

From his first assignment with the 86th Field Artillery, to his role as Director of the Afghan National Security Forces Development Assistance Bureau, to his nearly 3 years as a civilian employee serving as the Vice Director of the Guard's Joint Staff, Jon has served under 6 Governors and 4 Adjutant Generals. As each of them undoubtedly would agree, his wealth of experience and knowledge has been invaluable to the State and Nation as he has risen through the ranks, serving at nearly every level of command in the Army Guard.

He also served as a fellow in the office of Senator Jim Jeffords, and I have personally benefitted from Jon's legacy, having had the privilege of employing his daughter Lily in my Burlington office during the summer of 2010.

Jon will be remembered for his keen sense of humor, dedication to duty, and deep love and appreciation for the State of Vermont.

I am grateful that the Vermont National Guard was able to benefit from Jon's lifetime of service, and Marcelle and I send our best wishes to him in the retirement he has certainly earned.

#### HAITI AND ARMENIA REFORESTATION ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it is an unfortunate reality—perhaps bordering on negligence—that Congress has been unable to do something about climate change.

How will our grandchildren look back at our inaction when they inherit a changed planet—one that we found too politically inconvenient to help avoid?

Thankfully, this President has shown leadership on this issue, but we must do more.

Recently, I offered a simple piece of legislation—one that has traditionally been very bipartisan—that can help take another common sense step and at the same time improve the lives of millions overseas.

The bill helps two friends of the United States overcome the devastating impacts of deforestation: Haiti and Armenia.

Our forests provide resources for almost two-thirds of all species on the planet, offering shelter, food, fresh water, and medicines. Forests help with biodiversity, water conservation, soil enrichment, and climate regulation.

Forests cover 30 percent of the world's land area, but we still lose swaths the size of entire countries—about 12-15 million hectares—each year.

In fact, approximately 76 percent of our world's original primary forests have been destroyed or degraded. And deforestation alone accounts for up to 20 percent of the global greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global warming.

That is because forests take carbon out of the air, and in turn, replenish

the atmosphere with oxygen. Forests help settle out or trap dust, ash, smoke, and other harmful pollutants. They offer water through an evaporation process and shade to hundreds of thousands of species.

If deforestation continues at this staggering level, we lose one of the planet's most important weapons in stabilizing the global climate.

And deforestation in Haiti and Armenia hurts far more than the global climate—deforestation is a factor in economic, agricultural, health, and environmental problems.

An already struggling country, Haiti was hit hard by the massive, January 2010 earthquake.

More than 200,000 people were killed, and an estimated 1.5 million were displaced. A staggering number of houses and buildings simply collapsed.

The subsequent cholera outbreak claimed over 8,000 lives and infected hundreds of thousands more.

While Americans and people from all over the world donated money, organized shipments of medicines and supplies, and even traveled to Haiti as emergency relief workers helped rescue and treat victims, there is an important piece of the puzzle that has been receiving little attention—the role of deforestation.

When you look at the lush green of the Dominican Republic and compare it to the stark desolation on Haiti's side of the border, it is easy to see why Haiti is so much more vulnerable to soil erosion, landslides, and flooding than its neighbor.

In 1923, Haiti's tropical forest covered 60 percent of the country. Today, less than 2 percent of those forests remain.

Deforestation induces soil erosion and landslides, making land more vulnerable to floods and mudslides. In a place such as Haiti, already scarce agricultural land is rendered all the less productive.

These issues are exacerbated by natural disasters such as the 2010 earthquake or the many tropical storms Haiti has faced in recent years.

I remember on a previous visit to Haiti that there was a strong rain during the evening in the capitol of Port au Prince. I mentioned the rain casually to our Haitian hotel host and she said that in the morning several people would be dead from the rain.

I was puzzled—from the rain?

Yes, the mountains around Port au Prince have been so deforested that a simple downpour leads to deadly mudslides.

Former Haitian Prime Minister, Michele Pierre-Louis, said it so aptly:

"The whole country is facing an ecological disaster. We cannot keep going on like this. We are going to disappear one day. There will not be 400, 500 or 1,000 deaths [from hurricanes]. There are going to be a million deaths."

Mr. President, when I visited Armenia last year, I found a similar problem. I had the opportunity to drive through the Armenian countryside for

several hours en route from Georgia. What I saw in this otherwise proud country was devastating.

While archaeological data suggests that approximately 35 percent of Armenia was originally forested, less than 8 percent of its forests remain today.

