

CAPT James Stark, Jr., who was at that time commanding officer of the Roosevelt Roads Naval Station, said:

When you steam off to battle you're either ready or you're not. If you're not, that means casualties and that means more POWs. That means less precision and longer campaigns. You pay a price for all this in war, and that price is blood.

Admiral Murphy, then commander of the Sixth Fleet in the Navy, said the loss of training on Vieques would "cost American lives."

On March 12, 2001, five people died in Kuwait when a U.S. aviator dropped three 500-pound bombs off target. They missed their target, and some comments in the report of the incident point to the lack of live-fire training. The commander and deputy commander state that they actively sought opportunities for that training, but the limiting factor was range availability. In other words, they took away the live-fire capability at Vieques and we have five dead soldiers.

What we were talking about then is true today. We put American lives at risk unnecessarily if they are not fully trained prior to combat operations. The success or failure of our military when sent into combat is a direct function of the degree of realistic training they receive before combat. Their ability to conduct live, joint operations is critical to battlefield success, and preservation of the ranges at which our military trains ensures that success.

We have to ensure that our military is prepared for the next fight against a near-peer competitor. We have more near-peer competitors now than we have ever had in the history of this country. That will demand a full strength of our joint force.

There is still no range like Vieques. This happened 15 years ago. It is still the only range with land and sea and airspace that could accommodate naval surface, aviation, and live artillery ordnance delivery with amphibious landings supported by naval fires, all conducted in a joint training environment.

I understand firsthand both the importance and the significance of having a range in your home State.

On May 3, there was a program—I keep forgetting the name of it, but it is Crossfire—where they had two different people, a liberal and a conservative. I have been on that program several times, but this was way back in 2000.

I was debating a guy who was a Congressman from New York who was wanting to close the Vieques training site. As we went down to the end of that, he said: Well, look, Senator, how would you like to have a live fire training area in your State of Oklahoma?

I said: Let me tell you about Fort Sill. At Fort Sill, we have 320 days out of the year—24 hours a day—that we have a live range going. It is within a town of about 100,000 people, and nobody complains about it. In fact, they talk about the explosions, the ordnance that are going off all the time, and they say: "It is the sound of freedom."

I will tell you something kind of interesting. It wasn't long ago that down in Lawton they built—that is the city right next to the live range at Fort Sill—they built what is declared to be the best elementary school in America. When you walk through it, you can't believe there could be a school like that. Well, anyway, there is, and they named it "Freedom Elementary School" after the sound of freedom. There are places where people in this country really want to do things that carry their end of it, and that was so significant.

Anyway, Fort Sill has a live range that operates 320 days a year and nobody complains about it.

So I think we have an opportunity to help Puerto Rico. We can do that—help them as a nation—and a program they put together for Wednesday is pretty decent. It is something that can be done. But at the same time—and I talked to the individuals who put that plan together. I said: As soon as we vote on that, let's go back and tell—since Puerto Rico has had a shock treatment with the economic problems they have had—tell them: If you guys really want to make a contribution, you can do it. You can make a contribution of something that will save American lives.

We have had people testify that when we went into Bosnia and Kosovo, that in both Bosnia and Kosovo, we lost American lives because we didn't have the training only the Vieques can give us. As I mentioned, all around the world—I will always remember when Governor Rossello came in and was complaining about all the environmental concerns and said: We are going to close Vieques as a range. And he said to me, because I was pushing it so hard—he made the statement: Don't ever come into Puerto Rico because you won't come out of there alive. And I went there the next day and I am alive.

So, anyway, that is a serious thing, and I really do think we can support the bill on Wednesday and then after that talk to them in a very reasonable way to let them know what kind of a contribution they can make to the training of their people, as well as our people, to offset what we lost way back 15 years ago. I believe that is something we are now primed to talk to them about. They ought to be ready after all of this. So that is something to come, and I would like to have anyone thinking about the vote that takes place, which I will support on Wednesday, that now you have an opportunity to actually provide a service that is going to save American lives.

