

had been subjected to rigorous vetting at the time of employment with the U.S. military or intelligence community, and many were vetted again in a third country by an interagency vetting process before coming to the United States.

Once in the United States, they were vetted again when applying for an immigration benefit. They were vetted yet again when interviewed by a USCIS officer in the U.S., and in adjusting immigration status. So our Afghan allies are some of the most thoroughly vetted members of our immigrant community. In fact, they may be the most extensively vetted foreign population in U.S. history.

The vetting is exhaustive, it has spanned years, conducted by multiple Agencies and administrations. It has included turning over cell phones to the FBI, providing every address resided at since birth, notification of every biometric exam taken in their lifetimes, and detailed information about the occupations and addresses of family and extended family members.

But as extensive as the vetting was and is, we know that no vetting process is 100 percent foolproof. No one can predict with absolute certainty that a person—regardless of nationality—who is cleared today won't commit a crime years later.

The horrific, targeted shooting of two members of the West Virginia National Guard on November 26—by an Afghan refugee who was reportedly trained by the CIA—was a terrible crime for which the person responsible should and will be brought to justice.

President Trump's use of that tragedy to go after a minority community has become a hallmark of this administration's hostile attitude toward immigrants and refugees. Even though it was the Trump administration that vetted the accused most recently prior to granting him asylum, President Trump has called for re-vetting all refugees who arrived under President Biden. This includes people from Afghanistan and 18 other countries, some of whom also reside in Vermont. The President has halted resettlement, paused all asylum applications, and called for the removal of anyone deemed a risk.

The fact that an Afghan has been charged with this heinous crime is tragic, but it is no more reasonable to label the entire Afghan refugee community, as well as those from 18 other countries, a security risk than it would be to label all Vermonters a security risk because of the act of one individual who a year ago shot three Palestinian students walking down a street in Burlington. It is wrong to accuse a whole population, whether on religious, racial, ethnic, or other grounds, for the abhorrent act of one individual.

I want to convey my condolences to the family of the West Virginians who were targeted, one of whom, Sarah Beckstrom, died while serving her country. She was only 20 years old and had a promising life ahead of her.

At the same time, I want to express my appreciation to the Afghans who supported our ill-fated mission in Afghanistan, at great risk to themselves, and who as a result had to abandon their country and their families to seek safety in the United States. Five years later, many of them are still waiting to be reunited with their families. Our communities are better for their presence among us.

TRIBUTE TO RANA ALTENBURG

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, I rise today to honor Rana Altenburg as she retires from Marquette University. Rana has served as the leader of Marquette's government affairs and community engagement initiatives since 1996. Her retirement marks the conclusion of an exceptional career spanning nearly three decades of service to Marquette University and the greater Milwaukee community.

Rana's time at Marquette began as a student, where she earned her bachelor's degree in political science and Spanish. Later, Rana received her MBA from Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management.

Over her 30-year career at Marquette, Rana's advocacy efforts contributed to increased investment by both the Federal and State governments, resulting in major infrastructure projects near campus, such as the Wisconsin Avenue median, Wells Street median, Marquette Interchange, 27th Street Corridor and the Menomonee Valley. Later, Rana and her team helped secure Federal and State funding that supported capital projects and research efforts, including working with me to secure congressionally directed spending for an expansion of the school of dentistry, a simulation lab in the college of nursing, and catalytic development in the Near West Side of Milwaukee.

Rana championed the university's Les Aspin Center in Washington, DC, providing students interested in public service opportunities for internship and professional development in our Nation's Capital. The Les Aspin Center has offered incredible opportunities to many young people still working in public service, including on my staff. On campus, she was a mentor to student leaders.

A tireless advocate for Marquette, Rana takes immense pride in not only being an alumna; she is also a parent, donor and season-ticket holder to Marquette's nationally ranked basketball programs.

Outside of her work at Marquette, Rana serves as founding president of Near West Side Partners, which she helped launch in 2015. Near West Side Partners brings together schools, businesses of all sizes, nonprofits, and neighbors to strengthen and improve the community they live in. She is also a member of the boards of directors of the James W. Foley Legacy Foundation and the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities.

