

10. All defense articles and services listed on this transmittal are authorized for release and export to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

KEEP AMERICA'S REFUGES OPERATIONAL ACT

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, in celebration of National Wildlife Refuge Week, Senator BARRASSO and I introduced legislation just prior to the recent recess to reauthorize the National Wildlife Refuge System's volunteer and partnerships program. I want to share with our colleagues some information about S. 1940, the Keep America's Refugees Operational Act, and ask for their support.

The Keep America's Refugees Operational Act reauthorizes the volunteer and partnerships program, with no increase, at \$2 million per year. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will use this authorization of Federal funding to provide volunteer uniforms, training, equipment, and necessary travel. The bill also allows volunteer groups to use this modest funding for administrative expenses directly related to the program.

For example, these groups will now be able to use funding to complete administrative requirements of cooperative agreements with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Cooperative agreements enable volunteers to assist the agency in technical activities, such as bird banding, other wildlife tagging, and research.

Our National Wildlife Refuge System is an exceptional network of public lands and waters dedicated to fish and wildlife conservation. More than 40 million people visit our refuges each year to explore, fish, hunt, and view and study wildlife. This ecotourism industry strongly supports local economies.

Volunteers are critical to refuge operations, making up 20 percent of the refuge system's workforce. Volunteers assist with fish and wildlife surveys, restoring habitat, and supporting refuge office functions. Without volunteers and partner groups, refuges may have to cut back on public programs and reduce hours of operation.

In my home State of Delaware, we have two beautiful refuges: the Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge and the Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge. The two refuges employ only 10 full time staff, and both refuges are highly dependent upon volunteers.

Each year, people come to our refuges to observe the federally threatened Red Knot shorebird, which stops along the Delaware Bay to refuel on horseshoe crab eggs along its migration journey. Volunteers make sure these visitors have memorable experiences.

When people can see these pristine habitats and the many species that call them home, they are inspired to be good stewards of our planet for the enjoyment and benefit of future generations.

I want to ensure that these opportunities abound, in Delaware and around the country. A small annual investment in the refuge system volunteer and partnerships program goes a long way. Every \$1 appropriated to coordinate these volunteers translates to \$10 worth of volunteer services.

These appropriations also help cut government costs. In fiscal year 2016, 40,000 volunteers donated 1.4 million hours, with donated time equaling that of 649 full-time employees.

I want to thank Senator BARRASSO for cosponsoring this commonsense legislation. I look forward to working with him and our colleagues in the House to pass the Keep America's Refugees Operational Act and enact it into law.

Thank you.

CONFIRMATION OF AJIT PAI

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I do not believe Chairman Pai should have been confirmed to serve a full 5-year term as Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, FCC. Since assuming the leadership role at the Commission, Chairman Pai has systematically advanced policies that advance corporate interests at the expense of American consumers.

Chairman Pai's decision to open an NPRM that will eventually reverse the 2015 open internet order is an egregious example of his misplaced priorities. In 2016, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit confirmed that the open internet order was a lawful exercise of the Commission's regulatory authority. Broadband service providers must provide fair and equal access to all users, regardless of socioeconomic status. Over 18 million Americans submitted comments urging the Commission to maintain regulations that impose transparency and prevent ISPs from throttling or discriminating against certain data. Numerous polls have shown that Americans, across the political spectrum, overwhelmingly support regulations that would prevent broadband companies from discriminating against certain data.

Chairman Pai claims that the 2015 order caused a decrease in broadband investment, but the evidence suggests otherwise. I wrote to Chairman Pai about the evidence that he frequently cites to support his allegations of depressed investment—evidence, which I believe, is incomplete and inconclusive. As technology develops and consumers become even more dependent upon internet access, it is imperative that the FCC ensures that the internet is not divided between the have and the have-nots.

I was also disappointed by Chairman Pai's support for Congress's actions to repeal the Federal Communications Commission's broadband privacy rules. These rules are especially important in light of recent data breaches. Every website we visit and every link we click leaves an unintended trail that

tells a story about our lives. ISPs can collect information about our location, children, sensitive information, family status, financial information, Social Security Numbers, web browsing history, and even the content of communications. ISPs sell this highly sensitive and highly personal data to the highest bidder without consumer's consent or knowledge. The Commission's rules empowered consumers and gave them tools to protect their privacy through transparency, choice, and data security. In supporting the rule's repeal, Chairman Pai demonstrated that he does not believe that Americans should have control over their data.

