

to speak for up to 30 minutes. So everybody would be limited to 10 minutes each, except for him.

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

HOMETOWN HEROES SURVIVORS BENEFITS ACT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, today I am proud to recognize the 10th anniversary of the enactment of the "Hometown Heroes Survivors Benefits Act" which occurred this past Saturday. Back in 2003, I worked with a bipartisan group of Senators to pass this legislation to improve the Department of Justice's Public Safety Officers' Benefits—PSOB—program by allowing families of public safety officers who suffer fatal heart attacks or strokes to qualify for Federal survivor benefits. I am proud to mark the 10-year anniversary of this important program.

I first want to thank each of our Nation's brave law enforcement officers, firefighters, and emergency medical responders for the work they do for the American public each and every day. This legislation, like the Public Safety Officers Benefits program, is for them. It is Congress' recognition of the importance of their service to their communities and to the Nation.

Our public safety officers are often the first to respond to a crime scene or emergency situation. They are often the first line of defense in a natural disaster or national security emergency. They are among our most courageous and dedicated public servants. I applaud their efforts in responding to more than 240 million emergency calls each year—whether those calls involve a fire, crime, medical emergency, natural disaster, or act of terrorism—without hesitation. They act with a steadfast commitment to the safety and protection of their fellow citizens and, sadly, sometimes lose their own lives in the protection of their communities.

Each year, hundreds of public safety officers nationwide lose their lives and thousands more are injured while performing their duties. And while these benefits can never be a substitute for the loss of a loved one, the families of all these fallen heroes deserve this financial support from the Federal government.

The PSOB program was established in 1976 to authorize a one-time financial payment to the eligible survivors of Federal, State, and local public safety officers who die in the line of duty. While there had been various efforts over the years to improve the program leading up to 2003, the benefits did not extend to officers suffering a fatal heart attack or stroke from a work-related, non-traumatic injury, such as stress or strain from the job.

The Hometown Heroes Act of 2003 expanded PSOB coverage to ensure that the survivors of public safety officers who die of heart attacks or strokes in the line of duty or within 24 hours of a

triggering effect while on duty—regardless of whether a traumatic injury is present at the time of the heart attack or stroke—are eligible to receive financial benefits. Ensuring public safety is dangerous, grueling, and stressful work. A first responder's chances of suffering a heart attack or stroke exponentially increases when he or she puts on heavy equipment and rushes into a burning building or gets into a shootout with dangerous criminals. Since enactment of the Hometown Heroes law, the Department of Justice has approved 373 claims. This is 373 families who have received this important support in the face of a tragedy. The families of these brave public servants deserve coverage under the PSOB program and I am grateful that Congress was able to pass legislation to make sure the law covered these situations.

Over the past few years I have increasingly sought ways to improve the PSOB program. Last year, as part of the National Defense Authorization Act, I was successful in adding to that legislation the Dale Long Act. The inclusion of this amendment fixed coverage gaps in the Federal PSOB program by extending benefits to private, non-emergency medical services—EMS—volunteers and personnel. In Vermont alone, this change covers an estimated 1,200 EMS personnel for the program. This legislation also streamlined what had been an unwieldy and unnecessarily long appeals process for claimants, clarified the list of eligible survivor recipients, and eliminated an artificial distinction under current law to include vascular ruptures as a type of injury that would make a public safety officer's survivors qualified for Hometown Heroes benefits. Since 2012, as a result of the Dale Long Act's enactment, an additional 23 Hometown Heroes cases have been approved.

Finally, I want to recognize the outstanding work of Director Denise O'Donnell and her staff at the Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance. Under Director O'Donnell's leadership, her dedicated staff has put into place significant reforms and improvements to the program that have increased efficiency, transparency, and communication with the survivors of fallen first responders with pending claims. They are putting to good use the new statutory provisions that were enacted as part of the Dale Long Act provisions that make the program more cost effective and easier for administrators and claimants to find resolution. As a former prosecutor, Director O'Donnell understands the importance of this program to first responders across the country and she has worked very hard to listen to their concerns and act on them. I know the staff members within the PSOB program office recognize the solemnity and importance of the work they do and recognize that each case represents a family that has endured a great sacrifice. They carry out their duties with

the respect these cases deserve and I thank them as they continue to carry out the promise Congress made to America's first responders over 30 years ago.

