

Taken together, these provisions strike me as essentially asking Senators to put more trust in VA leadership and Donald J. Trump, the same Donald Trump who publicly attacked the parents of a Muslim soldier killed in action and the same Donald Trump who nominated his wholly unqualified personal physician to run the VA. Unfortunately, this administration has already proven it can't be trusted to take care of our veterans.

I had hoped Senators would be given an opportunity to debate this bill and offer amendments that might have addressed the bill's shortcomings. The Senate majority has prevented that from happening.

So the choice before me and every other Senator this week is to oppose this bill and the good it will do or to support it with significant reservations.

After hearing from many Oregonians and from the 38 veterans and military service organizations and seven former VA Secretaries who support this bill, I have chosen the second option and will support the bill despite my concerns.

Mark my words: The ultimate success or failure of this bill will depend on whether Donald Trump and his team at the VA choose to work with Congress and put our veterans first or whether they sell out to the privatization partisans.

I hope my fears about this bill prove to be unwarranted, but as the saying goes, hope is not a strategy. After Donald Trump signs this bill into law, I will redouble my efforts to work with Senator TESTER and others to support and sustain a robust VA worthy of the millions of veterans it serves.

If the Trump administration implements any of these provisions in a way that threatens to privatize or undermine the VA as a healthcare system, I will pull out all the stops and fight it like hell.

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, there are parts of the VA MISSION Act that I strongly support. The expansion of the Caregivers program to veterans of all generations will help support family members who have made enormous sacrifices for their loved ones wounded in war. Raising the limits on the Education Debt Reduction Program, an effort that I helped lead, will make it easier for the VA to attract the doctors and other medical personnel they need.

I am concerned, however, that despite some very good provisions in this bill, it continues a trend toward the slow, steady privatization of the VA. No one disagrees that veterans should be able to seek private care in cases where the VA cannot provide the specialized care they require or when wait times for appointments are too long or when veterans might have to travel long distances for that care.

The way to reduce wait times is not to direct resources outside the VA, as this bill does, but to strengthen the VA by recruiting and retaining the best

healthcare professionals to care for the brave women and men who rely on VA healthcare. The way to reduce wait times is to make sure that the VA is able to fill the more than 30,000 vacancies it currently has. This bill provides \$5 billion for the Choice program. It provides nothing to fill the vacancies at the VA. That is wrong. My fear is that this bill will open the door to the draining, year after year, of much needed resources from the VA.

Further, I am disappointed that the legislative process did not allow for votes on amendments that could have made this a stronger bill. The amendments I filed, but was prevented from offering, would have provided equal funding for the Veterans Health Administration and the Choice program, provided real money and a meaningful expansion of the Caregivers program, and established a pilot program for VA dental care in rural areas. In addition, I authored an amendment that would have struck the AIR Act provisions that could result in the closure of VA facilities and language clarifying that veterans may not be held financially liable for errors made by the VA.

It is my sincere belief that these amendments would have gone a long way to addressing the deficiencies in the bill and providing the care and benefits our veterans have earned and deserved. I hope that my colleagues on the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee will work with me to make these necessary improvements in future legislation. We must do a better job in standing together against the effort to privatize the VA.

I acknowledge the work done by some of my colleagues to improve this bill, but I believe it moves us too far in the direction of privatization. That is why I will vote against it.

Mr. ROUNDS. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session for the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 840, 841, 842, and 843.

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

The clerk will report the nominations en bloc.

The assistant bill clerk read the nominations of Cheryl A. Lydon, of South Carolina, to be United States Attorney for the District of South

Carolina for the term of four years; Sonya K. Chavez, of New Mexico, to be United States Marshal for the District of New Mexico for the term of four years; Scott E. Kracl, of Nebraska, to be United States Marshal for the District of Nebraska for the term of four years; and J. C. Raffety, of West Virginia, to be United States Marshal for the Northern District of West Virginia for the term of four years.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nominations be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Lydon, Chavez, Kracl, and Raffety nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

TRIBUTE TO JOHN H. KLETTE, JR.

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, as our Nation pauses on Memorial Day to remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice to keep our Nation safe and to protect the liberties we hold dear, I would like to join the residents of Park Hills in recognizing one distinguished Kentuckian. John H. Klette, Jr., a centenarian veteran of the Second World War, will be honored as the grand marshal in the community's Memorial Day parade.

Soon after the United States entered World War II, Klette enlisted at the age of 24 to help defeat Nazi Germany. A practicing attorney and a licensed pilot, he chose to join the Army Air Corps—the precursor of the Air Force—and passed the necessary exams that same day. After months of training, he was assigned as a pilot in the 32nd Bombardment Squadron of the 301st Bombardment Group and was sent to southern Italy. Klette's first mission to Bucharest, Romania, saw significant enemy resistance, and his aircraft suffered serious damage. That fight would

not be the last time Klette saw danger in the line of duty.

To this day, he remembers what he calls the worst mission of his career. Overcome by dozens of persistent enemy craft, Klette's plane was in a dire state. With low oxygen and fires onboard, the crew resisted wave after wave of enemy fighters destroying or damaging several of the enemy craft. Showing tremendous courage in the face of incredible danger, Klette and his team completed their mission and returned to their base.

In recognition of their intrepid actions, the entire crew was awarded the Silver Star, the third highest combat decoration awarded by the Armed Forces. Klette was only 25 at the time. Throughout World War II, Klette flew 51 missions, finishing his last on Thanksgiving Day in 1944.

As a member of the Greatest Generation determined to serve his Nation, Klette entered the Reserves after World War II. He was called back to Active Duty and served for nearly 2 years in Korea. Flying 50 combat missions in that conflict, Klette totaled more than 100 missions during his military career.

