NEW YORK STATE SENATE

THE STENOGRAPHIC RECORD

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REGULAR SESSION

SENATOR THOMAS D. CROCI, Acting President

FRANCIS W. PATIENCE, Secretary

P R O C E E D I N G S

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: The Senate will come to order.

I ask everyone present to please rise for the presentation of colors.

Color Guard, parade the colors.

(The Color Guard entered the chamber, proceeding to the center, and presented the colors.)

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Everyone present please join us in our Pledge of Allegiance.

(Whereupon, the assemblage recited the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, and the Color Guard exited the chamber).

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Today we are joined by Lieutenant Colonel Darrick Gutting. He is the division chaplain at Fort Drum, the 10th Mountain Division, and he will lead us in our invocation.

Colonel Gutting.

LT. COLONEL GUTTING: Will you bow with me this afternoon.

Lord, on this very good day, we humbly come before You, asking that Your spirit

be quickened with all whom have gathered in this chamber.

We are so very grateful for the opportunity to be used by You in service to the citizenry of the great State of New York, our 10th Mountain home, and to the people of this exceptional nation. You have shown us what is good and what is required of us, and we ask that You help us daily to do justly, love mercy, and to walk humbly with You and all of mankind.

In this new year, renew our spirit and our strength so we might run and not grow weary, that we would walk and not grow faint. Sustain us and lead us as we fight the good fight of faith both at home and abroad, ever upward, always climbing.

All of this we ask in Your name. Amen.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: The reading of the Journal.

THE SECRETARY: In Senate, Monday, February 5th, the Senate met pursuant to adjournment. The Journal of Sunday, February 4th, was read and approved. On motion, Senate adjourned.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Without objection, the Journal stands approved as read.

Presentation of petitions.

Messages from the Assembly.

Messages from the Governor.

Reports of standing committees.

Reports of select committees.

Communications and reports from state officers.

Motions and resolutions.

Senator DeFrancisco.

SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Mr. President, on page 19 I offer the following amendments to Calendar Number 170, Senate Print 685, by Senator Ortt, and ask that said bill retain its place on the Third Reading Calendar.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: So ordered.

SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Could we now take up a previously adopted resolution -- excuse me. I move to adopt the Resolution Calendar, with the exception of Resolution 3708.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: All in favor of adopting the Resolution Calendar, with the exception of Resolution 3708, please signify

by saying aye.

(Response of "Aye.")

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Opposed, nay.

(No response.)

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: The Resolution Calendar is adopted.

Senator DeFrancisco.

SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Can we now please take up a previously adopted resolution, 3375, by Senator Ritchie, read it in its entirety, and call on Senator Ritchie.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Legislative Resolution Number 3375, by Senator Ritchie, memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim February 6, 2018, as 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum Day in the State of New York.

"WHEREAS, Fort Drum is located in Jefferson County, in Northern New York, and is the largest military installation in the Northeastern United States; and

"WHEREAS, Fort Drum, previously

known as Pine Camp, was renamed in honor of Lieutenant General Hugh Drum, a decorated national hero, former commander of First Army, and an early leader of the state's own volunteer militia, the New York Guard; and

"WHEREAS, For 32 years, Fort Drum has been the home of the United States Army's storied 10th Mountain Division, one of the most deployed divisions in the United States Army; and

"WHEREAS, The 10th Mountain Division served our nation with honor, distinction and great sacrifice as a part of Operation Enduring Freedom and other actions central to our nation's response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001; and

"WHEREAS, Elements of the 10th Mountain Division, based on Fort Drum, were the first to be deployed in the aftermath of those attacks and the last units to return from combat duty; and

"WHEREAS, In addition to Operation Enduring Freedom, 10th Mountain Division deployments have included Hurricane Andrew Relief in Florida, Operation Restore Hope in Somalia, Operation Uphold Democracy in Haiti, Task Force

Eagle in Kosovo, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Freedom Sentinel in Afghanistan, and advise and assist operations throughout the world; and

"WHEREAS, More than 300 brave men and women of the 10th Mountain Division, based on Fort Drum have given their lives to the cause of defeating global terrorism; and

"WHEREAS, The distinguished service of units assigned to Fort Drum has been celebrated by presidents, members of Congress, and members of the international community; and

"WHEREAS, In addition to its vital role in our nation's defense, Fort Drum is also the largest employer in Northern New York, and an economic engine for the state and region, with a direct impact of more than $1.2 billion; and

"WHEREAS, The more than 30,000 soldiers, officers, retirees and family members of Fort Drum are an integral part of the community, and are welcomed as neighbors, coworkers, classmates, friends and fellow New Yorkers; and

"WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to salute the soldiers and

officers of the 10th Mountain Division, to honor their dedication to preserving our freedom and our nation, and to recognize their individual and collective contributions to our communities and to New York State; and

"WHEREAS, For the past seven years, 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum Day has served to educate members of this Legislative Body about the sacrifices made every day by the brave men and women of our armed forces, as well as the importance of Fort Drum to our nation's defense and New York's economy; and

"WHEREAS, Fort Drum has and will continue to play an important and critical role in ensuring our nation's military readiness to defend our state and nation against hostility and threats to our safety and national security; now, therefore, be it

"RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to memorialize Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim February 6, 2018, as 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum Day in the State of New York; and be it further

"RESOLVED, That a copy of this resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to

Major General Walter E. Piatt, Commanding General, 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum."

