

does the same today in regard to Russia's aggression towards Ukraine. It has pushed U.S. policy to take action to combat trafficking in persons, anti-Semitism and racism, and intolerance and corruption, as well as other problems which are not confined to one country's borders.

The Helsinki Commission has succeeded in large part due to its leadership. From the House, the commission has been chaired by Representatives Dante Fascell of Florida, my good friend STENY HOYER of Maryland, the current chairman, CHRISTOPHER SMITH of New Jersey, and ALCEE HASTINGS of Florida. From this Chamber, we have had Senators Alfonse D'Amato of New York, Dennis DeConcini of Arizona, Ben Nighthorse Campbell of Colorado, Sam Brownback of Kansas and today's cochairman, ROGER WICKER of Mississippi.

I had the honor, myself, to chair the Helsinki Commission from 2007 to 2015. That time, and all my service on the commission, from 1993 to the present, has been enormously rewarding.

I think it is important to mention that the hard work we do on the Helsinki Commission is not a job requirement for a Member of Congress.

Rather than being a responsibility, it is something many of us choose to do because it is rewarding to secure the release of a longtime political prisoner, to reunify a family, to observe elections in a country eager to learn the meaning of democracy for the first time, to enable individuals to worship in accordance with their faiths, to know that policies we advocated have meant increased freedom for millions of individuals in numerous countries, and to present the United States as a force for positive change in this world.

Several of us have gone beyond our responsibilities on the commission to participate in the leadership of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. Representative HASTINGS served for 2 years as assembly president, while Representative HOYER, Representative ROBERT ADERHOLT of Alabama, and I have served as vice presidents. Senator WICKER currently serves as chairman of the assembly's security committee.

Representative Hilda Solis of California had served as a committee chair and special representative on the critical issue of migration. Today, Representative SMITH serves as a special representative on similarly critical issue of human trafficking, while I serve as special representative on anti-Semitism, racism, and intolerance.

Our engagement in this activity as elected Members of Congress reflects the deep, genuine commitment of our country to security and cooperation in Europe, and this rebounds to the enormous benefit of our country. Our friends and allies appreciate our engagement, and those with whom we have a more adversarial relationship are kept in check by our engagement. I hope my colleagues would consider this point today, especially during a time

when foreign travel is not strongly encouraged and sometimes actively discouraged.

Finally, let me say a few words about the Helsinki Commission staff, both past and present. The staff represents an enormous pool of talent. They have a combination of diplomatic skills, regional expertise, and foreign language capacity that has allowed the Members of Congress serving on the commission to be so successful. Many of them deserve mention here, but I must mention Spencer Oliver, the first chief of staff, who set the commission's precedents from the very start. Spencer went on to create almost an equivalent of the commission at the international level with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

One of his early hires and an eventual successor was Sam Wise, whom I would consider to be one of the diplomatic heroes of the Cold War period for his contributions and leadership in the Helsinki Process.

In closing, I again want to express my hope that my colleagues will consider the value of the Helsinki Commission's work over the years, enhancing the congressional role in U.S. foreign policy and advocating for human rights as part of that policy.

Indeed, the commission, like the Helsinki Process, has been considered a model that could be duplicated to handle challenges in other regions of the world. I also hope to see my colleagues increase their participation on Helsinki Commission delegations to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, as well as at Helsinki Commission hearings. For as much as the commission has accomplished in its four decades, there continues to be work to be done in its fifth, and the challenges ahead are no less than those of the past.

JEWISH AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize and celebrate the month of May as Jewish American Heritage Month. Since the founding of our Nation, Jewish Americans have indelibly shaped American society. As a proud Jewish American, I am honored to have the opportunity to acknowledge the outstanding contributions of our vibrant community in the past, present, and future.

In the 109th Congress, Representative DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ and then-Senator Arlen Specter authored a concurrent resolution calling for a proclamation each year to observe American Jewish History Month. On April 20, 2006, President George W. Bush proclaimed that May 2006 would be Jewish American Heritage Month.

Jewish Americans have fought tirelessly to realize the American Dream and to enrich our society. Jewish Americans have been instrumental in eliminating disease such as the polio epidemic, and they have split the atom. These achievements and others too nu-

merous to count are watershed moments in history, and they make up only a small fraction of the various accomplishments Jewish Americans have made.

