

NOMINATION OF MAJOR GENERAL SCOTT
SPELLMON

Mr. CRAMER. Mr. President, first of all, I just want to associate myself with the words of my colleague Senator BLUNT. I couldn't say it as eloquently. I certainly couldn't improve upon it. I am just going to say I completely agree. Thank you.

The real purpose for my coming to the floor today is to demonstrate my support for MG Scott Spellmon of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

General Spellmon is up for a promotion to Lieutenant General and has been nominated to become the Chief of Engineers and Commanding General to replace General Semonite as he retires.

Since coming to the Senate, General Semonite and I have become well acquainted with each other. While we haven't always agreed, I do appreciate his service, his very hard work, and his accessibility, especially during this COVID-19 pandemic.

His retirement is well earned, and I thank him for his service and wish him well.

As a member of the Armed Services Committee and the Environment and Public Works Committee, I serve on two of the Army Corps committees of jurisdiction. As many of my colleagues can attest, it is a rare occasion that I compliment the Corps. It is an agency that is the epitome in many cases of cumbersome bureaucracy.

I am not unique in my frustration. During our last EPW hearing with the Corps, criticism was both bipartisan and tangible. From Rhode Island to North Dakota to Oregon, each of us expressed frustration with a seemingly tone-deaf bureaucracy, which either doesn't do what it is supposed to do or does what it is not supposed to do.

That frustration brings me here today: Major General Spellmon's pending nomination and promotion. Throughout this process, I have worked closely with General Spellmon on numerous issues important to North Dakota and other Western States.

Early on, I spoke with him regarding the Spring Creek embankment in Central North Dakota. Due to the poor maintenance of relief wells, the Corps was going to move forward with a water control plan that could potentially devastate water supply and irrigation needs in eastern parts of my State.

As per usual, the Corps' decision matrix was overly complicated and did not adequately reflect the needs and realities of rural America. When I brought the issue to General Spellmon, he promised to take a fresh look and reassess the economic impacts of the project. He then worked with me to craft legislation supporting these efforts, which was added to the water infrastructure legislation we unanimously passed out of the EPW not too long ago. He listened to the problem and is working with me to help solve it.

I also challenged General Spellmon on Western State water rights—a prob-

lem that has plagued Western States that operate under the prior appropriation doctrine. On a bipartisan basis, Democrats and Republicans from Western States have been frustrated by an Army Corps that either ignores States and Tribes or needlessly inserts extra bureaucracy into decisions that are really not theirs to make. Once again, General Spellmon listened intently to the concern and provided thorough, honest responses to be used as a guidepost for Corps policy moving forward.

Of equal importance, he acknowledged the flaws within his own organization. In my time in Congress, honesty sometimes seems to be missing but not with General Spellmon. He has proven he is willing to listen and be responsive in a forthright manner, and I thank him for that.

I am confident General Spellmon will continue to listen to Western States and provide the necessary deference to them pursuant to congressional intent and to our Nation's Constitution. I have appreciated getting to know the general, and while my oversight and questions may not have always been the most enjoyable to him, he has proven to be up to the task of replacing General Semonite. I support his nomination and promotion, and I hope his exemplary service will be replicated by the rest of the bureaucracy he is going to lead.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

OBSERVING MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, on Monday, our country will celebrate Memorial Day. It is a very special day—one that we, as Americans, set aside each year to honor those members of the military who have given their lives in sacrifice to their country.

Right now, this is typically the time when I am getting ready to travel home and go to Southern Oregon—to Eagle Point and to Central Point, wonderful communities to spend Memorial Day with hundreds of veterans and members of their families. These are events that take place each year and are inspiring and affirming and basically a time when Oregonians, from very young to often approaching almost 100 years old, assemble and are part of a centuries-long lineage of patriots who have been willing to serve and sacrifice for our great Nation.

There are other communities that come together to remember lost friends and loved ones, but at home in Oregon, we have always said: Eagle Point and Central Point are the gold standard in terms of services and programs to recognize our veterans, and members of their family, who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our Nation.

