

struggle continues until the day I can once again have my mom at my side. I hope other families don't have to endure this pain.

There are 11 million stories in America, many of them just like this. Hard-working men and women, law-abiding families, viable parts of our churches and our communities, who had the courage to leave everything behind and come to this great Nation. Those of us who are immigrants to this country, which includes the Presiding Officer and myself—at least my mother—thank our lucky stars we were given this chance. My mother was an immigrant to this country and her son is a U.S. Senator from Illinois. She was brought here at the age of 2. Her naturalization certificate is in my office upstairs. I am very proud of it. It is a reminder to me and a reminder to anyone who visits me that this is a nation of immigrants. We are a nation that thrives with the diversity of our immigration and the energy they bring, the courage they bring, leaving everything behind to come to this country. That is the family of the Presiding Officer, and that was my family. That is our story, but that is America's story. That is who we are.

Have we reached the point where we cannot even discuss future immigration in the House of Representatives? Have we reached a point where we cannot even bring the matter to the floor for a vote? Are we going to ignore what that means to this family and millions just like them, what it means to the thousands of kids presenting themselves at the border?

We are better than that. America is better than that. When we embrace our diversity, when we embrace immigration as part of who we are in America, we will be stronger for it and not just in the creation of new businesses and jobs. These immigrants are some of the hardest working people in America. They take the toughest jobs that a lot of Americans would not touch, but they know that is what an immigrant does.

What is their dream? That their babies, their sons and daughters, are going to have a better life. Thank goodness that story has been repeated over and over and over. That defines who we are in America.

Now—1 year later—the House of Representatives is about to throw up its hands and walk away from even addressing immigration issues. What a heartbreaking situation. What an abdication of responsibility.

I know there is a partisan difference between the House and the Senate, but I honestly believe that if the Speaker had the political courage to call the comprehensive immigration bill—the bipartisan bill that passed the Senate—we would find enough Republican House Members who would stand and vote with the Democrats and pass it. Sure, there will be critics of the Speaker—he shouldn't have done it—but that is what leadership calls for, for the Speaker to have that courage and get it done. I hope he will.

One year is long time to wait—and for these families, years and years, some of them with broken dreams that will never be fulfilled, families who have been split up and try to survive. But that is our responsibility, not just for DREAMers but for our country, to make sure we renew this commitment to our diversity and to immigration.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HIRONO). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

REMEMBERING HOWARD BAKER

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, it is with great sadness that I announce the passing of one of the Senate's most towering figures, Senator Howard Baker.

The Senate sends its sincere condolences to the family of Senator Baker. In particular, we want to pass along our deep sympathies to his wife Nancy Landon Kassebaum Baker. Many of us served alongside Nancy in the Senate, and we know this must be a difficult moment for her.

Senator Baker was a true pathbreaker. He served as Tennessee's first popularly elected Republican Senator since Reconstruction. He served as America's first Republican majority leader since the time of Eisenhower. He served his Nation with distinction as a member of the U.S. Navy, as Chief of Staff to President Reagan, and as our country's Ambassador to Japan.

Senator Baker truly earned his nickname, the "Great Conciliator." I know he will be remembered with fondness by Members of both political parties.

Again, let me express the Senate's sympathies to the Baker family. He will be missed by the Senate and by his country.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Madam President, as the distinguished Republican leader has said, this body—the U.S. Senate—has lost a member of its family, Tennesseean Howard Baker.

We know of his long and distinguished career. He served three terms in the Senate. He served as minority leader and ended his career as majority leader. He was an earnest man and worked with any and all Members of this body in passing legislation for the good of America.

As the Republican leader has mentioned, he worked under the direction of President George W. Bush as Ambassador to Japan. He was President Reagan's Chief of Staff. He was someone who could do everything.

He was well liked by Democrats and Republicans. He was a fine man. I did not know him as well as my colleague the Republican leader or of course the two sitting Tennessee Senators.