Public safety officers are part of the bedrock of our Nation. We must continue to recognize their hard work and selfless dedication to communities across this country and ensure that they and their families have the protections they need and most certainly deserve.

JAMES NOMINATION

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, the process for running these nominees through the Senate is unnecessary and contrived simply to ignore a number of Republican concerns.

I do not oppose all the nominees, however. I wish to strongly support the confirmation of Deborah James for Secretary of the U.S. Air Force. With three Air Force installations in Oklahoma—Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City, Altus Air Force Base, and Vance Air Force Base in Enid—the Air Force has long been a part of the fabric of the State of Oklahoma. Oklahoma is home to five major military installations between the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Army. They employ thousands of Oklahomans and contract work throughout the State being responsible for a tremendous role in Oklahoma's economy. These installations enjoy the strong support of the communities in which they are located and the entire State of Oklahoma.

The Senate Armed Services Committee held a nomination hearing on Ms. James back in September. In addition, I have met with Ms. James, and I have had an opportunity to discuss with her my concerns about this unprecedented period in which the readiness and capabilities of the Air Force are at significant risk because of budget cuts and sequestration.

For example, the Air Force was forced to ground one-third of its combat coded active squadrons for a time during fiscal year 2013 and according to the Chief of Staff of the Air Force it will now cost a minimum of 10 percent more flying hours to fully retrain the grounded squadrons than it would have to simply keep them trained all along. Further, General Welsh stated that sequestration in fiscal year 2014 could force flying hours to be cut by 15 percent and within 3 to 4 months, many units would be unable to fly at rates required to maintain mission readiness.

Ms. James has over 30 years of senior homeland and national security management, policy, and program experience in government and the private sector. She served with SAIC in McLean, VA from 2002 as the president of SAIC Technical and Engineering Sector, executive vice president for communications and government affairs, and senior vice president for Homeland Security. Prior to those positions, she served as vice president for

International Operations and Marketing at United Technologies from 1998 to 2000.

She served as Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs from 1993 to 1998, overseeing all matters pertaining to the National Guard and Reserve Forces. She has significant experience working with Congress, as a former professional staff member on the House Armed Services Committee from 1983 to 1993. She has a bachelor's degree in comparative studies from Duke University and a master's degree in international affairs from Columbia University.

I believe she is very qualified and ready to start her new role. I look forward to working with Secretary James in her new role and strongly congratulate her.

However, I would like to point out that these nominations are not without controversy which may be why the Democratic majority would rather ignore the minority and change the Senate for the first time in over 200 years.

For example, Ms. Patricia Wald who the Administration nominated to serve on the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board has written that those accused of terrorism should be given access to the civilian trial court system and be afforded the protections of simple criminal defendants. These views ignore the devastating effects of terrorism and ignore our actual war against terrorism around the world. These acts are not simply criminal acts, they threaten our entire country. This should be the subject of debate in the Senate, not simply brushed aside for quick confirmations.

Earlier the Senate voted on the nominations of two district court judges for Montana. These are lifetime appointments. The Senate confirmed these judges by a wide margin, but the Senate should not simply group a number of nominations together to pass for lifetime appointments for circuit and district judicial vacancies simply because the majority does not even want to work with the minority. This session will end with continued confirmation votes. It is to the detriment of both parties if the prerogatives, priorities, and concerns of the minority are not considered in the Senate, but it will not be easily overlooked.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, it is with great pleasure that I join my friend Senator MANCHIN from West Virginia in introducing legislation authorizing a Congressional Gold Medal for United States Air Force Fighter Aces.

This bill specifically honors those American pilots who have shot down five or more enemy aircraft in aerial combat during a war or conflict in which American armed forces have participated.

Since the First World War, there have been 60,000 American fighter pilots who have taken to the air in harm's way, but only 1,444 have become fighter aces. Our bill authorizes the U.S. Mint to strike—at no cost to the

taxpayer—a medal of appropriate design to American fighter aces in recognition of their heroic military service and defense of our country's freedom, which as spanned the history of aviation warfare.

American Fighter Aces hail from every State in the Union are one of the most decorated military groups in American history. Twenty-two fighter aces have achieved the rank of admiral, and 79 have achieved the rank of general in the Army, Air Force, and Marines. And there are 19 Medal of Honor recipients.

