

protect the environment and fight climate change. Do not be fooled. Scott Pruitt is not for protecting American citizens and the environment, but for protecting giant polluting corporations. With a record like his, we cannot expect Pruitt to safeguard our drinking water and air from pollution. With Pruitt, the environment will be auctioned off to the highest corporate bidder no matter the cost to the American public. It was for all these reasons that I strongly opposed Mr. Pruitt's nomination, and I urged my colleagues to join me in voting no.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, I speak in unity with my colleagues and highlight the irreparable harm that will be done to our environment and communities now that Scott Pruitt has been confirmed to be the head of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Mr. Pruitt has focused his career on working against the EPA's fundamental mission of protecting our Nation's environment, instead pushing an anti-environment agenda dictated by big corporations that have funded his campaigns and political career.

Mr. Pruitt has been serving as Oklahoma's attorney general since 2010, during which he has spent countless hours working to undermine and repudiate the very Agency he is nominated to run.

Throughout his tenure, Mr. Pruitt sued the EPA 14 times over orders that seek to protect our environment and the health and safety of our communities.

Included in Mr. Pruitt's lawsuits were efforts to undercut basic, commonsense measures that are essential to Americans' health and safety: EPA safeguards for clean air and clean water. Yes, Mr. Pruitt supports undoing measures that ensure the air we breathe is not polluted and the water we drink is free of contaminants.

And during his confirmation hearing, Mr. Pruitt contradicted his own record and biography, calling into question his knowledge of basic principles. Pruitt claimed he believes that the EPA has "a very valuable role." And yet his own LinkedIn profile brags that he is "a leading advocate against the EPA's activist agenda."

Almost 4,000 Nevadans reached out to my office urging me to vote against Mr. Pruitt.

I want to read some stories from Nevadans who voiced their concerns about Mr. Pruitt and what is at stake for them—as well as countless other families across the country.

From Jean Pierre LeBarry of Las Vegas, NV:

I am of Basque descent, as is my whole family. I grew up in Northern Nevada, as many other Basque folks did, on a ranch. We did not have running water or even electricity. We did have our sheep though. We were sheep ranchers, across the great state of Nevada the industry flourished, but before I had heard Al Gore say anything about climate change, I saw its effects in our state [Nevada]. We stopped getting as much snow-

fall; we would scour the desert for water to keep our herd alive on the range. Year after year it got worse, slowly killing our industry, thinning our herd, and giving me first hand example of how severe climate change is. This was more than 30 years ago I saw these changes taking place. After I left the ranch, I worked as a government employee for the Bureau of Land Management, until I retired. To see how much disregard Scott Pruitt would have for my family and their struggles with the deterioration of our climate; it is appalling that anyone would dare to confirm his nomination to head the Environmental Protection Agency, the very agency he has tried so hard to dismantle already.

From Sharon Ingram-Bevans of Reno, NV:

My Husband was a Vietnam Vet and he died last March after a 10 year illness directly related to environmental pollution. He was stationed at Camp Le Juhu North Carolina, exposed to drinking water full of jet fuel, and some great general's idea to have young Marines scrape and repaint Agent Orange boxes while serving in the Refugee camps at Okinawa Japan. Our Daughter has Thyroid disease due to this exposure also. If we only paid attention to how we use and dispose of substances we might have a better world to give to our children. There is no Planet "B" and even rich people need clean air and water.

From Brittany Lamborn of Las Vegas, NV:

I was born and raised in Nevada. My sister, brother, and I grew up in the Las Vegas valley, surrounded by majestic mountain ranges, fragrant pines, and breathtaking sunsets. Away from the glitz and glamour of the Strip, I could lose myself in the beauty of Red Rock or walk the trails on Mt. Charleston. My mom would take us to Gilcrease Orchard to pick fresh produce. My dad would take us on stargazing trips to Cathedral Gorge in Panaca. I have never wished for another home. Home means Nevada.

Now I have two young children of my own. I put on a brave face every morning so that they do not see my fear that increases with each day. I fear that these God given wonders will not be protected for them. I fear that the overwhelming need to consume will eat up our natural resources. And I fear that, unchecked, we will do irreparable harm to the only planet we have. When the dust has cleared, I fear: What will be left for our children?

Climate change is a fact, not a feeling or an opinion. We need someone at the helm of the Environmental Protection Agency that will protect every Gilcrease Orchard, every Red Rock, and every Cathedral Gorge in the United States. Scott Pruitt is not that man.