He enjoyed an illustrious career in public service and it was accomplished, everyone said, by his hard work. He loved foreign affairs and did a great job. He was motivated by his heartfelt desire to do good in the world. Our thoughts go to his family and his wife, whom I had the good fortune to serve with.

I do say this: The two fine men who now serve in the Senate from Tennessee, I am confident, learned a lot from Howard Baker because the senior Senator from Tennessee is also a person who wants to try to work things out. The junior Senator from Tennessee and I have had many conversations. I believe he also wants to be someone who works things out.

So my sympathy goes to Senator Baker's family and friends, especially the two Senators from Tennessee, who I am sure are heartbroken as a result of the loss of their mentor, friend, one of the great people to come out of Tennessee, and there have been plenty.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, I wish to speak very briefly this afternoon to acknowledge a hero. I come to the floor just after the announcement has been made about a leader in the Senate, Senator Baker. While I did not have the privilege of serving at the same time as he, my father did. They were close friends, not only Senator Baker but Senator Kassebaum. My heart, my thoughts go out to the family. The contributions clearly from Senator Baker on so many different levels are so greatly appreciated.

TRIBUTE TO MASTER SERGEANT ROGER D. SPARKS

Madam President, I would like to spend just about 5 minutes this afternoon speaking of another hero, and this is a man who has demonstrated above and beyond his commitment, his service to the United States. I would like to speak about MSgt Roger D. Sparks.

It is my duty as a Pararescueman to save lives and to aid the injured. I will be prepared at all times to perform my assigned duties quickly and efficiently, placing these duties before personal desires and comforts. The things I do, that others may live.

"The things I do, that others may live"—this is the solemn oath by which all pararescue airmen pledge their allegiance and dedicate their service to our country. It is the sacred creed of a most honorable profession.

Alaskans are extremely proud of the exceptionally heroic achievements of the Combat Search and Rescue Airmen assigned to the 176th Wing in the Alaska Air National Guard. These airmen embody the core values of the Air

Force—integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all they do—and are undoubtedly the best our country has to offer.

The National Guard Bureau recently confirmed that the rescue squadrons of the 176th Wing comprise the busiest Combat Search and Rescue unit in the entire U.S. Air Force. This of course brings great pride to us as Alaskans. These brave men and women risk their lives every day so others may live, and I am honored to thank them for their service and recognize the extraordinary bravery of one of their own.

I am pleased to honor one of these heroic pararescue airmen, specifically a parajumper—or a PJ—one MSgt Roger D. Sparks from the 212th Rescue Squadron out of Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. In the near future, the Air Force will award Sergeant Sparks with the Silver Star Medal for gallantry in combat during a daring, lifesaving rescue in the face of extreme danger in Afghanistan on November 14, 2010.

On that day, Sergeant Sparks—pictured here; the gentleman in the background; there he is with his pararescue team—responded to cries of help from an Army platoon pinned down on all sides by a fierce and coordinated Taliban assault.

What started as a relatively routine rescue mission—and routine by their standards is still extremely heroic by any normal standard—this rescue mission quickly broke down into a dire situation that claimed the lives of five U.S. soldiers but could have been an absolutely catastrophic loss of life had it not been for the bravery and selfless actions of Sergeant Sparks and his team.

At the time of this rescue, the PJ team had been providing dedicated medical evacuation support for the 101st Airborne unit during Operation Bulldog Bite. This was a coalition offensive which was aimed at driving the enemy out of the Watapur Valley in the Kunar Province of Afghanistan near its eastern border with Pakistan.

Throughout the 5-day operation, the team rescued 49 casualties and executed 30 hoist operations, most of which were done while they were exposed to enemy fire. The most significant of all these missions though took place on November 14.

To paraphrase the account from Sergeant Sparks' team commander, Capt. Koa Bailey, what began as a relatively routine rescue operation for two wounded and one deceased soldier quickly turned into anything but routine. As the rescue team approached the battle zone and took on fire, they quickly realized the situation was rapidly deteriorating for the U.S. soldiers on the ground.

