

patriots—are models of courage and respect for our democratic system that the President and his circle of enablers should look to emulate rather than belittle.

RECOGNIZING NATIONAL WOMEN VETERANS UNITED

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, we celebrated Veterans Day last Monday. On the 11th day of the 11th month, we pause to honor the courage and sacrifice of our Nation's veterans. Millions of Americans have served in uniform over the years, many of whom return home with visible and invisible wounds alike, often to serve again in their communities.

I had the privilege to meet with a group of such dedicated veterans recently at a meeting of the National Women Veterans United in Chicago. National Women Veterans United is the only center in Illinois dedicated to serving women servicemembers and veterans. Run by women and for women, I met with founder and president, the formidable Rochelle Crump. Rochelle served in the Army during the Vietnam era and has a long history of working with the VA at the Federal, State, and local levels. Rochelle and other members of her community in Chicago noticed that women veterans were falling through the cracks when it came to accessing the benefits they have earned, so they founded National Women Veterans United in 2005 to help fill the gap.

The VA reports that there are approximately 2 million women veterans in America, reflecting 9 percent of the total veteran population. By 2045, the share of female veterans is projected to double to 18 percent. Women are among the fastest growing segments of the veteran population; yet many women veterans are either not aware of the benefits afforded to them or they are frustrated with the VA's inability to understand or address the unique needs of women veterans. For example, women veterans tend to be older. The top reported health issues they face are PTSD, TBI, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease, but many also require services related to unique health needs such as military sexual trauma and reproductive health.

Now, the VA has made great strides over the years to provide for women veterans, but we must do more, especially when it comes to changing the culture at the VA that has often been a barrier to women seeking care at the VA. Groups like National Women Veterans United try to break down those barriers. They have helped hundreds of women veterans and their families, providing assistance in navigating the VA, holding healthcare screenings, and offering a host of personal and professional development opportunities and support groups. National Women Veterans United also supported entire families, such as the Gold Star Robinson-Wilson family. SGT Simone Robinson

of Robbins, IL, was 21 years old when she died of wounds sustained while serving in Afghanistan. At the time, she had a 2-year-old daughter. National Women Veterans United has helped care for the family after the sergeant's death. Earlier this year, they named their beautiful new center after her, now the SGT Simone A. Robinson Military Women Veteran's Center.

I would like to recognize a few of the other great women I had the opportunity to meet during my visit with National Women Veterans United, including two Korean war veterans: Wille Merine Rouse and Miljan Akin—Rouse also served again in Iraq, as did her daughter Rene—Sharon Stokes-Parry, who served in Iraq with the Marine Corps; Diane Halle, a retired U.S. Army master sergeant who later worked at the Jesse Brown VA and with Team Rubicon on disaster relief around the world; Jeannie Adams, a Vietnam Air Force veteran who serves as their treasurer; Donna Cooper; Hazel Noble; Valerie Harris—the list goes on.

I look forward to continuing to work with National Women Veterans United. These brave women stood guard for our freedom in uniform, and now, they continue to stand in support of their community—and specifically as African Americans, some of whom served during times of racial segregation, they faced challenges not only as women, but as Black women. Now, they help others who face challenges.

May we use their inspiration—and the inspiration of all of our veterans—to find our own ways to sacrifice for the good of our Nation and our world.

THE MIDDLE EAST

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, the Washington Nationals' upset victory in the 2019 World Series reminded a good friend of mine, Rabbi Michael Cohen of Manchester, VT, of another unforeseen win. Fifty years ago, the New York Mets, led by star pitcher Tom Seaver, and manager—former Brooklyn Dodgers star Gil Hodges—shocked the baseball world by defeating the heavily favored Baltimore Orioles in the fall classic.

Rabbi Cohen, who has led an exemplary life, taking action on major issues including Mideast peace, antisemitism, and other difficult challenges, sees a common theme in these two victories, 50 years apart. Life, as in sports, offers all of us the opportunity to achieve what at the outset seems insurmountable. Peace in the Middle East is possible. We can end the scourges of antisemitism, xenophobia, and racism.

Rabbi Cohen's words in an article published in the Jerusalem Post on October 28, 2019, "Letter from America: The '69 Mets and lessons for today" are a powerful reminder of what we humans can achieve against the odds.

I ask unanimous consent that Rabbi Cohen's writing be printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[The Jerusalem Post]

(By Michael M. Cohen, October 28, 2019)

LETTER FROM AMERICA: THE '69 METS AND LESSONS FOR TODAY

The articles we read in The Jerusalem Post and other news sources can be daunting, leaving us with a feeling of hopelessness and a debilitating sense that the conditions of the world are only getting worse.