Such achievements, however, do not come without concomitant struggles. Jewish Americans have been dedicated to promoting tolerance and understanding because Jewish people have been challenged and persecuted throughout history whenever they have professed their faith. Jewish Americans participated in the abolitionist movement in the 19th century and joined the ranks of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee during the civil rights movement in the 1960s. There is no question that the Jewish tradition of diversity and inclusion has helped to make the United States the force for equal rights, democracy, and opportunity that it is today. Though we face challenges to that ideal every day, we must not forget that this country was and remains a beacon for those suffering under the weight of oppression around the world.

We cannot understate the role that Israel plays in Jewish American society and in the lives of Jewish people around the world. Our homeland is the focal point of our religion and our culture. Further, our two nations are built on a common set of core democratic principles and representative government, but we have more than political philosophies in common; we share a strong belief in the promotion of equality, freedom, and tolerance. The United States will always stand by Israel, and we will always support the safety of the Israeli people. As a U.S. Senator, I have been proud to take part in efforts to strengthen the relationship between our two nations. Without our homeland, Jewish Americans may never have been able to make the myriad contributions they have made to our Nation. These Jewish Americans' accomplishments embody the positive values that form the foundation of our shared culture and history. Our diversity makes the United States of America strong, and Jewish Americans have played an integral role in shaping and nurturing that diversity.

THE MALMEDY MASSACRE

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, today I wish to honor the sacrifice of our soldiers at the Malmedy massacre.

As we prepare for Memorial Day, it is important to remember the 87 Americans who were killed in action during the Malmedy massacre and honor the brave few who survived this terrible ordeal. One of the survivors of this massacre, Harold W. Billow, is a proud resident of Pennsylvania.

On December 17, 1944, Mr. Billow and Battery B, 285th Field Artillery Observation Battalion were riding in a convoy of vehicles towards the Belgian town of St. Vith. The convoy was attacked outside of Malmedy by a Nazi SS unit called Kampfgruppe Peiper.

While a few soldiers were able to escape the initial attack, the other 130 Americans were forced to surrender to the SS troops.

Given orders to take no prisoners and violating the rules of war, German tank gunners lined up the Americans and gunned them down in cold blood. Worse yet, these Nazi troops searched for anyone showing signs of life and shot them repeatedly at point-blank range.

However, 40 men, including Mr. Billow, were able to play dead and escape the massacre. Many of these survivors traveled to Nuremberg after the war to testify in the war crimes trials and demand justice for their fallen brothers in arms. Today Mr. Billow is one of only two men from the 285th Battalion known to be alive.

Mr. Billow dedicates his life to remembering his comrades who did not survive this massacre. Every Fourth of July, Memorial Day, and Veterans' Day, Mr. Billow decorates his front lawn with 87 American flags, one for each man who fell on that terrible day in 1944.

Today I wish to remember the ultimate sacrifice made by those killed in the Malmedy massacre and also to honor and thank the survivors, including Mr. Billow, who keep the memory of their fellow soldiers alive.

TRIBUTE TO ANDY SIMKOVITCH

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, today I wish to honor and recognize a distinguished D-Day veteran from Pennsylvania, Mr. Andy Simkovitch, and to commemorate the 72nd anniversary of the D-Day landings.

A resident of Erie, PA, Mr. Simkovitch was a U.S. Navy sailor that served aboard the tank landing ship USS L.S.T. 501 during World War II. He was involved in Operation Overlord at Utah and Omaha Beaches, where he transported troops during the D-Day landings on June 6, 1944. During the operation and while under heavy German fire, he went to the beach nine times. Following his actions in France, his ship headed to the Pacific and saw combat in numerous battles, including the Battle of Okinawa. Mr. Simkovitch stayed in the Pacific until Japan surrendered, and he was then honorably discharged in March 1946.

The courage and bravery displayed by Mr. Simkovitch earned him the Chevalier Legion of Honor medal, the highest honor bestowed by the nation of France. With only 855,000 of the 16 million American WWII veterans remaining today, it is increasingly important to honor those that served our great Nation and ensure future generations know about the struggles and sacrifices these brave veterans endured.