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Senator Ritchie on the resolution.

SENATOR RITCHIE: Thank you, Mr. President.

Colleagues, I am proud to welcome you to the seventh celebration of the 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum Day in the New York State Senate.

The men and women of Fort Drum truly represent the best of the best. They have dedicated themselves to defend our freedom and that of freedom-loving people around the globe. Our soldiers and officers know how to lead, as evidenced by some of those we have had the privilege to host during previous Fort Drum Days, including the current chief of staff of the United States Army, one of the seventh highest ranking officers in our nation's military, General Mark Milley; the top previous commander of a multinational coalition battling ISIS in Afghanistan, General Stephen Townsend.

And that tradition of leadership and distinction continues today with the soldiers and

officers you see before you and those that hopefully you met downstairs in the displays in the LOB. Let me take a moment to introduce them to you: Commanding General Walter Piatt. Brigadier General Patrick Donahoe. Command Sergeant Major Sam Roark. Command Sergeant Major Ryan Alfaro. Chaplain Lieutenant Colonel Darrick Gutting. Captain Sam Kriegler. Master Sergeant Keisha Archer.

And we are joined by these native New Yorkers also: Sergeant First Class Brian Lambert, of Penn Yan; Staff Sergeant William Maxwell, of Pawling; Sergeant Kyle Milliman, of Lansing; Sergeant Jonathan Ruiz, of Brooklyn; Sergeant Joseph Frank, of Rome; and Specialist Hunter Bishop, of Plattsburgh.

Please join me in welcoming also a few special guests who are here in the chamber today: Mrs. Cynthia Piatt; Mrs. Deanna Roark; Colonel Eric Wagenaar; and General Ray Shields, representing the New York National Guard.

Thank you for being here.

(Standing ovation.)

SENATOR RITCHIE: And in the gallery I'd also to like to recognize another

member of the General and Mrs. Piatt's family, their daughter, Jessica --

(Applause.)

SENATOR RITCHIE: -- along with representatives from the community organizations in my district that work to support Fort Drum's mission and their success. Thank you all for joining us today.

Many of you have heard me speak about how proud I am to represent the men and women of Fort Drum, the largest military installation east of the Mississippi, and the importance of the post to the North Country economy -- indeed, to our entire state, as New York's largest single-site employer.

I've told you how the soldiers and the officers of Fort Drum and their families are our friends, our neighbors, coaches, volunteer firefighters, and community volunteers -- how they are literally intertwined in every community across our region. I cannot overstate how important Fort Drum and the 10th Mountain Division are to the North Country, to New York State, and to the nation -- and, as you will hear this from General Piatt's address, to the

nation's defense.

The 10th Mountain Division was among the first to deploy overseas in the days and weeks following the horrific terror attacks on New York City and our nation. In fact, units from the 10th Mountain Division have deployed two dozen times since September 11th. And in just a few weeks, many of these brave soldiers, including General Piatt and his entire command team, will be again deploying to Iraq in defense of our freedom. I ask you that you keep them in your thoughts and prayers.

So to the soldiers here, I want to say thank you for your service, because that is what it means to be part of our armed services. There is no higher calling than service to others, service to the community, service to freedom and liberty. We are all proud of the work you do, proud of the 10th Mountain Division, and proud to call you fellow New Yorkers.

Let me close by saying to all my colleagues and especially to our leader, Senator Flanagan, thank you. Thank you for learning about Fort Drum and supporting our brave troops. I also want to thank Senator Flanagan for taking

the trip to the North Country and touring Fort Drum.

And once again, I would like to extend that invitation to every member in this chamber to do the same thing. To see the troops here in the Capitol and in the LOB is an experience, but to witness firsthand how they live, how they train, is something entirely different, and it will only deepen your appreciation and respect for who they are and what they do.

So welcome to all of you, and thank you for your service. And once again, we are all so very proud of all of you.

Thank you, Mr. President.

(Applause.)

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Thank you, Senator Ritchie.

Senator Flanagan on the resolution.

SENATOR FLANAGAN: Thank you, Mr. President.

I want to welcome our guests. And I'm in awe, I really am in awe when all of you are here.

Senator Ritchie, who does a

spectacular job, she's right. I've heard about Fort Drum, you know, we've had people here for a number of years. There's nothing like seeing it. And, you know, you think "fort," okay, I think like a kid, it's like a nifty cool thing. It's a city. It really is a city. There are thousands of people there.

And I remember going -- and I have not had the honor or the privilege of serving in the military, but I remember going and getting some education from young men and women who were simulating battles. They put us in a room with smoke, with loud noise, all kinds of things that were just simulations. Then they took us in another room and they showed us body parts. Fake, but like, you know, legs ripped apart, arms half-severed. And I'm thinking, this is -- I'm looking at this on a mannequin. I can't fathom what the heck that would be like in person.

And I remember when we were there, it was hot. It was hot. And all of these folks had on tons of gear. And I forget exactly what it was, but I just remember thinking, my goodness, it's just -- you know, this is again a simulation. I can't imagine what it would be

like to be over in Iraq.

