

he graduated from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He and Edith, his wife of 39 years, are also the proud parents of two daughters. I know that after over 40 years of distinguished military service, your family is looking forward to your retirement.

In capacity as a civilian, Lieutenant General Roper has over 33 years of law enforcement experience, culminating with his 10-year tenure as the chief of police of the Birmingham Police Department, the largest municipal police department in the State of Alabama. A dedicated law enforcement professional, he is a graduate of the Federal Bureau of Investigation—FBI—National Academy, the FBI National Executive Institute, and is an adjunct professor of criminal justice. He specialized in protecting critical infrastructure and served on the executive board of the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force.

Lieutenant General Roper is a role model for aspiring servicemembers and law enforcement officers. He has demonstrated the power of passion and purpose in fulfilling a life of service. Lieutenant General Roper, thank you for your long and distinguished career in service to our Nation. On the occasion of your retirement, I wish you and your entire family the best. Congratulations on a job well done.

TRIBUTE TO DAVID BEARDEN

Ms. CAPITO. Mr. President, I rise to honor Mr. David M. Bearden for his lengthy career of public service to the U.S. Congress and the American people. After more than 33 years at the Congressional Research Service, or CRS, Mr. Bearden recently retired at the end of March as a specialist in environmental policy.

Mr. Bearden hails from Guntersville, AL. After graduating from the University of the South in Sewanee, TN, with a theology degree and backpacking around Europe, he moved to Washington, DC. In August 1990, Mr. Bearden was hired as a clerk at the Library of Congress, where he began to gradually climb the ranks. In 1991, Mr. Bearden served in the CRS inquiry unit, where he earned the prestigious Award for Meritorious Service for his work during the Persian Gulf War. Following his stint with the inquiry unit, Mr. Bearden became a production assistant, helping colleagues to prepare reports and memoranda in varied subject areas. After several years as a production assistant, Mr. Bearden became an environmental information analyst and began to specifically focus on environmental issues. Mr. Bearden became an analyst in environmental policy in 2002 and continued to amass a wealth of knowledge on the topics he covered.

As an analyst, Mr. Bearden primarily focused on the implementation of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, also known as the Superfund law. His extensive research of individual

contaminated sites was immensely beneficial for Members' offices representing their impacted constituents and communities. It was in this capacity that I first interacted with Mr. Bearden professionally. I relied on his expertise in the aftermath of the 2014 Elk River chemical spill in Charleston, WV, and I was not shy to do so again in the future. Beyond Superfund, Mr. Bearden specialized in some of the most complex environmental laws on the books, including the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act, Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act, National Environmental Policy Act, among others.

With decades of experience, Mr. Bearden became the go-to analyst and coordinator for high-profile cross-cutting environmental issues that involved clean-up or contamination, including concerns over specific chemicals such as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances or PFAS. Much of his work involved direct support of the legislative process by providing expert analysis and consultative support for a wide range of environmental policy issues. Through it all, Mr. Bearden approached each request with a high level of consistency in objectivity, nonpartisanship, authoritativeness, and timeliness, the core values of the Congressional Research Service. He has a particular quality of breaking down complex topics into easy-to-understand narratives that intersperse facts-of-the-matter with the law and relevant legislative history. Members and staff appreciated his practical explanation of issues and how the Federal Government can address them, evidenced by his requested testimony in several hearings, ranging from the topic of addressing radioactive contamination at the Marshall Islands to the Federal and State relationship in implementing the Superfund law.

While members of my own staff have personally benefited from Mr. Bearden's mentorship and expertise, his talents for teaching and professional development also benefitted his fellow colleagues at CRS. Over the last few years, Mr. Bearden was a mentor to new and less experienced colleagues, sharing the wisdom and expertise he has accumulated. A point he emphasizes to mentees is that the work is never about those who work for CRS, but always about who CRS serves: Members of Congress and their staff. His style of mentoring reflects the objectivity, balance, and authoritativeness of CRS work, but also comes with unique wit that brings some humanity to the job.

