

Senate, and have continuously fought to uphold the promises we have made with the men and women who served on behalf of our Nation. I am continually looking for opportunities to improve the lives of our veterans who have served honorably and have sacrificed, sometimes with their lives, in support of our country.

They deserve every benefit they earned and what we have promised them, but they have suffered a grave injustice in this body. Late last year the Senate, without my support, agreed to a budget that cut retirement benefits of our veterans, reducing the cost-of-living adjustment. I certainly could not support this provision.

Veterans and the American people are rightly upset. I want to share some of the letters I have received from our veterans and other Arkansans. David Mullins from Jonesboro wrote:

I am a 20 year veteran of the United States Army. I retired as a Sergeant First Class and I am currently drawing military retirement. I joined the Army when I was 18 years old and I wouldn't do anything different. Even though it was very hard at times, I know that was what I was supposed to be doing. Less than 1% of the American population serves in the military and of those only about 13% actually retire with 20 years or more of service. So we are talking about less than .02 percent of the population. It is really appalling that, after sacrificing my freedoms to protect those of my fellow citizens, this is how we are treated. America is out of touch.

I agree with David. In a letter I sent to the Armed Services Committee leadership in the House and Senate, I equated retirement compensation cuts to reaching into these individuals' retirement accounts and taking that money from them. This is unconscionable.

Diane from Hot Springs, AR, said in a letter:

I am truly disgusted by the new deal that cuts military pensions but doesn't touch benefits for any of the politicians. I would have no problems if it was an across the board cut. This is the best example of what is wrong with our government. Cut benefits for those that make real sacrifices for their country. They take lower pay and separation from family.

I agree with Diane. It is not fair. Our veterans should not be the ones bearing the burden for irresponsible spending. We need to cut spending and put our country on the path of fiscal responsibility, but it should not come at the expense of our Nation's military retirees. These are the only Americans who are being asked to sacrifice under the budget agreement. It is wrong to single out our servicemembers for what amounts to \$6 billion over 10 years, representing a .02-percent reduction. We need to right this wrong so our military retirees and their families have one less thing to worry about.

Terry Williamson from Jacksonville, AR, wrote:

I just retired from 26 years of active duty serving my country in the Air Force. I must say I was shocked and disappointed to learn that the pay of retirees are being offered up

to be reduced by 1% cost of living as part of the budget deal. I feel that I have lived up to and beyond my part in serving my country. I have not even received my first retirement check and yet already my government is short changing my and all veterans who have served and fulfilled their end of the deal, defending this great nation. I ask you to do what you can to not allow this to happen to a small portion of society that gave more to their country than most.

Terry, we are working to make sure you get the full retirement you earned. We are seeking ways to undo this cut and fully restore military pay.

In January Congress took the first step toward restoring veterans' COLAs with the passage of the Omnibus appropriations bill. This exempted medically retired disabled veterans and survivors from the COLA reductions. But there is more work to do. The good news is we are on your side.

Senator AYOTTE introduced the Keeping Our Promises to Our Military Heroes Act that repeals the COLA reduction for all military retirees. I am certainly proud to support that legislation.

Arkansans want Congress to fully restore military retiree benefits as soon as possible. I am committed to raising this priority at every possible opportunity until justice is realized for these military families. While there has been much discussion about restoring these benefits in future legislation, this should be done at the earliest opportunity in order to provide certainty for our military retirees' financial future.

To our Nation's military retirees, I am committed to this fight. You have earned these benefits. Congress must correct the wrong and restore your full retirement pay. As always, thank you for your service to our country.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

HILL FARMSTEAD BREWERY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, Vermont is home to hundreds of world-class small businesses, each of which dots our economic landscape with their unique and often award-winning offerings. Our reputation for quality has made the "Vermont brand" one that is valued and sought after by consumers across the Nation—and increasingly also across the globe. One burgeoning

industry in Vermont is that of craft beer. In fact, the State is becoming almost as well known for its craft beers as it is for its maple syrup.

One such successful small brewery, the Hill Farmstead Brewery, was featured in the January 18, 2014, edition of the New York Times. After a planned expansion next year, the brewery's owner, Shaun Hill, plans to cap production at 150,000 gallons per year. His successful business model, and highly sought after brew, as the article states, "offers lessons in how limiting production can bring success."

