

for new investment and economic growth or share responsibility for putting the country on a course leading to the scale of criminality and economic decline that have engulfed Nicaragua and Venezuela. With American companies relocating from China back to this hemisphere and with a Guatemalan President who believes in transparent and accountable governance, there is an opportunity for new investment and business partnerships in Guatemala unlike any time in recent memory. It is time for Guatemala's business leaders to embrace President Arevalo's vision for the country and to become real partners in the Guatemala's development.

I had the privilege of traveling to Guatemala in December as part of a bicameral congressional delegation led by Senator TIM KAINE. Our purpose was to show our support for Guatemala's democracy and for a peaceful transfer of power. We left Guatemala convinced that, while the outcome was far from certain, the people of that country would defend their democracy to the end. That is what they have done, and while the daunting challenges of governing lie ahead, they and President Arevalo deserve our congratulations and our strong support.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### TRIBUTE TO CHRIS GEORGE

• Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, I rise today to recognize my friend and fellow Connecticut resident, Chris George, on the occasion of his retirement from Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services—IRIS—after 18 years of remarkable leadership in resettling individuals and families seeking to build a new life in our country.

In 2005, Chris joined the organization that would later be known as IRIS, which operated out of a small office in New Haven with an eight-person staff. Over the following 18 years, Chris guided an enormous expansion of the organization, with 150 employees now helping to resettle 1,000 people per year across Connecticut. During Chris' tenure, IRIS has been at the center of Connecticut's response to refugees and other immigrants fleeing from persecution and violence, working with those displaced from Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ukraine, and many other places worldwide. Chris and IRIS performed lifesaving work to accommodate refugees, especially through the expansion of their community cosponsorship program.

The success of IRIS under Chris' leadership has made New Haven and Connecticut national leaders in refugee resettlement. In January 2023, the organization was selected by the U.S. Department of State as one of five agencies to lead a consortium of nonprofit organizations as a part of the launch of the Welcome Corps program. In this

role, IRIS is responsible for coordinating and managing the newly created Welcome Corps program infrastructure, which includes vetting, certifying, and training private sponsors, as well as monitoring and evaluating the overall success of the program.

I have been deeply honored to work with Chris over the years and witness his incredible accomplishments firsthand. I will always remember collaborating with him closely during the evacuation of Americans and allies from Afghanistan in 2021. From the outset of the crisis, Chris worked tirelessly, oftentimes communicating with those trapped in Afghanistan directly in order to secure their safe evacuation. Chris was quick to recognize the complexities that the evacuation from Afghanistan presented and was able to secure humanitarian parole for hundreds of refugees resettling across Connecticut. Chris has also been a key contributor and spokesperson for the Afghan Adjustment Act, aiming to affirm the legal status of the refugees who have been able to make it to the United States. Chris and IRIS were critical in not only advocating for and assisting in the safe escape of these individuals from the Taliban, but also in helping them to find housing, connect with healthcare, enroll in school, find jobs, and learn English.

Chris has been a fierce advocate on behalf of all fleeing oppression across the world, and his remarkable career is a testament to his diligence, leadership, and compassion. Although he is stepping down from IRIS, he plans to continue advocating for humanitarian causes, including working at the newly created Welcome Corps. I applaud Mr. Chris George for his incredible work and hope my colleagues will join me in expressing our gratitude and admiration. •

##### TRIBUTE TO NILS BURINGRUD

• Mr. CRAMER. Madam President, I want to honor a very special North Dakota resident who turned 100 years old on January 11. Nils Martin Buringrud celebrated this landmark birthday in Fargo at a party with a small group of friends and later a dinner with his family.

Nils was born January 11, 1924, to Nils and Marthe Buringrud in Thief River Falls, MN. His father was a farmer, and the family moved near the Red River Valley community of Kelso, ND, in 1930. They moved 3 years later to a place a few miles away southwest of the community of Hillsboro. In 1943, they moved to a new home southeast of Hillsboro, where Nils lived until he graduated from high school in 1942.

That fall he moved to Spokane, WA, and then to McClellan Air Force Base near Sacramento, CA, where he worked in shipping airplane engines overseas to military bases in the Pacific. Nils returned home and helped farm for awhile before enlisting in the Marines in 1944 at the age of 22. During World

War II, he served aboard an aircraft carrier that sailed through the Panama Canal and on to all the islands in the Pacific, along with Japan, China, India, and near the coast of Africa. He was an expert rifleman when the war ended.

