

allowed to benefit from this discount as well.

As VA focuses on resolving homelessness, instead of just managing it, housing stability is increasingly a focus across the continuum of programs VA offers to eligible veterans. This bill will also modify VA's Grant and Per Diem Program, its largest transitional housing program, to allow VA to incentivize grantees to increase their focus on permanent housing and housing stability in support of the transitional housing program. More specifically, this bill provides VA with much needed authority to allow transitional housing providers to utilize their facility for permanent housing, and to receive a reduced per diem payment to provide case management for participating veterans. This would allow communities that are reaching critical junctures in the fight to end homelessness to repurpose existing transitional housing capacity for more pressing needs, such as permanent housing opportunities for veterans.

As many initiatives across VA have faced performance challenges, it is paramount that we continue to examine all VA initiatives and identify metrics that can be tracked to keep the Department accountable. This legislation includes a provision that would require VA to set national performance targets for entities that receive per diem funding for transitional housing and examine them to determine whether the grantee's performance merits continued funding. Further, this bill also contains a provision that would prompt VA to utilize the data it collects to better target interventions offered by its assertive community teams engaging homeless veterans on the street. Requiring a more targeted effort focused on homeless veterans who are health care "super-utilizers" will reduce unnecessary utilization of health care and, subsequently the costs for care.

Research has indicated that housing can be an effective health care intervention when paired with appropriate services and resources. At its very simplest, homelessness among veterans is preventable when there is coordination among the many services and resources available to lift a veteran up. We cannot sit by idly and allow another veteran to slip through the cracks. We must reach out and let them know when, where, and how to get the help that they need and that they have earned.

This is not a full recitation of all the provisions within this legislation. However, I hope that I have provided an appropriate overview of the major benefits this legislation would provide.

#### SAFER OFFICERS AND SAFER CITIZENS ACT OF 2015

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, I join Senators TIM SCOTT and LINDSEY GRAHAM in introducing the Safer Officers and Safer Citizens Act of 2015. This

critical legislation moves our Nation a step forward in rebuilding the trust gap between law enforcement and communities by creating a Federal grant program to supply local, State, and tribal law enforcement with body-worn cameras. I thank Senator SCOTT for his work on this bill and his leadership on such a critical issue.

Trust between law enforcement and communities is critical to the foundation of our democracy. It reinforces the legitimacy of the State to the people that the State serves. It assures the public that the people sworn to protect them will do so honorably or be held accountable when they don't. It builds transparency and promotes open government by shining a spotlight on police-citizen interaction so that no misconduct occurs in the dark. It ensures police officers that the community will see their side and not cast unmerited aspersions.

But recent police-citizen encounters in our Nation have created a trust deficit between law enforcement and the communities that they serve. Over the past year, troubling use of force incidents have occurred between police officers and citizens in places like Ferguson, MO, Baltimore, MD, and North Charleston, SC. These events spurred a national dialogue about the state of policing in America, and created an urgency for body-worn cameras.

When I served as mayor of New Jersey's largest city, I saw firsthand the difficulties law enforcement faced in keeping our communities safe. The overwhelming majority of police officers in the United States are decent and hardworking Americans who have dedicated their lives to a greater calling. But let us not mistake ourselves—we have a problem in our country. Over the past few years, trust has eroded between law enforcement and the communities they serve. The unfortunate actions of a few have cast a long shadow over the good work of many.

I am also concerned that systemic issues have contributed to eroding the trust between communities and police. It comes from decades of a failed War on Drugs. Minority communities are routinely subject to stop and frisk policies. People are stopped for "suspicious" activities like acting too nervous, acting too calm, dressing casually, or wearing expensive clothes or jewelry. The fact is that five times as many Whites report using drugs as African Americans, yet African Americans are sent to prison for drug crimes ten times that of whites. Of course a lack of trust will exist when our criminal justice system as a whole disproportionately targets minorities.

It is time we start rebuilding that trust. This bill is about transparency. The Safer Officer and Safer Citizens Act of 2015 would require that the Department of Justice give priority to States, localities, and tribal areas that have developed comprehensive body-worn camera policies that address such issues as privacy, data retention, and

victim protection. It would also give priority to jurisdictions that consult victim and juvenile advocacy groups, labor organizations, civic leadership, law enforcement professionals, and the defense bar. The bill requires States, localities, and tribal units to collect data on the effectiveness of body cameras.