One of those aces hailed from my home State of Oklahoma.

BG Robinson "Robbie" Risner was from Tulsa, OK, my hometown, and a fellow graduate of Tulsa Central High School in 1942. Risner then enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Force as an aviation cadet and began his career as one of America's most celebrated Fighter Aces.

After being stationed in Panama during World War II, he returned home to serve in the Oklahoma Air National Guard until he was called to fight in the Korean war. There, he flew 108 missions in his sweptwing F-86 Sabre and became an ace by shooting down eight enemy MiG-15s. He also received one of two Silver Stars in his valiant attempt to save a fellow pilot.

During the Vietnam war, General Risner flew 55 missions and led the first flight of air strikes over North Vietnam in Operation Rolling Thunder, earning him the Air Force Cross.

While flying in another raid in his F-105 Thunderchief on September 16, 1965, he took fire and was forced to bail out. He was captured and was a prisoner of war for 7 years 4 months and 27 days, serving most of his time in the infamous Hanoi Hilton. He was kept shackled for weeks at a time and spent more than 3 years in a darkened, solitary cell. In his 1973 memoir, "The Passing of the Night: Seven Years as a Prisoner of the North Vietnamese," he wrote, "I did not ask God to take me out of it. I prayed he would give me strength to endure it."

After his release in 1973, General Risner returned to the air in the F-4 Phantom II in the 1st Tactical Fighter Wing at MacDill Air Force Base, FL. He was later transferred to Cannon Air Force Base, NM, in February 1974 to command the 832d Air Division, in which he flew the F-111 Aardvark. He was promoted to brigadier general in May 1974, became vice commander of the USAF Tactical Fighter Weapons Center at Nellis Air Force Base, NV, in 1975 and retired in 1976. He spent his retirement years involved in community service projects and spoke often before gatherings of veterans and other pilots.

He was inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame in 1974 and passed away in his sleep on October 22, 2013, at the age of 88.

I salute Gen Robbie Risner and all other American fighter aces who have served our country so courageously and

selflessly. It is my honor to be associated with the introduction of this legislation today which authorizes a Congressional Gold Medal for U.S. Air Force fighter aces.

TRIBUTE TO STEPHEN LILLEY

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, any Senator will acknowledge that each of us is only as effective as the staff who support us. For nearly as long as I have been a Member of this body, I have enjoyed the benefit of the considerable abilities and expertise of Stephen Lilley. Stephen's tenure on my staff has drawn to a close, and the U.S. Senate loses a gifted lawyer and a dedicated public servant.

Stephen joined my team in 2008 as a Heyman Federal Public Service fellow and quickly demonstrated a keen understanding of the workings of the Senate and of the Judiciary Committee. Unwilling to part with either his sharp legal analysis or his good humor, we brought him on board full time as a counsel after his fellowship ended. After more outstanding work, he was soon promoted to chief counsel on the Subcommittee on Administrative Oversight and the Courts and later the Subcommittee on Crime and Terrorism.

Stephen has ably staffed hundreds of committee hearings and markups and advised me on every issue under the wide-ranging jurisdiction of the Judiciary Committee. In particular, he played a key role in the investigation of the Subcommittee on Administrative Oversight and the Courts into the use of so-called enhanced interrogation techniques in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001; he helped me during the confirmation of two Justices to the Supreme Court; he worked with me to promote and defend the role of the civil jury; and he has emerged as one of the Senate's leading experts on cybersecurity and intellectual property, facilitating immensely complex negotiations that brought us to the brink of comprehensive cyber legislation.

In addition to producing great work, Stephen elevated the work of those around him. His diligence, his ability to work well with other offices, his passion for doing right, and—not least—his sharp and dry wit, all made him a pleasure to work with. I particularly wish to thank his wife Jaynie and his daughter Mary Win for supporting Stephen and for sharing him with us.

Stephen's hard work brought him success before his arrival at the Senate, whether at Princeton University, where he graduated summa cum laude; at Yale University, where he earned his law degree; or as a clerk to Judge Thomas Ambro on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit and Judge Jeremy Fogel on the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California. I have no doubt he will find continued success in all of his future endeavors.

Theodore Roosevelt reminded us of the credit due to the man who spends