

TRIBUTE TO NATHAN
BERGERBEST

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I rise today to honor a long-time Senate staffer who recently retired, Nathan Bergerbest.

Many Members and staff who have worked on judiciary, military and veterans, homeland security, public safety, foreign relations, intelligence, or Native American issues and national and international disasters likely had the opportunity to work with Nathan during the 16 years he served the people of Alaska and the Nation. I am sure that many can share stories of the help Nathan offered, ideas he pushed to fruition, and wise counsel he provided. My statement today will offer just a slice of the many contributions this accomplished man has made in the lives of so many.

Nathan began his interest in good public policy and politics at a young age growing up in New York City. I believe he once said that he got involved in his first political campaign in elementary school because he was searching for the candidate who could improve his neighborhood. His quest for what was right, what was fair, and what was useful public policy has never subsided.

An attorney, Nathan has been a litigator, represented an Alaska Native regional corporation, and worked at FEMA. He started in my office in 2003 as legislative assistant and retired as senior counsel and deputy chief of staff. Throughout his service here in the Senate, Nathan was the quintessential Senate staffer—working late, knowing his subject cold, understanding the ways of the Senate and navigating them brilliantly.

His portfolio was huge, complex, and important. Yet he never shirked from pitching in where he could be useful. Nathan served not only as a mentor to young staffers in my office but as the conscience of Federal agency employees, military personnel, and elected leaders—constantly challenging us to do better, to be better versions of ourselves.

While a tribute from a former employer is always gratifying, Nathan made a lasting impression on so many who have worked here in the Senate over the years. I would like to share some of their stories. Several of the military fellows who have served in my office and worked closely with Nathan shared these words:

Nathan was part of the original group that came to be known as the Fairbanks Tiger Team, leading the red-shirted charge with the Fairbanks community against the Air Force's proposed plan to remove the F-16 Aggressor Squadron from Eielson Air Force Base. He rallied community leaders, helped leverage the effort on the Defense Appropriations Committee, and ultimately helped the Alaska delegation save Eielson. Then, only a year later, he worked to support the Alaska delegation's strong push to bring the F-35 to Eielson. In just over a year, the delegation was able to take Eielson from a near-shut-tered installation, to one that will soon have

the most capable fighter aircraft in the world, with significant infrastructure investment to support it.

The Tiger Team still meets over telephone or in person every other Friday to discuss housing and other local community issues related to the military. The team has evolved over the years with new members joining and old members retiring or moving to different lines of work. Nathan will be missed on these calls but his legacy will be forever forged in the Fairbanks community and the national defense of our country.

New commanders coming to Washington, DC, for their Hill visits would often ask my military and veterans affairs liaison in Anchorage for advice about how to prepare. The advice they received was "Don't try to BS Nathan, because he'll be able to sniff it out." Several of these commanders were relieved when the meeting with Nathan was over.

But Nathan would bend over backwards to help the military or a service-member. "A Colonel who served in Alaska attributed Nathan for saving his career. He didn't give any details. Only that he owed him everything." That is just like Nathan—to do good for an American and move on to the next task.

Nathan was a true friend to the Alaska National Guard as well, very close to the Adjutant Generals, and always quick to help support their needs or tout their accomplishments.

Nathan was extremely proud that Alaska boasts the highest rate of veterans per capita and worked to ensure strong representation of the Total Force military and veteran communities, always working to advance veterans' rights and benefits. His efforts helped lead to improvements in VA hospitals in Alaska as well as advances in telemedicine and other support to veterans in remote Alaskan communities.

Public safety and support for law enforcement were always priorities for Nathan. He helped to lead collaborative efforts among the Federal agencies and State and local law enforcement to keep drugs out of Alaskan communities, and he never missed honoring the fallen at the National Fallen Officers Memorial ceremonies. He cared deeply for all those who put themselves in harm's way.

While he was a policy expert in so many areas, Nathan was never one to ignore a plea for help from an individual Alaskan. There are countless examples of "casework" that he took on in addition to his legislative duties. From arranging military honors for veterans' funerals, persuading the Canadian Border Security Agency to reinstate 24-hour border crossings between Hyder, AK, and British Columbia, ensuring Alaskans' concerns were heard by the Navy prior to Northern Edge exercises, protecting National Guard members from retaliation during an investigation of sexual misconduct complaints, improving the standard of care at VA medical facilities, or any number of efforts, Nathan started with the question "What does the individual need?" and went about getting it done. In many instances, Nathan would help

my staff in Alaska navigate the bureaucracy to help solve an Alaskan's problem.