Body-worn cameras will protect communities from police abuses of power and simultaneously protect police from false complaints. I am proud to join with Senators SCOTT and GRAHAM in introducing the Safer Officer and Safer Citizens Act of 2015, and I urge its speedy passage.

#### 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, this week we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the passage of landmark civil rights legislation, the Americans with Disabilities Act. The ADA outlawed discrimination on the basis of physical or developmental ability and sought to grant those with disabilities the same opportunities as other Americans.

In the past quarter century, this law has changed our social fabric as well as of our physical surroundings. Every newly built building or sidewalk with basic accommodations lets more and more of our fellow citizens live fuller lives as self-sufficient members of our communities.

Before there were curb cutouts, some Rhode Islanders couldn't cross the street. Before there were wheelchair lifts on public buses, some Rhode Islanders couldn't commute to work. Before there were assisted listening devices, some Rhode Islanders couldn't follow a professor's lecture or a pastor's sermon. Before there were Braille signs, some Rhode Islanders couldn't find a doctor's office or a child's classroom without assistance. Before there were accessible voting systems, some of us couldn't even exercise our most basic rights as citizens.

My colleague in Rhode Island's congressional delegation, Congressman JIM LANGEVIN, has a special perspective on this groundbreaking law. "As someone who has lived with the challenges of a disability both before and after the enactment of the ADA," he has said, "I have experienced firsthand the profound changes of this law on our society."

JIM was only sixteen when an accidental injury left him paralyzed. In an amazing example of optimism and courage, JIM went on to serve the people of our State in the Rhode Island House of Representatives and as our Secretary of State. Today he is the first quadriplegic to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives. On the day he was the first person ever to preside in the House in a wheelchair, I trooped over from the Senate to watch history made.

JIM LANGEVIN is living proof of the promise of the Americans with Disabilities Act and a champion of expanded opportunity for people with disabilities. He fought hard for the ADA Amendments Act of 2008. He is founder and cochairman of the Bipartisan Disabilities Caucus in Congress. And he is a living example to his colleagues that a disability need not be a limitation. Americans of every level of ability are better off for JIM's passion and determination.

For 25 years, as the Americans with Disabilities Act removed barriers to buildings and transportation, it eliminated obstacles that once kept people from contributing to our society, growing our economy, and realizing their dreams. The equality of opportunity embodied in this law is at the very heart of our American notion of liberty. There is still work to be done, but we should cheer how far we have come, and rededicate ourselves to fulfilling the promise of the ADA. This is truly the work of forming a more perfect union.

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RECOGNIZING THE KEEP THE  
SPIRIT OF '45 ALIVE COALITION  
AND BRIGADIER GENERAL  
JAMES B. THAYER

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, as our Nation commemorates the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, I would like to recognize and honor the achievements of the Keep the Spirit of '45 Alive coalition, as well as the remarkable legacy of BG James B. Thayer, Sr. I am proud to speak today in recognition of the devotion exhibited by the Oregon Spirit of '45 organization, and by one of Oregon's finest.

Over the past 5 years, the Keep the Spirit of '45 coalition has been instrumental in convincing Congress, and various State legislatures, to designate an annual Spirit of '45 Day in August. I am incredibly proud that Oregon is our Nation's first State to legislate a permanent State Spirit of '45 Day to honor the valiant men and women who served on the battlefields and on America's home front. However, I am even more proud of Governor Brown's recent decision to designate the week of August 9-16 to be WWII 70th Anniversary Spirit of '45 Commemorative Week, a period of profound appreciation and reflection for the actions of a truly inspirational generation.

