

and independent inspector general to be our partner in that effort. Delaying this nomination also delays improvements to the services that our veterans receive.

Permanent leadership of the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General is long overdue and will go a long way toward providing stable leadership and oversight of the agency. I urge my colleagues to quickly confirm Mr. Missal so he can go to work on behalf of our veterans and the American people—not in a couple of months or later this year; we can do it now, as soon as we come back from the recess that begins tomorrow.

ZIKA VIRUS

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I wish to take this opportunity to talk about an issue that is both concerning and tragic; that is, the rapid spread of the Zika virus in Central and South America in recent months. This is a virus we have known about ever since I was born, and that has been about 69 years. I think the first time somebody detected this was maybe on an island in the South Pacific. It has ebbed and flowed over the years, and now it is flowing big time.

Every day researchers are discovering more about this virus and its potential impact, particularly on pregnant woman and their unborn children. The findings are not good. In fact, they are deeply troubling. There are strong indications that the virus is connected to a developmental birth defect that can lead to underdeveloped brains. We have seen the photographs of smaller heads in too many children.

Additional studies are also examining a potential connection between the Zika virus and other health concerns. With the World Health Organization estimating that as many as 4 million people could be infected in the region this year, it is clear that we must act swiftly to combat this threat. That is why I was pleased to see President Obama and his administration take an early and proactive role in addressing the Zika virus. For example, a coordinated Federal response led by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is working with State, local, and international public health partners to step up mosquito control efforts and to ensure that health officials have the equipment they need to test people for this disease.

To further these efforts, President Obama has recently submitted a supplemental funding request to Congress. These funds would go toward developing vaccines, mosquito control efforts, and diagnostic testing, among other things. The Senate should take a long, hard look at the President's request in the coming days and weeks and consider what measures we need to take to ensure we are ready for Zika and for other future outbreaks.

TRIBUTE TO FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, in closing, I want to do something I think the Presiding Officer has heard me do before. I try to come to the floor once a month and talk about some of the employees who work at the Department of Homeland Security. They work for us across this country and really around the world.

This is the youngest Department, if you will, that we have in the Federal Government. It is about 12 years old. It sort of formed on the heels of 9/11. Twenty-two agencies that have some commonality in their focus or the way they touch the security of our homeland and the people who live in it kind of glommed together.

The morale in the Department has not been good. There has been a great, sustained effort—and certainly we are trying to support it in our Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs—to turn a corner and let people know that not only is the work they do important, but we appreciate their efforts.

I wish to say a few words today about some of the men and women who work tirelessly to keep us safe and secure, often without a lot of recognition and thanks. I am talking about the good people at the Transportation Security Administration, now led by retired Coast Guard Admiral Neffenger, Peter Neffenger, a very able and impressive leader.

As the Easter holidays approach, many Americans will be traveling to spend time with their families around the country and even around the world. If you head to an airport, as many of my colleagues, their colleagues, and their constituents will be doing very soon, chances are you will interact with some of the hard-working men and women of the TSA who keep our skies safe. Nearly 59,000 people work at TSA. Many are focused on securing our aviation system, while others work to protect our service transportation networks, such as the train I took to work this morning and will be jumping on later today to go home.

TSA's work is not only carried out by frontline employees whom we see at the airports as we check in and go through security, have our bags checked, our bodies checked, there are also many dedicated people who are hard at work behind the scenes. We never actually see them, but they are there keeping us safe too. These men and women perform the critical work of gathering and analyzing intelligence in order to identify potential threats to our transportation system and to mitigate them in real time.

I would like to use the remainder of my time to highlight the outstanding efforts of some of these individuals. I learned about them yesterday while meeting with Admiral Neffenger, who happened to be in a meeting that we had in my office and was with me again today for a secure briefing in the SCIF.

