

A New Jersey native and 1974 graduate of the United States Military Academy, General Dempsey was well prepared to lead our Armed Forces these last 4 years as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. A career armor officer, he has commanded at every level, from platoon leader to combatant commander, and his assignments have carried him and his family across the United States and around the world.

As a company grade officer, he served with the 2nd Cavalry in Europe and the 10th Cavalry at Fort Carson. Following troop command, he earned his masters of arts in English from Duke University and was assigned to the English Department at West Point. He subsequently earned additional advanced degrees from the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College and the National War College.

In 1991, General Dempsey deployed with the 3rd Armored Division in support of Operation Desert Storm. He later commanded a battalion in Germany and then served as the Army's "senior scout" as the 67th colonel of the Third Armored Cavalry Regiment—the Brave Rifles—before reporting to the joint staff as an assistant deputy director in the J-5 and later as a special assistant to the 14th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

In 2003, General Dempsey commanded the 1st Armored Division in Baghdad and returned to Iraq in 2005 as the commanding general of the Multi-National Security Transition Command—Iraq. From 2007 to 2008, he was the deputy commander and then acting commander of U.S. Central Command, and from 2008 to 2011, he commanded U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command.

Appointed to serve as the Army's 37th Chief of Staff, General Dempsey led his beloved Army a short 149 days before being tapped to serve as the 18th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In that capacity and as the Nation's highest-ranking military officer, he has served as the principal military adviser to the President, the Secretary of Defense, the National Security Council, and this Congress these past 4 years.

General Dempsey's exceptional ability to coordinate and build consensus among the office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the services, and the combatant commands has served us well and ensured those charged with civilian oversight of the military have received the best military advice possible to achieve our national objectives. Additionally, he has built trust and strengthened relations with both national and foreign leaders.

During a period of complex and rapid global change, coupled with the military's exceptionally high operational tempo and unprecedented fiscal challenges, General Dempsey's decisive leadership enabled the success of military operations around the world. He masterfully guided the Joint Force to

extraordinary execution of global responsibilities, from counterterrorism and crisis response, to supporting our allies, building partner capacity, and humanitarian assistance. His efforts strengthened key alliances, bolstered new partnerships, and more closely integrated the military with the other instruments of our national power against the many threats we face.

Because of those many threats, General Dempsey's tenure as Chairman has been marked by significant transitions in military operations and personnel. His exemplary stewardship helped reset our forces after the conclusion of major combat operations and has prepared them for an increasingly dynamic and unpredictable security environment.

His leadership was critical during the transition of authority to the Afghan National Security Forces following Operation Enduring Freedom. Additionally, in the fight against ISIL, his expert advice helped formulate the military component of a sustainable counter-ISIL strategy. He also guided the military's work as part of the U.S. interagency response to the Ebola virus epidemic in West Africa.

He guided the Joint Force to capitalize on the lessons learned over these past 14 years fighting as a Joint team, undertaking reforms that have driven "jointness" further into our military's capability development and operational planning. In addition, recognizing the shifting nature of the security environment and our ability to respond to it, General Dempsey led a paradigm shift in how we posture and employ this Joint team around the world.

At the same time, the past few years have witnessed exponential growth of the cyber threat against our Nation, and, in response, General Dempsey has deftly pushed the expansion of our cyber capabilities. He has pressed hard for cyber legislation, championed the rapid development of our cyber forces, and implemented the Joint Information Environment to optimize and better defend our military's information technology infrastructure. These initiatives will be critical to the future security of our Nation.

As principal steward of the military profession, he renewed an internal commitment to strengthen the profession of arms and reinvigorated education, training, and leader development. He managed historic decisions, including reforms to general and flag officer ethics, Department-wide improvements in sexual assault prevention and response, expansion of service opportunities for women, and the extension of benefits to same-sex spouses of uniformed servicemembers and Department of Defense civilian employees. His stewardship set conditions to preserve the strength of the all-volunteer force and to ensure servicemembers departing the military are successfully reintegrated back into their communities.