I know I am not the only Senator whose office was contacted by countless constituents, urging us to put the health and safety of our children and our environment first and oppose Mr. Pruitt's nomination.

I promised Nevadans I would come to Washington and fight for them and their priorities, and that is why I could not support Mr. Pruitt to lead the EPA. I urged my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to do the same.

#### TRIBUTE TO MAJOR GENERAL CAMILLE M. NICHOLS

Mr. REED. Mr. President, today I want to pay special tribute to an ex-

ceptional officer of the U.S. Army, MG Camille M. Nichols. Currently serving as the director of the Department of Defense Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, General Nichols will retire after more than 41 years of Active military service on April 1, 2017. From enlisted private, to academy graduate, to two-star general, MG Camille Nichols has demonstrated the Army values of duty, integrity, selfless service, and dedication to country. Many of my colleagues and I have had the pleasure of working with Major General Nichols on a number of issues and programs, and it is my distinct privilege to recognize her accomplishments.

MG Camille Nichols began her military career in 1975, as an enlisted soldier in the U.S. Army. While serving in Germany and at the insistence of her leadership, she applied for acceptance as a cadet candidate to the U.S. Military Academy Preparatory School, thus enabling her to join the U.S. Military Academy Class, USMA, class of 1981. Upon her graduation from USMA, Major General Nichols was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Corps of Engineers. Throughout her years of service, Major General Nichols attended numerous advanced military and civilian schools, receiving three masters degrees, and while working full time, earned a Ph.D. in engineering management from George Washington University.

After serving in several command and high-level staff positions, General Nichols developed expertise in contracting and acquisition procedures and systems. These demonstrated abilities were recognized by her selection as one of the general officers named to stand up the U.S. Army's Contracting Command. It cannot be overstated that, in all her leadership and staff roles, Camille Nichols positively influenced the lives of thousands of military personnel while she did the Nation's bidding around the world and at home. From Korea to Saudi Arabia; from Operation Iraqi Freedom/New Dawn to commanding general of U.S. Army Contracting Command, Major General Nichols has been out front, pressing hard to ensure the Army is well-equipped with a 21st century fighting force capable of defeating the enemy.

As the director of the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, Major General Nichols' undeterred leadership, soldier-scholar depth and breadth of knowledge, commitment to eliminating sexual assault, and commonsense approach to problem solving have contributed immeasurably to the improvement and execution of Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program and the DOD-wide strategy. She also spearheaded specialized policies and strategies focusing on prevention efforts, combating retaliation, and addressing the needs of male victims. Major General Nichols' efforts have been instrumental in shaping and articulating program initiatives, plans,

and objectives to Congress, senior defense leaders, and the American public, earning the respect of both her superiors and peers.

I ask that you and our colleagues join me, as well as Major General Nichols' family, many friends, and peers in saluting this distinguished officer's many contributions and sacrifices in the defense of our great Nation. It is fitting that today we publicly recognize her service and wish her health, happiness, and success in the years to come. Congratulations, Major General Nichols, on completing an exceptional and exemplary career.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### TRIBUTE TO MAJOR GENERAL FRANK VAVALA

• Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, it is with great pleasure that I rise today on behalf of Delaware's congressional delegation—Senator CHRIS COONS, Congresswoman LISA BLUNT ROCHESTER and myself—to honor the exemplary service of MG Frank Vavala, the adjutant general for Delaware for the past 18 years. As Governor of Delaware, I had the distinct pleasure of nominating him to serve as Adjutant General in February 1999, and I believe to this day it is one of the best appointments I have ever made. Over the past 17 years, General Vavala has been responsible for the mission readiness of all Delaware National Guard units for both Federal and State missions. He served as a cabinet member and trusted military adviser to me when I was Governor, as well as to the three Governors who succeeded me: Governor Ruth Ann Minner, Governor Jack Markell, and Governor John Carney. In January 2017, he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant general Delaware, becoming the first three-star general to lead the Delaware National Guard.

During General Vavala's tenure, the Delaware National Guard has deployed close to 11,000 soldiers and airmen to support our State and country. Nearly half of them were deployed abroad to Bosnia, South America, Africa, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, and Afghanistan, among other countries. Once in theater, these men and women accomplished almost every mission imaginable. They ran entry control points, provided security, established and maintained communications and conducted medical evacuation from the battlefield. They also transported supplies, patients, personnel, and dignitaries in both UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters and C-130 aircraft. Back at home, the Delaware Guard activated nearly 5,000 soldiers and airmen to provide support during 11 snowstorms, 8 hurricanes—including Hurricane Katrina, where hundreds of Delawareans went to help in Mississippi and Louisiana just 24 hours after the devastating storm made landfall, 1 tornado, dozens of floods, Nor'easters, and

three Presidential inaugurations. General Vavala oversaw all operations as soldiers and airmen helped transport emergency workers and patients, evacuate flooded areas, get residents to shelter, safety, and medical assistance, and even set up emergency communications around the state.