But I want to thank the General and his entire team for their service. And General, you can't quite see, but we have a lot of young people in our gallery. And to the young boys and girls who are here, you have freedoms and you have the ability to be here, you have the opportunity for free speech, a great education, and to be part of your government because these people protect us. And thank God that they do. Thank you for your service. And I guess I'm just deeply grateful. And General, I think I told you -- you said this, you came into our conference, I'm finally glad to meet the real general, the beautiful woman to your left --

(Laughter.)

SENATOR FLANAGAN: -- because I know she represents management, and you are labor --

(Laughter.)

SENATOR FLANAGAN: -- which is the way it should be.

But, you know, it really is an honor and a privilege. And we have a number of our colleagues who have served with distinction in

the military, and I'm sure they have a better appreciation than I. But I just want to say thank you, thank you, thank you with the utmost sincerity.

And I believe, Senator Croci, the floor is now -- or the podium is going to be reserved for the General.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Yes, Mr. Leader. We do have two other members who would like to address the resolution.

Senator Larkin.

SENATOR LARKIN: Thank you, Mr. President.

Good morning, General. You know, 23 and a half years I wore that uniform. And you know, the 10th Mountain Division, the first time I ever heard about them, I was out -- back from Korea. I had two little trips to Korea I'll never forget.

And we went up to a place called Camp Drum then, and somebody said, "We're going to do some glider training." And I said, "I have bad legs and bad eyes, I can't do it." And they said, "Lieutenant, yes, you will."

And later on I studied a little bit

more about the 10th, and then I learned all about Senator Dole. Senator Bob Dole was wounded just days before the fighting in Italy, as your history tells you. And when we were doing something later on in life, this chamber helped us when we were talking about a Purple Heart stamp and a Purple Heart monument. And Bob Dole stood up there and said "The 10th Mountain should be one of the top," and it was. And it is.

Young sergeants. You know, I looked here and I said, God, think about it, Billy, you were a first sergeant one time. I said yes, and I used to listen to the older sergeants. Am I correct, General? That's how we learned.

But you are a hero in yourself, but you are a sustained project of the United States, the defense of our country. There are young people, you have some of yours who have been two and three trips across the pond. One of my neighbors is over there right now, and he said "The 10th Mountain takes second place to none."

And you don't. Because, number one, nobody gets to this assignment as the commanding general of the 10th Mountain. It's evidenced today by the chief of staff of the United States

Army. You came here right, General Milley. And every one of you should be proud.

But you know, it's our job, it's our job to tell the rest of our nation, not just our state, that the freedoms that we enjoy, what these young people can do, and how great our country is because we have people like General Piatt and his troops in the 10th Mountain Division.

I'll never forget my life with it. And when you command troops in combat, you make sure your troops are ready. And General, everybody tells me you're standing tall. May God bless you and your members and their families.

Thank you very much (saluting).

(Applause.)

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Senator Little.

SENATOR LITTLE: Thank you, Mr. President.

I'd like to begin by thanking Senator Ritchie for initiating Fort Drum Day. When she first came to the Senate, that was one of the first things she did want to accomplish, and how well she has accomplished that.

Certainly I did not, regretfully, have any military experience, so my experience has been through my recently retired Navy son of 26 years. But I would like to call some attention -- not take attention away from the general and the members of the military -- but to the nonpaid, totally volunteer person in the military, the spouses of our leaders in the military.

Cynthia Piatt is here today. And as the wife of the general, she has lots of responsibilities -- taking care of and welcoming families who arrive, changes of leadership under the general, all of that, helping families adjust to their new locations and their places in the military.

And looking back and talking to her last night, the number of times that she has had to move -- I think, if I'm correct, it was 22 different locations throughout their marriage they have moved. So not only is she an expert at unpacking and setting up a household within hours and days -- the general said in 72 hours she could be totally set up at whatever location she went to -- but dealing with her children as they

changed schools. And Jessica is in the audience in the gallery today, as well as they have a son, Joshua, who moved around even a lot through high school, and changing schools and moving on as they go along.

It's not easy, and I don't think we always understand that. But her role is as important as the general's. Not on the front lines, but she's on the back line with the families. And many times it's the family who is undergoing some turmoil and emotional distress that Cynthia and women like Cynthia have to deal with.

So thank you for your service as well as all those paid members of the military.

Thank you very much. And thank you for being here.

(Applause.)

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Senator Sanders.

SENATOR SANDERS: Thank you, sir.

Although my brother and I, we did the Marine Corps, my younger brother defected and he went to the 101st.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR SANDERS: My nephew continued that line of going, and my nephew has done two tours Iraq, one tour Afghanistan, one tour DMZ, on and on. And that's what he can tell me, at least.

But we hear about the Mountain Division, we hear about these guys who are able to take the snow as easy as -- I did warm weather training, I did desert training, and I enjoyed it. So I cannot fathom, I cannot fathom anybody who would enjoy a temperature lower than 50 degrees.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR SANDERS: I suspect that your unit deals with people dealing with a little lower than 50 degrees, General. I might not do very well there, sir, but if you ever come to the desert, I can do that.

I want to commend you all because you have really put yourself in harm's way over and over and over again and have acquitted yourself quite well. That I'm sure that if we went and did a study of people, there would also -- there would be one or two other groups that may say how well you do in Iraq and other

places.

I wish you well in your return to it. I really hope that, as we were speaking earlier, General, that it is just a nation-building exercise, that we get there and people decide to create a nation and go in a certain direction and that there will be no terrorism, no problems while you are there.

