

Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committee is authorized to meet during today's session of the Senate:

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL
RESOURCES

The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, December 19, 2019, at 9:30 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Virginia Flores, a detailee of the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Subcommittee, be granted floor privileges for the debate and action on H.R. 1158 and H.R. 1865.

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

TRIBUTE TO HAROLD THUNE

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, in 1906, two brothers named Nikolai and Matthew Gjelsvik arrived at Ellis Island from Norway. The only English they knew were the words "apple pie" and "coffee," which evidently they learned on the boat on the way over.

The immigration officials at Ellis Island thought that their name would be too difficult to spell and pronounce in this country, so they asked them to change their name. The names, when they got to this country, were Nikolai Gjelsvik, spelled G-J-E-L-S-V-I-K, and his brother was named Matthew.

So the immigration officials asked them to change their name, and they picked the name from the farm where they worked near Bergen, Norway, which was called the Thune farm. So Nikolai Gjelsvik became Nick Thune, my grandfather.

He and his brother worked on the railroad as they built it west across South Dakota. They learned English and saved up enough money to start a small merchandising company and then later a hardware store in Mitchell, SD. To this day, there is a Thune Hardware in Mitchell, although the family sold it many years ago.

In 1916, Nick Thune married an Iowa girl who had moved to South Dakota to teach school, and they had three sons. The middle son, Harold, will turn 100 in a few days, and that middle son happens to be my dad.

Like many of my colleagues, I send congratulatory notes to constituents for big birthdays and anniversaries. I never thought I would have the occasion to send one to my dad. I figured for this one, instead of writing a letter, I would come to the floor.

My dad is a World War II veteran. He is a member of that "greatest generation," and he shares the qualities of so many in that generation—humility, patriotism, quiet service. Dad was a Navy pilot who flew Hellcats off the USS *In-*

trepid, and he was an excellent pilot. He received the Distinguished Flying Cross for shooting down four enemy planes in one engagement. As a side note to that, that accommodation was issued to him by none other than ADM John McCain, Senator John McCain's grandfather.

But my dad didn't and still doesn't talk about his own exploits. In fact, had it not been for my mom, I am quite sure I never would have known about my dad's record in World War II. I did have the opportunity to interview him for the Library of Congress's Veterans History Project a few years back, and he shared some wonderful details about his service. As usual, his focus was never on his own achievements but on those of his fellow pilots.

I also probably would never have learned what an outstanding athlete my dad was, had it not been for my mom. My dad grew up in the small town of Murdo, SD, during the Great Depression. They didn't have a lot, but there were a lot of basketball hoops around Murdo. They put them on barns, poles, garages, and my dad learned to play. In fact, he learned to play so well that he took his high school basketball team to the State championship game where, although they lost narrowly, he was named the tournament's most valuable player.

My dad had hoped to attend college in South Dakota, but there was a doctor in Murdo named Joseph Murphy who thought my dad was good enough to play at the University of Minnesota and used his contacts to get my dad up to Hibbing Junior College in hopes that the Minnesota Gophers would notice him. Well, they did. He went to the Twin Cities on a scholarship and played three seasons for the Gophers. He was the team's most valuable player in his junior year. In fact, he was high point man in Madison Square Garden on his birthday, December 28, 1940.

In another example of how things have changed through the years, my dad said that when his team came out to play for the second game that night at the Garden, you couldn't see the upper deck because of all the cigarette smoke. Some things do change for the better.

While at the University of Minnesota, my dad met a girl who served sodas at a drugstore just off campus. They were married within a couple of years while my dad was in flight training for the Navy, and they spent the next almost 69 years together.

After the war, they came back to South Dakota. My dad had been thinking about a career in the Navy, but his dad asked him to come back and run the family hardware store. My dad said that his heart sank, but he knew that is what he had to do. So he went home and went to work for his dad. The hardware store did OK for a while, but started to struggle. My dad sold it and went back to school and got a teaching degree.

All parents are teachers for their kids, but my parents were teachers sev-

eral times over. Kids usually get a break from their parents when they are at school. My dad was a teacher at my high school. He was also a coach and the athletic director, and he drove the bus. My mom was the school librarian. So I think it is safe to say that my brothers and sister and I were pretty much always under the watchful eye of my parents. I have to say that I never had my dad for a class in high school, but my brother Rich did. Rich was the valedictorian of his high school class, and the only B he got in high school was from my dad. That was my dad for you. He never showed any preference or gave any of his kids better treatment than anybody else. In fact, some of us might argue that he gave us a harder time because we were his kids. But he believed very firmly that you had to earn your achievements.