After being discharged from the Marines, he farmed with his brother-in-law and sister and later delivered fuel to area farms. He married Elaine Ponto in 1947, and the newlyweds lived in a home on the Argusville farm of his brother-in-law and sister until 1949, when they bought a farmstead 3-and-a-half miles east of Gardner. There, they continued to farm and raised six children. Nils was active in the American Legion, and he and Elaine attended regular reunions with friends from his Marine unit. They lived there until 1993 when they sold their farm and moved to Fargo.

Elaine died in 2006 and Nils continues to reside in Fargo in the home they purchased in 1998. His daughter Marcia now lives with him, and his life is filled with the activities of his four children who are still living and 11 grandchildren. He continues to drive and walks about an hour daily, weather permitting. While not the oldest living veteran in North Dakota, his family believes he may be the oldest to still have a valid drivers license.

North Dakota is home to more than 200 centenarians, and we consider them among our most treasured residents. Nils Buringrud embodies the very best of the Greatest Generation, growing up on a farm, moving out of State for awhile, enlisting to serve in World War II, and then returning home to raise a family and contribute to his community and State. He has remained a proud and active veteran, and his pioneer spirit, dignity, and hard work have brought him through many challenges and personal achievements. He is an inspiration to all of us.

On behalf of all North Dakotans, I thank Nils for his service to our country and wish him a happy 100th birthday. I hope you enjoy continued good health and vitality for years to come. •

##### RECOGNIZING WELTER STORAGE EQUIPMENT CO., INC.

Ms. ERNST. Madam President, as ranking member of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, each week I recognize an outstanding Iowa small business that exemplifies the American entrepreneurial spirit. This week, it is my privilege to recognize Welter Storage Equipment Co., Inc., of Monticello, IA, as the Senate Small Business of the Week.

Welter Storage Equipment was founded by Lloyd and Joyce Welter in 1982 on their family farm in Monticello during the farm crisis of the 1980s. The farm crisis affected thousands of farmers and farming communities in Iowa, and many farmers had to find alternate forms of income to support themselves. Before launching Welter Storage

Equipment, Lloyd served in the U.S. Army from 1956 until 1958. Following his service, Lloyd saw a need in the Monticello community for shelving, pallet racks, and storage equipment. What began as an idea around the kitchen table grew, and in 1987, Welter Storage Equipment moved off the Welter family farm to its current headquarters location on South Main Street in Monticello.

Welter Storage Equipment sells both new and reconditioned warehouse equipment and office furniture acquired through auctions, liquidations, bankruptcies, closeouts, and more. They also provide storage equipment and forklifts. Over the years, Welter Storage Equipment has become a trusted local resource for office furniture and warehouse racks. The business is not only a community staple, but now sells products to customers across the United States.

Currently, the Welter Storage Equipment team operates in Cedar Rapids, Dubuque, and Monticello, with their Monticello location serving as the company's headquarters. Lloyd and Joyce's sons Ron, Dave, Dean, and Bob serve as the current owners and have seen three generations of the Welter family work at the family business. Lloyd Welter passed away in 2021, leaving behind a legacy of hard work, service, and dedication to entrepreneurial excellence.

Welter Storage Equipment is actively involved in the Monticello, Dubuque, and Cedar Rapids communities. In addition to employing more than 60 people, they have sponsored the Great Jones County Fair and have served as a business partner to the Dubuque Senior High School Drama Department. They were named a 2023 Business Hero by Animal Welfare Friends, a nonprofit that aims for the adoption and fostering of dogs and cats in the Monticello area. Due to the team's hard work, Welter Storage Equipment Company celebrated its 41st business anniversary in 2023.

Welter Storage Equipment's commitment to providing quality office, storage equipment, and furniture in Eastern Iowa is clear. I want to congratulate the Welter family and the entire team at Welter Storage Equipment for their dedication to the Monticello, Cedar Rapids, and Dubuque communities. I look forward to seeing their continued growth and success in Iowa.

#### TRIBUTE TO SHERYL "SHERRY" BRANCH-MAXWELL

• Mr. SCHMITT. Madam President, I rise today to recognize and celebrate the extraordinary contributions of an exceptional individual, Ms. Sheryl Lynette Branch-Maxwell of Charleston, MO, affectionately known as Ms. Sherry. Her dedication to service and her tireless efforts in improving the lives of Southeast Missourians exemplifies the spirit of selflessness and community stewardship that inspires us all.