But I can say to those who want to create problems that we are sending one of the best units that we have out there, and they will acquit themselves quite well, as they have in days gone by.

Thank you, Mr. President. Godspeed to you all on your journey.

(Applause.)

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Senator Griffo.

SENATOR GRIFFO: Thank you, Mr. President.

I thank Senator Ritchie for hosting this event each and every year because it's an honor to have you in our presence -- to all of you, General, and all the troops assembled.

I just simply want to say that I

have the opportunity to express my great respect, my admiration and my appreciation for your bravery, for your sacrifice, and most importantly, for your service. You are truly the defenders of democracy. God bless you, and may He continue to keep you in good grace.

(Applause.)

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Senators and ladies and gentlemen, it is my great honor to introduce to you the commander of the 10th Mountain Division, New York's own, Major General Walter Piatt.

General.

(Standing ovation.)

MAJOR GENERAL PIATT: Thank you very much.

Good morning and thank you for this incredible welcome to this beautiful Capitol in the great Empire State. And thank you again for honoring this division on the seventh Fort Drum and 10th Mountain Division Day.

Majority Leader John Flanagan, Independent Democratic Conference Leader Jeff Klein, Democratic Conference Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, and our very own Senator Patty

Ritchie and her staff and all your staffs, and for all of you for your service in and out of uniform and for what you do in this chamber every day.

It's to protect these institutions, and why we fight. And Senator, you're right, it's for that next generation as well. The Sergeant Major will be here afterwards to take their recruiting statements, so we'll be ready.

(Laughter.)

MAJOR GENERAL PIATT: This is what we do. And I just want to say we can't say thank you enough to our very own and special patriot to the 10th Mountain Division, Senator Ritchie. Her dedication to our post, its soldiers and our families, it humbles us all, inspires us every day, and motivates us to continue to serve.

I tell everyone wherever I go that the North Country is the best military community in our Army. I tell it that way because on several occasions, when my son was playing high school sports for the Carthage Comets, he received something in the mail from Senator Ritchie, a photo from a local newspaper showing a sport highlight and saying "I saw something

special about you and I wanted to send this to you."

That doesn't happen everywhere. And it didn't happen because of my rank. It happened because my son was Josh Piatt and he was a member of a school district that just happened to have military kids in it. He holds that on his wall today still. Thank you, Senator.

I appreciate you all welcoming us a little bit early this year because, as mentioned, division headquarters begins our deployment to Iraq. We started heading out this week; we will complete our deployment by early March, and then by mid-March I will assume the duties of the Coalition Force Joint Land Component commander in Iraq.

We know that this deployment comes at a very critical time. We deployed there in January for two weeks. And you're right, it was a little bit warm there, Senator. And folks who were flying the helicopters, it was about 40 degrees, and they were cold. They were from Oklahoma. And they said, "We need to turn on the heat for the general and the sergeant major in the back."

So our major reminded them, "Hey, we're in the 10th Mountain Division, this is kind of hot, so please don't turn the heat on. We'll take the air-conditioning."

But we do deserts as well. We go where we're told. And we fight where we go, and we win where we fight. That is the 10th Mountain Division.

But this deployment comes at a critical time. It comes at a critical time now that Iraqi people now have hope. There's a real sense of joy in Baghdad because of this last victory they achieved against the Islamic State. And it was a victory. The Islamic State invaded Iraq and pushed forward as the Iraqi Army had to flee through the violence that was coming. They were at the gates of Baghdad -- Iraq itself was almost overthrown. It was the Iraqi security forces and the Iraqi people that stood up for this.

They were enabled by a mighty coalition, and they will continue to get our support. But it was the Iraqi soldiers that went door to door, block by block in Mosul to defeat the most ruthless enemy this world has seen. And

though it was a victory for the people of Iraq, this enemy is a global threat. And this was a victory for the world.

Folks often ask, What are they doing about their own security? The real question is, What have they done for world security? They defeated ISIS in Iraq and in Syria. They defeated the caliphate. Now we must complete the destruction of this terror group. And that's what the 10th Mountain Division will now deploy to go and do.

Our 3rd Brigade, our Patriot Brigade from Fort Polk, Louisiana, has been over there since last September. They moved in-country in September, and they immediately went where the enemy was, providing critical fire support, intelligence support, and helped defeat the remnants of ISIS in Mosul and pursued it throughout Hawija, and now the Anbar Valley all the way to the border of Syria.

The enemy is defeated as a conventional threat, but he's not destroyed. The time is now. And he remains ever-vigilant. On October 1st, we lost a soldier in Iraq, Specialist Alex Missildine. He was attacked by

an improvised explosion device just outside the Salaheddine Operations Center.

I had the honor of presiding over his funeral in Tyler, Texas. We presided down a 10-mile convoy through a town where everybody stopped their cars and put their hands on their heart for this fallen hero. All Alex wanted to do was serve his country. All he wanted to do was serve his unit in combat. He fought to earn his spot on that deployment. It cost him his life and his parents their only son. But as his father said to me: "This is the cost of our freedom, and I hope Alex's sacrifice will inspire the unit and this division to continue to serve." And it certainly does.

When I was here in this chamber last May, I told you about what the units in the 10th Mountain Division were doing. Our Combat Aviation Brigade deployed to Eastern Europe, assuring our allies, deterring our adversaries, building up military power in a NATO alliance that we have seen great reduction and increased threats from adversaries. They returned just in time for Thanksgiving, but now they are flying again in helicopters over the North Country as

they get ready for whatever mission is next.