On behalf of the U.S. Senate, I wish to thank Mr. Simkovitch for his dedicated service to our Nation in advance of the 72nd anniversary of the D-Day landings.

(At the request of Mr. REID, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

VERMONT FEDERAL EXECUTIVE ASSOCIATION 2016 AWARDS

• Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, to commemorate Public Recognition Week, the Vermont Federal Executive Association, VTFEA, recognized the more than 4,000 Federal employees working across the State and the good work they do every day. I would like to offer special congratulations to the 2016 Excellence in Government award winners, who have been recognized by VTFEA for their exemplary government service.

Excellence in Management and Program Support Award, Individual Award—Heather Festa, management program analyst, personnel security division, Office of Security and Integrity, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, South Burlington—Heather demonstrated exceptional innovation and professionalism in response to the Office of Personnel Management's security breach of electronic systems containing background investigation records. When OPM instructed Federal agencies to mail all paper documents, many agencies simply halted their personnel security processes. However, Heather skillfully designed and implemented an action plan for the hard-copy paper forms to ensure there would be no interruption in processing security checks within U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Excellence in Management and Program Support Award, Group Award—northeast regional office position description workgroup, northeast regional office, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, South Burlington, including Jeannine Longchamp, Maegan Cutler, Brian Johansson, and Laurie Juskiewicz—the northeast regional office human resources team led a working group to review supervisory position descriptions for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services's entire field operations directorate. Not only did the team ensure that all positions aligned with Office of Personal Management guidelines, it also created supervisory positions at new grade levels that opened up previously unobtainable career paths for some employees.

Professional Award—Peter Banacos and Andrew Loconto, meteorologists, National Weather Service, Burlington International Airport, South Burlington—Peter and Andrew worked together to develop a snow squall identification and forecasting technique that has greatly improved winter weather forecast and warning systems for many National Weather Service offices. Historically, there has been an overall lack of forecaster awareness in identifying the weather conditions in which snow squalls can occur, as well as understanding their impact. Peter and Andrew's innovation, leadership, and persistent efforts over the past 3 years

have enhanced the National Weather Service's ability to provide useful winter weather information to the public.

Law Enforcement, Safety and Security Award—Amanda Cahill, special agent, Department of Justice, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, satellite office, Rutland—Amanda exemplifies the highest traditions of government service: tireless dedication and devotion to her agency and the residents of her community. She has singlehandedly reestablished a Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives presence in southern Vermont and has begun to fill a void in the law enforcement community's fight against armed drug traffickers. She has acted as an undercover agent, as well as a lead investigator, and recently, she has been recognized for her efforts by the U.S. attorney for Vermont.

Managerial/Supervisory Award—Daniel Whitney, section chief, training, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, law enforcement support center, Williston—Dan Whitney exemplifies the continued pursuit of excellence and an unparalleled record of achievement. The law enforcement support center, LESC, is U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's primary point of contact for law enforcement agencies throughout the country. Dan is responsible for ensuring that all LESC employees receive continuous training in multiple law enforcement databases, including ICE's new enterprise database that his team tested to ensure that LESC employees had the training and the tools to provide up to the minute information to law enforcement agencies. Dan is someone who leads by example and is always willing to do whatever it takes to ensure that LESC meets its mission.

Tina Gurka Community Service Award—registered nurse Sharon Levenson and police officer Guy Gardner, VA medical center, White River Junction—in January 2016, Nurse Sharon Levenson and Officer Guy Gardner demonstrated their dedication to veterans in their local community. After one of her patients did not show up for an appointment, Sharon contacted the local police department and requested a welfare check. When the police department said the situation did not warrant a check, VA Officer Guy Gardner contacted a neighbor, and they discovered the veteran in serious distress. Thanks to Sharon and Guy's efforts, the patient recovered fully. Their commitment to veterans was recognized by VA Secretary McDonald during testimony before the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Interagency Collaboration and Partnership Award—Brian Wood, Border Patrol agent, U.S. Border Patrol, Richford—Brian has demonstrated exemplary professionalism and work ethic in forming and maintaining valuable and productive partnerships with various Federal and State agencies in Vermont and across the country. Brian's efforts have resulted in the arrest of numerous alien smugglers, drug