

rich here. Add together the averages, and we're still talking about poverty level income for a family of four.

The coalition of disability groups points out that the unemployment and disability programs were designed for different purposes and for the most part serve different populations. But there is an overlap estimated at about 117,000 of the 8.9 million Americans receiving disability, according to Rebecca Vallas of the National Organization of Social Security Claimants' Representatives, a leading advocacy group.

These are people who have passed through the very stringent gauntlet necessary to qualify for disability benefits, and they've also worked long enough to become eligible for unemployment. There's no justification in law or logic for offsetting one benefit by the other.

Vallas and other advocates are especially nervous that this sort of proposal encourages lawmakers to view Social Security benefits as a "piggy bank" to pay for other social programs. "It's death by a thousand paper cuts to call this a pay-for" to cover the expansion of unemployment insurance, she says.

But the idea is becoming disturbingly common in Washington. The disability-unemployment offset also appeared in President Obama's 2014 budget proposal, which called it a "smart reform . . . (to) root out duplicative or wasteful spending." (The budget hasn't been passed.)

It's anything but a "smart reform": it's a hacking away at the safety net for the disabled and unemployed that only a Scrooge would contemplate. The very idea that we should bill the disabled to pay for benefits for the jobless suggests that our national standards of fairness and civilization have fallen very, very low indeed. This is a proposal that should die in its crib.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, with that, I yield the floor and note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

VERMONT ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

Mr. LEAHY. As the longtime co-chair of the Senate National Guard Caucus, I have the honor of advocating for the amazing men and women of the National Guard and of supporting their role in protecting our Nation, both at home and abroad. It is always a great pleasure for me to be able to point to the men and women of Vermont's own National Guard as an example of everything the National Guard does right. This weekend, a battalion of the

Vermont National Guard was honored with the Army's prestigious Valorous Unit Award for their service in Afghanistan. I recognized the achievements of this acclaimed unit last week here in the Senate.

I ask unanimous consent that an article from today's Burlington Free Press commemorating the award ceremony held January 12 in Norwich, Vt., and the amazing service that led to the award be printed the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Burlington Free Press, Jan. 13, 2014]

COMMENDED FOR COURAGE: GUARD UNIT, COMBAT MEDIC HONORED FOR ACTIONS IN AFGHANISTAN

(By Sam Hemingway)

Three years after the Vermont Army National Guard concluded its largest deployment since World War II, 600 members of the mountain infantry contingent were given a Valorous Unit Award on Sunday for their service in Afghanistan.

"You served in a very hostile area," Brig. Gen. Brian Carpenter told the soldiers as they stood in formation during a ceremony at Shapiro Field House at Norwich University in Northfield. "For a unit to be recommended, as you are, takes tremendous leadership."

The award, the second highest award a military unit can receive, honored the combat performance of the 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry while it was carrying out its 2010 mission in Paktya and three other provinces in eastern Afghanistan near the Pakistani border.

The unit was attached to the active Army's 101st Airborne Division and stationed at the Herrera and Rahman Kheyl combat outposts and at the Gardez forward operating outpost. The unit is largely made up of Vermonters, but includes soldiers from Maine and New Hampshire.

Also recognized during the ceremony was combat medic Sgt. Michael Mulcahy, who was awarded the Bronze Star for Valor for his bravery during a platoon ambush that claimed the lives of two Guard soldiers, Sgt. Tristan Southworth of Walden and Sgt. Steven Deluzio of Glastonbury, Conn.

Mulcahy who was assigned to the small Herrera outpost in Paktya province, braved enemy fire during back-to-back ambushes near Mullafatee village on Aug. 22, 2010, according to a narrative detailing his exploits.

Carpenter, reading a portion of the narrative to soldiers and attendees at the ceremony, described how Mulcahy "led the way uphill through accurate heavy volumes of enemy fire" in order to reach injured soldiers.