I think we all know that this Memorial Day is going to be different. There will not be the same big gatherings, and there will not be as many parades. But one of the reasons I want to come to the floor of the Senate today—and I

will be home this weekend thinking about Eagle Point and Central Point—is I want to make sure our country never ever diminishes the significance of this day.

Never should our country take away our determination to honor those who pay the ultimate price in service to America, and it shouldn't cause us to forget that Memorial Day can be hard—very, very hard on the parents and spouses and children and friends our fallen heroes left behind. I know when I am recognized to speak in Central Point and in Eagle Point, I look out in the crowd, and I always see family members with a Kleenex by their eye, trying to remember and at the same time deal with the inevitable grief. This Memorial Day, I am going to be thinking of all of those who have come year after year to Central Point and Eagle Point in Southern Oregon to do something very, very important: to speak up for Oregon on the importance and appreciation we have for those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

My view is, this year, on Memorial Day, it is more important than ever to reach out and connect with those folks who are remembering loved ones they have lost in the line of duty—to give them a call, ask how they are holding up—because the last few months, in particular, have been tough on everybody, and their sacrifice shouldn't be forgotten.

I know when I am home in Southeast Portland this weekend, I am going to be thinking about whom I am going to be talking to, checking in with, and see how they are doing just for the reason I mentioned. These have been tough times for everyone, and I think this is going to be a very difficult Memorial Day for those Americans who are remembering loved ones they have lost in the line of duty.

It is also more important than ever to remember for ourselves that as Americans, we owe so much to so many. The parades and the services may have to wait until Memorial Day 2021, but our deep respect and gratitude for sacrifice does not.

Just on a very personal note, apropos of the respect and gratitude for sacrifice, I think about my late father and my mother, both of whom fled the Nazis. Not all of our family got out. My great Uncle Max was one of the last who was gassed in Auschwitz. My father basically talked his way into our Army because he was a fluent young man in German, and he convinced our military that he could be part of our propaganda unit to drop the pamphlets on the Nazis, making it clear that they could never defeat our great troops.

My mother, on the other hand, was a WAC, and I look often at the picture that is on my wall of my mother in her WAC uniform. For them, during their lives, Memorial Day was a really special day because they were so thrilled to be able to come to the freest and most open Nation on Earth and to be able to serve in our military. They, in

particular, would say, if they were here today: Ron, this is a special day for showing our deep respect and gratitude for those who made the ultimate sacrifice, and we are never going to miss a Memorial Day without expressing that sentiment.

I am going to be, this weekend, thinking about how much I want to be back in Eagle Point and Central Point to celebrate Memorial Day, and I am going to be thinking about how now we have to find a way to honor and remember our fallen servicemembers a little bit differently than before.

I would close—and perhaps I am the last speaker today in the Senate. I think I can speak for every Member of the Senate that this is especially important now to keep in our hearts all of those who have died serving our country, and let's do right by their families who are still with us.

I close my remarks by wishing all Oregonians and Americans from sea to shining sea a healthy Memorial Day.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCOTT of Florida). Without objection, it is so ordered.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, over the past couple of months, our country has gone into a lockdown but then slowly but surely has begun to adjust to the new normal brought on by COVID-19.

Many of us have been working safely from home, as kitchen tables have been transformed into makeshift office spaces and, in many cases, classrooms as parents and students navigate the challenges of remote working and learning. But many of the most critical jobs in our country can't be done with a laptop and an internet connection—defense contractors, for example, the intelligence community, law enforcement agencies, and, of course, our heroic healthcare workers. They have to be on the frontlines doing their job each and every day no matter what the risk is because their work is considered to be essential.

Our healthcare workers continue to fight this virus on the frontlines, delivering lifesaving care and comfort to those isolated from their loved ones. Our farmers and ranchers are producing the food, truckers are transporting it, and grocery store employees are stocking shelves so that amidst all of this uncertainty, we don't have to worry about not having enough to eat. Then there are the postal workers, the delivery drivers, the waste collectors, and an entire network of people we depend on who are keeping the cogs of our society running.

Whether working from home or heading out the door each morning, these

men and women are doing their jobs, even when it isn't easy or convenient, and they expect their elected officials to do the same thing.