Vermont's small-State appeal attracts business owners large and small. The Hill Farmstead Brewery is just one example of the successes Vermont's economy boast. I ask unanimous consent that a copy of "Craft Beer, the (Very) Limited Edition," from the January 18 New York Times be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the article was ordered to appear in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the New York Times, Jan. 18, 2014]
CRAFT BEER, THE (VERY) LIMITED EDITION
(By Claire Martin)

Two weeks ago, a beer drinker in Fresno, Calif., called Hill Farmstead Brewery in Vermont to ask where he could buy its craft beers. "You have to drive to the airport, get a ticket, fly to Burlington, rent a car and drive an hour and a half to the brewery," the owner, Shaun Hill, replied with a laugh. But he wasn't joking.

Hill Farmstead, in the hamlet of Greensboro, produces just 60,000 gallons of beer annually. The beer is available for purchase only at the brewery and in roughly 20 Vermont bars. In addition, Mr. Hill sends 12 kegs to distributors in New York City and Philadelphia a few times a year.

Next year, after several buildings are expanded and new equipment is installed, Mr. Hill plans to cap production at 150,000 gallons a year—forever. (For context, the Russian River Brewing Company, a craft brewery in California, made 437,100 gallons last year, and Dogfish Head Craft Brewery in Delaware produced 6.3 million gallons.)

Hill Farmstead is one of at least three Vermont craft breweries that are churning out small batches of highly sought-after beers and have owners with firm plans to keep the operations small. Mr. Hill's story offers lessons in how limiting production can bring success.

Mr. Hill, 34, has been honing his brewing technique for nearly 20 years. He first learned to make beer for a high school science-fair project, then started a homebrew club in college and later worked as the head brewer at two other Vermont breweries, the Shed and the Trout River Brewing Company, as well as one in Copenhagen, Norrebro Bryghus.

Two beers created during Mr. Hill's tenure at Norrebro Bryghus won gold medals in 2010 at the World Beer Cup, an international beer competition, and a third earned a silver medal.

Several months before these accolades, Mr. Hill returned to Vermont to begin construction on Hill Farmstead Brewery on a former dairy farm that he and his brother, Darren, a woodworker, inherited from their grandfather. "I wanted to make beer, I wanted to live in this place and I wanted to help my family and make sure I had the finances available to take care of this land in perpetuity," Mr. Hill says.

This wasn't his first attempt at starting a brewery, but it was the first time he was able to obtain financial backing. "Ten years ago or even still five years ago," he says, "it was very difficult to find private investment or to convince banks to loan money to a start-up."

In the past decade, craft beer production has thrived, attracting investors with deep pockets. In 2012, national retail sales for craft beer were \$11.9 billion, according to the most recent figures from the Brewers Association.

While Mr. Hill was in Denmark, where American craft beer was starting to become popular, he was able to borrow \$80,000 from a small group of European and American lenders who he felt respected his vision and abilities.

From the start, his philosophy has been to make the best beer possible without pursuing what he calls "infinite, boundless growth." He operates under the belief that beer is a perishable item, "just like lettuce or broccoli," he says, and should be consumed locally, not shipped long distances.

Mr. Hill has a staff of six, including two assistant brewers who harvest yeast and transfer beer into kegs, but he personally makes all of the brewery's offerings—pale ales, stouts and porters—using modern stainless steel tanks and traditional wooden barrels, like those used in winemaking.

The beers are known for having "a sense of balance that isn't common in a lot of new breweries," says Jeff Baker, the bar manager of the Farmhouse Tap and Grill in Burlington, which serves the beers. "They're hoppy, but they're not super-bitter and they don't exhaust your palate."

For entrepreneurs who measure success in more than just financial terms, it's still crucial to have a viable business, says Bo Burlingham, author of "Small Giants: Companies That Choose to Be Great Instead of Big." "The challenge for a lot of small companies who have nonfinancial goals is that you can't let that get in the way of having a very financially solid business," Mr. Burlingham says. "You'd better have a sound business model, steady gross margins, a healthy balance sheet and margins you protect."

For Mr. Hill, financial stability came quickly. He says the brewery began turning a profit after just one year.

Demand surged last February when users of the beer-review site Ratebeer.com deemed Hill Farmstead the best brewery in the world—after having anointed Mr. Hill as the best new brewer in 2010.

Now Mr. Hill says he fields questions like the one from the Fresno caller every day. He estimates that thousands of people have made long-distance beer runs to Hill Farmstead Brewery, some traveling from as far as New Zealand, Norway and Japan.

Customers wait in line for one to four hours to buy bottles and two-liter growlers of the beers, many of which are named for Mr. Hill's ancestors (Edward, Abner, Florence). The brewery once sold an entire batch of beer—500 gallons—in one day.

As his beer's popularity has risen, he has sometimes worked 18-hour days. Some small-business owners who have achieved financial stability choose to delegate a significant portion of their work to employees, but Mr. Hill says he won't be doing that.