In recent years, increasing bouts of heavy rainfall, landslides, and floods have endangered hundreds of communities in Armenia and cost millions in damages. On the other hand, record droughts have threatened more than two-thirds of the nation by desertification as natural tree cover continues to diminish.

Groups such as the Armenia Tree Project have focused on reforestation efforts in northern Armenia because it suffered a significant loss of forest cover in the early 1990s.

Mr. President, deforestation is brought on by a number of reasons—making land available for urbanization, plantation use, logging, mining—and illegal logging and mining—and others.

Poverty and economic pressures also play significant roles; 80 percent of the population of Haiti and 36 percent of the population of Armenia live below the poverty line, and wood and charcoal produced from cutting down trees accounts for a major—and relatively cheap—supply toward the energy sectors of both nations.

But the implications of deforestation are disastrous. These forests, if protected and regrown, would fight the destructive effects of soil erosion.

They would help protect freshwater sources from contaminants, would safeguard irrigable land, and would save lives during natural disasters. Helping these nations deal with their deforestation problem—one that impacts the entire planet given the rise in greenhouse gas emissions—is not only the right thing to do, it is the smart thing to go with our limited assistance dollars.

Every dollar we put into reforestation in these hard-hit countries pays itself back in economic, health, and environmental returns.

That is why Senators BROWN, CARDIN, FEINSTEIN, and WHITEHOUSE have joined me in introducing the Haiti and Armenia Reforestation Act to help address the deforestation challenge.

The bill aims to restore within 20 years the forest cover of Haiti to at least seven percent and the forest cover of Armenia to at least 12 percent, about each country's respective levels in 1990.

Within 7 years of enactment, the bill also aims to restore the social and economic conditions for the recovery of 35 percent of both countries' land surfaces and to help improve sustainable management of key watersheds.

A number of groups and organizations are already on the ground working toward these goals in Haiti, and a few in Armenia such as the Armenia Tree Project I mentioned earlier, but more needs to be done to help support

these efforts in a coordinated manner and with backing from both the Governments of Haiti and Armenia and of the United States.

While it is important to start putting trees in the ground, this bill is about more than just planting trees. Our government has tried that approach in the past and it has proven to be ineffective.

This bill empowers the U.S. Government to work with Haiti and Armenia to develop forest-management programs based on proven, market-based models.

These models will be tailored to help both countries manage their conservation and reforestation efforts in ways that can be measured.

The bill encourages cooperation and engagement with local communities and organizations, provides incentives to protect trees through income-generating growth, and authorizes debt-for-nature swaps, focusing on sustainable restoration of forests, watersheds, and other key land surface areas.

Most importantly, the bill does not authorize any new funds. It will help make sure such existing funds are spent wisely and productively.

It will help the people of Haiti and Armenia rebuild their critical ecosystems, which in turn will have tremendous long-term impacts on their qualities of life.

I urge my colleagues to join me in this effort.

#### TRIBUTE TO CARMEN VELÁSQUEZ

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to thank Carmen Velásquez of Chicago, who is retiring as executive director of Alivio Medical Center, for her many years of service to the Latino Community and the city of Chicago.

As a community leader, civil rights activist, health and education advocate, and one of my personal “she-ros,” Carmen Velásquez has dedicated her life to justice and equitable health access for all. As one of the original founders of the Alivio Medical Center, she has served the community for 25 years, helping grow one community health center to a network of 6 clinics, with plans to open two new sites this year.

Carmen is the daughter of Mexican immigrants—her father harvested beets in South Dakota before coming to Illinois to start a successful jukebox business. Carmen went on to earn degrees from Loyola University Chicago and the University of the Americas in Puebla, Mexico.

In her professional career, Carmen dedicated her talents and energy to universal health care and immigration reform as a community organizer. She was a social worker and bilingual education specialist, who quickly became a pillar of Chicago’s Latino community.

As a member of Chicago’s Board of Education, she realized that more needed to be done not only to address

the needs of the Latino community in schools, but also in health clinics.

In 1988, Carmen’s mission was clear; she needed to find a place to address the too often neglected medical needs of her community. While walking through Chicago’s Pilsen neighborhood in search of clinic space, Carmen came upon a muffler shop parking lot littered with rusting old trucks. She went inside the shop and asked its owner if the lot was for sale.

His response? “Offer me something.”

Carmen Velásquez made an offer, and with that, she began her active campaign to raise \$2.1 million for construction of the first of Alivio’s community health centers.