A former attorney for FEMA, Nathan was also the Alaska delegation's go-to staffer whenever disaster struck. After the November 2018 earthquake struck Anchorage, Mat-Su, and the Kenai Peninsula, Nathan helped disentangle municipalities, school districts, business owners, and individuals from the byzantine red tape that often characterizes FEMA. In call after call, Nathan translated FEMA's language and policies for Alaskans and worked with FEMA officials to do a better job assessing and responding to the damage. When FEMA sought to respond to a flood in Galena but lacked a sense of the challenges of rural Alaska, Nathan helped prod and guide the agency in improving the response.

Nathan took the same sense of dedication to his work on Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian issues. Leading Alaska tribal rights attorney Lloyd Miller called Nathan "one of the most knowledgeable and talented lawyers to ever work on the Hill. He combined an unmatched mastery of Alaska Native legal history with a deep sensitivity to Alaska Native issues gained from working inside one of the major Alaska Native regional corporations. And while his background before coming to the Hill was predominantly with Alaska Native corporations, he was equally knowledgeable about the unique challenges confronting Alaska Native Tribes, and the importance of supporting the critical role that Alaska Tribes play alongside their corporations. Nathan's remarkable intellect and sage advice will be deeply missed."

Over the years, as protestors filled the halls of Capitol Hill and individual offices, Nathan would stay late to talk with those who visited my office. He would sit with them for long periods and talk about how they can best navigate the issues, and how they, as advocates, could best approach offices for meetings and how they can present their issues in such a way that they were truly being heard on both sides of the aisle. On at least one or two occasions, I have seen him go and literally sit on the floor with protestors outside of my office for an hour or two—just listening to what they had to say so that he could ensure I understood the concerns of Americans who are so passionate about the important issues of the day.

No matter what the time of day or day of the week, Nathan made himself available to me, to other members of my staff, and to Alaskans. As my constituent services director in Anchorage put it, "I remember one time in particular in 2011 where he and I each took 12-hour shifts around the clock so we could help Alaskan constituents after the 9.0 magnitude earthquake struck in the Pacific Ocean off the northeast coast of Japan. A massive tsunami was triggered that flooded Japan's coastal

communities and damaged infrastructure. We spent several days in communication with constituents stranded in Japan that were trying to navigate the treacherous environment, communicate with the State Department, and ultimately obtain transportation home. He was also helpful in working with stranded Alaskan constituents after the 2015 severe earthquake in Nepal. He reached out to the lobbyist for Orbitz, since many of the foreign air carriers on their website raised prices drastically when trying to book flights out of Nepal after the earthquake.”

There are so many stories illustrative of Nathan's positive influence here in the U.S. Senate and in Alaska.

I thank Nathan Bergerbest for his service to Alaska and the Nation and wish him well.

TRIBUTE TO FAISAL AMIN

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the work of Mr. Faisal Amin, who has been serving for the past 4 months as a detailee on the staff of the U.S. Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies.

Faisal is a senior attorney for the Budget and Appropriations Law Group at the U.S. Government Accountability Office and joined the staff in September of this year to fill in for a long-time staff member on maternity leave.

Faisal has been heavily involved in the drafting, consideration, and passage of the fiscal year 2020 Interior appropriations bill starting from the first day of his assignment with the subcommittee. In just 4 months, he participated in almost all of the milestones of the appropriations process: a committee markup, floor consideration, and conference negotiations.

He ably represented Vice Chairman LEAHY and me throughout the process, handling the day-to-day responsibilities of overseeing the budgets of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and related agencies and working with other congressional offices, Agency staff, nongovernmental organizations, and other stakeholders to ensure that the priorities of Members of this Chamber on both sides of the aisle were well represented.

Faisal did tremendous work, stepping in to handle complicated policy and budgetary issues in an unusually expedited process. He is smart, pragmatic, thoughtful, and strategic—creating an excellent rapport with his colleagues on both sides of the aisle and serving as an optimistic and positive presence on the subcommittee. I am grateful for his time with us, and I know his colleagues on the subcommittee staff—Rachael Taylor, Ryan Hunt and Melissa Zimmerman—feel the same way.