I am pleased to congratulate Rana Altenburg on a distinguished career and wish her, her husband Jeff, her daughters Sophia and Hannah, son-in-law Jack, and her granddaughter Honor much happiness and well-deserved time together in the years ahead. We will continue to look to her for her thoughtful servant leadership and wise counsel, and I know that her impact will continue to be felt within the Marquette and greater Milwaukee community for generations to come.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO DENNIS E. NIXON

• Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I honor today Mr. Dennis E. Nixon for his commitment as one of our Nation's leading banking authorities and executives, particularly for his 50 years of extraordinary service to the broader Texas communities and Texas banking industry.

A Pittsburgh, PA, native, Dennis grew up in many different places across the United States due to his father's military service. His family eventually moved to Corpus Christi, TX, where Mr. Nixon graduated from high school. He then attended the University of Texas at Austin, where he graduated in 1964 with a degree in finance. Following graduation, Mr. Nixon spent 6 years as a bank examiner with the U.S. Treasury Department before joining the Union National Bank in 1970. In 1975, he joined the Bank of Commerce, the predecessor of the International Bank of Commerce, IBC, and International Bancshares Corporation, where he currently serves as the president and chief executive officer of the International Bank of Commerce in Laredo, TX, and as chairman of the International Bancshares Corporation.

Since joining the International Bank of Commerce, Mr. Nixon has played a vital role in International Bancshares Corporation's ranking as the largest minority-owned bank organization in the United States and one of the largest independent banks in Texas. Mr. Nixon's knowledge across all areas of banking was pivotal in the development of IBC's acquisition and expansion efforts. His tenure at IBC has been marked by visionary strategies and a commitment to excellence, transforming the company into an industry-leading financial institution with assets reaching approximately \$16 billion and serving 75 communities from Del Rio to Brownsville, TX, and into Oklahoma.

Beyond his duties as chief executive officer of the International Bank of Commerce and chairman of the Bancshares Corporation, Mr. Nixon is a member of the Texas Business Leadership Council, a network of CEOs and business executives that aims to advance Texas prosperity in a globally competitive business environment. Most notable is his stewardship in raising \$11 million for MD Anderson Cancer

Center, where he serves as a senior member of the board of visitors, demonstrating his commitment to improving the health and quality of life for all citizens.

In 2006, Mr. Nixon was inducted into the Texas Business Hall of Fame. In 2007, he was elected to serve on the board of directors of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and in 2008, he was named “International Citizen of the Year” by the World Affairs Council of San Antonio. The Texas Bankers Association awarded him the 2015 Texas Bankers Foundation’s 50-Year Banker Award. In 2016, Mr. Nixon and his wife received the Distinguished Community Service Award from the Chabad Center for Jewish Life and Learning. In 2018, he received the Distinguished Business Leader Award from the Texas Association of Business.

Mr. Nixon has been widely recognized for his generosity to communities in Texas and around the globe. He received the Paul Harris Fellow Award by Rotary International and the Eleanor Roosevelt Humanities Award by the State of Israel for his outstanding community and philanthropic service. He is also involved in the American Heart Association, the American Cancer Society, United Way of Laredo, the Boys and Girls Club of Laredo, and Legatus. He serves as a founding member of the Association of South Texas Communities and the Alliance for Security and Trade. Mr. Nixon’s service has received well-earned praise from organizations that strive to improve the health and quality of life of south Texans.

Mr. Nixon’s exceptional career and his relentless efforts toward economic development are defined by intentionality, dedication, and success. He has dedicated his life and career to serving others and improving the communities in Texas and beyond. For his remarkable work, and all that he has yet to accomplish, I would like to recognize him.

I offer my thanks and appreciation to Dennis Nixon for 50 years of steadfast service to Texas communities and the Texas banking industry. I send him my best wishes for the years ahead.●

RECOGNIZING LATIMER GROCERY

● Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, as chair 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 honor Latimer Grocery of Franklin County, IA, as the Senate Small Business of the Week.

Founded in 2008, Latimer Grocery began with a straightforward mission to ensure that communities have access to a dependable, local grocery store. At a time when rural areas increasingly faced the risk of becoming food deserts, founder Landon Plagge, along with a committed group of community members, stepped in to fill a

critical need. Their efforts created more than a business; they created a place where neighbors could reliably find the essentials that supported their daily lives.

