

Secretary of Defense to revisit this question.

The importance of minimizing harm to civilians in conflict cannot be overstated. For far too long, senior officials of United States and other countries' armed forces spoke little about civilian casualties, treating them as regrettable collateral damage that is inevitable in warfare. In fact, if the laws of war are to be taken seriously, they require effective procedures and rigorous enforcement. CIVIC's mission, 20 years after Marla Ruzicka compelled us to pay attention, is as relevant today as it was then, to ensure that everything is done that can and should be done to protect civilians in conflict, and to assist those who are harmed. By doing so we reaffirm our respect for human life and human dignity that people around the world expect of us, we mitigate anger and resentment within local populations whose support we need, and we enhance the reputation and mission of our own Armed Forces.

RECOGNIZING HIGHER EDUCATION IN VERMONT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I rise today to celebrate the incredible institutions of higher education in my home State. Like many Vermonters, I was the first in my family to attend college—I chose a small, liberal arts, Catholic college—Saint Michael's College in Colchester, VT. St. Mike's, as it is affectionately called, was a home away home for me during some of my most formative years. It was there that I met my wife Marcelle, received my B.A. in government, and from where I left to receive my JD from Georgetown University Law Center.

Higher education is a path out of poverty and towards personal and professional growth for so many Americans. When those who choose to seek higher education, are able to do so—everyone succeeds. Throughout my 48 years in the Senate, I have worked to increase access to higher education through programs such as TRIO, the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program, Pell grants, and Federal Work-Study. I know how important these programs are because I am a product of a quality Vermont education. Each year, thousands of students attend Vermont colleges and universities. My alma mater, St. Mike's, is not the only quality school—but one of many.

The University of Vermont, founded in 1791, is a public land-grant research university that has championed agricultural, opioid-misuse, rural development, and medical research, among many other fields of study. I have been honored to be one of UVM's biggest fans and supporters in Congress. Throughout his tenure, President Garimella has been an incredible partner of mine and Marcelle, and I look forward to spending more time with him and his wife in Burlington.

Another legendary institution is the Vermont State College system. Today,

it is comprised of several outstanding institutions: Castleton, Northern Vermont University, VT Tech, and Community Colleges of Vermont. Each of them in their own right have made a name for themselves through great strides in nursing and teaching workforce development, creating high-technology manufacturing jobs, rethinking remote learning, and expanding opportunity for mid-career learners.

I recognize that the future of higher education is often disputed. What does it offer young people in the face of uncertainty and economic insecurity? The cost of higher education has ballooned and has become out of reach for too many families. Higher education's intent has become lost. Higher education—college or university—should never be a prerequisite to a job that supports one's family.

However, higher education—such as the extension program at UVM or the language programs at Middlebury College—provide the tools to better understand our complex and constantly changing universe. They provide a challenge to get to know ourselves better and a community to sustain us.

I rise today to honor one of the places, one of the communities that first raised me, gave me a home, and a purpose. From my time travelling throughout the State, I have met Vermonters who are cybersecurity experts, doctors, researchers, mechanics, arborists, and teachers. Many of them, like me, were the first in their family to seek continuing education and many have told me that they never could have imagined this bright of a future.

I am confident that long after my tenure in the Senate, Vermont colleges and universities will continue to provide a home, challenge, and pathway to the future for Vermonters and students from around the world.

TRIBUTE TO NANCY PELOSI

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, before the conclusion of the 117th Congress, I want to add a few of my own congratulations to the outgoing Speaker of the House, NANCY PELOSI, as she concludes her second history-making and history-changing tenure as Speaker.

It is a cliché to begin these kinds of tributes with the obligatory observation that the person speaking and the subject of the reflections had their fair share of disagreements. In this particular case, that cliché certainly applies in full. Over the course of our careers, Speaker PELOSI and I have disagreed both frequently and forcefully on practically every kind of national issue that comes before Congress. We have led opposite parties. We have spent many years fighting hard on behalf of policies, ideas, and visions that usually sharply diverged.