From the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, which seems intractable, to climate change, to endless strife in the Middle East, to an assault on the institutions of, and belief in, democracy, to the worldwide rise of antisemitism, xenophobia and racism, to name but a few, the odds appear against us.

Fifty years ago the New York Mets began the baseball season with 100 to 1 odds against the scenario they would win the World Series. Before the 1969 season they had won a total of 394 games and lost a staggering 737 games since they first started playing in 1962. A sense of gloom pervaded the team. But in 1969 they would win 100 games, and this year's World Series marks the 50th anniversary of the final out in game five against the favorite and imposing Baltimore Orioles led by Frank Robinson and Boog Powell.

Baseball and other sports are not only about wins and losses and statistics. On a deeper level, sports are a metaphor for life and a holder of lessons for life. The '69 Mets are no different for us today.

The 1969 Season did not begin with a stellar start for the Mets. By the end of May they were continuing to lose more than win, with a record of 18-23.

I attended my first major league baseball game on June 19, when the Mets beat the Phillies in Philadelphia at the old Connie Mack Stadium, 6-5. Member of the tribe Art Shamsky went four for four, including two home runs, and pitcher Tom Seaver stole second base!

Three weeks later Seaver would pitch two outs short of a perfect game against the Chicago Cubs, as the Mets moved within 3 games of the division-leading Cubs.

Change seemed at hand, but change is rarely perfectly linear. By mid-August the Mets had fallen 10 games behind the Cubs. But then the Mets took all the accumulated and invaluable lessons from the losses of those previous seasons and applied them to win an incredible 38 of their last 49 games, and win the Eastern Division of the National League.

That is the thing about baseball. A good batting average is .300, which means that 70% of the time a good player fails when he is at bat. Players will tell you they take all the lessons from their previous at bats every time they are in the batter's box, with most of those lessons coming from failed experiences.

In addition, baseball is the only sport where the team on offense, the team at bat, does not have the ball. Rather, the team on defense pitches to you. That dynamic makes the encounter more difficult, but batters know those are the conditions they operate within.

The Mets would go on to sweep baseball legend Hank Aaron and the Atlanta Braves in the National League playoff series and then face the Baltimore Orioles in the World Series. They would win the Series by tenacity, hustle, a strong work ethic, smart baseball, and that factor out of our hands, serendipity.

On the second pitch of the first game of the World Series, Don Buford hit a home run off Seaver, and the Orioles would go on to win

the game. After that game many felt that an Orioles sweep of the Mets was a very good possibility. The tenacious Mets had other ideas, and went on to win the next four games in a row to become the champions.

In game two, their oldest member, Ed Charles, 38, came through, batting, and helped end the game with a difficult and brilliant throw to Donn Clendenon at first base.

Game three was all about two magnificent running catches by center fielder Tommie Agee. The first, with two runners on base, was caught in the webbing of his glove, the white of the baseball protruding from the glove, while the second diving catch was made with the bases loaded.

Game four the Mets won because the correct call was not made. J.C. Martin bunted in the bottom of the 10th inning and ran to first base on the wrong side of the first base line. Because of that, Oriole pitcher Pete Richert's throw hit Martin's wrist and the ball rolled to the ground, allowing Rod Gaspner to score the winning run. Martin should have been called out, but he was not.

The final game was won by the Mets because of smart, creative and detailed thinking by Mets manager Gil Hodges. In the bottom of the sixth inning, with the Mets trailing 3-0, Dave McNally's pitch to Cleon Jones went low and ended up in the Mets dugout. Umpire Lou DiMuro ruled the ball had not hit Jones. Hodges then emerged with the baseball showing a smudge of shoe polish on it. Jones was then awarded first base, and the next batter, Donn Clendenon, would hit a two-run homer, and the Mets would go on to win the game, 5-3.

The challenges we face can feel disheartening. We may feel like the Mets before the '69 season began, when the past suggested 100 to 1 odds against a different and better outcome. But change did happen. Fifty years later, that uplifting lesson should not be lost on us.

We are also reminded of that lesson in the Bible, where Moses's last speech to the people is a poem. We see in the life of Moses—who 40 years earlier said to God, "I have never been a man of words . . . I am slow of speech and slow of tongue" (Exodus 4:10)—someone who develops from a poor orator to a master of prose and poetry.

That which appears to be insurmountable may be difficult to overcome, but as Babe Ruth said, "Never let the fear of striking out keep you from playing the game." The batter's box awaits.

The writer, rabbi emeritus of the Israel Congregation in Manchester Center, Vermont, teaches at Bennington College and the Kibbutz Ketura campus of the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies.