Just because a pandemic has brought our society to a screeching halt doesn't mean the U.S. Congress should pack up shop. Just as the men and women across the country continue to show up for work each day, Congress should do the same. After all, our responsibilities during this crisis have become more important, not less. That is why we moved quickly to pass four coronavirus response bills, totaling nearly \$3 trillion—something none of us imagined we would do just a couple of months ago—and provided vital support for our country amidst so much uncertainty.

This, of course, came in the form of additional resources, including equipment for our healthcare workers and funding for ongoing research into vaccines and treatments. We also sent aid for what I consider to be a lifeline to those workers who, through no fault of their own, had no job and no paycheck, and then we have also provided serious resources to help small businesses and their workforce stay afloat.

A financial investment in our fight against this virus was desperately needed, and that is precisely what we delivered on a bipartisan basis, but our response to this crisis cannot begin and end with blank checks. We need to ensure that taxpayer dollars are being spent responsibly and that we are making the changes needed to recover from this crisis.

Every day I hear—usually through a videoconference—my constituents in Texas telling me how these bills are being implemented, what is helpful, what isn't, and what is needed from Congress. This feedback has been incredibly valuable as we look for more effective ways to strengthen our response and speed our recovery. So the Republicans in the Senate believe it is wise—it is prudent—to take stock of everything we have done before passing another relief bill.

I believe the Presiding Officer and I heard the same report at lunch today; that only about half of the money that we have appropriated is actually out the door, and yet here people are clamoring for more and more money. And Speaker PELOSI, in really an unfortunate act of showmanship, rammed through a \$3 trillion bill that has no prayer of being passed or becoming law. It is safe to say that House Democrats are taking a different approach than we are here in the Senate.

They passed the \$3 trillion bill, and they call it the HEROES Act, expressing their support for our Nation's healthcare heroes. We would join them in that sentiment, but the fact is, their priorities are much different. This bill mentions cannabis more times than it mentions doctors, hospitals, and nurses combined. It is an interesting tribute, if you ask me.

If this bill were to become law, taxpayers' money wouldn't be going to

coronavirus response; they would be funding a range of completely unrelated pet projects like environmental justice grants, soil health studies, and not one, but two studies on diversity and inclusion—again, in the cannabis industry. It is interesting: two more studies on diversity and inclusion in the cannabis industry. The list of absurdities in this legislation is as big as this bill itself.

Here is another one. They want to make sure that the wealthiest Americans pay less in taxes. This is from our Democratic friends who say that the top 1 percent don't pay enough, yet they present them with a huge tax cut for the wealthiest people in America.

It also would complicate the hiring that our struggling businesses are already facing and rapidly dig our Nation deeper and deeper into debt. Is this all to attack the coronavirus, to come up with a treatment or a vaccine? No. This is a liberal wish list that has consumed all the time and energy of House Democrats over the last several weeks. This is what they think is more important.

Rather than returning to Washington for more than a drive-by, which is what they did last Friday, to work on bipartisan legislation that might actually have a chance of becoming law, they chose to put together this partisan bill without consulting with the White House or the Senate. It doesn't address the crisis at hand, let alone the national security challenges that cannot be ignored.

The threats we faced before this virus ever reached our shores, both on land and in cyber space, have not gone away. From Beijing to Tehran, Moscow to Pyongyang, and in nearly every corner of the globe, our enemies and adversaries are watching and continuing their efforts to work against our interests. They are not going to politely pause their efforts so that we can focus our efforts on COVID-19; if anything, they are doubling their efforts. We cannot afford to be caught flat-footed.

Unfortunately, our counterintelligence and counterterrorism experts are already without some of the key tools they need in order to carry out their duties. In mid-March, the House refused to vote on a clean, short-term extension of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act under section 215 that would preserve these tools while we discuss long-term changes that might need to be made. Had they agreed at that time in mid-March, these authorities would still be intact through the end of this month. Instead, House Democrats chose to let those authorities lapse. For 2 months now, our counterintelligence and counterterrorism experts have been forced to work without some of the most powerful tools in their toolboxes.

Fortunately, last week, the Senate was able to pass a bill to reauthorize these critical provisions that expired in mid-March. This legislation would not only restore those authorities but