Like many successful leaders, General Vavala did not keep regular office hours. He routinely came to work early, stayed late, and worked on weekends. He was known for taking the time to recognize, thank, console, and care for everyone under his command from the newest private to the most senior officer. He valued every person who wore the uniform equally. I have met Guard men and women for years who say that when they were in a time of need, General Vavala was there for them, even if it was just taking time to drop them an email or note. Sometimes they wondered how he found out about what was going on in their lives, but however he did it, he found out. He prioritized his soldiers and airmen over his own career. Instead of focusing the spotlight on his individual accomplishments, General Vavala put the focus on his soldiers and airmen, and it made his career a success by default.

In addition to holding dozens of leadership positions in the Delaware Guard, General Vavala held prominent national positions as president of the Adjutants General Association of the United States and chairman of the board of the National Guard Association of the United States, NGAUS. During his tenure as chairman of the board, NGAUS was the main driver responsible for passing one of the most significant pieces of military legislation in a generation—the National Guard Empowerment Act. General Vavala provided key testimony before the House Armed Services Committee and was instrumental in advocating for the passage of this important legislation. In January 2012, Delaware's 146th General Assembly passed H.J. Res. 10, recognizing General Vavala for his leading role in helping to reshape the U.S. military.

General Vavala is from a proud military family, having served with both his father, COL Frank P. Vavala, and brother MSG Gerard P. Vavala. Before serving as Adjutant General, he worked full time for the DuPont Company, where he was employed as marketing services supervisor for 31 years. He has been honored with the Anthony of Padua Founders' Award and the Italian-American Man of the Year Award. He also cares about his community, organizing food drives for the Food Bank of Delaware, and he is a person of deep faith who takes seriously what the Bible tells us about caring for others and focused that into his career as Adjutant General.

I believe General Vavala has been successful in no small part because he possesses some of the finest leadership qualities that I have ever observed in a military leader. Frank Vavala under-

stands that leaders are humble, not haughty. They have the heart of a servant. They understand that their role is to serve, not be served. General Vavala leads by example. It is not do as I say, but do as I do. He knows that the best leaders aren't afraid to keep out of step when everyone else is marching to the wrong tune. Leaders unite, not divide. They build bridges not walls. They are aspirational—purveyors of hope, if you will—and they appeal to our better angels. Like the very best leaders, Frank has always sought to do what is right, not what is easy or expedient. He embraces the Golden Rule and treats other people the way he would want to be treated. General Vavala surrounds himself with the best people he can find. When his team does well, he gives the credit to them. And when the team falls short of the mark, this leader takes the blame. Finally, when General Frank Vavala knows he is right, he never gives up. As a leader, General Frank Vavala is in a class of his own, and he is one whom other leaders, both civilian and military would do well to emulate.

On behalf of Senator COONS and Congresswoman BLUNT ROCHESTER, let me wholeheartedly thank General Vavala for his service to our country and our State. The leadership and commitment he modeled helped keep Delaware and our Nation more safe and secure. Today, we are honored to be able to offer General Vavala our sincere congratulations on a job well done. From our hearts, we wish him and his wife Jane, who he has been married to for 50 years—along with their children Anne, Jane, and Nick and their three granddaughters—many happy, healthy, and successful years to come. Bravo Zulu.●

#### MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 12:02 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that pursuant to section 4 of the United States Semiquincentennial Commission Act of 2016 (Public Law 114-196), and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House of Representatives to the United States Semiquincentennial Commission: Mr. MEEHAN of Pennsylvania, Mr. ADERHOLT of Alabama, and from private life: Mr. Jim Koch of Newton, Massachusetts, Mr. Val Crofts of Milton, Wisconsin, Dr. Wilfred McClay of Norman, Oklahoma, and Mrs. Lynn Young of Rockdale, Texas.

The message also announced that pursuant to section 161(a) of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2211), and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House of Representatives as Congressional Advisors on Trade Policy and Negotiations: Mr. BRADY of Texas, Mr. REICHERT of Washington, and Mr. NUNES of California.

The message further announced that pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 276h and the