Carmen’s passion and tenacity turned her dream into a reality. Alivio Medical Center opened its doors 1 year later in 1989, as a bilingual, bicultural nonprofit community health center. Alivio has since grown to become a respected advocacy organization that is also an essential safety net provider for many low-income and vulnerable residents of Chicago.

Because of Carmen Velásquez’s hard work and dedication, Alivio continues to meet the primary health care needs of over 20,000 Spanish-speaking, predominantly Mexican immigrants who fall through the cracks of the health care system every year. The residents of the Pilsen, Little Village and Back of the Yards neighborhoods who come to the clinic every year know that, regardless of their income level or insurance coverage, they can expect the very best quality care.

Carmen’s commitment to her community has not gone unnoticed. She has been recognized for excellence in her work throughout the years. She was recently recognized at halftime by the Chicago Bears with the National Football League’s, NFL, Hispanic Heritage Leadership Award, and she has been honored with the MALDEF Lifetime Achievement Award, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Community Health Leadership Award, and Premio Ohtli, the highest honor bestowed by the Government of Mexico on an individual for service to Mexicans living abroad. Illinois Governor Pat Quinn has also honored Carmen as the Latino Heritage Month “Trailblazer of the Day.”

I was fortunate to meet Carmen and her family early in my Senate career. On so many occasions I have counted on Carmen’s wise counsel and caring heart to help me through the challenges we face. If I could make one phone call before facing a tough decision on an issue of social justice, particularly in the Hispanic community, I would call Carmen Velásquez and know that her life experience, caring heart, and street-level wisdom would never disappoint me.

Carmen’s perseverance and her indomitable spirit are tremendous. Her willingness to stand up as a voice for the community during her tenure as Alivio’s executive director has left an

incredible legacy to Chicago’s Latino community enormously.

Congratulations to Carmen on a spectacular career. I thank Carmen for all her years of distinguished service. I know I speak for Alivio’s professional staff, the thousands of families that have benefited from her caring leadership, and all of Chicago when I say she will be sorely missed.

I wish her the best as she opens the next chapter in her life.

#### WORLD WAR II VETERANS VISIT

Mr. BEGICH. Mr. President. In October of 2013, Veterans in the Last Frontier and Alaska-Golden Heart hubs of Honor Flight will be traveling to Washington, DC, to visit their memorials. I would like to welcome these heroes to our Nation’s capital and take this time to recognize their service to our Nation.

I would like to record the individual names of the World War II veterans selected for this trip: Mr. Jacob Knapp, Army; Mr. Stanley Coleman, Navy; Mr. John Collins, Army; Mr. William Field, Navy; Mr. Alvin Hershberger, Army; Mr. Norman Hogg, Army; Mr. Howard Hunt, Army; Mr. Alfred Kehl, Army; Mr. George Miller, Air Force; Mr. Manuel Norat, Army; Mr. Leonard Nugent, Navy; Mr. Dale Parker, Navy; Mr. Fredrick Samsun, Marines and Air Force; Mr. Marshall Solberg, Navy; Mr. Lafton Wells, Navy; Ms. Ellen White, Air Force; Ms. Juliana Wilson, Navy; Mr. Allen Woodward, Navy; Mr. Edward Young Jr., Air Force; Mr. James Brewster, Navy; Mr. Elvin Brush, Air Force; Mr. Arnold Booth, Army; Mr. Conrad Ryan, Army; Mr. William Miller, Army; Mr. Louis Palmer, Navy; Mr. James Dodge, Marines; Mr. Roy Helms, Army; Mr. Nelson McBirney, Navy and Mr. Wenzel Raith, Navy.

These veterans from Alaska join over 90,000 other veterans from across the country, who, since 2005, have traveled to our Nation’s capital to visit and reflect at memorials built here in their honor. This Honor Flight trip was made possible by generous public donations and contributions from those who wish to honor these heroes.

We owe a great deal to our servicemen and veterans who put themselves in harm’s way for our Nation and for our security. The sacrifices made by these heroes are truly incredible and without their honor, courage, commitment, and sacrifice, we would not enjoy the freedoms we cherish today.

Each of these veterans have my thanks for their service, and I very appreciate the staff, volunteers and supporters of the Honor Flight program who make these trips happen. Again, thank you to all Alaska veterans and the volunteers for their dedication, commitment, and service.

#### ESTEVEZ NOMINATION

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, yesterday, I voted to confirm Alan Estevez to