We deployed one of their Apache battalions to the Republic of Korea for a nine-month deployment at a time that it's absolutely critical that we have military presence forward to deter adversaries on the Korean Peninsula.

And it was right about that time in the fall that hurricanes brought devastation to the doorstep for thousands of American citizens. And what was called from our 10th Mountain Division was a very specialized unit, the 510th Human Resource Company. They deployed, no notice, to Texas.

And as soon as they came back from supporting Hurricane Harvey, they were once again called to go to Puerto Rico to support the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. They didn't know where they were going to stay, they had a rucksack. But all of them said, Now we get to go help our own citizens.

A young lieutenant led the deployment to Puerto Rico. Her husband, also in the 10th Mountain Division, was out on exercises doing a live fire. She was unable to call him.

But she got on that plane, she did her job. And because of that specialized unit, many, many folks that were there to help with the reconstruction and help with the devastation were able to follow through, follow through getting in-country and go to where they needed to go. They did it for the honor to help our fellow Americans.

In September we also sent First Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment, to Afghanistan and to Cameroon, Africa, on a deployment that came with almost no notice. Our nation called, just giving us weeks to get this regiment ready, and they were. They are deployed to Afghanistan today, they are helping specialized units and special operations forces all around the country, taking the fight to the enemy and enabling Afghan security forces to become ready.

And also our 548 Combat Sustainment Brigade returned home from a successful deployment in the Middle East just before Christmas, and it came down to the wire. We didn't know if we were going to get them back. They supported from Kuwait, but they were really everywhere. All the way to Syria we had soldiers

from the 10th Mountain Division supporting our forces in the fight, and they did a marvelous job.

Today we have over 4,000 soldiers deployed to 17 different countries around the world -- Korea, many countries in Africa, Iraq, Afghanistan and many more. We say all the time the 10th Mountain patch, the sun never sets on our patch. We are stationed in Fort Drum, New York, but we go everywhere and we're always there.

And if all that coming and going didn't keep us busy enough, we leaned forward on a campaign to once again open our great post, which I so proudly call a nature preserve that we just happen to be allowed to train soldiers on. We opened our post to our surrounding communities. Our post is beautiful and shares an awesome history with the rest of Northern New York. But in the past 16 years of war, and all the security requirements that came with that, we began to build up walls, real and metaphorical. That question about that, we needed to know -- we needed to maintain security, there's no question. But we did not need to be

divided from the community that supports us so well.

In June we opened up the post to more than 10,000 soldiers, families and community members to host country music star Trace Adkins for a free concert. We'll do that again this year. Don't know who the artist is going to be, but it will be big.

And just a month later, after the tragic in-line-of-duty death of local hero Trooper Joel Davis, we joined forces with the New York State troopers to hold his funeral on Fort Drum. After his death, we, like so many other organizations, offered what assistance we could provide. In less than a week, a team of troopers and Fort Drum employees organized a memorial tribute that welcomed close to 4,000 mourners onto our post.

It was an incredible honor to be part of remembering so great a man. I will never forget Trooper Joel Davis. He was hero that ran to meet danger without hesitation. Together we mourned his loss, but we will forever honor his life. His service will never be forgotten.

Then in September and December, we

opened our post to tours of the LeRay Mansion, the ancestral home of the man thought to be the founding father of upstate New York.

In November we brought more than 400 community members, many of them with personal connections, to the sites of villages that were dissolved during the expansion of Fort Drum in the 1940s. After that event I received a letter from one of the participants telling me, and I quote her now: "The Army's obvious concern for the environment has allayed concerns I had harbored for many years previous. As a result of the friendly atmosphere I encountered on Monday, I no longer perceive the installation as foreign territory that must be approached with caution."

In recognizing the past, we are doing great work in solidifying the future of Fort Drum. This perhaps is not the most obvious route to stay relevant for the next 30 years, but I argue it's one of the most effective. And we also started new traditions, hosting the first ever all-Army hockey team for their inaugural game against the Canadian hockey team. And against all odds, we won.

(Laughter, applause.)

MAJOR GENERAL PIATT: And perhaps an even bigger win came that night when we packed the house. There wasn't an empty seat in the Watertown Municipal Arena. Soldiers, their family members, and the community showed up in force to cheer their team on. And with that warm reception on a very cold night, Watertown earned its spot forever as the home ice for Army hockey.

We also spent a lot of time working with communities, talking about how our training needs are expanding as our enemies gain the ability to defeat us from further and further away. The way we are fighting wars now is changing, and our training has to change with it. We are now facing enemies that can attack us from further away. In many areas our enemies have us outnumbered, outgunned and outranged. This is unacceptable.

We must be able to win our wars to protect our nation, which means we have to be able to defeat every adversary that poses a threat to our United States. And if we can win that war, we can certainly deter that war.

But we need to train against the future fights, because our enemies are expanding

these threats through air defense systems that are elaborate, that can deny the U.S. Air Force entry into certain spaces. They make it very difficult. It becomes now, again, a land fight. The call for the U.S. Army and Army infantry is even more important now than it ever has been.