And the notion of moving production to an industrial park, where craft breweries are commonly found, holds no appeal for him. He has decided to invest in infrastructure and better equipment that will make his current operation more efficient.

"I didn't start this brewery so I could keep growing and move it away from here; that wasn't the point," he says. "It wouldn't be

fun anymore. It wouldn't have purpose or meaning."

FAIRNESS IN DISASTER DECLARATIONS ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, this week, Senator KIRK and I introduced the Fairness in Federal Disaster Declarations Act. It is designed to ensure fairness in FEMA's consideration of whether a community will be granted Federal assistance after a disaster.

This legislation is necessary because the way FEMA evaluates whether to declare an area a Federal disaster is not working. It works against States with large populations.

From 2002 to 2012, Illinois was denied Federal disaster assistance six times. Texas was denied 11 times—for damage caused by everything from wildfires to tropical storms. Florida was denied Federal disaster assistance six times during that 10 year period, and California, New Jersey, and New York were each denied four times. FEMA's formula does not work for large, populous States, particularly those with a concentrated urban area, like Illinois.

It is not enough just to talk about the numbers, though. Each one of these disasters devastated communities. In each one of these disasters, people saw their homes and their towns destroyed.

This past November, tornadoes swept through Illinois, killing six people and destroying whole towns in my State. The cities of Washington, Gifford, and New Minden, IL, experienced some of the worst tornado damage I have ever seen. Power lines were down and public infrastructure was decimated, but because Illinois did not meet one of FEMA's criteria, we were denied Federal public assistance.

Governor Pat Quinn is going to appeal that denial, and he has Senator KIRK's and my full support for that appeal.

Illinois also was denied Federal disaster assistance after tornadoes destroyed the towns of Harrisburg and Ridgway in 2012. Eight people died after tornadoes with winds up to 200 miles per hour splintered homes, businesses, churches, and public infrastructure in those two towns. Nevertheless, the State was denied public assistance. FEMA said because Illinois has a large population, we should be able to absorb those recovery costs. When similar tornado damage happened in neighboring Joplin, MO—which has a smaller population—Federal assistance was granted.

It is not just tornado damage in Illinois that has resulted in denials from FEMA for Federal assistance, and it is not just the State's per capita that has been used as FEMA's justification for the denials. Counties with a high population also have been denied. Last April, Illinois experienced major flooding both along the Mississippi River and resulting from flash flooding due to major storms.

Many communities in Cook County, including Chicago and its suburbs, ex-

perienced unprecedented flooding. But because the damage in Cook County did not meet FEMA's per capita requirement, Cook County was denied individual assistance. All of the neighboring counties were approved. Cook County was denied.

When questioned about these decisions, FEMA pointed to the factors it considers when determining if a Federal declaration is warranted. One of these factors has to do with the population of the State. If a State has a large population—more than 10 million people—it is analyzed differently than if it were smaller. The thinking is that large States have the resources necessary to absorb the recovery costs. Well, I can tell you—Illinois does not have the resources to absorb the costs of these tornadoes and flooding. Whole towns were devastated in these disasters.

The bill Senator KIRK and I introduced assigns a value to each of the six factors considered in the disaster declaration analysis. When FEMA considers individual assistance—help for people to rebuild their homes and pay for temporary housing—it will use the same, consistent factors, no matter where the disaster strikes.

The population of the State will constitute 5 percent of the analysis. Consideration of the concentration of damages will be 20 percent. The amount of trauma to the disaster area will be 20 percent. The number of special populations—such as elderly or unemployed people—will be 20 percent of the analysis. The amount of voluntary assistance in the area will be 10 percent. And the amount of insurance coverage for the type of damage incurred will be 20 percent of the analysis.

Our bill also adds a seventh consideration to FEMA's metrics—the economics of the area, which will receive 5 percent consideration. This includes factors such as the local assessable tax base, the median income as it compares to that of the State, and the poverty rate as it compares to that of the State. It is reasonable that FEMA should take into consideration the size of the State, but as the regulations stand, large States are being penalized. Assigning values to the factors will ensure that the damage to the specific community weighs more than the State's population.

After the tornadoes hit Harrisburg and Ridgway, the head of the Illinois Emergency Management Agency, Jonathon Monken, worked with locals and people from the FEMA regional office to determine if the State could apply for public assistance—money to help Mayor Gregg and others pay for the overtime accrued by all the people working around the clock to help the community dig out of the destruction. What Director Monken and the others discovered was that it would have been a waste of the State's time and resources to even apply for Federal public assistance. We did not meet FEMA's threshold.