Canal Towpath, which leads from Washington, DC, to Cumberland, MD, creating an uninterrupted route between our Nation’s Capital and the Forks of the Ohio.

President Theodore Roosevelt once stated, “Conservation means development as much as it does protection.” The Great Allegheny Passage is an excellent example of an area that Americans have worked to conserve in such a way. The development of the passage has greatly improved the trail, while preserving its natural beauty for all to enjoy.

The Great Allegheny Passage is a wonderful place for Americans of all ages to engage in our rich cultural history, enjoy the varied natural history of great river valleys, and experience a range from rural to urban communities.

The Great Allegheny Passage significantly benefits the surrounding communities in many ways. Trails increase the quality of life in a community. The proximity to rivers, trails, and greenways is an important factor when people and businesses are deciding where to live or invest in new properties. Employees who work near such areas will reduce their commuting costs by walking or biking to work.

The Great Allegheny Passage increases tourism to the surrounding areas. Americans realize that using such a trail is an environmentally responsible way to spend their time. The trail attracts people to the area, which greatly benefits the local communities. Trail users create a demand for more lodging, restaurants, and sporting equipment stores. New jobs will be created as entrepreneurs continue to bring tourism and service based businesses to the area.

The Great Allegheny Passage is truly a unique path through a significant corridor. I encourage Pennsylvanians and all Americans to enjoy the natural beauty of America by visiting the Great Allegheny Passage, now, and for years to come.●

TRIBUTE TO MIHAELA GHITA

• Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize Mihaela Ghita, a

graduating senior at Manchester High School West in Manchester, NH. There is much to celebrate about Mihaela’s academic achievements, but one of her most notable accomplishments is that she has never missed a day of school since the day she entered first grade.

Mihaela is an active member of West’s school community. She competes in throwing events for the school’s track and field team and is also a member of West’s gymnastics squad. In addition, Mihaela has gone above and beyond academic requirements by completing an extended learning opportunity, volunteering to read with and tutor the school’s special needs students. She is also an active volunteer in the greater Manchester community.

Mihaela’s dedication to her education and her commitment to being present to learn every day is truly admirable. As a former public school teacher and parent, I understand and appreciate how unusual and unique it is for a student to attend every day of school for an academic year, but it is truly impressive that she has never missed a day at any point in her studies. The maturity and sense of dedication that Mihaela has demonstrated will serve her well in whatever field she chooses. I am confident that Mihaela will achieve success in her future pursuits.

High school graduation is a special time in a student’s life, and I am pleased to rise today to recognize Mihaela’s unique attendance accomplishment. However, I would also like to extend my sincerest congratulations to Mihaela and all of her classmates who will be joining her on Saturday, June 15, 2013, for their graduation ceremony. While the students may be heading in different directions, they will always share the common bond of being graduates of Manchester High School West. Once again, I would like to recognize Mihaela Ghita on achieving her exemplary attendance record. I know that her family, her friends, and the entire West community join me in congratulating her and celebrating her many accomplishments.●

TRIBUTE TO RALPH McGARY

• Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. President, I would like to speak today about an individual in my home State—a gentleman from Carlsbad named Ralph McGary. Because as we work for solutions to our Nation’s challenges, I hope that we will always remember one basic thing. There are human beings behind these debates. There are stories of struggle and hardship and of inspiration. What we do here in Washington, DC, has real impact on real lives. What happens here matters in profound ways to millions of Americans, matters to fellow citizens like Ralph McGary, who have sacrificed and worked hard, and who depend on a government that will be there for them in return.

This is Ralph's story, as reported recently in Focus on Carlsbad magazine. Ralph worked in the oilfields. One day, in 2006, on his way home, he was almost killed in a traffic accident. In an instant, his life was changed forever. He spent 6 weeks in intensive care and then 3½ months at a rehabilitation hospital. He survived but was left a quadriplegic. Ralph McGary had to face tremendous loss, and then he had to decide how to move forward with his life.