He shared with me something I was very happy to learn about. He told me of six members of the current intelligence team within TSA's Office of Intelligence and Analysis and how they recently received the 2015 Intelligence Community Counterterrorism Award for Education and Training from the Director of the National Counterterrorism Center. That is a mouthful, but it is quite an award, quite a recognition. These six individuals—three men, three women—developed a counterterrorism threat briefing for all frontline employees who man our checkpoints and transit systems so they can better understand the connection between intelligence and TSA security operations.

In essence, these individuals are helping TSA frontline officers understand the "why," if you will, behind their work. According to the Director of the National Counterterrorism Center, these six or seven men and women "exemplified the essential attributes of the counter-terrorism community: expertise, integration, collaboration, and information sharing."

While I cannot state their names here, maybe for obvious reasons, I do wish to say to all of you out there—you know who I am talking about—thank you for the work you do every day to ensure that your fellow Americans, people who work here and the people we represent, can travel safely and that our transit systems are secure. Thank you for the work you have done to ensure that your fellow TSA employees have the tools they need to carry out the critical work they do. Your dedication and your invaluable service are appreciated by me, by all of our colleagues in the Senate, our staffs, and by millions of Americans who travel throughout our country every single day.

With that, I have probably said enough. I will say to the Presiding Officer, the staff, and everybody who might be tuned in, happy St. Patrick's Day. We hope good fortune shines on all of us and on our country, not just over this holiday and upcoming recess and a special day today but for a long time after that.

Some of the people we have talked about today—their job is to make sure we are not just lucky, but that we are safe, secure, and successful going forward. There is an old saying: The harder I work, the luckier I get. I am talking about some people who work very hard so we can be fortunate and blessed in this country. I bid you a happy St. Patrick's Day.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO MIKE DUNCAN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to pay tribute to a distinguished Kentuckian, a man who knows the meaning of public service, who I am proud to call a friend. Robert M. "Mike" Duncan will be celebrating his 65th birthday next month, and I want to wish him great happiness and every success on such a special occasion.

Mike is well known in Kentucky and nationally for wearing many hats. Currently he serves as the president and CEO of the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity, a national nonprofit organization that advocates for coal miners in Kentucky and elsewhere and for the use of coal as an affordable and reliable resource in our Nation's energy mix.

Mike has served the Republican Party in many roles, most notably as the 60th Chairman of the Republican National Committee, RNC, from 2007 to 2009. He came to that role having previously served as treasurer and general counsel of the RNC before his election as chairman.

During his career, Mike's served on the campaigns of five Presidents. He worked in the White House as the assistant director of the Office of Public Liaison. He was appointed to the President's Commission on White House Fellows in 2001, and later served as the chairman and a board member of the Tennessee Valley Authority. He served in various roles with the U.S.-China High Level Political Party Leaders Dialogue and the Center for Rural Development.

Mike is also active politically in Kentucky at every level. He has served as a precinct captain to a county chairman to the State chairman to the national chairman. In 1998, he chaired Jim Bunning's successful U.S. Senate race. Mike's involvement with Kentucky politics dates back to his time interning for the Kentucky General Assembly, when he got the chance to serve as President Richard Nixon's driver when the President was campaigning for reelection in the Bluegrass State.

Mike is also active with numerous nonprofit organizations. He is a trustee of the Christian Appalachian Project and runs a student mentoring program. He has been recognized with honorary degrees from several schools, including the College of the Ozarks, Cumberland College, and Morehead State University.

In his professional life, Mike is the principal owner, along with his wife, Joanne, of two community banks with five offices in eastern Kentucky. He has served as the president of the Kentucky Bankers Association and as a director of the Cleveland Federal Reserve Bank Cincinnati Branch.

Mike holds degrees from Cumberland College and the University of Kentucky College of Law. He and Joanne call Inez, KY, their home; and they have a son, Rob, who is an assistant U.S. attorney.

Mike was 8 years old when his uncle ran for superintendent of schools. It was volunteering for his uncle's campaign that sparked his love of politics, and we are glad that it did. He has been of great service to the people of Kentucky and to the people of this Nation for many years, and we owe him our gratitude.