For over four decades, Ms. Sherry has been a pillar of support for her community. Her journey began when she dedicated herself to the well-being and development of children in daycare facilities and Head Start Centers. Her commitment to nurturing youth extended beyond the classroom as she coordinated and directed summer food programs, ensuring children had access to essential nutrition during the summer months.

Ms. Sherry's leadership and commitment to her community organizations have significantly benefited the Bootheel region of Missouri. Her work as a program educator at Lincoln University Cooperative Extension in Charleston has been pivotal in implementing programs focused on leadership, self-esteem, and anti-drug initiatives.

Another commendable accomplishment is the development of the Kids' Beat initiative. This program became a beacon of hope offering guidance and support through more than 30 clubs across all counties of the Missouri Bootheel. Ms. Sherry's dedication to empowering youth through education and mentorship is truly commendable.

Sheryl Lynette Branch-Maxwell is truly a champion of Missouri. I ask my esteemed colleagues to join me in applauding Ms. Sherry, an exceptional individual whose dedication and contributions have made an indelible mark on the fabric of our community.●

#### TRIBUTE TO JIM CHAPPELL

• Mr. SCHMITT. Madam President, I rise today to honor an exceptional individual who has greatly impacted Missouri, Jim Chappell.

As founder and long-time owner of the beloved Chappell's Restaurant & Sports Museum, Jim Chappell has made an indelible impact on the culture and community of Kansas City, MO. Jim first captured the hearts of Kansas Citians through his restaurant, a cultural mainstay celebrating sports legends and hometown pride for over three decades. However, he is seen as far more than a successful restaurateur; Jim is a respected leader who has demonstrated a tremendous spirit of service across business, civic, and community organizations over his illustrious career.

Under his visionary leadership, Chappell's became far more than a place to grab drinks and watch the game; it emerged as a living museum and community touchstone, drawing praise as a one-of-a-kind local gem. The uniqueness of Chappell's Restaurant & Sports Museum was part of the reason USA Today selected it as "the number one place in the country to watch the Super Bowl." Beyond the restaurant walls, Jim lends his talents to multiple Kansas City institutions as a board member shaping influential business, banking, and civic organizations.

His insights helped guide institutions like First Bank of Missouri, Valley

View Bank, and the Kansas City Police Employees' Retirement System. Additionally, Jim upholds Kansas City's heritage through his involvement with groups like the Sons of the American Revolution and Native Sons & Daughters of Greater Kansas City. From preserving beloved traditions to promoting sports icons, he connects the community's past glories to its future potential.

Jim Chappell is truly a Champion of Missouri. Jim stands as a model Kansan through his leadership, business success, and community spirit. His enduring passion for elevating local culture lays the groundwork for generations to come. Today, we commend this esteemed individual for his impact on Missourians. I wish to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Jim Chappell for his significant contributions to the Missouri community.●

#### TRIBUTE TO CAPTAIN PHILIP E. GREGORY

• Mr. SCHMITT. Madam President, I rise today to honor Captain Philip E. Gregory of Fredericktown, MO, for his service to the State of Missouri.

Captain Philip E. Gregory has been a servant leader, dedicated to keeping Missourians safe throughout his three decades of service with the Missouri State Highway Patrol. Gregory's career began in Southeast Missouri, and each patrol appointment across the State has given him the chance to give back to his community by working closely with local law enforcement and first responders.

Gregory's desire to serve his community started as early as high school where he worked in the fire service and then served as an EMT/paramedic. His career in law enforcement started when he turned 21 and has continued to this day. He credits his parents for instilling in him a strong work ethic, which provided the structure upon which he has built his career. Throughout his career, Gregory has served as a zone supervisor, a criminal investigator, a corporal, a sergeant, a lieutenant, an assistant division director, and a captain for the highway patrol. In each role, Gregory worked to better protect his neighbors. On August 1, 2023, after 30 years of dedicated service to Missouri, Captain Gregory retired.

Captain Philip Gregory is truly a Champion of Missouri. I wish Captain Gregory and his wife Tanya all the best in his well-earned retirement. Missourians are safer and better off because of his efforts and his service to his fellow Missourians.●

#### HONORING DETECTIVE SERGEANT MASON GRIFFITH

• Mr. SCHMITT. Madam President, I rise today to honor the life and memory of Detective Sergeant Mason Griffith, of Rosebud, MO. Sergeant Griffith served with the Hermann Police Department with distinction for over 12