On behalf of Vice Chairman LEAHY and the committee, I also extend our gratitude to the Comptroller General, Mr. Gene Dodaro, and the staff of the U.S. Government Accountability Office

for sharing Faisal with us during this critical time.

Congratulations, Faisal, for a job well done, and thank you for your service to the United States Senate.

TRIBUTE TO GARY HARTZ

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, I rise to recognize Mr. Gary Hartz, who is retiring from his position at the Indian Health Service with 48 years of distinguished Federal service to the Nation.

Mr. Hartz is especially deserving of this Chamber's recognition because he has spent his entire career on a single and absolutely critical goal-improving access to quality health care for American Indians and Alaska Natives. In his current position, Mr. Hartz serves as the Director of the Office of Environmental Health and Engineering, overseeing the construction, maintenance, and operations of Tribal health facilities, sanitation, and environmental health programs, a position that he has performed for more than two decades after working his way up through ranks of the office. An engineer by trade, Mr. Hartz also served as a member of the Public Health Service Commissioned Corps—retiring with the rank of rear admiral—and served briefly as the agency's Deputy Director. He began his career in the field, working as an engineer on projects in New Mexico and Alaska.

I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with Mr. Hartz in my roles as vice chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs and the ranking member of the Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies. He has worked closely with me and my staff and testified before my committees, and I can say from firsthand experience that he is one of the most knowledgeable, dedicated, and pragmatic public servants at the Indian Health Service, and his wisdom and experience will be deeply missed.

Finally, I want to thank him for all that he has done for my home State of New Mexico. Mr. Hartz has been instrumental in working to improve and replace Tribal health facilities, including working most recently on plans to replace the Service's Albuquerque, Alamo, Pueblo Pintado, and Gallup facilities. While we have more to do, I am tremendously grateful for the work that he has done to improve access to quality health care in Native communities across the State.

On behalf of the Nation, thank you for a job well done, Mr. Hartz. I wish you all the best as you begin your next chapter.

TRIBUTE TO DELIA SCOTT

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, I rise to recognize Ms. Delia Scott, who is retiring next month with more than 40 years of distinguished Federal service in the executive and legislative branches of government.

I have been lucky enough to work with Delia twice, both when I served in the House of Representatives and in my current role as ranking member of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies.

Most recently, Delia has served as the Congressional Liaison Officer at the National Gallery of Art, shaping the Gallery's relationship with members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. I know firsthand that Delia has been an effective advocate for the Gallery, playing an essential role in shepherding its annual appropriations through Congress and securing critical funding increases for operating and infrastructure needs.

Beyond her role with the budget, Delia has made it her goal to connect Members of the House and Senate with the world-class collection at the Gallery so they are invested in its success. My wife, Jill, and I are both grateful to have visited countless times to enjoy and learn about significant paintings, sculpture, photographs, and other works because of Delia's thoughtful invitations. The Gallery won't be the same without her.

For all her impressive work at the Gallery, I also want to recognize her enduring legacy of public service in other positions. Prior to her current position, Delia served as the staff director for the House Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, managing a \$30-plus billion funding bill and working to secure funding for natural resources, environmental protection, and Tribal and cultural programs. She also worked as a professional staff member for the committee and worked for more than two decades at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Delia has devoted her entire career to making sure that Federal agencies and programs—from the arts to environmental protection to foreign assistance—have operated smoothly and received ample funding to benefit the people of this Nation. For that service we should all be grateful.

I congratulate her on a job well done and an outstanding Federal career, and I wish her and her husband, John, the very best as they move on to the next chapter of their lives.

TRIBUTE TO COMMANDER MICHAEL D. CASSADY

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to pay special tribute to Commander Michael D. Cassady, Medical Service Corps, U.S. Navy. Commander Cassady currently serves as the Program Manager, Naval Advanced Medical Development at the Naval Medical Research Center and will be released from Active Duty after almost 35 years of Active military service on March 1, 2019. Commander Cassady is a native of Millersport, OH, and I am pleased to recognize his distinguished career.

Commander Cassady enlisted in the U.S. Navy on May 21, 1985, and after