

the threats and religious tests end today.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Madam President, on another matter, I have the great honor of representing nearly 29 million Texans, roughly 40 percent of whom are Hispanic. I consider myself fortunate to have experienced the tremendous influence of the Hispanic community on our country and on our culture. Much of that culture, of course, dates back to a time long before the Lone Star flag or the American flag flew over Texas.

The first sovereign flag planted on Texas soil was Spanish, and that sprawling Spanish colony extended all the way to modern-day Chile. When Mexico won independence from Spain in 1821, it won all of Texas as well, and when Texas fought for its independence, soldiers of Mexican and European descent stood together on the Texas side in support of an independent republic.

It is unfair to say that Hispanic culture has influenced Texas because, in reality, Hispanic culture is as much a part of our State's foundation as the ground that our cities are built on.

Today, Texas is home to more than 11.5 million Hispanic Americans, some who have lived there for generations and others who have contributed to the recent rapid growth of the population of the Lone Star State. Since 2010, the Hispanic population has grown by more than 2 million people in my State, and the positive impact of Latinos across our State continues to grow.

Every year, during this month in particular, I am proud to join millions of my fellow Texans in celebrating the heritage that is uniquely woven into the fabric of our State and our Nation. During Hispanic Heritage Month, which officially commenced last week, we honor and celebrate Hispanic and Latino Americans and the traditions and contributions these men and women and those who came before them have made to our country.

For the past 12 years, I have joined our colleague Senator MENENDEZ from New Jersey and a number of other bipartisan cosponsors in introducing a resolution to formally recognize September 15 through October 15 as Hispanic Heritage Month. It is a time we take to honor Latinos who, for generations, have served in our military, held elected office, grown small businesses, and fought in big and small ways to make our country better.

Today, Texas is proud to have incredible Hispanic-American leaders who are shaping our States' and our Nation's futures and inspiring the next generation. At the highest levels of public service in my State, we have incredible leaders like Ruth Hughs, our secretary of State, and Justice Eva Guzman, the first Hispanic woman to serve on the Texas Supreme Court.

Our communities are learning from inspiring women like Sister Norma Pimentel, who is executive director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande

Valley and led the creation of the respite center in McAllen to help care for migrants coming across our border.

They are seeing the incredible work of organizations like Buckner International, led by Dr. Albert Reyes, which has set up hope centers around the world that help families become self-sufficient.

Entrepreneurs are looking to business leaders like my friend Ramiro Cavazos, who is president and CEO of the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. For more than 40 years, the U.S. Hispanic Chamber has been an incredible resource for Hispanic business owners across the State, and their advocacy has been invaluable, particularly during the COVID-19 crisis. Earlier this summer, I was able to virtually connect with U.S. Hispanic Chamber members across Texas to discuss the relief provided by Congress in four major pieces of legislation, as well as to learn more about the challenges that they were facing and what more we might be able to do.

I have also been able to speak with Hispanic healthcare leaders, who are instrumental in Texas's fight against this virus.

Over the summer, we saw a dramatic increase in positive cases and fatalities in the Rio Grande Valley, which is predominantly Hispanic. Last month I visited the valley for conversations with local officials and healthcare leaders about the impact of the Federal CARES Act funding that we passed in four separate pieces of legislation, as well as the hurdles they continue to have and are fighting to overcome.

During our discussion, I heard from Hispanic leaders in the healthcare industry, like Manny Vela, who is the CEO of Valley Baptist Health System, and Cris Rivera, who is CEO of the Rio Grande Regional Hospital.

Strong leadership at the local level has never been more important, and I am grateful for those who are continuing to help our communities through this crisis.

For nearly a century, our State has also benefited from the work of the League of United Latin American Citizens, otherwise known as LULAC, which is led by Domingo Garcia, and for years has benefited from the leadership of Laredo native Roger Rocha. LULAC fights to improve opportunities for Hispanic Americans, particularly when it comes to education, and it is an avid supporter of Hispanic-serving institutions.