It has been wonderful to witness the hard work of Oregon's Spirit of '45 organization this year. From six performances across the State by Oregon's 234th Army Band to wreath laying ceremonies, all of the events took an extraordinary amount of planning and initiative. Oregon has truly developed a unique State plan to commemorate the end of WWII; a plan that not only involves an unprecedented concert tour, but that also includes a worldwide tribute coordinated with WWII allies. I also look forward to what is unfolding on the national level: the fly-

overs by WWII aircraft, the swing dances and concerts, and the performance of "Taps" during a wreath laying ceremony that will bring many great Nations together. Across Oregon and the United States, younger generations will truly appreciate our Nation's successful efforts to defend freedom worldwide, as well as the 70th anniversary of VJ Day—which marked the end of the conflict on August 14, 1945.

As I recognize the efforts of the Keep the Spirit of '45 Alive coalition, I must also express my gratitude for General Thayer, who serves as the coalition's ground forces spokesperson in Oregon. He has served as a guiding force behind the Spirit of '45 organization in Oregon. The recipient of numerous military awards, including the Silver and Bronze Stars, General Thayer helped save the lives of over 15,000 Hungarian Jewish refugees. But his legacy does not end there. Following his heroic liberation of the Nazi Death Camp Gunskirchen-Lager, General Thayer served in the Oregon State Defense Force, eventually ascending to the rank of commander. His willingness to serve his country after WWII, and work his way through the ranks, as well as his distinguished civilian career, speaks highly of his character.

It is our Nation's responsibility to ensure that the men and women who stand by our country are honored for their individual and collective sacrifices. Observing the Spirit of '45 Day begins the process of properly commemorating the sacrifices of our Nation's veterans and home front, at a time when democracy and human rights were threatened around the world.

It is also an opportunity for us to remember the shared sacrifice, commitment to service to community and country, and national unity of our WWII generation so that their example will continue to inspire future generations of Americans, especially the youth of our country.

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TRIBUTE TO COLONEL LEON  
PARROTT

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, today I would like to recognize the outstanding career of COL Leon Parrott, District Commander of the Huntington District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Since the beginning of his tenure, Colonel Parrott has dutifully served our great State and was honored earlier this month during a Change of Command ceremony in Huntington.

As District Commander, his jurisdiction encompassed an area of approximately 45,000 square miles in 5 States—West Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio, Virginia, and North Carolina. The District's staff of more than 800 employees supports their mission of operating and maintaining 35 multi-purpose reservoirs and 9 dams in addition to providing flood damage reduction, commercial navigation, recreation, and water supply protection. Colonel

Parrott and his staff oversaw significant planning, design and construction efforts that imitated the replacement of outdated navigation structures, dam safety measures and other significant water resource challenges including emergency management.

Throughout his career, Colonel Parrott has held a variety of command and staff assignments including: platoon leader, company executive officer and construction officer with the 94th Engineer Battalion, 18th Engineer Brigade and 249th Engineer Battalion; battalion maintenance officer and company commander with the 37th Engineer Battalion, 20th Engineer Brigade; assistant construction and operations officer with the 416th Engineering Command; environmental project officer and district executive officer, Europe District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; battalion operations and executive officer with the 1st Battalion, 395th Engineer Regiment; group engineer with the 5th Special Forces Group, deputy and then chief of the Emergency Operations Center for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; Commander of the 326th Engineer Battalion; deputy engineer for installations, Environment and Civil/Military Operations, U.S. European Command; chief of engineering at the Defense Intelligence Agency; and, most recently, as corps engineer of the XVIII Airborne Corps.

Colonel Parrott is an outstanding soldier, friend, husband, father and student. A 1988 graduate of the Citadel, he holds a bachelor of science degree in civil engineering as well as master's degree from the University of Phoenix and the U.S. Army War College. In addition, Colonel Parrott has received numerous awards for his heroism and military duty.

I have had the honor to work with him as a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives and now in the U.S. Senate. During that time, I have come to admire his dedication and selfless commitment to the mission of the Huntington Corps and its employees. I would like to wish Colonel Parrott and his wife Judy well in his next command at the North Atlantic Division of USACE in Brooklyn, NY, where he will serve as deputy division commander. I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking Colonel Parrott for his service.

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ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

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CONGRATULATING MICHAEL  
HERNANDEZ

• Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, today, I wish to congratulate Michael Hernandez on his retirement after serving as Reno fire chief for over 5 years. It gives me great pleasure to recognize his years of hard work and dedication to creating a safe environment throughout Reno.