With that, I yield the floor.

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.

Mrs. FISCHER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

NOMINATION OF ROBERT ROSSITER

Mrs. FISCHER. Madam President, I rise to speak in strong support of Bob Rossiter, who has been nominated to fill the vacancy on Nebraska's Federal district court.

The Judiciary Committee approved the nomination of Bob Rossiter without objection last October, and I am extremely pleased that the Senate will be voting on his nomination this evening.

The U.S. District Court for the District of Nebraska has a tradition of fairness and of justice. This court owes its reputation to the well-respected judges who have served on it.

With only three judgeships, Nebraska's Federal district bench is relatively small. Nebraska's Federal bench is an example of efficiency, as well as integrity. It also has one of the busiest dockets in the country.

For example, during the 12-month period ending March 31, 2016, Nebraska had the most per-judgeship weighted filings among the eight States that have only three authorized judgeships in a single Federal district.

With a small bench and a full docket, it is important that Nebraska's Federal district court operate at full capacity. As soon as Judge Bataillon announced that he would be taking senior status, I began working with Senator Mike Johanns to select a highly qualified candidate for this important position. Through an open process, we considered many applicants with excellent credentials. Approximately 20 individuals asked to be considered for this position, and we had each of them fill out the Judiciary Committee's lengthy questionnaire.

The questionnaires and the reams of supplementary materials were then carefully reviewed. Having reviewed the qualifications and materials of these applicants, I can tell you that Nebraska has no shortage of principled and sharp legal minds. Narrowing the list was challenging. After weeks of thorough consideration, we agreed to recommend Bob Rossiter to President Obama for this judgeship in August 2014. Although Senator Johanns retired from the Senate before the President nominated Mr. Rossiter in June of 2015, I know he was pleased with this nomination.

I thank the President for listening to my advocacy for Mr. Rossiter and for his support for him, for even among the many fine candidates we interviewed, Bob's accomplishments stood out.

Bob has an impressive list of professional achievements. After graduating cum laude from Creighton University School of Law, Bob clerked for U.S. district court judge C. Arlen Beam on Nebraska's Federal district court. Currently, he is a partner at the law firm of Fraser Stryker in Nebraska. Whether Bob is working on Federal and State

employment litigation or administrative agency investigations, he always demonstrates an admirable commitment to integrity and to the rule of law. Over the years, he has gained the respect of his clients by handling a variety of important issues with excellence. He is listed in "The Best Lawyers in America" and in "Chambers USA, America's Leading Business Lawyers." Perhaps the strongest testament to Bob's aptitude and integrity, as well as the admiration of his colleagues, is the fact that he was previously selected to serve as president of the Nebraska Bar Association. Though Bob never assumed the bar presidency due to this nomination, this honor, which is not bestowed lightly, is a reflection of the trust placed in Bob by those who know and work with him.

For these reasons I am confident that we have found a truly remarkable and qualified person to fill the vacancy on Nebraska's Federal district court. I urge my colleagues to support Bob Rossiter's nomination so that he can put his outstanding intellect, skill, and judgment to work for the American people.

Thank you, Madam President.

I yield the floor.

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

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

TRIBUTE TO CORPORAL JASON CHESTER AND SERGEANT TREY DUPUY

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, I would like to recognize Corporal Jason Chester and Sergeant Trey Dupuy of the Jonesboro Police Department as this week's Arkansans of the Week for heroically saving the life of a 13 year-old boy trapped in a storm drain.

Last month, 13-year-old Jacob Hunter was swept away during a flash flood in Jonesboro. Jacob was washed through the city's drainage system underneath a parking lot, where he held on for hours. Initial search efforts by police, fire, EMS, and other volunteers to find Jacob were unsuccessful, but Corporal Chester and Sergeant Dupuy wouldn't give up hope. They returned to the area where Jacob was first swept away and searched it again. Sergeant Dupuy leaned toward a storm drain and heard a faint cry for help. That is when the two officers jumped into action. They removed a heavy manhole cover and were able to pull Jacob to safety.