But all of the frequent interactions that have brought our differences into sharp relief have also given me a close-up view of the formidable qualities

that fueled the Speaker's historic life journey to becoming the first woman ever to lead the House and made her such an effective advocate for her party's point of view.

Throughout our Nation's history, rising to prominence in Congress has often seen leaders sorted into competing archetypes of either a pragmatist or an idealist. But Speaker PELOSI's leadership has resembled a combination of both. Even while working to synthesize the views of the entire Democratic Caucus, the Speaker never relinquished her own passionate, substantive set of convictions on policy matters.

Speaker PELOSI's ability to marshal her side of the aisle to support specific tactics and outcomes has been formidable. It has made her a powerful partner to multiple Democratic Presidents. These abilities paved the way for the Speaker's instrumental role in helping to deliver a long list of consequential policy changes. I have no doubt that historians will reserve Speaker PELOSI a place on their lists of the most influential and consequential Speakers that our country has seen thus far.

On the very rare occasions when the Speaker and I did find ourselves rowing in the same direction—such as our shared determination that the House and Senate reconvene as soon as humanly possible on the evening of January 6, 2021, and complete our constitutional duties straightaway—I was glad to have this formidable leader in my corner.

I congratulate the Speaker on the conclusion of her time leading the House.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I have historically supported disaster assistance to farmers and others who experience losses due to no fault of their own.

However, I had to vote no on Senator SCOTT's disaster relief standalone amendment. As a lifelong family farmer and taxpayer watchdog, I have fought for many years to close loopholes that have allowed some farming operations to exploit Federal farm payments at taxpayer expense.

Congress has been generous when it comes to supporting farmers. Farmers have federally subsidized crop insurance, commodity payments, and supplemental disaster payments. Farmers also had access to Market Facilitation Program during the Trump administration and Coronavirus Food Assistance payments in the past couple years.

The Scott amendment would remove any payment limit to the disaster supplemental payments. This is a dangerous precedent to set. This amendment would release the spigot of disaster payments to wealthy farmers without regard to how much total assistance we are providing, which could mean less funding for family farmers who really need the help most.

I want a strong farm safety net program that helps farmers weather downturns in the market and survive natural disasters, but I do not want an unending stream of payments with no caps.

This amendment aims to help large farms get large bailouts while small farmers are left behind. Instead of fundamentally changing market dynamics, we should work together to make sure small and medium sized farmers do not get left behind in farm payment programs. This is especially true as we go into farm bill discussions in the next Congress.

OMNIBUS

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, this bill, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of FY23, addresses an issue that I have been dealing with for well over a decade, since I was Louisiana State Treasurer. The U.S. Treasury Department is sitting on nearly \$30 billion in mature, unredeemed savings bonds, issued years or decades ago to hard-working Americans who wanted to invest in America. States, who have long held the responsibility of holding and making available lost assets, have tried to subject these savings bonds to the time-honored, reliable escheatment and unclaimed property process. At every turn, their efforts have been opposed by Treasury, which has also rebuffed any offers from the States to use their vast capabilities to help reunite bondholders or their rightful heirs to these funds. Instead, Treasury has made its own attempts at digitizing and updating its voluminous bondholder records and creating a database for users—efforts which have failed to make any meaningful dent in the amounts of unredeemed debt, according to their own status report.

This bill includes a provision that directs Treasury to provide States with information relating to bond purchases, including the name, applicable address, co-owners or beneficiaries, and the bond serial numbers which claimants often need to reclaim their funds. I understand that Treasury has said it may not have enough data in its records to match the serial numbers with the name and address of the bondholder; this is why the bill's language includes some flexibility, stating that the information Treasury must provide to States "may" include bond serial numbers. This wording allows Treasury to use its discretion in the limited instances when it is incapable of providing those numbers, but the overall language makes clear that Treasury is obligated to make every effort to locate relevant and necessary information and provide it to the correct States. I expect Treasury to issue regulations which will fulfill these responsibilities.