OCEAN PLASTIC POLLUTION

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, the world's oceans serve as a crucial carbon sink, a home to hundreds of thousands of known and countless unknown species of marine life, an essential source of protein for billions of people, and a facilitator of billions of dollars in tourism, fishing, shipping, and other economic activity. Today, the oceans, on which life on Earth depends, are under serious threat.

Threats from climate change, habitat destruction, illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, and pollution—plastic waste pollution in particular—are accelerating and causing potentially irreparable harm to this planet.

I spoke recently on the significant health, environmental, and economic

impacts of the more than 300 billion pounds of plastic waste circulating in the oceans, and on funding in the Senate version of the fiscal year 2020 Department of State and Foreign Operations appropriations bill to strengthen U.S. efforts to address this pollution.

Today I will further discuss the scale of the problem and actions that governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), private companies, and other stakeholders can take to address this challenge.

I want to share a few findings and recommendations from a report recently published by Ocean Conservancy and the Trash Free Seas Alliance, a global group of companies and NGOs seeking to reduce and reinvent products and services that contribute to ocean pollution.

Absent collective action, the report depicts a bleak future—one involving more than 550 billion pounds of plastic waste in the oceans by 2025, clogging our rivers and waterways, threatening marine life and seabirds, endangering human health, contaminating the food supply, and triggering a significant decline in economic benefits.

For perspective, the amount of plastic entering the oceans each year is equivalent to dumping a garbage truck full of plastic into the ocean every minute of every hour of every day. That is 1,440 truckloads of plastic per day, or more than half a million truckloads per year. And, of course, this does not include the immense amounts of chemical waste and other types of pollution that enter the oceans every day.

As the report describes, rising ocean plastic pollution is a direct result of the increasing global production and use of plastic, which totals more than 750 billion pounds per year, an estimated 40 percent of which is single-use. Waste management systems, particularly in developing countries, are woefully incapable of managing the growing quantity of plastic waste.

So the majority of plastic entering the oceans was never collected as part of a formal waste management system, and without increased resources for waste management programs and improvements to collection infrastructure, developing countries—and the oceans—will continue to be inundated with plastic waste.

There is no single solution. Instead, the report outlines four priority areas on which to focus our collective efforts: financing the collection of plastic waste; reducing the production and use of single-use plastics; improving design standards to address nonrecyclable or difficult to recycle plastics; and increasing the demand for post-consumer plastics.

One option for increasing resources to finance the collection of plastic waste is by charging fees to companies based on the amount of nonrecyclable materials used in their products. Such fees have the potential to generate up to 75 percent of the resources needed to

support effective waste collection programs. And increasing the demand for recycled products—one of the other priority lines of effort—reportedly has the potential to reduce the resources needed for such programs by more than 30 percent. Other options for tackling plastic pollution include a ban on microplastics, incentive programs for recycling, preferential procurement policies, and the use of refillable packaging.

All of this is to say that steps can, and must, be urgently taken. While ocean plastic pollution may be a devastating and growing challenge, it is not an insurmountable one.

And as I have said before, while the United States should significantly increase our engagement and leadership on this issue, we cannot solve this problem alone. There is no greater unifier than the oceans. Their protection should be of the utmost importance to governments, companies, and individuals on every continent and in every country.

TRIBUTE TO MAIDA TOWNSEND

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I would like to take a moment to celebrate the achievements of Maida Townsend, a Vermont State Representative and now a decorated figure skater, who recently took home the gold medal in an international figure skating competition in Lake Placid, NY. Marcelle and I have known Maida for many years, and we have always been impressed with her dedication, artistry, and selflessness. While we have come to know Maida through her tireless work for the State of Vermont, we have been impressed, but not surprised, that she brings the same dedication to figure skating, a sport she picked up at the age of 50.

Maida has served the State of Vermont over the years through her leadership as the president of the Vermont branch of the National Education Association, as a chair of the Vermont Democratic Party, and in recent years as a State representative for South Burlington. Most noteworthy though is Maida's long career as a public school teacher, a career in which she has taught young Vermonters the French language for well over 30 years. Maida's career of public service is exemplary. I know that she will continue to dedicate herself to Vermont for many more years to come.

But just as inspiring as her long career in public service is her pursuit of a personal joy and passion, that of figure skating. Maida, proving it is never too late to pursue a new joy, is as dedicated to her sport as she is to her career. Starting her days hours before many of us see the sun rise, Maida hits the ice before she hits the halls of the State legislature. Maida is a friend, a true Vermonter, and a true treasure.

Marcelle and I are proud to join her loved ones in offering a hearty congratulations to Maida Townsend on