Mr. Bearden is retiring as an expert in his field. On behalf of the U.S. Senate and the American people, I wish to express gratitude for the contributions of Mr. Bearden during his over three decades at CRS. I thank him and wish him all the best in retirement.

TRIBUTE TO DIANNE RENNACK

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I rise today to honor Dianne E. Rennack, specialist in foreign policy at the Congressional Research Service—CRS—for her distinguished career in service to Congress. Ms. Rennack retired on March 29 after more than 39 years with CRS, during which time she has made exceptional contributions to Congress as an expert on sanctions policy and foreign affairs legislation. Ms. Rennack has called Maryland home for many decades, making it a home for her family. She has dedicated her time to Maryland through volunteer work at Shephard's Table and the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, once being named Volunteer of the Year.

Since 1985, Ms. Rennack has informed Congress on some of the most important foreign policy issues of our time. Congressional committees have relied on her nonpartisan sanctions policy expertise to shape legislation and inform their oversight activities. Her knowledge of executive-legislative branch relations and general foreign policy authorities has been a critical resource for Congress and long made her a pillar of the institutional memory of Congress.

For years, Ms. Rennack was the driving force behind updates to the Legislation on Foreign Relations compendium, a resource used across the foreign policy community. She provided leadership at crucial times in CRS history, serving 3 years as head of FDT's foreign policy management and global issues section. Ms. Rennack is also known among her colleagues for her commitment to substantive collaboration and mentoring. Her dedication to sharing with junior colleagues the expertise she has earned over nearly four decades of service will have a lasting impact on the work of Congress.

Throughout her career, Ms. Rennack has personified CRS's mission of providing authoritative, objective, nonpartisan, and timely service to Congress. In recognition of her wide-ranging achievements on behalf of the Congress, she received the CRS Directors Award in 2019 and the Distinguished Service Award in 2024.

In conclusion, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Dianne Rennack for her outstanding contributions to the Senate community and the country and offer her best wishes in her retirement.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

FAITH MONTH

● Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. Mr. President, Americans across the country, led by Concerned Women for America, CWA—the Nation's largest public policy organization for women—and other faith-based organizations will again celebrate April as Faith Month. I commend this noble effort calling on all people of faith to join in prayer, to give thanks, and to celebrate their faith.

Faith is at the very core of who we are as Americans. Every nation before us was based on either a shared ethnicity, a common language, or a unifying monarch. But the United States of America was the first nation in history founded on the belief that every human being has inherent value and natural rights granted to them not by any earthly government, but by an all-powerful God. In the words of our Declaration, we are “endowed by [our] Creator with certain unalienable Rights,” based on “the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God,” acknowledging our “reliance on the protection of divine Providence.”

Many of our Nation’s earliest settlers were people of faith, seeking a land in which they could freely practice their beliefs. The Puritans of New England, the Pennsylvania Quakers, and the Catholic founders of the Maryland Colony were all men and women who came to these shores in search of a haven for religious freedom. The Founding Fathers after them carried on that faithful torch by enshrining that freedom of religion in the very First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, as well as “the free exercise thereof.” They knew that a nation founded on the belief in a higher power must encourage a faithful population.

When religious freedom is protected, communities thrive. Ample research shows that faith strengthens the family unit, promotes stable marriages, and discourages drug abuse and violence. Regular church attendance is linked to lifting young people in inner cities out of poverty, and faithful people tend to be happier and more satisfied in life.

The role of religious organizations in America is invaluable. An estimated 350,000 religious congregations operate schools, pregnancy resource centers, soup kitchens, drug addiction programs, homeless shelters, and adoption agencies throughout the Nation, with more than 2,600 of them in my state of Mississippi alone. These organizations selflessly care for their communities and deserve to be celebrated and uplifted for the work that they do.

Today, it is distressing that attacks against particular faith communities have become all too common. Individuals and charities alike have been forced to compromise their sincerely held beliefs to keep their jobs or participate in certain government programs. Worse, some Federal Agencies are promoting policies and regulations that make it harder for faith-based charities and social service organizations to care for the need.