In 2020, ownership transitioned to a group of eight families, which includes Karla and Doug Peter, Mark and LuAnn Johansen, Roy Plagge, Delray and Barb Farrer, Tyler and Sarah DeBour, Randy and Sue Debour, Kent and Chris Morton, and Scott and Jennifer Borchering. The families embraced the store’s community-centered foundation while guiding its continued growth. Under their leadership, Latimer Grocery has strengthened its role as a hometown hub, offering the trusted service customers have come to expect. They also expanded partnerships with local producers to provide groceries, baked goods, and a full deli. Today, customers can purchase locally raised meats, area-grown grains, and locally produced bakery goods from Sheffield, IA, or products from The Olde Creamery in Garner, IA. The deli remains at the heart of Latimer Grocery. Known for hot and cold sandwiches, it also serves seasonal dinner deliveries during harvest, ensuring farmers working long hours have access to fresh and warm meals. Weekend pizzas have become a favorite among families, and the store’s delivery service, which is especially valuable for elderly and disabled residents, helps ensure that everyone in the area maintains access to quality food. These services highlight Latimer Grocery’s dedication to meeting the evolving needs of the community.

Latimer Grocery is equally invested in supporting local families and children. The store partners with local schools through a reading rewards program, giving students coupons for treats based on the number of books they read. Each fall, the annual Halloween Spooktacular draws families from across the region for a festive evening of costumes, games, and free food, showcasing the store’s commitment to creating positive, memorable experiences for its customers. With a team of seven employees and nearly two decades of service, Latimer Grocery stands as a testament to resilience, local collaboration, and heartfelt service. Under its united leadership, Latimer Grocery remains a cherished gathering place and an essential resource, demonstrating how a smalltown business can strengthen an entire community through dedication and care.

It is my honor to recognize the entire Latimer Grocery team for their outstanding work and dedication to their community. I look forward to their continued success and wish them the very best in the years ahead.●

RECOGNIZING SISTER’S HOME STYLE ENTREES

● Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, as chair 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 honor Sister’s Home Style Entrees of Humboldt County, IA, as the Senate Small Business of the Week.

In 2011, Sister’s Home Style Entrees began as a simple passion project in the kitchen of founder Deb Davis. What started as Deb preparing home-cooked meals for family and friends quickly evolved into a service rooted in compassion, quality, and community. Her dedication and the growing demand for dependable, nutritious, ready-made meals transformed a small hobby into a thriving commercial kitchen operation serving customers across Iowa and neighboring States.

As the company grew, Deb was joined by co-owner Mary Catherine Ferry, whose leadership and partnership helped guide Sister’s Home Style Entrees through major expansions and increased production. Together with a dedicated team of 48, they built an operation that now prepares over 75,000 meals every month. Their focus on supporting the elderly and homebound population has made the small business not just a meal provider, but a support system for individuals striving to maintain independence. Families, too, have embraced the convenience and flexibility of reliable, high-quality frozen meals when they need them.

Under Deb’s vision and Mary’s continued leadership, Sister’s Home Style Entrees has grown into an industrial-scale commercial kitchen without ever losing sight of its founding values: service, heart, and consistency. The company remains proudly women-owned in Humboldt, IA, and embodies the spirit of a close-knit, mission-driven enterprise. As Deb transitioned into retirement and ownership passed fully to Mary Catherine this past June, the business represents a model of thoughtful, well-planned succession, ensuring stability for employees, customers, and community partners for years to come.

Sister’s Home Style Entrees has been widely recognized for its impact, receiving honors such as the 2015 SBA Iowa Top Small Business Award and the 2021 Iowa Venture Award Honoree. The company is also known for its generosity, regularly donating meals to food pantries, nonprofit organizations, and surrounding communities. Their contributions have strengthened local support networks and provided vital resources to families facing food insecurity. Sister’s Home Style Entrees’ story reflects the power of community-minded entrepreneurship and the lasting difference a mission-driven small business can make in the lives of the people it serves.

It is my honor to recognize Mary Catherine Ferry, Deb Davis, and the entire Sister’s team for their outstanding work and dedication to their community. I look forward to their continued success and wish them the very best in the years ahead.●