Last week the Senate passed a resolution Senator MENENDEZ and I introduced to honor these institutions, which are helping Hispanic students achieve their dreams through a quality education. Despite the fact that these colleges and universities only represent 17 percent of nonprofits colleges and universities, they enroll two-thirds of all Latino students, totaling more than 2.5 million students nationwide.

Texas is home to 100 Hispanic-serving institutions, more or less, and these

colleagues and universities are helping to prepare the next generation of leaders for our future. This month is the perfect opportunity to celebrate their incredible work and acknowledge the important role these institutions play in my State and in our country, and I am glad this resolution passed with unanimous support.

I hope we can also pass legislation I introduced to honor the contributions of Hispanic Americans for generations to come.

When Americans of all ages visit Washington, they are able to learn the stories of great Americans through the Smithsonian museums, which welcomed more than 22 million visitors last year. These museums house priceless pieces of American history, from the Star-Spangled Banner, which inspired the national anthem, to the hat that President Lincoln wore on the night he was assassinated.

Unfortunately, these museums don't represent the diversity of the American story, but that is slowly changing. In recent decades, the Smithsonian Institution family has grown to include the National Museum of the American Indian and the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

But it is time for another addition. More than a decade ago, in 2008, President Bush signed into law the National Museum of the American Latino Commission Act to study how to establish a new museum. The results of that study found that the Latino representation within the Smithsonian Institution is far from what it should be and challenged us to provide their story and to make sure it is represented there.

I am thinking of the U.S. Latino community as a whole, which numbers some 60 million people, but I am also thinking of individual men and women—people like Juan Seguin, who, in some ways, was a predecessor of mine. He came from Mexican descent and helped lead the Texas Revolution. Then he was a Texas senator before Texas even joined the Union. So in many ways, he was one of the forefathers of my State, and his contributions, like so many others, are an important part of our multifaceted American story.

We need to ensure that every American has the opportunity to learn about people like Juan Seguin and the countless other Latinos who have played pivotal roles in our history. Last year, Senator MENENDEZ and I reintroduced a bill with a bipartisan group of Senators which would authorize the Smithsonian Institution to create a museum honoring American Latinos here in Washington. This has been a work in progress since 2003, and this legislation will finally put that into motion.

The bill passed the House unanimously this summer, and between the House and Senate, we have more than 340 bipartisan cosponsors.

The time has come to turn the dream of this museum into reality. There is

no better time than Hispanic Heritage Month for that to happen.

Texas and our entire Nation are stronger, smarter, and more inclusive because of the contributions of Hispanics over the generations.

I am glad to spend this month reflecting on our complex and ever-evolving American story, and celebrating the contributions of Hispanic Americans who have helped shape our Nation's history.

I hope the Senate will honor Hispanic Heritage Month by passing this important legislation to finally give Latino history a brick-and-mortar home here in Washington, DC.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to complete my remarks prior to the vote.

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

TRIBUTE TO AMY AMRHEIN

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, Senators come to this floor with greatly diverse life experiences and political theories and representing enormously different States. But we all share this in common: a vast appreciation of our team members, our staff, who enable us to do our work as U.S. Senators on behalf of our own States, but also on behalf of the Nation.

These team members are not just staff. They are family. We share in moments of joy—marriage, the birth of a child. We grieve with them in those life moments that are so difficult. And when the team members choose to move on, it is a bittersweet moment.

I come to the floor today to recognize and pay tribute to a beloved member of my team, Amy Amrhein, who in just a few short days will be leaving us to a well-deserved retirement. Even after knowing for months that this day was coming, it is still hard for me not to be saddened by her departure. She has been on my team from the very beginning of my time as a Senator, serving as my field representative in Southern Oregon and staffing our Medford office. That is now a dozen years.

She took on the task of learning complicated natural resource issues and learning them with determination and insight, working to internalize the issues and challenges of every community in the region, from the smallest port to the biggest county.

She mastered the art of putting on a townhall, as I do one in every county every year, and I think at last count that is about 80 townhalls she has conducted over the years.

