

along with all those who serve our country, the deepest debt of gratitude.

# WELCOMING OUR HONORABLE VETERANS TO THE NATION'S CAPITOL

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, today I am incredibly honored to rise and recognize a group of 25 heroic veterans who have traveled from West Virginia to visit our Nation's Capital as part of the eighth Always Free Honor Flight. On behalf of our State and Nation, it is a true privilege to recognize them for their courageous service and unparalleled sacrifice as they tour the memorials that have been built in their honor.

With one of our country's highest per capita rates of military servicemembers and veterans, West Virginia is undoubtedly one of our Nation's most patriotic States. According to the Department of Defense, West Virginia had the highest casualty rate in the Nation during the Vietnam war, and I am so proud that the Honor Flight will allow these West Virginia veterans to pay homage to their brethren at the Vietnam Wall. Throughout our State's history, West Virginians have demonstrated selflessness and courage time and again in making tremendous sacrifices to defend our freedoms and to keep our homeland safe. As these veterans tour the monuments made in their honor, I offer my sincerest thanks to them on behalf of our Nation for their service.

The veterans joining us in Washington range in age from 62 to 94 and hail from the coalfields of West Virginia and Virginia. These patriots come from seven West Virginia coal mining counties and three Virginia counties. Of the Honor Flight veterans attending, two served in World War II, one served in the Korean war, two served in both the Korean and Vietnam wars, 18 served in the Vietnam war, and two Veterans served stateside. They have participated in decisive overseas battles and won a myriad of accolades for their accomplishments in uniform.

I would especially like to recognize our World War II veterans who will be on this Honor Flight for the second time. Ninety-four-year-old former SN William "Ray" Calvin Sexton from Tazewell joined the Navy in Bramwell, WV, in 1943 and was a gunner stationed in Panama and the Galapagos Islands. We will also be joined by Machinist Mate 3rd Class Marion Grey Noel who joined the Navy in the 1940s and bravely fought in the battles of Iwo Jima and Okinawa.

These men represent our Nation's Greatest Generation, and their sacrifices and valor embody American patriotism. They fought in such a pivotal war, in an era that threatened our existence as a nation. Unfortunately, as the years go by, we are losing so many of our World War II veterans, and we must show them our utmost gratitude each and every day.

As I mentioned, we will also be joined by veterans of the Korean and Vietnam wars. These men and women served courageously in a variety of ways, working both at home and abroad. They engaged in combat all over the world. They were pilots, helicopter gunners, and radio operators. One of these veterans is MSgt Reese Williamson Moore who joined the Air Force in 1951 in Bluefield, WV. He was first stationed in Iwo Jima as part of the Japan Occupation Forces in 1952. Then he moved to the Royal Thai Air Base Nam Phongin in the Kingdom of Thailand. He served during a pivotal time following World War II and went on to serve in the Vietnam war.

We will also be joined by Jaeger, WV, native Sergeant Marion "Mario" E. Deskins, who joined the Air Force in 1968 in Beckley, WV. He served with the 15th Aerial Port Squadron at Danang, where he maintained records on unit personnel and transported documentation to the headquarters of the 7th Air Force in Saigon via C-130 Hercules airplanes. Sergeant Deskins was awarded the Air Force Commendation Medal for his service in Vietnam.

Another Vietnam veteran participating in this week's Honor Flight is Sergeant Marshal G. Mann from Princeton, WV. Sergeant Mann served in combat as an aircraft loadmaster, bravely preparing and air lifting urgently needed ammunition to combat troops fighting in the Republic of Vietnam. For his service and extraordinary achievement, Sergeant Mann received the Distinguished Flying Cross.

This week's Honor Flight and the continued support of our veterans would not be possible without the dedication of so many volunteers and caregivers. I would like to thank the five JROTC Cadets from Montcalm, Bluefield, Pikeview, and Princeton High Schools, as well as the military spouses serving as the guardians on this year's Honor Flight. The care and love these Patriots provide for our veterans is invaluable and deeply appreciated.

I also commend those in the Always Free Honor Flight network for their dedication to providing our veterans with such a unique and meaningful experience. Without the diligence and passion of Dreama Denver, president of Always Free Honor Flight network and owner of Princeton, WV, Little Buddy Radio, as well as Pam Coulbourne, the coordinator of these flights, many of our veterans would never have the opportunity to travel to Washington and pay homage to the men and women they fought beside. Dreama and Pam launched the Always Free Honor Flight in 2012, and every year, they continue to make this dream a reality for many of our West Virginia veterans.