The bill's definitions ensure that this will cover both paper and paperless bonds—and I want to clarify also includes bonds that were issued in paper

but have been lost, stolen, or destroyed. Treasury's own 2021 report on mature unredeemed debt describes the process for bond owners who have the necessary information but not the paper document itself as lengthy, complex, and a hindrance that discourages claimants. The clear purpose of this legislation is to make this process simpler by opening it up to States, and Treasury should issue regulations reflecting this intent.

PREGNANT WORKERS FAIRNESS ACT

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, the purpose of the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act is to help pregnant mothers in the workplace receive accommodations so that they can maintain a healthy pregnancy and childbirth. Therefore, I want to make clear for the record that the terms "pregnancy" and "related medical conditions," for which accommodations to their known limitations are required under the legislation, do not include abortion.

On December 8, the sponsor of this legislation, Senator BOB CASEY stated on the Senate floor as follows: "I want to say for the record, however, that under the act, under the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, the Equal Opportunity Employment Commission, the EEOC, could not—could not—issue any regulation that requires abortion leave, nor does the act permit the EEOC to require employers to provide abortions in violation of State law."

Senator CASEY's statement reflects the intent of Congress in advancing the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act today. This legislation should not be misconstrued by the EEOC or Federal courts to impose abortion-related mandates on employers, or otherwise to promote abortions, contrary to the intent of Congress.

PREGNANT WORKERS FAIRNESS ACT

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I wish to expand upon the remarks I delivered earlier today on the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, which this body voted to include in the omnibus spending package. I first introduced this bill in 2012 with Senator SHAHEEN. Senator CASIDY joined us this Congress, and the bill now has broad, bipartisan support.

The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act is a very straightforward piece of legislation; it closes a loophole in the 1978 Pregnancy Discrimination Act to allow pregnant workers to request reasonable accommodations so that they can continue working safely during pregnancy and upon returning to work after childbirth. This is a commonsense bill that has broad, bipartisan support—everyone from the ACLU to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to the Chamber of Commerce.

The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act is very simple. Pregnant workers should be able to request reasonable

accommodations—a stool, a water bottle, a bathroom break—when such an accommodation would help them remain at work safely during their pregnancy and so they can return to work after childbirth. Other accommodations that a pregnant worker might request include, but are not limited to, light duty, temporary transfer, additional or more flexible breaks, changing food or drink policies, time off to recover from childbirth, accommodations for lactation needs, and flexible scheduling.

The bill is intended to help women like Peggy Young, a UPS driver who requested light duty while she was pregnant. Peggy was denied her request, even though other workers had received light duty, because there is no requirement under the 1978 Pregnancy Discrimination Act to provide reasonable accommodations. She was forced onto unpaid leave and eventually took her case all the way to the Supreme Court. She won, but the ruling did not provide full protections to the millions of workers who get pregnant each year. That is why we need the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, so that every pregnant worker will be able to request an accommodation without fear of being fired or forced on leave, when all she needs is a stool or a bathroom break.

Young did not solve this issue, and the standard is still unworkable for employers and pregnant workers. After Young, over two-thirds of women still lost their Pregnancy Discrimination Act pregnancy accommodation claims in court, mostly because they were unable to find a suitable comparator under the Young comparator framework. Pregnant workers need immediate relief to remain healthy and on the job. Pregnant workers should not have to muster evidence and identify someone else at work to get their own medically necessary accommodation, as basic as a stool or extra restroom breaks. Pregnant workers, especially in low-wage industries, usually do not have access to their coworkers' personnel files and do not know how all their coworkers are being treated.

The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act would create a clear, explicit right to accommodations, allowing pregnant workers to remain healthy and attached to the workforce. It is a solution that provides clarity to both employers and employees. That is why the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other business groups support the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act.

The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act sets up a simple framework that is easily understood and utilized by both employers and employees. Under the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, a pregnant employee may request reasonable accommodations from their employer, the same process that individuals with disabilities use under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Employers are familiar with it, the interactive process is easier for both the worker and the employer.