I want to wish Mike a very happy birthday, and I know my colleagues join me in recognizing his achievements and wishing him many happy returns.

Thank you, Mike, for your service to the Party and to our country.

THIRD ANNUAL CESAR CHAVEZ DAY-LAS VEGAS FESTIVAL

Mr. REID. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the third annual Cesar Chavez Day-Las Vegas Festival. Since 2013, the Las Vegas City Council, the Cesar Chavez Committee, and Councilmember Bob Coffin have organized this community festival in Las Vegas to honor the lasting legacy of civil rights activist and labor leader, Cesar Chavez.

Cesar Chavez led a courageous and humble life. He was born on March 31, 1927, in a small farm outside of Yuma, AZ. His experiences as a laborer and migrant worker in the fields of the southwest United States encouraged his pilgrimage from Delano to Sacramento, CA. He brought attention to the workplace inequities experienced by those who tilled America's soil and harvested America's crops. Alongside Dolores Huerta, Larry Itliong, and United Farm Workers, Cesar Chavez fought tirelessly to raise salaries and improve the working conditions of farm workers. He organized migrant workers to raise awareness for the humane and fair treatment of all workers. Today Mr. Chavez's legacy inspires hope, action, and prosperity for those who are often burdened by marginalization and discrimination. His contributions will forever be embedded in the fabric of our country, and we owe gratitude to the indelible mark that Cesar Chavez has left on our Nation.

Cesar Chavez dedicated his time to a life of purpose in bringing social justice and dignity to the workplace. As we commemorate his meaningful work and contributions, it is vital that we continue his legacy by fighting for higher wages, worker rights, and the fair treatment of all workers. I commend the Las Vegas City Council, the Cesar Chavez Committee, and Councilmember Bob Coffin for commemorating Cesar Chavez, and I join in honoring Mr. Chavez's visionary leadership.

NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, 29 years ago, March was designated National Women's History Month. It is hard to

imagine, but as recently as the 1970s, history books largely left out the contributions of women in America. This began to change in 1978, when a small group set out to revise the school curriculum in their community—Sonoma County, CA. The idea was to create a Women's History Week, and its goal was to write women back into history books. It was an idea that was long overdue. And Women's History Week took off around the county . . . around the State . . . and across the Nation. It didn't take long before organizers lobbied Congress and even the White House. And on February 28, 1980, it paid off.

President Jimmy Carter announced for the first time that March 2-8, 1980, would be designated as National Women's History Week. He urged libraries, schools, and community organizations to focus on leaders who struggled for equality: Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth, Lucy Stone, Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cody Stanton, Harriet Tubman, and Alice Paul. In 1981, the cause gained further momentum when an unlikely partnership between then-Representative BARBARA MIKULSKI and Senator ORRIN HATCH cosponsored a congressional resolution for National Women's History Week. And 6 short years later, National Women's History Week became National Women's History Month. And last November, Senator MIKULSKI was awarded the Nation's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, in part for her work on equal pay for women—what an honor.

Throughout history, women have achieved significant progress in the face of discrimination and, time and time again, blazed new trails. So it is appropriate that Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI would play such an integral role in creating National Women's History Month. After all, she understands the role of a trailblazer better than many. And during her last year in the U.S. Senate, it is fitting we honor some of her accomplishments. Senator MIKULSKI was the first woman elevated to a leadership post in the U.S. Senate and the only current Member of Congress in the National Women's Hall of Fame. She is also the first woman elected to Congress in her own right, not because of a husband or a father or someone who served before her in higher office. Senator MIKULSKI embodies what National Women's History Month is all about, particularly this year, when its theme is "Working to Form a More Perfect Union: Honoring Women in Public Service and Government."

So with that in mind, I would like to tell you a story about Senator MIKULSKI, also known in this chamber as the Dean of Women. Following the election of a number of esteemed women into the Senate, a lot of reporters deemed 1992, the Year of the Woman, but Senator MIKULSKI didn't like the sound of that.

She said: "Calling 1992 the Year of the Woman makes it sound like the