As a coach, my dad taught us about being a team player. He made it clear that being on a team was not about building your personal statistics but about making the players around you better. It is a lesson I have carried throughout my life and one that I try to live by every day.

A few years ago, the Jones County School District in Murdo named the auditorium in Murdo after my dad in recognition of his service and achievements at the school. It was particularly special since my dad was one of the volunteers who originally built the auditorium back in the 1950s. My dad would tell me the story that he was more scared up on the scaffolding of that building than he had ever been flying off a carrier during World War II.

You might think that with my dad as coach and athletic director, sports were the main focus around our house. They certainly were a big part of our lives. But my mom was determined that we would grow up to be well-rounded people, and my dad always supported her in that. They worked hard to ensure that we grew up with a perspective on life that went beyond just the latest sporting event. Mom made us take piano lessons and, during the summers, come in from outside and read for an hour every day. We complained at the time, but I know all of us today are grateful to her and my father for their investments in that.

Mom and Dad made a good team. Mom was an optimist, and Dad was a pessimist—or, as he would put it, a realist—and they balanced each other out well. We didn't have material riches growing up, but we were beyond rich in those things that money can't buy but that lend purpose, joy, and meaning to life. All of us Thune kids are very, very grateful for that heritage.

I can't close without talking about something that was life-changing for my parents, and that was their strong faith in Christ. My dad always had real discernment and wisdom in no small part because of his daily dependence upon God in his life. God blessed him with it.

As we celebrate my dad's 100th birthday, I want to say thank you to you for the example of faith, integrity, character, and humility that you have given to me and to Bob and to Rich and to Karen and to Tim. Thank you for faithfully serving God's purpose for your generation and happy 100th birthday.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

REMEMBERING WILLIAM EBELTOFT

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, we have had a fruitful day here today. We passed a lot of bills. We did it in a bipartisan way. I want to thank both Leader MCCONNELL and Leader SCHUMER for their good work, as well as Chairman SHELBY and Ranking Member LEAHY for their good work on these bills.

Today, I am going to do something that I have never done before. I am going to read an obituary about a man I don't believe I have ever met, even though I was in the Veterans' Home of Columbia Falls while he was there. This obituary was passed on to me by my wife, who got it from a friend. It is incredibly powerful because, quite frankly, it is about one man, but it is actually about a generation of men and women who served in Vietnam.

This guy's name was William Ebeltoft. The obituary goes like this:

"Not everyone who lost his life in Vietnam died there." The saying is true for CW2 William C. Ebeltoft. He died on December 15, 2019 at the Veteran's Home in Columbia Falls, Montana. He died 50 years after he lost, in Vietnam, all that underpinned his life. He was 73 years old.

Everyone called him "Bill." He was loved by the nursing staff who cared for him. He was loved by the fellow veterans with whom he lived; those he helped when he was able and entertained with funny German slang and a stint at the piano when he could. He was a virtuoso when playing "Waltzing Matilda."

His small family loved him dearly. He was preceded in death by his parents, Paul and Mary Ebeltoft of Dickinson, North Dakota, whose devotion and care for their war-damaged boy was strong and unflinching. He is survived by his brother, Paul Ebeltoft, and the one he loved as the sister he never had, Paul's wife, Gail. . . . It is difficult to write about Bill. He lived three lives: before, during and after Vietnam. Before Vietnam, Bill was a handsome man, who wore clothing well; a man with white, straight teeth that showed in his ready smile. A state champion trap shooter, a low handicap golfer, a 218-average bowler, a man of quick, earthy wit, with a fondness for children, old men, hunting, fast cars, and a cold Schlitz. He told jokes well.

During Vietnam, he lived with horrors of which he would only seldom speak. Slow Motion Four, Bill's personal call sign, logged thousands of helicopter flight hours performing Forward Support Base resupply landings, medical evacuations, exfiles and gun ship runs. We know of him there mostly through medals for valor he received, and these were many. . . . While attempting to resupply B Company, [Warrant Officer]

Ebeltoft's co-pilot became wounded. Realizing the importance of the mission WO Ebeltoft elected to attempt completion of the mission. Due to his superior knowledge of the aircraft, the helicopter was kept under control during the period in which the pilot was wounded and the ship was under fire. Remaining under attack from automatic weapons fire, the supply mission was successfully completed. While unloading the supplies, WO Ebeltoft received word that there were five emergency medical evacuation cases located 200 meters to his rear. WO Ebeltoft re-positioned his helicopter and picked up the wounded personnel. While evacuating the wounded, the commanding officer of Company B was injured. WO Ebeltoft again maneuvered his aircraft to enable evacuation of the injured officer. WO Ebeltoft then proceeded to evacuate all injured personnel by the fastest possible means. Upon completion, examination of the aircraft revealed that the aircraft had sustained nine enemy .30 caliber hits.

