

potential. He saw clearly the promise and talents in each student, recognizing gifts that they often did not fully realize they possessed. This was perhaps best exemplified through his years of coaching his school's Granite State Challenge, a televised academic competition between New Hampshire students. Not only did he prepare his students for success in the competition, he also helped build their confidence in their ability to take on hard challenges.

As a social studies teacher, he was committed to giving his students a hands-on education and encouraging them to take seriously their responsibilities as citizens. In New Hampshire, we prize our commitment to civic engagement, embodied in both our citizen legislature and our first in the Nation Presidential primary. A true Granite Stater, Kevin regularly invited elected leaders and political candidates to visit Winnacunnet High School and talk to his students as part of their civic education. I have had the privilege of meeting many of Kevin's students over the years and was honored to speak at their graduation in 2017.

Kevin even brought to his class leaders from across the country, including some of my own colleagues in the Senate, as well as candidates running in New Hampshire's Presidential primary, including President Clinton, President Bush, and Secretary Clinton. These visits from candidates running for offices up and down the ballot gave Kevin's students a remarkable view into public office, unlike any most students receive.

Kevin has also always practiced what he teaches, so his influence goes well beyond the classroom. Aspiring public officials across New Hampshire know that Kevin has deep and lasting experience as a volunteer and that he has valuable advice and counsel to provide, insights that often stem from the questions and concerns he hears from his students. His role as informal adviser is particularly appreciated because he counsels with a light touch, appreciation for the very human challenge represented by any grassroots effort, and a great sense of humor.

Kevin's experience and commitment has also made him a champion for public education in New Hampshire and for encouraging more people to become involved in the democratic process. Particularly in debates around education, Granite Staters respect Kevin's voice and his passion, whether or not they always agree with him. They know—as I know—that he cares deeply about our democracy and is willing to do the hard work of keeping it strong.

Our democracy depends, in part, on people like Kevin—citizens who are willing to work for something bigger than themselves. Kevin and others like him know that citizenship can't be a passive exercise; they understand that our democracy is not sustained on its own and depends on each of us getting

involved, speaking out, becoming better informed, and working to expand our country's promise to more Americans. Beyond that, our democracy depends not only on us, but on future generations assuming the mantle of leadership so that they can safeguard our freedoms for years to come. By educating 45 years' worth of students and instilling in them the importance of civic engagement, Kevin has helped raise future citizen leaders. In short, Kevin Fleming has made our democracy stronger.

For touching the lives of students for nearly half a century, for pushing young people to reach their full potential, and for doing the hard, essential work of keeping our democracy strong, I am honored to recognize Kevin Fleming for everything that he has done, and I congratulate him on his well-deserved retirement. Our State and our country are better places because he chose to teach, both in the classroom and by example.●

#### TRIBUTE TO MIKE FOLAN

● Ms. HASSAN. Mr. President, I am honored to recognize Mike Folan of Alton as June's Granite Stater of the Month. Mike is honoring the memory of New Hampshire servicemembers through his volunteer efforts at the Wright Museum of World War II in Wolfeboro and through his work as a high school teacher inspiring the next generation to learn about the remarkable sacrifices that Granite Staters who lost their lives on D-Day made. His dedication to these efforts is particularly important now, as we have just marked the 80th anniversary of D-Day.

During World War II, Mike's father and uncle served in the Navy and the Army, and he grew up hearing from veterans who lived in his neighborhood about what they experienced during the war. Learning about their heroism inspired Mike to study the war and work to honor the legacy of these servicemembers.

At the Wright Museum and at Prospect Mountain High School, Mike has helped Granite Staters of all ages learn more about World War II and its ongoing significance today. As a docent at the Wright Museum for more than 25 years, he helps welcome visitors and answer any questions they may have about World War II or the exhibits. Mike has brought what he has learned at the museum to his work at Prospect Mountain High School, where he has taught social studies for 18 years. Mike first learned at the museum that when servicemembers were killed overseas, they were often buried immediately without much, if any, knowledge of their background or personal history. During the postwar process, a series of documents—called an individual deceased personnel file—was created for each servicemember. Mike ordered the individual deceased personnel files of 10 Granite Staters, including four who

died on D-Day, and gathered 10 students at Prospect Mountain High School who were interested in independently researching the lives of the servicemembers. The students reconstructed the lives of the Granite Staters and honored their memories on the 80th anniversary of D-Day in a presentation at the Wright Museum.