But to be able to defeat that enemy, we've got to train against that, against greater standoff, utilizing manned and unmanned systems. We need to be able to train with Air Force and New York Air National Guard so they can drop their precision munitions on Fort Drum for many years to come, on platforms that exist today and many that aren't even invented yet.

If we are properly to train our soldiers for what awaits them on that future battlefield, we must continue to train for that future. We must be prepared with methods not yet understood, with technology not yet invented and doctrine not yet written.

This sort of training brings the idea to bear of our encroachment around our post into clear focus. The main topic of discussion this past year has been industrial wind turbines. Many on either side of the issue always ask me,

What is Fort Drum's position? And I remind them strongly, Fort Drum is an advocate for positive growth in the North Country. We must do this together.

We know that energy needs to be secure in our nation, and protecting that energy is part of our own national military strategy. We know that green energy is part of that solution. But we also know that if we plan together, we can do this smartly. We just want to be part of that process. And I thank all of you here for allowing us to be part of that process.

We have been heard by our local communities and by New York State. Local municipalities and developers alike now are reaching out to us to be part of their planning, and New York State has made our input part of the Article X process.

These are hard conversations to have, as much is at stake. But you have my promise that I will always be transparent and work towards positive growth in the North Country that we all love so much. And I thank you all for your heartfelt considerations in these

delicate matters.

But it's true, it's true to form. This is the kind of support that we expect and we have seen from Albany time and time again. In so many things that are important to our soldiers, our families, and our Army, New York steps up to the plate all the time.

You supported the interstate compact on educational opportunity for military children that addresses transitional issues encountered by military families like enrollment, placement, eligibility. And there's an example in the gallery today. My daughter Jessica went to four different high schools as we moved here before the start of her senior year. A guidance counselor from a local high school, Carthage High School, got her transcripts, made sure that she had the right classes to graduate and apply to college on time. And I'm proud to say she received a college scholarship to Duquesne University and graduated in three and a half years.

(Applause.)

MAJOR GENERAL PIATT: That would not happen without your help. She would have had

to take extra classes, her college acceptance would have been delayed or maybe not have happened at all, and maybe missed time. New York does it. Right now she's back here in Watertown working for the Chamber of Commerce, sitting right next to her boss, Kylie Peck.

So military kids do recognize that these bases are indeed their homes.

You support our unique healthcare model, through your support to the Fort Drum Health Planning Organization. The U.S. Army Surgeon General came to visit us twice, and she came in January, which makes her a friend of the 10th Mountain Division. She came to learn about our model and how unique it is, and she visited the facilities that we have off-post.

We don't have a hospital on our base that's unique to our military, but we rely on the support of five local hospitals, and mainly the support from Samaritan Hospital, which I always fondly call Samaritan Army Hospital, in Watertown, New York. It is a unique model, but it is a win/win for New York State and for our soldiers. It's not just about access to healthcare, it's about military-readiness. And

for that I say thank you, New York.

The State University of New York supports soldiers and family members' access to student aid initiatives like the Excelsior Scholarship and access to state tuition rates.

SUNY and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority offer programs to retrain our soldiers who are leaving the service so that they can enter the workforce instead of the unemployment line. On behalf of all of us who strive to keep learning, I say thank you, New York.

The New York State Police partner with our department of Emergency services for mutual aid, on-post training, and event support. For all of us who sleep well at night knowing we're safe, I say thank you, New York.

You voted to support our military spouses with expedited licensing services, with reduced fees for many career fields. For all of us who ask so very much from our spouses and are able to do so little to lessen the impact on their careers: Thank you, New York.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Region 6 is a

steadfast partner in ensuring that our training requirements and sustaining our environment aren't at odds. For the many of us who are in awe of the nature preserve that is Fort Drum, we say thank you, New York.

And for your continued investment in keeping Fort Drum as relevant for 30 years as it is today, through projects like the I-781 connector and the Route 26 overpass linking our main post to our critical air field, thank you, New York, for cementing our future.

And thank you for the young men and women who have grown up in towns and cities throughout New York, left their hometowns to train and become soldiers in the United States Army. Some of those soldiers, as introduced, are here today.

Soldiers like Sergeant Joseph Frank, from Rome, who was told that the Army would be too hard for him, that he couldn't to it. When he earned the rank of noncommissioned officer, sergeant, it made him think about what else he could accomplish and how far his career in the profession of arms might take him.

Others, like Specialist Hunter

Bishop, from Plattsburgh, answered the call to serve after being affected by the attacks of 9/11, and he wanted to make a difference.

Soldiers like Sergeant Jonathan Ruiz could see the smoke from the Towers at his school in Brooklyn before the teachers closed the window blinds. He didn't understand what was happening then, but he said that years later, that's what motivated him to enlist.

For all those soldiers, I say thank you, New York.

The coalition I will soon join in Iraq faces, as I said, a difficult mission, for wars do not end in peace, and the terrorists are still there. Although defeated militarily, they still pose a threat. We must continue with surgical precision to hunt down those who mean to threaten Iraq, Syria, and indeed our own United States. But we must also help stabilize the populations as they come back from the ruins of war to rebuild their country so that they can be an independent, free Iraq and a partner to the United States in the Middle East.

On 12 May, one of our very first tasks will be to help provide the security for

Iraq's elections again. So in all this time of crisis, they have not given up on those democratic ideals, and now the political fight that remains post-conflict is one we will continue to assist and enable until they are secure in their country.