The rise of the internet of things, telehealth, and smart agriculture means that American consumers need an FCC that is on watch and committed to protecting their interests. I hope that Chairman Pai will reverse course and will stop putting the interests of big corporations ahead of the interests of American consumers.

REMEMBERING LIEUTENANT THOMAS F. BURKHART AND VETERANS OF THE WAR IN THE PACIFIC

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, this week my constituent Caroline Burkhardt of Baltimore, MD, is on a historic trip to Japan of remembrance and reconciliation. A guest of the Japanese Government, she will follow the journey of her father, Thomas F. Burkhardt, who was a prisoner of war of imperial Japan 75 years ago. Her trip will include a visit to the site of the camp in which her father was held as a POW.

At the start of WWII, Lieutenant Burkhardt served in the Philippines with the Headquarters Company of the 45th Infantry, Philippine Scouts, an elite U.S. Army unit composed of American officers and Filipino enlisted men. After Japan's December 8, 1941, invasion of the Philippines, his battalion helped defend the withdrawal of American forces on Luzon to the Bataan Peninsula. Barely a month after being promoted to first lieutenant, on January 24, 1942, Lieutenant Burkhardt earned a Silver Star for "Gallantry in Action" at the Battle of Abucay Hacienda, January 15 to 25, 1942, which maintained the first battle position on Bataan.

Sick with malaria, Lieutenant Burkhardt was in the open-air general hospital No. 1 near the tip of Bataan when Major General Edward King surrendered the peninsula to Japanese forces on April 9, 1942. Soon thereafter, the patients were taken by truck, boxcar, and foot up to Camp O'Donnell, an overcrowded, makeshift POW camp. In early June, the Japanese, fearing the deaths of the prisoners from the horrific conditions in the camp, began to release their Filipino POWs and transfer the others to a new facility at Cabanatuan. It is estimated that 1,550 Americans and 22,000 Filipinos died at Camp O'Donnell, the overwhelming majority within the first 8 weeks.

On November 6, 1942, Lieutenant Burkhardt was among 1,500 prisoners packed into the coal bunker of the unmarked "hell ship" *Nagato Maru* to Japan. It took three torturous weeks for the ship to make its way from the tropics to the cold of Northeast Asia. Lieutenant Burkhardt, nearly blind from malnutrition, was used as a slave laborer for the construction company Toshima Group—today's Tobishima Corporation. He was soon moved to the Hiroshima No. 1-B Zentsuji POW Camp on the island of Shikoku. The enlisted men at Zentsuji were slave stevedores for Nippon Express Co.—Nippon Tsuun—at Sakaide Rail Yards and the Port of Takamatsu. As an officer, Lieutenant Burkhardt worked in the camp garden. On June 23, 1945, he and 334 officers were transferred to POW Camp 11-B Rokuroshi, deep in the Japanese Alps. Food was scarce, conditions were overcrowded, and winter clothes were unavailable, leading many to fear that they would not survive the harsh winter. Lieutenant Burkhardt was liberated from this camp in early September.

Lieutenant Burkhardt remained in the Army and had a distinguished career with the quartermaster corps, retiring in 1957 as a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army Reserve. Throughout his life, he was plagued by health problems most likely caused by the illnesses and hardships of being a POW. In 1972, at age 57, he passed away and was buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

Thomas Burkhardt's daughter Caroline has honored his memory by working tirelessly to preserve the history of the POW experience and to teach its lessons of American perseverance and grit. Ms. Burkhardt is an active member of the American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor Memorial Society. In this year, the 75th anniversary of the fall of the Philippines, we appreciate the effort by Japan to reach out to Ms. Burkhardt and the American POWs in the spirit of reconciliation and healing.

I ask my colleagues to join me in wishing Caroline Burkhardt a safe and meaningful journey and in expressing our gratitude and appreciation to Thomas F. Burkhardt and all veterans of the war in the Pacific for their heroic service and sacrifice.

TRIBUTE TO GEORGE JAMES WRIGHT

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, today I wish to honor George James Wright, a resident of Laurel, MT, and a veteran of the Second World War.

George, I would like to thank you and your family on behalf of Montana and the United States of America for your service to our Nation in times of war.

George was born on June 14, 1923, in Hinsdale, MT.