As the daughter of a World War II veteran, I am particularly grateful for Mike's mission to honor the legacy of those who served and keep their memories alive. I had the pleasure of meeting Mike and some of his students earlier this month, after I returned from a bipartisan congressional delegation trip to Normandy to commemorate the anniversary of D-Day. It was inspiring to hear the students' enthusiasm for their projects and what they learned about the war during their studies. The students discussed the connection that they felt to the men whom they studied and were particularly interested to hear that, on our delegation trip, Senator JEANNE SHAHEEN and I were able to pay our respects at the grave of Private First Class Raymond Cole, one of the men whom the students studied. It was clear from my conversation with the students that Mike's leadership in creating this research project sparked even deeper appreciation for everything that servicemembers did to win World War II and save the world from Hitler.

Mike's commitment to honoring the lives of Granite Staters who fought for freedom in World War II exemplifies the Granite State spirit of recognizing the courage and sacrifice of those who serve. His dedication to keeping history alive and inspiring new generations to do the same is why I am honored to recognize him as Granite Stater of the Month.●

#### TRIBUTE TO PAUL LeBLANC

● Ms. HASSAN. Mr. President, I am honored to recognize a Granite Stater whose leadership and innovations have helped make higher education more affordable and accessible to people around the world, Southern New Hampshire University president Paul LeBlanc.

After 20 years of leadership, Paul has now moved on from SNHU, but his legacy of modernizing higher education and making it more accessible will endure far beyond his tenure as president. Under his leadership, SNHU transformed from a small regional school to the largest nonprofit provider of online higher education in the country, growing from 2,500 students to more than 225,000.

As an immigrant and a first-generation college graduate himself, Paul knew as well as anyone that, too often, college is out of reach for many people. Many students have the talent, the drive, and the ambition that is required for college, but simply lack the means. As Paul often says, "Talent is distributed equally throughout the

world, but opportunity is not." From the very beginning of his career, Paul knew that in a country like ours, where we believe that our democracy's promise belongs to everyone, we have to do better to expand opportunity to more students.

With this challenge in mind, Paul helped revolutionize the modern classroom through innovative online and hybrid programs, giving more students the tools that they need to embark on exciting new careers. SNHU has not only opened doors of opportunity for Granite Staters and other Americans, but for students all across the world. Under his leadership, SNHU even began offering courses to students living in refugee camps or who have been displaced. During my time as Governor and now as Senator, I have had the privilege to work with Paul in his mission to make education more accessible. I have seen firsthand his vision and ability, traits that have made him one of the most respected voices in higher education. His creativity is boundless, and his care for his students is at the center of all that he does. Through his pioneering spirit, he is always trying to find ways to give more students the chance to gain an education, learn more about our world, and build better lives.

When taking measure of his achievements, it can be easy to get lost in a sea of statistics—the number of students who earned a degree under his tenure, the number of countries that have students enrolled at SNHU, the honors and recognitions won by SNHU, and more. But behind these statistics are people whose lives have been made better, in part, thanks to Paul and SNHU. Across the country—and indeed, the world—there are people who were able to follow their dream to start their own business, become a nurse, serve as a teacher, and build a better life for themselves and their family because of Paul LeBlanc and SNHU. By modernizing higher education and making it more accessible, Paul and SNHU have helped give hope to countless learners of all ages, helping them understand that higher education is a dream that can belong to them, too. In so doing, Paul has not only helped strengthen higher education in America; he has helped expand our democracy's promise to more Americans.

For his innovative work in revolutionizing higher education, for his commitment to tearing down barriers and expanding opportunity, and for the countless lives he has helped transform, I am honored to recognize Paul LeBlanc and to thank him for his incredible service to New Hampshire and our country. I have no doubt that, with the same pioneering spirit that defined his tenure as president, Paul will continue to find ways to give more people a chance to pursue higher education and follow their highest aspirations. Paul represents the Granite State's—and our Nation's—spirit at its very best.●

#### TRIBUTE TO SHERRY VESTAL

● Ms. HASSAN. Mr. President, I am honored to recognize Sergeant Sherry Vestal as she begins her retirement after over 20 years of service as a New Hampshire State Trooper.

A New Hampshire native, Sherry taught English at the New Hampton School before joining the New Hampshire State Police in November 2003, spending 10 years protecting and serving the North Country. In 2013, Sherry joined the small team tasked with protecting the Governor of New Hampshire, a role in which she remained until her retirement.