But just as we did here years ago when the Army outgrew Madison Barracks in Sackets Harbor, New York worked with us to find new areas to train in Pine Plains. When we outgrew that area, more than 500 families left their homes to keep us mission-capable, on the condition that we would respect and keep their cemeteries and preserve the environment. We keep those promises daily.

Does this compromise always come easy? Of course not. But as I've learned on the battlefield, and as our shared history tells us, unfortunately, disabling the opposition solves only a fraction of the problem, whereas the energy and effort you put into relationships has the capacity to build a lasting peace.

Thank you for living that lesson through legislation here in Albany, and by the support you show our military members back in

your home districts. New York is an incredible place to serve.

Please keep our deployed soldiers in your thoughts and prayers in the coming year. We will assist in completing the destruction of ISIS in Iraq so that they can no longer threaten the world.

And I want to make sure I reemphasize the open invitation that Senator Ritchie gave to you all. Be sure to come visit us in New York. Just dress warm and comfortable, because even in July you're going to get cold, and you're darn sure going to get dirty when you come out and train with the infantry. But we love to show off our installation, and we love for folks to see how wonderful it is cared for for the people of upstate New York.

Thank you again for this opportunity. We are honored to be here today and a part of this great state every day. But know this: No matter what terrors we fight, no matter where we are sent and no matter what challenges we face, your 10th Mountain Division will accomplish the mission. No matter how difficult the job, no matter how dangerous the climb, we

will not stop, we will keep moving until we all meet at the top.

Ever upward! Climb to glory! Thank you all very much.

(Standing ovation.)

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Senator DeFrancisco.

SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Yes, Mr. President, can you open that resolution for cosponsorship, so that anyone who does not want to be on that resolution should notify the desk.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Very good. The resolution is open for cosponsorship. If you do not wish to be a cosponsor, if you do not wish to be a cosponsor, please notify the desk.

Senator DeFrancisco.

SENATOR DeFRANCISCO: Can we now take up Resolution 3708, by Senator Stewart-Cousins, read it in its entirety, and call on Senator Cousins.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Legislative Resolution Number 3708, by Senator Stewart-Cousins, memorializing Governor Andrew M.

Cuomo to proclaim February 2018 as Black History Month in the State of New York.

"WHEREAS, Black History Month, previously known as Negro History Week, was founded by Dr. Carter G. Woodson, and was first celebrated on February 1, 1926; since 1976, it has become a nationally recognized month-long celebration, held each year during the month of February to acknowledge and pay tribute to African-Americans neglected by both society and the history books; and

"WHEREAS, The month of February observes the rich and diverse heritage of our great state and nation; and

"WHEREAS, Black History Month seeks to emphasize black history is American history; and

"WHEREAS, Black History Month is a time to reflect on the struggles and victories of African-Americans throughout our country's history and to recognize their numerous valuable contributions to the protection of our democratic society in war and in peace; and

"WHEREAS, Some African-American pioneers whose many accomplishments, all of which

took place during the month of February, went unnoticed, as well as numerous symbolic events in February that deserve to be memorialized include: John Sweat Rock, a noted Boston lawyer who became the first African-American admitted to argue before the U.S. Supreme Court on February 1, 1865, and the first African-American to be received on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives; Jonathan Jasper Wright, the first African-American to hold a major judicial position, who was elected to the South Carolina Supreme Court on February 1, 1870; President Abraham Lincoln submits the proposed 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, abolishing slavery, to the states for ratification on February 1, 1865; civil rights protester Jimmie Lee Jackson dies from wounds inflicted during a protest on February 26, 1965, leading to the historic Selma, Alabama, civil rights demonstrations, including Bloody Sunday, in which 600 demonstrators, including Martin Luther King, Jr., were attacked by police; Autherine J. Lucy became the first African-American student to attend the University of Alabama on February 3, 1956; she was expelled

three days later 'for her own safety' in response to threats from a mob; in 1992, Autherine Lucy Foster graduated from the university with a master's degree in Education, the same day her daughter, Grazia Foster, graduated with a bachelor's degree in corporate finance; the Negro Baseball League was founded on February 3, 1920; Jack Johnson, the first African-American World Heavyweight Boxing Champion, won his first title on February 3, 1903; and Reginald F. Lewis, born on December 7, 1942, in Baltimore, Maryland, received his law degree from Harvard Law School in 1968, and was a partner in Murphy, Thorpes & Lewis, the first black law firm on Wall Street, and in 1989, he became president and CEO of TLC Beatrice International Food Company, the largest black-owned business in the United States; and

"WHEREAS, In recognition of the vast contributions of African-Americans, a joyful month-long celebration is held across New York State and across the United States, with many commemorative events to honor and display the cultural heritage of African-Americans; and

"WHEREAS, This Legislative Body

commends the African-American community for preserving, for future generations, its centuries-old traditions that benefit us all and add to the color and beauty of the tapestry which is our American society; now, therefore, be it

"RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to memorialize Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim February 2018 as Black History Month in the State of New York; and be it further

"RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor of the State of New York, and to the events commemorating Black History Month throughout New York State."

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Senator Stewart-Cousins.

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: Yes, thank you, Mr. President.

I rise to commemorate Black History Month. And certainly in the context of listening to the general and thinking of all that those in the military go through to protect our freedoms, with military might and with force and with the

sanction of the government, even then how important it is that we support our men and women in uniform and realize that freedom under no circumstance is free.