After officially leaving military service in 1952, Klette returned to northern Kentucky to practice law with his father in Covington. Still practicing law to this day—now with his daughter as a partner—Klette has been an active member of his community, serving on the board of multiple civic organizations.

As the grand marshal of the Park Hills Memorial day parade, Klette will receive the recognition and gratitude that he deserves. Because of his years of dedication to our Nation in uniform, I am proud to join with the Park Hills community to honor his gallant service and sacrifice. I urge all of my colleagues in the Senate to help me thank John Klette.

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

VOTE EXPLANATION

• Ms. DUCKWORTH. Madam President, I was necessarily absent for vote No. 103 on the confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 608, the nomination of Dana Baiocco to be a Commissioner of the Consumer Product Safety Commission for a term of 7 years from October 27, 2017. On vote No. 103, had I been present, I would have voted nay on the confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 608.

I was also necessarily absent for vote No. 104 on the motion to invoke cloture on the motion to concur in the House amendment to S. 2372, the VA MIS-SION Act of 2018. On vote No. 104, had I been present, I would have voted yea on the motion to invoke cloture on the motion to concur in the House amendment to S. 2372.●

75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF ATTU

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, as we approach Memorial Day to remember the men and women who sacrificed their lives in devotion to the causes of liberty, freedom, and democracy, I would like to take the opportunity to speak about one event in our Nation's history that had a profound impact on my great State. The Battle of Attu was the only land battle fought in North America during the Second World War.

Commonly referred to as the Forgotten Battle or Forgotten War, the campaign began in 1942 with the bombing of Dutch Harbor and subsequent invasions of Adak, Kiska, and Attu by the navy of Imperial Japan. On June 7, 1942, close to 3,000 Japanese soldiers invaded Attu, exactly 6 months to the day after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. As the only land battle during World War II, it was costly. In May of 1943, over 15,000 American soldiers stormed this small island in the Aleutians, and over the course of the engagement, the United States suffered 549 casualties and sustained more than 1,200 injuries. Many more were taken out of action due to disease and nonbattle injuries. Of the over 2,400 Japanese soldiers present at the battle, only 28 survived the battle by capture.

In addition to these often forgotten sacrifices is the impact on those residents who lived on Attu. During the Japanese invasion, all 47 residents of the island were detained, captured, and taken to Japan as prisoners, where 22 would later perish. Those who did survive were not able to return home; there were too few people to rebuild the community after being destroyed by war.

Today, before the Senate, I would like to take a moment to honor the brave servicemembers and the Alaska Territorial Guard members who fought and, in many cases, gave the ultimate sacrifice to defend the territories of the United States and the memory and lives of those Aleut evacuees and Attuan prisoners of war whose communities, culture, and languages were forever effected.

From May 17 to May 19, a memorial ceremony took place in Alaska to honor and acknowledge those who were affected by the Battle of Attu—the Aleut evacuees, their descendants and veterans of this Forgotten War, both living and deceased.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

REMEMBERING JEFFREY HOLT

• Mr. DONNELLY. Madam President, today I wish to recognize and honor the extraordinary service and sacrifice of Jeffrey Holt, a firefighter from Brownsburg who served in the Lawrence Fire Department. Selflessness, caring for others, and service to his community were defining traits of Jeff's life.

On the morning of April 30, 2018, Jeff was participating in an annual physical assessment training when he collapsed and suffered an apparent heart attack. He passed away at Indiana Heart Hospital. Jeff's death left his fellow firefighters without one of their leaders, and he will be sorely missed by his fellow firefighters and loved ones.

Jeff was a graduate of Indiana's Benton Central High School. After finishing high school, he worked at the Otterbein Fire Department in Otterbein, IN, as a firefighter and then as an EMT and subsequently joined the Purdue Fire Department in 1985. In 1994, Jeff began training to be a paramedic and, while training, met his future wife, Lindi. In 1996, he began his service in the Lawrence Fire Department as a firefighter and paramedic. Over the course of his career with the Lawrence Fire Department, Jeff served as an engineer, lieutenant, division chief of training, and deputy chief of operations.

Outside of work, Jeff pursued his passion for music and was the lead singer in several bands. He shared this love of music and rescuing special needs animals with Lindi, his wife of nearly 20 years.

He is survived and deeply missed by his wife, Dr. Lindi Holt, stepdaughters Jennifer and Rachael Kempfer, parents Dr. Donald and Marilyn Holt, brothers Dr. Steve Holt and Bill Holt, sister Kathy Stichnoth, as well as nieces, nephews, and a great-nephew.

Jeff represented the best of Hoosier values. He put his life on the line day-in, day-out, serving his community and working to keep his fellow citizens safe. Those who knew Jeff described him as well-liked and respected, compassionate, dedicated, and loyal. Jeff set a strong example for others, and let us remember and emulate the example this selfless man set for us and honor his commitment to serving his community.

On behalf of Hoosiers, we mourn with Jeff's family, the men and women he served with, and the Lawrence community. His legacy will live on and his memory will not be soon forgotten.●

TRIBUTE TO MAKENZIE SHEEHAN

• Ms. HASSAN. Madam President, I am proud to recognize second grader MaKenzie Sheehan of Monroe, NH, as the May Granite Stater of the Month for her bravery and quick thinking that helped save her family when their house caught on fire recently.

On the night of the fire, MaKenzie woke to a crash in her bedroom, and when she saw a wall of fire, she quickly acted to wake her sister. Remembering from her fire education at school that the door would be hot, she knew not to touch it and began screaming for help. Her cries alerted the rest of the family, and they were able to make it out just in time.

Her family is very proud and grateful for MaKenzie's grace under pressure and considers her their hero.