The entire State of Arkansas is grateful to Corporal Chester and Sergeant Dupuy and to all the first responders for their heroic efforts.

We don't hear news stories with happy endings enough these days, espe-

cially when the circumstances seem so grim, but because of the persistence and quick thinking of these two officers, Jacob Hunter is alive and well today.

I am honored to recognize Corporal Jason Chester and Sergeant Trey Dupuy for their efforts. Their determination and commitment to finding Jacob is a reflection of the true spirit of Arkansas. They remind us we owe a debt of gratitude to all first responders and emergency personnel across the country for the work they do to keep us safe.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

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

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Robert F. Rossiter, Jr., of Nebraska, to be United States District Judge for the District of Nebraska.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 30 minutes for debate only on the nomination, equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from Alaska.

CULTURE OF WHALING IN ALASKA

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, one of the great things about being able to come to the floor and preside—as is the Presiding Officer, and it is something I have had the opportunity to do a lot—is that when you are in the Chair, you get to hear a lot about the home States of other Members of the Senate. A lot of Senators like to come to the floor, as they should, to talk about their constituents and talk about so many things that are happening throughout our country.

We just heard the Senator from Arkansas talk about some local heroes in his State. He came to the floor to talk about them. Presiding, I have had the opportunity to hear many great stories: Vietnam veterans in North Dakota, great basketball from the Presiding Officer's State of Indiana, proud members of our military who live in Texas, and tight-knit communities in

responding to disasters in States across our Nation. These are great stories and in many ways they are what make our Nation great; it is what makes our Nation strong. Hearing about all the wonderful communities we have, I certainly have learned a lot from listening to these speeches, and I encourage my colleagues to come and talk about their States and do a little bragging. That is what I am going to do for the next couple of minutes.

My State, the great State of Alaska, has certainly captured the country's imagination in a lot of ways. It is hard to turn on cable TV without seeing a new show on Alaska, and for good reason. There is so much about the great State of Alaska that is awe-inspiring and captures the imagination of the American people. Our mountain ranges, hundreds of them, literally seem to go on for miles and miles—forever, like waves in the ocean. The color of our glaciers is unlike anything you have ever seen before. Our rivers and streams, particularly this time of year, are choked with salmon—millions and millions of salmon. We have moose, bear, wolves, caribou, and muskox. But one of the very best things about Alaska, one of the things that makes us unique, is our mix of cultures and the extraordinary lengths people in Alaska go to keep these cultures alive.

Today I wish to speak specifically about the culture of whaling and to honor our Alaska Eskimo whaling captains—heroes in our communities—and the communities that support these brave Americans.

In Alaska, 11 communities in northern Alaska, which we call the North Slope, participate in two whaling seasons. Nuiqsut, Kivalina, Barrow, Kaktovik, Wainwright, Gambell, Little Diomed, Wales, Point Lay, Savoonga, and Point Hope—these are the whaling communities of my State.

There is a spring whaling season and a fall whaling season. Both correspond to the migration patterns of the great bowhead whale.

The spring has ended now, and it is time for celebration. Nalukataq season is upon us. This is when with the communities get together to celebrate the harvest. It is like a summer picnic on the top of the world, but without hot dogs. Families eat whale and muktuk.

Let me spend a few minutes talking about what it takes to harpoon a whale. I have never done it, but a lot of my constituents have. Amazingly, today's whaling captains and crews still hunt using handheld harpoons, as their ancestors had done for thousands of years. During the spring harvest, many of the villages—also as their ancestors had done—go into the icy waters of the Arctic in hand-sewn boats that are built using wooden frames and hand-sewn walrus or bearded seal skin.

When a bowhead whale is landed, to spread the good news the people exclaim "Yay, hey, hey" across the North Slope.

The VHF radios that sit on kitchen counters and dining room tables all