As he retires, General Dempsey should take great pride in his role in

ensuring our military remains the best supported, best trained, best equipped, and best led force on the planet. His contributions to our national security are a testament to his remarkable leadership and selfless dedication. During trying times, under sometimes harsh scrutiny and with high national security stakes at hand, his steadfast commitment to the readiness and welfare of Joint Force servicemembers and their families, as well as his exceptional support for commanders and their warfighting requirements, made significant and lasting contributions to our Nation.

With over four decades of exemplary service to our Nation, General Dempsey and his family deserve our most heartfelt gratitude and admiration. He and Deanie have my very best wishes for a long, happy, and well-deserved retirement. Our Nation, our Joint Force, and our Army are all better for his leadership and distinguished service.

OBSERVING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE VIETNAM WAR

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, on the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam war, we reflect with reverence upon a generation that served with honor, distinction, and selflessness. We pay tribute to the 9 million men and women who wore our Nation's uniform during the Vietnam era, answered our Nation's call to service, and advanced the sacred ideals of liberty and self-determination.

All gave some, and some gave all. Currently, the names of the more than 58,000 patriots who gave their all are forever etched in black granite on the Vietnam Memorial in our Nation's Capital. The names of the nearly 1,800 Americans who remain unaccounted for are forever etched in our hearts.

Nearly 350 patriots from Maine are listed among the killed or missing. Among those names is U.S. Army SGT Donald Skidgel, a Medal of Honor recipient, born in my hometown of Caribou, ME, who served in Vietnam and who gave his life saving the lives of others. On September 14 of this year, Navy pilot LT Neil Taylor was finally laid to rest in his hometown of Rangleley, ME, 50 years to the day after his aircraft was shot down on his 68th mission and he was reported missing. They were patriots in the best American tradition. We will never forget them.

May the families of those who fell and of those unaccounted for find peace in knowing that the American people share their loss and grief. We will always be grateful for the valor and sacrifice of their loved ones. And we will never forget them.

From the founding of our Nation to today, the freedom we hold sacred has been earned by our fellow citizens. Our Nation's history has been written by the men and women who serve, despite the sacrifices, with courage and devotion. The men and women of the Vietnam era carried on that tradition.

They carry on another tradition that echoes throughout our history: After their military service was done, they returned home, quietly and modestly, and continued to serve their communities.

The American people believe that supporting our troops doesn't stop once they leave the military. Just as no member of our Armed Forces would leave a comrade behind on the battlefield, we must not leave our veterans and their families behind on the battlefields of injury and disease. We must be strong advocates for veterans' health care and be concerned about the Vietnam veterans who were exposed to agent orange. We must remain committed to ensuring that those veterans and their families receive the care and support they have earned.

The men and women who served our Nation a half century ago upheld the highest ideals of America and of the American Armed Forces. Our Vietnam veterans were then, and remain today, heroes who deserve our respect and our gratitude.

Mr. KING. Mr. President, this month marks the 50th anniversary of the introduction of U.S. ground troops in the Vietnam war, and I would like to recognize our Vietnam era veterans who dedicated their strength and service to defend freedom and democracy across the globe. In honor of this anniversary, the Secretary of Defense coordinated various events to thank and honor all veterans of the Vietnam war. A well-deserved welcome home ceremony will be held in Presque Isle, ME, on September 26, 2015, to recognize and commemorate the lives of those who fought so bravely.

For nearly 20 years, the Vietnam war occupied the American collective conscience. American involvement initially focused on assisting French forces to counter the Vietminh communist revolution. However, in 1964 the Gulf of Tonkin incident dramatically shifted American perspective, and on August 7, President Johnson drafted and Congress unanimously approved a resolution authorizing direct military intervention in Vietnam.

Throughout the war, the United States deployed over 2.7 million servicemembers to Vietnam, and over 8 million Americans served in uniform during the Vietnam era. More than 58,200 Americans lost their lives and more than 150,000 were seriously wounded during the conflict. I would like to honor those brave Americans who sacrificed so much for their country. Their contributions to our Nation will never be forgotten.

Maine played a crucial role in the war effort. With one of the highest percentages of veterans per capita in the nation, the Vietnam war's legacy still resonates in Maine today. Close to 48,000 people from Maine served in Vietnam, and nearly 350 Maine servicemembers were killed or went missing in action during the war. Our veterans' unwavering patriotism, courage, and

resilience fully demonstrate the fortitude of American character and our Nation's commitment to democracy worldwide.