It is a sad fact that, today, too many people of faith feel unsafe on their college campuses, in their workplaces, or where they worship as attacks against their communities rise. No religious American should be afraid to openly practice their faith in the land of the free. It is imperative that the American Government clearly state that such discriminatory actions and hate-

ful attacks are intolerable and that they must be met with speech that unwaveringly speaks the truth and calls out evil for what it is. Attacks against faith, against the freedom of conscience, undermine the very foundation of America.

In a 2023 Gallup Poll, nearly three out of four Americans said they practice some kind of religious faith. This rich, diverse religious heritage is to our credit and should be encouraged. This Faith Month, I join millions of Americans in honoring the right to worship freely and openly, with public displays and celebrations, unashamed to share in our common American heritage as a people of faith. In this manner, we reaffirm our commitment to the religious liberty principles of our founding.●

TRIBUTE TO DR. JOLENE KOESTER

● Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, on Thursday, April 4, the California State University, Northridge’s—CSUN—“Soraya” performing arts center honored the four-decade career of former CSUN president, Dr. Jolene Koester. I rise today to celebrate the tremendous contributions she has made to the California State University community and to California at large.

Dr. Jolene Koester was born in Plato, MN, as the eldest of five children. Dr. Koester was the daughter of an auto mechanic and a stay-at-home mom; both her parents had never finished high school. But even in a rural town where, as she says, girls “were never encouraged to consider a future outside of the home,” Dr. Koester dreamed bigger.

Early on, it was in the classroom where Dr. Koester found mentors, friends, and a passion for learning that would last her a lifetime. It is that same passion that carried her through her studies to earn a bachelor’s degree from the University of Minnesota, a master’s degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and a Ph.D. in speech communication after returning home to Minnesota.

Despite hailing from a small, Midwest town that wouldn’t even fill half of the performing arts center she would one day help build, Dr. Koester set out on what would become a 40-year career with the California State University system.

After starting as an assistant professor at California State University, Sacramento, Dr. Koester quickly rose through the ranks, holding various positions in the academic affairs division before being appointed to serve as provost and vice president for academic affairs in 1993. In 2000, Dr. Koester was appointed to become the fourth president of CSUN, one of the largest campuses in the CSU system and the only public university in the San Fernando Valley.

Under her leadership as president, she helped expand CSUN’s student population by over 25 percent, increased

retention and graduation rates, and opened their brandnew, state-of-the-art 1,700-seat performing arts center.

After retiring as president of CSUN in 2011, Dr. Koester made her return to the CSU system in 2022, when she was appointed to serve as the interim chancellor of the entire CSU system, the second woman ever to lead the 23-university system.

On a personal note, as a proud San Fernando Valley-native, I have seen Dr. Koester’s genuine commitment to the San Fernando Valley. Appointed in the wake of the Northridge earthquake and following a decade of social and political unrest, Dr. Koester brought a vision and a resilience to campus that matched the hopes of our community. Her service and dedication to our community has made us proud.

Whether in a small town in Minnesota or at the largest 4-year public university system in the Nation, the guidance of one mentor or leader can change the trajectory of countless students’ lives. For tens of thousands of students in California, Dr. Jolene Koester has been that leader.

CSU Northridge, the CSU system, and the entire State of California will always be grateful for her contributions.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mrs. Stringer, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The messages received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 12:03 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Alli, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has agreed to the following concurrent resolution, without amendment:

S. Con. Res. 33. Concurrent resolution authorizing the use of the rotunda of the Capitol for the lying in honor of the remains of Ralph Puckett, Jr., the last surviving Medal of Honor recipient for acts performed during the Korean conflict.

The message also announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 4639. An act to amend section 2702 of title 18, United States Code, to prevent law enforcement and intelligence agencies from obtaining subscriber or customer records in exchange for anything of value, to address communications and records in the possession of intermediary internet service providers, and for other purposes.