According to Captain Bailey, a different operator came on the radio, indicating that the first operator was hit. You could hear the fear in the guy's voice. While we were listening it went from two to six wounded. So with complete disregard for their own safety,

Captain Bailey and Sergeant Sparks were lowered into the battle amidst a hail of enemy fire.

It was later determined that the hoist line used to lower them into combat was actually even struck by several rounds. As soon as their boots hit the ground, a rocket-propelled grenade exploded less than 20 feet away, knocking both airmen to the ground. Quickly gathering themselves, Sergeant Sparks and Captain Bailey took charge of the beleaguered platoon who were trapped in a furious, chaotic fight.

Sergeant Sparks and Captain Bailey were on their own to handle the situation the best they could, with extremely limited first aid equipment and no ground artillery support. Over the next 5 hours, as bombs hammered enemy positions and bullets spattered against the rocks, Sergeant Sparks abandoned cover to locate, consolidate, and treat the wounded.

According to his team commander, Sergeant Sparks selflessly exposed himself to destructive enemy fire, in order to save American lives, competently handling the treatment of nine patients during the worst possible mass casualty situation.

Taken from the narrative:

When Sergeant Sparks exhausted his medical supplies, he improvised using belts, T-shirts or boot strings in a desperate attempt to keep his patients alive. After assembling all the casualties in a central location, Sergeant Sparks gathered body armor and positioned it around the helpless soldiers to protect and shield them from enemy fire. Repeatedly returning to the most critically wounded, Sergeant Sparks performed vital medical procedures in a deliberate process to ensure that each of the soldiers received continued care and attention until airlift arrived.

He feverishly triaged chest wounds, punctured lungs, shattered hips, fist-sized blast holes, eviscerated stomachs, and arterial bleeders with extremely limited medical supplies and only the light of the moon piercing the darkness of the remote mountaintop. Upon return of evacuation aircraft, Sergeant Sparks directed the hoisting of the most critically injured and briefed the crews on each casualty's injuries and medical requirements, choosing to remain behind until the last man departed.

Sergeant Spark's quick and composed actions ensured nine soldiers received medical care as quickly as possible amidst constant enemy fire and despite extremely limited resources. Sergeant Sparks' leadership and courageous actions saved lives and allowed the remainder of the infantry platoon to continue with their assigned mission. His extraordinary efforts under direct fire and in immediate danger to his own life resulted in saving four American lives and one host nation civilian as well as returning four soldiers killed in action to their families.

Tragically, the fierce battle ultimately claimed the lives of five soldiers that day. All told, only eight soldiers of the platoon involved in the 6-hour battle were left with no visible wounds. However, if it were not for the courage and selfless action of Sergeant Sparks,

Captain Bailey, and the entire rescue team, the loss of life would have been much higher.

I would like to take this opportunity to honor Sergeant Sparks' brave teammates, who also disregarded their own personal safety throughout their support of Operation Bulldog Bite so that others might live. These men are: SSgt Aaron Parcha, SSgt Jimmy Settle, SSgt Ted Sierocinski, TSgt Brandon Hill, MSgt Brandon Stuemke, SMSgt Christopher "Doug" Widener, Capt. Marcus Maris, and Capt. Koalii Bailey.

There were many heroes on that day, including these pararescuemen and the soldiers that were engaged in battle. But I am particularly honored to congratulate MSgt Roger Sparks on the award of the Silver Star and thank him and his family for their dedicated and selfless service to our Nation.

As with all the members of the 176th Wing, I am absolutely in awe of his achievement, eternally grateful for his service, and sincerely proud to have him serving in the great State of Alaska.

I ask unanimous consent that the complete text of Master Sergeant Sparks' Silver Star Medal citation be printed in the RECORD.

CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF THE
SILVER STAR TO ROGER D. SPARKS

Master Sergeant Roger D. Sparks distinguished himself by gallantry in connection with military operations against an armed enemy of the United States as a Pararescue Jumper assigned to the 212th Rescue Squadron in the Watapur Valley, Afghanistan on 14 November 2010. On that date, Sergeant Sparks responded to a call in support of Operation BULLDOG BITE and the Army's 101st Airborne Division. While in the air, circling the objective, the ground situation grew extremely hostile and the number of casualties increased from two to six. As a result of the increased fighting in the area, Sergeant Sparks' team took the lead position for the evacuation mission. With limited information regarding the ground situation, Sergeant Sparks and Captain Bailey began their 40 foot descent from the helicopter via a hoist to the ground and immediately began taking enemy fire. Bullets flew by the two pararescuers and the lowering cable was hit three times while they dangled in the air. They yelled for rapid descent and the flight engineer lowered them to the ground with enemy rounds flying all around. Upon reaching the ground, the pair was assaulted with a rocket propelled grenade. Exploding just 20 feet away, the blast knocked them both off their feet. As the gunner engaged the enemy with danger close rounds, Sergeant Sparks ran approximately 70 yards uphill, to take cover. As he approached the tree, it was blown to pieces by another enemy fired rocket propelled grenade. Still under intense enemy fire, with bombs hammering danger close enemy positions, Sergeant Sparks abandoned cover to provide aid to the wounded. Despite continued enemy fire and with no concern for his personal safety, Sergeant Sparks immediately performed lifesaving measures for nine wounded Soldiers. He feverishly triaged chest wounds, punctured lungs, shattered hips, fist sized blast holes, eviscerated stomachs, and arterial bleeders with limited medical supplies and only the light of the moon. Upon return of evacuation aircraft, Sergeant Sparks directed evacuation of the injured while briefing crews on each casualty's injuries and

medical needs; choosing to remain behind until the last man departed. His extraordinary efforts under direct, immediate danger to his own life resulted in saving four American lives, one Host Nation civilian and returning four Soldiers killed in action to their families. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Sergeant Sparks has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

REMEMBERING HOWARD BAKER

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I rise to speak about the missing girls from Nigeria who on the 73rd day are still held in captivity. But before I do, as a Senator I would like to express my sorrow to hear about the passing of one of the great Senators, Howard Baker of Tennessee.

Many Senators will come to the floor to extol what a great Senator he was, what a great leader he was. I also want to take a moment to express my sympathy to his widow, another Senator, Senator Nancy Kassebaum. When I came to the Senate, there was only one other woman, and that was Senator Nancy Kassebaum, then representing the great State of Kansas. She was a great friend to me. We served on the HELP Committee. We worked together over many years. Then Senator Kassebaum retired.

She thought she was going back to Kansas, but she found herself in the arms of Howard Baker. We watched a love story unfold that was so endearing to many of us. Senator Ted Kennedy and I were invited to the wedding of Howard Baker and Nancy Kassebaum. After the vows there was a beautiful reception and they played the music. Howard and Nancy twirled and whirled around the floor. Then they turned to the crowd. Ted Kennedy and I rushed out. I grabbed Howard, he grabbed Nancy, and we did the bipartisan boogie through the night.

Those were the days that one remembers. That is the kind of spirit the Senate had. That is the kind of spirit that Senator Howard Baker had—that you could argue, you could debate, and so on, but deep down the Senate should be the saucer that cools irrational passions of the time. He was a great leader. He created this atmosphere of being able to come together and solve problems. So whether it was on the Senate floor or whether it was on the dance floor, he really spoke about the need for bipartisanship. Senator Nancy Kassebaum Baker is exactly the same way.

So remembering with such fondness, we want to express our condolences about him and certainly to her as just one woman to another.

NIGERIAN SCHOOL CHILDREN

I also come to the floor today to talk about another sadness, the sadness about the fact that the Nigerian school girls who were abducted by Boko Haram continue to be held in captivity. I come to the floor to say that just because it is not in the headline does not

mean that these girls are not still in danger for what has happened to them.