On this 50th anniversary of the Vietnam war, I would like to join the Secretary of Defense in recognizing the brave Americans who served overseas, as well as those on the homefront whose unrelenting support was invaluable to those overseas. Our veterans have made countless personal sacrifices in protection of our freedoms, and I am proud to honor and thank them for their service to our great Nation.

BEING A TOLERANT AND ACCEPTING COUNTRY

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, in recent weeks two of the leading contenders to be President of the United States called into question the devotion of American Muslims to this great country, and one even outrageously suggested that being Muslim precludes you from being President. I denounce this. It is in violation of Article VI of the Constitution and in violation of our Country's basic principles.

Everyone that serves in public office from President to the Senate must uphold the Constitution. Article VI of the Constitution explicitly states:

All debts contracted and engagements entered into, before the adoption of this Constitution, shall be as valid against the United States under this Constitution, as under the Confederation.

This Constitution, and the laws of the United States which shall be made in pursuance thereof; and all treaties made, or which shall be made, under the authority of the United States, shall be the supreme law of the land; and the judges in every state shall be bound thereby, anything in the Constitution or laws of any State to the contrary notwithstanding.

The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the members of the several state legislatures, and all executive and judicial officers, both of the United States and of the several states, shall be bound by oath or affirmation, to support this Constitution; but no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.

There are 3 million American Muslims in our country. They teach in our schools, they work in our hospitals, and they attend our universities. Their children play on the same playgrounds and go to the same schools. They are able to do this because one of our founding principles on which our country was established was freedom of religion. It is on that basis that the United States should strive to be a tolerant and accepting country where differences are understood and diversity is celebrated. This is not the America some leading candidates for President imagine. They are perpetuating an undercurrent of bigotry by suggesting that American Muslims can't be President because of their religious beliefs. Not only is this contrary to our American values, it defies the U.S. Constitution.

TRIBUTE TO MARY BEHRENS

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, the Wyoming Nurses Association is honoring Casper nurse practitioner Mary Behrens with the 2015 Lifetime Achievement award. I am delighted to congratulate Mary on this tremendous honor.

Following in the footsteps of her mother, Mary pursued her passion for service by completing her RN at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1964. She practiced as a nurse in Madison while her husband Jerry finished his medical degree and residency. She remained in Madison as Jerry served our Nation as a physician treating wounded soldiers in Vietnam. In 1973, the couple moved to Casper, WY. Folks in Wyoming are fortunate that Mary chose to dedicate her career helping others in our State. She is truly an innovator, leader, and mentor for many nurses in Wyoming across the Nation and around the world.

The list of Mary's accomplishments and awards is long. She was active on the American Nurses Association board and is a board member of the University of Wyoming's Friends of the Fay W. Whitney School of Nursing. She is one of only three Wyoming nurses to be nationally recognized as a fellow of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners, FAANP. Her leadership in this area is incredible.

In 2005 she was a member of the American delegation to the World Health Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland, where she testified on the national nursing shortage. In addition, through her involvement with the Friendship Bridge program, Mary is credited with helping to establish an education pathway for nurses in Vietnam. Her efforts to develop a modern baccalaureate curriculum have had a tremendous impact on the global scope of nursing, particularly in Vietnam and neighboring countries.

Mary's civic service is not at all limited to her profession. In fact, she has an established history as a public servant for both Casper and Wyoming. Mary served on the Casper city council and as mayor of Casper. She was also a Natrona county commissioner and a representative in the Wyoming State Legislature. This experience, and her intense desire to make change, has made a profound impact on our State. Mary's extensive activity in shaping public policy truly stands alone, as few people possess such a wide breadth of policy knowledge, leadership skills, and passion for the nursing profession.

It is fitting that the Wyoming Nurses Association is honoring Mary Behrens with their most prestigious award. Countless patients and nursing students have benefitted from her leadership and care. The nursing profession is stronger because of Mary's enthusiastic advocacy.

Please join me in thanking Mary Behrens for her lifetime investment in nursing. Bobbi and I are truly fortunate to call her our friend.