It is impossible for any of us to fully realize what an ordeal that must have been for Ralph or what courage and determination it has required of him every single day just to keep going, just to find his way on a path that he never imagined he would be on. But move forward he did. Drawing upon his own valiant spirit and with the help of others, among his family and in his community. His is a classic American story of self-reliance and community support.

He found valuable allies at the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in Carlsbad. Despite his severe physical impairment, Ralph still wanted to work, still wanted to be as productive as his condition would allow. DVR is a State-Federal organization. Its mission is to work with folks like Ralph to find employment, to help them overcome their disabilities.

DVR provided Ralph with a computer and a special voice recognition software. His counselor at DVR, Barry Jolly, explained:

We worked with him to develop a plan. That included going back to school and completing his degree. We don't just identify employment. We identify a strategy to get from where you are to where you need to be.

Ralph is still on that journey getting from where he has been to where he needs to be. He requires 24-hour care. His family, like so many others, tried to provide that care at home for as long as they could. For now, Ralph resides at a local nursing care facility. Most of his disability income pays for his nursing home care. He keeps about \$60 a month. But his dream of greater independence continues. He dreams of some day being able to adapt his home to accommodate his needs.

In the meantime, he earned his associate's degree from the New Mexico State University-Carlsbad. Last year, he obtained a part-time job at the Jeff Diamond Law Firm. The firm had helped him obtain his Social Security disability benefits, and SSA allows him to earn a certain amount of money each month without reducing his disability income.

In his work at the law firm, Ralph calls himself the "reminder guy." He calls clients to remind them of their appointments or other matters relating to their disability claims. He knows their struggles. He understands what they are going through. His job not only provides some extra income, it boosts his morale and his connection to his community, and the McGary family is very much a part of the community.

His wife, Susan, has taught at Carlsbad schools for over three decades.

Jolly told Focus on Carlsbad that:

Ralph is a determined man and a sharp individual. I used to work in the oilfields too, so I think we speak the same language. I think one of his strengths is his ability to get along with other people and his understanding of how things work.

Those are admirable qualities—getting along with others. Understanding how things work. We need more of that here in Washington, DC. People like Ralph McGary should expect no less of us. Ralph faced his challenges. We should face ours.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Pate, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations and a withdrawal which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The messages received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

REPORT ON THE CONTINUATION OF THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY THAT WAS ORIGINALLY DECLARED IN EXECUTIVE ORDER 13405 OF JUNE 16, 2006, WITH RESPECT TO BELARUS—PM 12

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States, together with an accompanying report; which was referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs:

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to the actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Belarus and other persons to undermine Belarus's democratic processes or institutions that was declared in Executive Order 13405 of June 16, 2006, is to continue in effect beyond June 16, 2013.

In 2012, the Government of Belarus continued its crackdown against political opposition, civil society, and independent media. The September 23 elections failed to meet international

standards. The government arbitrarily arrested, detained, and imprisoned citizens for criticizing officials or for participating in demonstrations; imprisoned at least one human rights activist on manufactured charges; and prevented independent media from disseminating information and materials. These actions show that the Government of Belarus has not taken steps forward in the development of democratic governance and respect for human rights.

The actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Belarus and other persons to undermine Belarus's democratic processes or institutions, to commit human rights abuses related to political repression, and to engage in public corruption continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13405 with respect to Belarus.

BARACK OBAMA.
THE WHITE HOUSE, June 13, 2013.

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 11:27 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 634. An act to provide end user exemptions from certain provisions of the Commodity Exchange Act and the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, and for other purposes.

H.R. 742. An act to amend the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 and the Commodity Exchange Act to repeal the indemnification requirements for regulatory authorities to obtain access to swap data required to be provided by swaps entities under such Acts.

H.R. 2167. An act to authorize the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development to establish additional requirements to improve the fiscal safety and soundness of the home equity conversion mortgage insurance program.

At 3:28 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 1038. An act to provide equal treatment for utility special entities using utility operations-related swaps, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1256. An act to direct the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Commodity Futures Trading Commission to jointly adopt rules setting forth the application to cross-border swaps transactions of certain provisions relating to swaps that were enacted as part of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act.

At 5:16 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 2217. An act making appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security for