I would also like to recognize SFC Paul Dorsey, vice president of Always Free Honor Flight and official photographer Steve Coleman, who have done a tremendous job of ensuring that our veterans receive the recognition they deserve. Dreama, Pam, and Steve have

also dedicated themselves to the Denver Foundation, serving as incredible examples of how individuals can give back to their communities.

This week, as we celebrate these incredible veterans and their answering our Nation's call of duty, we must remember that the men and women who have given so much to ensure America's safety deserve the utmost care and support upon their return home. We must continue to fight for a Department of Veterans Affairs that provides our veterans with the services they very much need and deserve.

I am filled with pride every time I meet the patriots who have served our country, and I am so pleased to welcome West Virginia's most courageous veterans, who are all heroes, to Washington, DC. I encourage all of my colleagues to join me in saluting them. They truly inspire us all as we are reminded of their selfless service. It is because of their bravery that all Americans enjoy the greatest liberties and freedoms in the world.

God bless our many servicemembers and veterans, the great State of West Virginia, and the United States of America.

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize and honor the sacrifice of West Virginia's veterans and to welcome them to Washington DC, as a part of the Always Free Honor Flight. West Virginia has a proud tradition of military service, and I am privileged to be able to recognize these brave men and women who put their lives on the line to preserve our freedoms during our Nation's most critical hours of need.

The Always Free Honor Flight program, run by the Denver Foundation, is dedicated to bringing our veterans to Washington, DC, to thank them for their bravery and selflessness. As a daughter of a World War II veteran, this is something that is very close to my heart, and I am so thankful for the folks at Always Free Honor Flight who have dedicated their time to making sure our veterans feel our immense gratitude and pride. This year, we have the privilege of being joined by 25 veterans, including veterans from World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.

These courageous individuals embody the very best of our Nation's values and have endeavored, through unimaginable hardship and danger, to ensure that all Americans may continue to live in the freedom and safety that we all cherish. Their courage, through some of the greatest conflicts of the 20th century, will not go unnoticed, and we must strive to show our appreciation every day.

On this Always Free Honor Flight, we will be joined by two World War II veterans: Storekeeper Second Class William "Ray" Calvin Sexton, USN, Tazewell, VA; and Motor Machinist's Mate Third Class Marion Grey Noel, USN, Roanoke, VA.

In addition to our World War II veterans, we will also be joined by Korean

war veteran Gerald Marreese Richmond, North Tazewell, VA; and two veterans who served in both the Korean and Vietnam wars: Johnnie Lewis Gordon, Sr., USA, Princeton, WV; and MSgt Reese Williamson Moore, USAF, Bluefield, WV.

The Vietnam veterans participating are Samuel "Sam" J. Connor, USN, Princeton, WV; CPL William "Bill" Cox, USA, Bluefield, WV; Sergeant Marion "Mario" E. Deskins, USAF, Iaeger, WV; CPL Donald R. Dinger, USMC, Bluefield, WV; SGT James "Jim" W. England, USA, Bluefield, VA; Jackie W. Estep, USMC, Yukon, WV; SPC Carl A. Lane, USA, Pineville, WV; Sergeant Marshal G. Mann, USAF, Princeton, WV; SGT Owen C. Neff, USA, Summersville, WV; PO3 Donald "Donnie" W. Noel, USN, Salem, VA; CPL Raymond C. Palmer, USA, Mabscott, WV; SGT Ronald Pennington, USA, Princeton, WV; PFC Jackson Phillip Thompson, USA, Bluefield, WV; SPC Larry Malone Saunders, USA, Madison, WV; PO1 Alan Brett Sexton, USN, Princeton, WV; SPC James Buck Tunnell, USA, Bandy, VA; CPL Ricky D. Williams, USMC, Beckley, WV; and CPT Jerry Sheffield, USA, Lavelette, WV.

Other veterans include PFC Willis Lee Helmandollar, USA, Rocky Gap, VA; and SrA Grover C. White, Jr., USAF, Princeton, WV.

This year, we are also proud of the ROTC cadets serving as escorts for our veterans, including Jacob Aaron Krabbe, Montcalm High School, Princeton, WV; Miaha Thompson, Montcalm High School, Rock, WV; and Lamont Devon Johnson, Bluefield High School, Bluefield, WV.

These young cadets are proof of West Virginia's continuing tradition of military service and are the next generation of brave men and women that serve our country with bravery and pride.

A great debt of gratitude is also owed to Dreama Denver, president of the Denver Foundation and Little Buddy Radio. These nonprofit organizations, which were founded by Dreama and her husband, Bob Denver, established the Always Free Honor Flight Network in West Virginia.