During my time as Governor, Sherry usually worked the evening shift, often dropping me off at home after my family—and a good portion of the rest of the State—was asleep. There is a special bond between leaders and members of their protection teams, and this is particularly true in New Hampshire, where the team for most of my time in office was only two people. I saw firsthand how Sherry could defuse tense situations with a little bit of humor and a whole lot of composure. And over the course of our many long hours together, I also saw how Sherry kept not only my safety in mind, but the safety of everyone around her.

While Sherry's primary duty as a member of the Governor's detail was the Governor's safety, Sherry was still a New Hampshire State Trooper; and if I wasn't in the car with her, she would routinely stop the car when there was an emergency to respond to. And because, in New Hampshire, State troopers can be spread pretty thin, sometimes she would need to stop for an emergency even if I was in the car with her. In fact, once while we were returning from a commencement ceremony at White Mountains Community College in Berlin, we passed a motorist who had struck a moose. Sherry asked my permission to turn around, and while waiting for additional help, she called for assistance for the motorist, helped provide first-aid to—thankfully—minor wounds, and searched for the injured moose while also managing a growing number of passersby and on-lookers. No matter the situation, Sherry was laser focused on protecting the safety not only of the Governor, but of every Granite Stater.

Sherry's dedication to public service is not surprising for anyone who knows her. It is what has come to define her entire career—taking on tough challenges to keep Granite Staters safe. Sherry first became a State trooper when it was less common to see women serving in law enforcement. After a decade of patrolling the North Country alone in a police cruiser, she traveled up and down the Granite State for 11 years on the executive protection detail. In each of these roles, she not only met every challenge head on, but she raised the standards while doing it.

New Hampshire is safer thanks to Sergeant Sherry Vestal's service to our State. On behalf of all Granite Staters,

I offer her our sincere gratitude and a congratulations on her retirement.●

#### TRIBUTE TO MITCH HOLTHUS

● Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. President, I rise today to honor and recognize Mr. Mitch Holthus of Smith Center, KS.

Mitch is the play-by-play announcer and the voice of the Kansas City Chiefs. After three decades as a decorated announcer, Holthus is the longest tenured voice in franchise history. During every Chiefs game, "Touchdown, KAN-SAS-CITY!" can be heard thundering throughout the Chiefs kingdom. Today, because of his impact on football commentary and as a son of Kansas, Mitch Holthus is honored with the 2024 Kansan of the Year Award.

Mitch grew up on a farm in Smith Center, KS, and the valuable lessons he learned there gave him the work ethic needed to become who he is today. He graduated from Kansas State University with a bachelors in journalism and business administration. A devoted family man of Christian faith, Mitch is married to Tami Johnson of McPherson, KS, and together, they have two wonderful children.

The foundations of his incredible career began as a broadcaster calling games for the Pratt High School Greenbacks. In 1983, Mitch continued his career as the voice of the K-State Wildcats and worked for 13 years on the K-State Radio Network. Since 1994, he has been the Voice of the Kansas City Chiefs. His work includes multiple Super Bowls, hosting the Hy-Vee Chiefs Insider Television show, the Chiefs Field Pass Pregame show, the Chiefs Rewind show, and the "Minute with Mitch" radio and television series. Mitch delivers a comprehensive and precise analysis of the sport that we all love. It is no surprise that he has earned a litany of awards and accolades. He is a member of the Kansas Association of Broadcasters Hall of Fame, the Kansas State University Athletics Hall of Fame, the Missouri Broadcasters Association Hall of Fame, and has received the Kansas City Sports Journalist of the Year, the Hod Humiston Award of Excellence by the Kansas Association of Broadcasters, and five Emmys.

Mitch's passion, loyalty, and hard work for the game is an inspirational template for future announcers and broadcasters. As the voice for the greatest football team in the world, Mitch is a strong ambassador for Kansas and embodies our values. I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing his amazing career, and I wish him nothing but the best in the following years and as he continues his work. We are proud to call him a Kansan, and the people of Kansas thank him for his dedication to the Chiefs and the State.

"You can doubt the Chiefs, you can dislike the Chiefs, you can disrespect the Chiefs. But you're going to have to deal with the Chiefs," Mitch Holthus at the 2022 AFC Championship victory over the Bengals.●