We need to continue to speak up and speak out. That is not to minimize Iraq. That is not to minimize Iran. This is not to minimize all of the other problems facing the world. But we all had Web sites and hashtags and so on saying: Bring our girls back home. I am here today saying to Boko Haram: We have not forgotten. We are proud that our President sent 80 troops to Chad to assist in the effort to locate these kidnapped girls.

We understand that there continues to be the search effort. We do not want it to be a recovery effort. We need it to be a rescue effort. These girls were kidnapped. It is despicable. It is unacceptable. They are threatening to sell these girls into trafficking. Now after holding them for 73 days, I have no idea what they have had to endure.

It goes on. They are continuing to kidnap children. They are kidnapping girls, some as young as 3 and 4. That was the other day. They are also kidnapping little boys. What kind of organization is this? Now, in response to the violence there, I know we, the women of the Senate, signed a letter to President Obama asking for international sanctions against Boko Haram, and that they be added to the U.N. Al Qaeda sanctions list. The United Nations actually acted. They actually acted promptly. So now they are on the terrorist list. We need to take all of the appropriate actions that support the sanctions that go with it.

I am hopeful we can find these girls. But we cannot stop our advocacy for them, for close to 100 girls, and now for the new children that have been kidnapped—boys as well as girls.

We need to be able to take all necessary international steps that are legal to be able to rescue them and bring them home. Now this terrible, terrible situation has also generated the conversation about the education of children around the world, particularly girls. For some reason, there are those around the world who do not want to see girls get a basic education. Malala, who wrote her book about it, took a bullet wound in her brain because she wanted to go to school, because she wanted to learn to read. As she said: One child, one book at a time, we can change the world.

We have put money in the Federal checkbook in foreign ops to really help with the education of the children around the world. Right now there are 62 million girls throughout the world who are not in school. They are not in school for two reasons. They are not in school because of the lack of capacity, like books and teachers, and they are not in school because of the bigotry against them.

We need to do something. I know that we are moving towards a vote. I say to Boko Haram: Let these girls go. Let's bring them back home. I say for those who are searching for them: Do not lose heart. We have got to deal

with that. But we also have to come to grips with the fact that we cannot let millions of girls around the world not have access to education. Education is as important as water. We need water to live. You need education to make a life for yourself.

We look forward to working with our colleagues across the aisle. We hope to move the foreign ops bill that has money in the Federal checkbook to do this. When we return from the break I will have more to say. I hope it will be: Thank God we found them and we brought them back to their mothers and fathers.

Millions of these girls who fight for their right to attend school are risking their lives. Facing harassment, threats, and even violence to get an education and have the opportunity to thrive and succeed.

Additionally girls who are in school often do not have access to adequate supplies needed to do their work, lack basic bathroom facilities, and that provide them security and safety.

They lack trained teachers and adequate learning environments.

This is unacceptable. We must make a real effort to address this far-reaching global crisis.

This kidnapping of the Nigerian school girls also illustrates the horrifying reality of human trafficking.

Over 20 million people throughout the world are victims of human trafficking.

This is something that we cannot accept.

The U.S. Government is committed to addressing this problem.

I am happy that the State Department has announced that USAID will be launching a new program called "Let Girls Learn".

"Let Girls Learn" provides \$231.6 million for new programs to support primary and secondary education and safe learning.

In Nigeria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Jordan, and Guatemala.

Making sure that girls receive an education needs to be a priority for all of us.

When girls are educated their families and communities are better off.

Girls who receive basic education are three times less likely to contract HIV.

Education helps women increase their income, allowing them to better support their families and contribute to their nation's economy and overall success.

The United States must continue to be a leader in the fight to make sure girls across the world are able to receive an education in a safe environment.

I also call on all nations to make this a priority and to put their words of support into action, and for governments around the world to make every effort to ensure that children can receive an education in a safe environment.

Education is a basic human right that should not be deprived regardless of where you live or where you come from.