I am so proud of the service and sense of duty that defines West Virginians and, indeed, all Americans. We all benefit from their selflessness and courage, and one of the most sacred tasks we hold is properly honoring the dedication of our veterans. In bringing them together with the powerful monuments that recognize their sacrifice, we can express our unyielding gratitude while demonstrating our lasting commitment to preserving their memory. One of the greatest honors of serving in the U.S. Senate is representing citizens who have given so much to their country. I take seriously the duty of ensuring that their sacrifice is honored with the same steadfast conviction with which they defended the rights and freedoms of every American. Today I

ask my colleagues to join me in welcoming and thanking these exceptional West Virginia veterans.

#### TRIBUTE TO GENERAL DANIEL B. ALLYN

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I would like to recognize GEN Daniel B. Allyn for his exemplary dedication to duty and service to the U.S. Army and to our Nation. For the last 3 years, he has served as the 35th Vice Chief of Staff of the Army and is planning to retire next month.

General Allyn is a fellow New Englander from Berwick, ME. He was commissioned as an infantry officer from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1981. General Allyn and his family were also fortunate to make a midcareer return to New England while he was a student at the Naval War College in Newport, RI.

General Allyn has commanded troops from the platoon through corps level and served as commander of U.S. Army Forces Command, along with myriad other staff assignments. He served an overseas assignment in Korea and operational deployments for Operation Urgent Fury in Grenada, two peace-keeping deployments to the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt, Operation Just Cause in Panama, Operation Desert Storm in Saudi Arabia, Operation Desert Spring in Kuwait, two tours in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Unified Response in Haiti, and one tour in Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

During a recent interview, General Allyn reflected on his time in uniform by saying "the only legacy we leave behind is the leaders that we develop on our watch." The U.S. Army is fortunate to have leaders like General Allyn, and those who have served under him have no doubt benefitted immeasurably from the mentorship he has provided. We should all be thankful for the generations of Army leaders who will follow in his footsteps and, in so doing, positively contribute to the security of our nation.

On behalf of a grateful nation, I join my colleagues today in recognizing and commending GEN Daniel B. Allyn for over 36 years of service to our country. We wish Dan and his wife, Debbie, the very best in the years to come.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### TRIBUTE TO MAJOR GENERAL H. MICHAEL EDWARDS

• Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize and commend Maj. Gen. H. Michael Edwards, who retired on March 31, 2017, after 43 years of exceptional leadership and service to our country, including 36 years in the Colorado Air National Guard.

For almost a decade in the position of the adjutant general for Colorado, General Edwards was responsible for

the command administration of over 5,300 Army and Air National Guard members.

He had responsibility for the executive director of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and was a member of the Governor's cabinet.

He had responsibility for the Colorado National Guard's primary missions of national defense and State emergency response. In addition, he was responsible for supporting the missions of the Civil Air Patrol's Colorado wing.

General Edwards received his commission in 1973, after graduating from the Air Force Academy, and earned his pilot wings in 1974 at Reese Air Force Base, TX.

He served as an F-4 pilot and AT-38 fighter lead-in instructor pilot at Osan Air Base, Korea, and Holloman Air Force Base, NM, respectively.

General Edwards joined the Colorado Air National Guard in August 1980. He has served in numerous assignments in flying and operations, as well as command positions at squadron, group, and wing levels—culminating as the adjutant general for Colorado.●

#### RECOGNIZING 77TH ANNUAL PIKES PEAK OR BUST RODEO

• Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the annual Pikes Peak or Bust Rodeo, an important part of the Western culture and history of the Pikes Peak Region. This year marks the 77th rodeo, making it one of the oldest and most prestigious in the county.

The Pikes Peak Region plays a significant role in our American history. For centuries, this area was home to Native Americans, pioneers, miners, farmers and ranchers, and other explorers. The Pikes Peak region became a prime location for trade and, eventually, the home of the "Pikes Peak or Bust" gold rush in 1857. Thousands of prospectors scrambled to the area for their piece of the gold fortune. This area became the pinnacle of the American frontier, which spurred development and innovation.

Today community-wide events, including the Pikes Peak or Bust rodeo, celebrate the adventurous spirit of the Pikes Peak region and its Western heritage. In addition, the rodeo donates all proceeds to charities that support military members and their families, such as the Fort Carson Outreach Program and the U.S. Air Force Academy's Operation Warm Heart. Thank you to the Pikes Peak or Bust Rodeo leadership and entire El Paso County community for keeping these longstanding traditions alive.●

#### MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Ms. Ridgway, one of his secretaries.