At one point, according to the narrative, Mulcahy used his body to shield a wounded Southworth from heavy enemy fire.

"Mulcahy moved with very little cover through RPG (rocket-propelled grenade) and extremely heavy machine gun fire to . . . Southworth," the narrative said.

After determining Southworth had died, Mulcahy again risked his life to treat another wounded soldier.

Mulcahy, described by a colleague at the ceremony as a "very humble guy" went up to Southworth's parents after the ceremony. The three exchanged long, tearful embraces.

"We are proud to know him," Julie Southworth, Tristan Southworth's mother, said of Mulcahy after the ceremony ended. She said the family had not met Mulcahy previously. Mulcahy told Guard officials he did not want to be interviewed.

Carpenter, speaking of the unit award, said the 172nd Infantry carried out 4,300 combat patrols during the Afghanistan deployment. Twenty-six members were awarded Purple Hearts for injuries sustained during combat, he said.

"Their expertise in bringing decisive combat power to bear on the enemy wherever and whenever needed set the conditions for overwhelming victory and represents a phenomenal effort," the unit award narrative said in part.

The unit also served in the only province where no civilians were harmed or killed during parliamentary elections in 2010. Paktya's turnout for the elections topped 94,000, a 15 percent increase over its turnout in the previous election.

The unit also worked on various economic development and governance projects, and helped train Afghan army, police and medics.

Attending Sunday's ceremonies were U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., Rep. Peter Welch, D-Vt., Gov. Peter Shumlin and Lt. Gov. Phil Scott, who had spent the day before as an honorary Guard member. John Tracy, a veteran and Vermont office director for Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., represented Leahy. All but Scott spoke briefly at the ceremony.

"This is a really emotional day for me," said Lt. Col. Robert Charlesworth, who was based at Gardez and oversaw the 172nd Infantry's operations in Afghanistan. "To finally see these guys and gals recognized for the accomplishments that they had in Afghanistan is very satisfying."

Charlesworth, who now works at the Pentagon as a staff planner with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the gains made by the infantry unit in Paktya have mostly held up since the deployment ended.

He said the outposts at Herrera, Rahman Kheyl and Gardez where the soldiers served have been either dismantled or substantially altered since the unit left Afghanistan.

Charlesworth said he's hopeful for the future of Afghanistan as the United States continues to withdraw combat troops from the country and wind down its operations there.

"It's a pretty pivotal moment in history right now in Afghanistan," he said. "We're in the final stages of trying to put together our bi-lateral security agreement with Afghanistan to try to solidify all of the gains we helped the Afghans build over there. I think the next year is going to be critical."

During the course of Sunday's ceremony, one of the soldiers in the unit collapsed as the result of an apparent seizure. The proceedings were halted briefly while several soldiers came to his aid. The soldier, who was not identified, was able to walk under his own power out of the building. Maj. Chris Gookin, the Guard's spokesman, said later Sunday he did not believe the soldier had to be hospitalized.

Two other of the 600 soldiers who stood during the hour-long event also grew faint during the proceedings and were assisted by their comrades.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO BERNICE JOSEPH

• Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, today I wish to honor the life and achievements of Bernice Joseph, who committed her life to improving our State through education reform and to ensuring the success of Alaska Native students.

As the vice chancellor and executive dean of the College of Rural and Community Development at the University

of Alaska Fairbanks, Ms. Joseph played an important role in advancing university services to Alaska Native and rural students throughout 160 communities within the State of Alaska. As a member of the university's senior management, she was a respected leader throughout the University of Alaska system and throughout the State. It has been said that if it had not been for Bernice and her work to build the College of Rural and Community Development, many would not have been able to earn their college degree.

From 1995 to 2000 Bernice served as assistant professor at UAF in the Department of Alaska Native and Rural Development. Prior to her work at the university, Bernice served as deputy commissioner of the Alaska Department of Community and Economic Development, overseeing rural development programs as the tribal liaison and as a key advisor to Governor Tony Knowles. She worked tirelessly to strengthen rural Alaska communities and was a conduit in bringing rural Alaska concerns to the attention of the administration. She also served her community in many ways, including as a trustee for the Greater Fairbanks Community Hospital Foundation.