Bill got the medal, of course, but he would have been the last to say anything about it. The citation shows the type of man that he, and many of his brothers-in-arms in Vietnam were; and still are today, albeit battered hard and unfairly by the cruel winds of the time in which they fought.

After being discharged as a decorated hero, Bill had a rough re-entry into civilian life. It is not necessary to recount Bill's portion of what is an all-too-common story for wartime veterans, particularly those of the Vietnam era. It may be sufficient to say that after a run at business, a marriage and while grappling daily with his demons, his mental faculties escaped him. Bill became a resident of the Veteran's Home in Columbia Falls, Montana in 1994. He lived there for the next 26 years.

At the Home, the patina of his memory covered life's sorrows, and it was a blessing. Bill was happy there, living a life that was a strange mixture of hunting stories, pickup trucks and memories of some of his better times with women, friends and the outdoor life. Bill denied that anyone he loved had died; could not understand why anyone would fill with gas at four bucks a gallon when "Johnny's Standard sells it for 27 cents;" and still "drove" his 1968 Dodge Charger. He was unfailingly courteous. His largest concerns were making his smoke breaks and finding his wallet (a search of 26 years.)

In the past year, Bill's shaky grip on physical health also slipped through his fingers. Yet, despite this, what we loved in him remained, if only sometimes as a shadow. Even after his serious decline, suffering fractures because of falls, Bill would tell the staff that he was "just fine" and not to worry about him. Thin, hunched over, propelling himself with one foot, he would wheel himself into the room of a bed-ridden veteran and sit there, next to the bed, unspeaking. The nursing staff was certain that Bill thought that the man in bed was lonely and needed company.

Bill was always a proud man, remembering himself as he was in 1969, not as he became. Who are we to suggest differently? His was not a life that many would wish for, but in some ways, Bill was a lucky man. He was surrounded to the end by staff who enjoyed and respected him. He had a chance to be helpful to others who were doing less well than he. And the passing of the seasons never diminished his plans for another elk hunt or to "see that beautiful girl again this weekend."

When a small slice of reality penetrated his pleasant confusion, Bill struggled to understand why he was where he was. Prematurely aged, his worldly goods in a small

dresser, not knowing who the President might be or remembering why he should care, Bill's losses were greater than most of us could endure. Yet, to those who love him, his brother and his brother's wife, and their sons, he will always be a brave, accomplished man, more generous than was wise, more trusting than was safe.

It is not possible to wrap your arms around a loved one who leaves. But it is possible to wrap your heart around a memory. Bill's will be well taken care of.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

UNITED STATES-MEXICO-CANADA TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I am here on the floor again for the third time in 3 weeks to talk about the U.S.-Mexico agreement, USMCA.

Just a few moments ago, this trade agreement passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 385 to 41. That is extraordinary. Trade agreements sometimes tend to be pretty controversial and, more recently in our history, pretty partisan. In this case, Republicans and Democrats alike helped negotiate a good agreement, and Republicans and Democrats alike supported it.

Let's now get that agreement over here. Let's not wait. The people in Ohio and all around in country who are going to benefit from it need those benefits now.

So I am very pleased that the President and his U.S. Trade Representative, Bob Lighthizer, patiently negotiated with Speaker PELOSI and House Democrats and were able to get something done, and now it is close to becoming the law of the land. All it needs is a vote over here from the Senate and then the President will sign it into law.

Thanks to important measures designed to strengthen our economy, create more jobs, and increase market access, this new agreement, the USMCA, actually helps to level the playing field between the United States and Canada and Mexico.

First of all, it is going to result in more jobs. The independent International Trade Commission has said over 170,000 new jobs. That is mid-range. It could be a lot more than that.

But they have also said that these are good-paying jobs. Jobs in trade tend to pay about 15 percent higher on average, and they have better benefits. So this is a bunch of good jobs.

By the way, they estimate that at least 20,000 jobs in the auto industry will come to the United States that would not have come otherwise. I come from Ohio, a big auto State. It is a State that cares a lot about manufacturing and, specifically, autos, and they are both going to be helped by this agreement.

Part of the way that it is going to create jobs here is by leveling the playing field on labor standards and enforcing those standards.

Also, it has higher content requirements for U.S.-made steel and intra-