Like many Montanans from Valley County, he made a living off the land farming and ranching. He worked hard alongside his older brother, where he remembers driving the tractor and

looking up into the big blue Montana sky.

Also, like many Montanans, he did not back down from answering the call to serve his Nation when we needed him most.

In 1943, George enlisted in the Army, making him the first in his family to serve in the military.

He spent over 2 years fighting in the jungles and on the beaches of the Philippines and New Guinea as a proud member of the 32nd Infantry Division.

He braved the mud. He braved the rain. He braved the bugs, and he braved the bullets.

He saw the unimaginable, as Japanese kamikaze pilots slammed their airplanes into American ships.

He did the unbelievable, driving Army bulldozers into the unknown, making sure our soldiers got the supplies and food they desperately needed.

He served our Nation with bravery, courage, and dignity, working his way up to the rank of T5.

After America's victory, George came home, and returned to those same Montana fields and skies.

After seeing the war's destruction firsthand, he knew that the world needed to be rebuilt, and he knew he was the person for the job. He took what he learned on the battlefield and spent his next years doing construction work.

He married the love of his life, Vivian, who we remember today, and they had two children Roland and Sharon.

At the time, he did not receive the recognition that he was due for his service to our Nation, but we are here today to make that right.

Now, a proud father, grandfather of two, and great-grandfather of seven, he will get that long overdue acknowledgement.

I have the proud honor of presenting him with the following: Bronze Star Medal with one Bronze Service Star, Good Conduct Medal—Army, American Campaign Medal with three Bronze Service Stars, World War II Victory Medal, Philippine Liberation Ribbon with one Bronze Service Star, and Honorable Service Lapel Pin—WWII.

George, you are a Montana farmer through and through, whether feeding Americans at home or soldiers in the field.

I am proud to call myself a farmer, if only because it means I have something in common with a man like George Wright.

George, you have spent your life providing for Montanans at home and protecting Americans overseas.

These medals serve as a small token of our Nation's appreciation for your service and your sacrifice. You are an American hero and one of Montana's best. Thank you for your service.

TRIBUTE TO GERALD ROBERT ZELMER

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, today I wish to honor Gerald Robert Zelmer, a veteran of the Vietnam war.

Gerald, I would like to thank you, on behalf of the State of Montana, and the United States of America, for your service to this Nation.

Gerald, known by his friends and family as Gerry, was born in Bismarck, ND, on June 25, 1947.

He married the love of his life, Dora Jean or D.J., on October 12, 1968, in Worden, MT, at the height of the Vietnam conflict.

Two months later, Gerry was off to war.

He attended boot camp in Fort Lewis, WA, and then moved on to advanced infantryman training in Fort Eustis, VA.

He deployed soon thereafter, serving proudly with the 101st Airborne Division out of Camp Eagle.

Gerry served as a helicopter crew chief, ensuring that pilots and crews were safe as they flew aerial missions. His skills on the battlefield ensured that rotary-wing aircraft were fine-tuned and ready to take off for their missions.

Gerry is a fixer and a problem solver.

In Vietnam, he fixed helicopters and kept our birds in the air, covering our soldiers on the ground.

When he returned from war, he worked as a maintenance foreman at Montana Sulphur and Chemical.

It is his skills on the battlefield, his bravery and courage, and his service to our Nation that earned him these commendations decades ago. It is my honor to finally deliver them today.

As a father to Carrie and Cody and grandfather to two grandchildren Sienna and Aden, he will get that long overdue acknowledgement.

I have the proud honor of presenting you, Gerry, with the Bronze Star Medal for your meritorious service in connection with ground operations against a hostile force.

I am also presenting you with copies of your previous awards: Army Commendation Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal with Silver Service Star attachment, Expert Badge with Auto Rifle Bar, and sharpshooter badge with rifle bar.

Gerry, these medals are but a small token of our Nation's appreciation for your service and your sacrifice. You are an American hero, and Montana is proud to call you one of our own.

NATIONAL FOREST PRODUCTS WEEK

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, in support of National Forest Products Week and in my role as a cochair of the Senate Paper and Packaging Caucus, I would like to recognize the almost 20,000 hard-working men and women employed by the forest products industry in the great State of Arkansas.

Arkansas is home to over 90 wood products, paper, and packaging manufacturing facilities that make over \$8 billion in products annually and contribute over \$1.2 billion to the State and local economies through wages and compensation.