As I reflect on her short time on this earth, I realize that she achieved so much. Bernice advanced our State's dialogue on Native education. In her 2005 keynote address to the Alaska Federation of Natives, during which she summarized her journey as a leader, she said:

We are all too familiar with the statistics facing Alaska Natives about educational attainment, suicide, alcohol and drug abuse and the number of Alaska Natives in prison. Education is the key to overcoming many of the barriers Alaska Natives face. Yet, it must be an education that is sensitive to Native Ways of Knowing.

She was tireless in working to help our State's leaders understand that a strong cultural foundation and an education system that values Alaska Native knowledge are vital to the success of our Native students. One of her greatest joys was attending college graduation ceremonies across rural Alaska.

Living in Fairbanks, and originally from Nulato, Ms. Joseph maintained her personal connections to her heritage and culture. She went to fish camp every summer and enjoyed moose hunting with her husband. She did it all, from the bush to the boardroom and in 2012 was named citizen of the year by the Alaska Federation of Natives.

She will continue to be an inspiration to leaders, both current and emerging, throughout Alaska. The impacts of her contributions to ensure that our education system is relevant to Native students will be felt for generations.●

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message from the President of the United States was communicated to

the Senate by Mr. Williams, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGE REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate a message from the President of the United States submitting a nomination which was referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Development.

(The message received today is printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 2:02 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. 2279. An act to amend the Solid Waste Disposal Act relating to review of regulations under such Act and to amend the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 relating to financial responsibility for classes of facilities.

H.R. 3811. An act to require notification of individuals of breaches of personally identifiable information through Exchanges under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bills were read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 2279. An act to amend the Solid Waste Disposal Act relating to review of regulations under such Act and to amend the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 relating to financial responsibility for classes of facilities; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

H.R. 3811. An act to require notification of individuals of breaches of personally identifiable information through Exchanges under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-4225. A communication from the Chairman, Federal Maritime Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission's Fiscal Year 2013 Performance and Accountability Report; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4226. A communication from the Administrator, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Agency Financial Report for fiscal year 2013; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4227. A communication from the Secretary of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Department of Health and Human Services' Semiannual Report of the Inspector General for the period

from April 2013 through September 2013; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4228. A communication from the Associate General Counsel for General Law, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a vacancy in the position of Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 7, 2013; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4229. A communication from the Associate General Counsel for General Law, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a vacancy in the position of Under Secretary, National Protection and Program Directorate, Department of Homeland Security, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 7, 2014; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4230. A communication from the Chairman, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission's Fiscal Year 2013 Performance and Accountability Report; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4231. A communication from the Acting Chairman of the Consumer Product Safety Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission's Financial Report for fiscal year 2013; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4232. A communication from the Secretary of Education, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Department's Semiannual Report to Congress on Audit Follow-up for the period of April 1, 2013 through September 30, 2013; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4233. A communication from the Acting Chairman of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission's Performance and Accountability Report for fiscal year 2013; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4234. A communication from the Director, U.S. Trade and Development Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Agency's Performance and Accountability Report for fiscal year 2013; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4235. A communication from the Director, Office of General Counsel and Legal Policy, Office of Government Ethics, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Post-Employment Conflict of Interest Regulations; Exempted Senior Employee Positions" (RIN3209-AA14) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 6, 2014; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4236. A communication from the Associate General Counsel for General Law, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a vacancy in the position of Under Secretary for Management, Department of Homeland Security, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 7, 2014; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4237. A communication from the Associate General Counsel for General Law, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a vacancy in the position of Deputy Secretary, Department of Homeland Security, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 13, 2014; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4238. A communication from the Chairman of the Federal Trade Commission,