She has worked to bring the community together to discuss visions for the future. One of those was the potential expansion of the Cascade-Siskiyou Monument. She organized a gathering that gave public testimony, which helped share insights from all the stakeholders. Local leaders and regional Tribes and all members of the public shared their insights and perspectives.

It is no exaggeration to say that there are few people in the world with a better grasp of the complicated water issues in the Klamath Basin. We have a saying in the West that “whiskey, that’s for drinking; water, that’s for fighting” because it is so essential to so many aspects of our economy and our natural system.

For 12 years, Amy engaged in shuttle diplomacy over long-term solutions to water shortages. She found ways to help farmers and ranchers save their livelihoods through shattering droughts, truly making herself an indispensable facilitator to stakeholders across the board and an indispensable facilitator as I tried to work out agreements. That really came in handy with the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement, developing that effort to have the stakeholders share a common vision for the future. It really came in handy when we worked to get funds to address the devastating droughts in 2010 and 2013—funds that would help the farmers who depended on irrigation but had no water to be able to temporarily, for a season, retire their water rights and therefore have some income for their ranch or their farm or be able to have money to pump groundwater to compensate for the lack of irrigation water during those drought years.

One of the issues has been the water quality in the Klamath Basin and the competing environmental rules regarding the river and the lake, and a piece of that is the survival of two endangered species. So she helped to put all the details together to hold the Sucker Science Summit, which brought together again the farmers, ranchers, Tribes, scientists, local government officials, and Federal officials to devise a plan for the long-term survival of the C’waam and Koptu suckerfish in the Klamath Basin.

There is no doubt that Southern Oregon could not have asked for a better advocate over these past 12 years. I have appreciated her diligence, her humor, her positive attitude, and her candor about our smart political tactics or policy tactics and our mistakes. I could share some of those stories, but perhaps they are better shared through the eyes of our fellow team members, so I will read some of their comments.

The first goes as follows:

Amy is the definition of dedication. No one can out work her. She is committed and she will keep asking questions and pushing buttons until she makes progress on an issue. She is fearless. She has been such a great leader and mentor for not only the field team, but the entire state staff. I’m so grateful for the opportunity to learn from her. Oregon is a better place to live because of her service and she will be dearly missed.

A second team member expressed this:

When I think of Amy I think about her fearlessness. A distant field rep’s job is really challenging—[the rep] is the face and the voice of the Senator and you are all alone, far from DC, even far from Portland. Despite all our communications breakthroughs you are still all by yourself, driving remote high-

ways, walking into rooms full of strangers, never knowing what is going to be thrown at you. They want a Senator, and instead they get you. Amy was open about her questions and concerns, but once she was out there and on her own, we always had confidence she would do and say the right thing.

A third team member said this:

No surprise that she is leaving behind big shoes. She makes covering some of the largest counties and most difficult issues in the state look easy. Her knowledge of the issues run deep and her contacts in counties is impressive. When you ask about a county, she’ll give you the breakdown of all her contacts: who would give me straight answers and who has the juicy county political/social gossip. She has also been a great mentor to those in the field. I am pretty sure she has walked every one of us through our first town halls, roundtables and site visits. She was someone you could rely on to give you feedback and let you know if you were on the right path.

The final comment from a team member:

I would just say that every time I have ever come into contact with a community leader or elected official that has worked with Amy, no matter the political party, they absolutely love her. She has done so much for the Southern Oregon communities. Just a beautiful human who has worked incredibly hard over the last decade-plus to help rural Oregonians. She is funny, kind, and blunt—always tells you like it is. I cannot reiterate enough how imperative her mentorship has been. She is a wealth of knowledge and experience that can’t be replaced.

I certainly could not have said it better, so I appreciate the team members who contributed those thoughts.

On behalf of myself and the entire team, thank you, Amy Amrhein, for all you have done for our team, for all you have done for the State, and for all you have done for so many constituents, working on so many complex and difficult issues. You are going to be deeply missed by the entire team but by me most of all. It is the wish of the entire team that you will have a joyous, healthy retirement.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Young nomination?

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON) would have voted yea.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS) and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?