And as I think about Black History Month, I think of the same things. I think of the heroes and sheroes who, without sanction, frankly, of the government here, still fought for freedom. I think about Harriet Tubman, who lived right here in Auburn, New York. And from the time she moved here, she spent 54 years just going back, dragging people out of the confines of slavery and making sure that there was a pathway to freedom and that people would never go back.

I think about Constance Baker Motley, who was right here in this chamber, a Senator, she was in the chamber from 1964 to 1965. And Senator Motley was also one of the authors of the groundbreaking Brown vs. Board of Education. It was she, along with Thurgood Marshall, who made the case that separate is not equal in education or anywhere. And it changed the way we educated the children of this great nation.

I think about Marsha Johnson, an LGBT activist who was born in a time where there was not a conversation about being transgender. She was born in the '40s. But she was key and instrumental in terms of Stonewall and the Stonewall uprising and changing, again, the course of a people who just wanted to be free.

And I stand here today in memory of the Reverend Dr. Wyatt T. Walker, who was for a while a resident of Yonkers, who died on January 23rd. And he was the chief of staff for the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King. He was credited in many ways with being the chief strategist in terms of how he fought for freedom, for black community and everyone during those very tumultuous Civil Rights Era marches.

And I want to say to Senator Larkin I know how important that time in history was and really thank him for his participation during the time where Dr. King was fighting so hard for freedom.

But Wyatt T. Walker was also credited for putting together Dr. King's Letter from a Birmingham Jail, because Dr. King, when he was in prison, wrote that on little scraps of

paper, he wrote it in the margins of newspaper -- but it was Reverend Dr. Wyatt T. Walker who had to assemble this magnificent letter that is really something that we all associate as one of the greatest written texts from Dr. Martin Luther King.

So Wyatt T. Walker, who also became the senior pastor of Canaan Baptist Church, used his bully pulpit in every way to fight for freedom and social justice. And he was very much in the background, because obviously we saw Reverend Dr. King as that leader.

So whether you are a Harriet Tubman who was on the front line of freedom, or whether you were like Martha Johnson or Wyatt T. Walker, or whether you were like Constance Baker Motley, the understanding that freedom is not free and sometimes you've got to fight, even when people aren't supporting you, because the values and the importance of living your life as a free and liberated person in a just society makes all the difference. It's worth living for and certainly worth dying for.

So as we celebrate black history in this chamber, a chamber where great people have

emerged and where we have the possibility of doing great things, I hope that we will always remember those things that we say all the time: Freedom isn't free, and each of us can do something to advance freedom for the next generation and the next generation, because that's what we must do.

Thank you so much.

(Applause.)

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Senator Larkin.

SENATOR LARKIN: Thank you, Mr. President.

Thank you very much, Senator Cousins.

You know, what bothers me -- and I mention it every year -- it's nice to talk here and say this is what, this is what, that's what. My question is, what have you done to improve it?

My association with people of color goes back a long way, when I was a youngster. In my days in the military, my first command was a company of five Caucasians, all lieutenants. I was the youngest; 208 members who had color. And you know, the thing that got me the most was I

think the five lieutenants took care of the issue of making friends, working together, and realizing that there is no "I" in team and cooperation and teamwork always produce positive results.

We had a young man from Atlanta, I won't mention the corporation, but he came to us as a prima donna in the 2nd Armored Division in 1954. And he come in to see me one day and said, "I have a problem." I said, "What is your problem?" He said, "There are three black guys in my squad room." I said, "Get your ass out of here and come back in and talk to me."

And when he come back in, he said, "We have three people of color in my squad. In my area in Atlanta, they come in the back door." I said, "Well, we'll take care of that tonight."

I called the first sergeant and I said, "I want six more members with color in that squad room."

Shortening the speech up, he left and he went home. Before he left, he was a draftee. And he came in and he said, "You know, I'm going to remember this training. I learned a lot." Four months later I got a letter from his

father. He said: "I sent you a boy who was a bigot. He returned a man of honesty and integrity, and I thank you."

I don't like all this garbage going back and forth. I can speak pretty close to anybody, and you know my family. What are we doing to ourself? We're showing the rest of the world we can't get along. We don't want to do this with them, we won't want to do this with them. Why don't we sit down and talk and do something right?

Black History Month should be something that we stand up and say: This is what we've done. I invite any one of you to come to the armory in Newburgh. When you look and see 500, 600 inner city kids that walk in in the morning. And if they've got a cold, they go like this (gesturing). And if they don't have a cold, they shake hands. They study together, they play together.

And if we're going to make this place history, let's make history that we can be responsible for. Make history that we're proud of.

I'm ashamed when I read something.

Why do we have to say it, in the newspaper, "Two black guys were suspected of committing the murder"? Well, do we say two white guys did it? No. Why don't we use our brain instead of our buttocks and say a suspect was apprehended, a suspect is on the loose. He's a suspect, right? He's not just a person of color.

In this house, years ago, we used to go to dinner together as legislators, male and female. And you didn't talk about what went on in the shop, but on the weekend: Hey, how was the bar mitzvah? I heard you got engaged. I heard you got a new little baby there.

Why are we ashamed to put on a line and say black history is the same as us? I'm Irish. I remember what they said about us. Every street in Troy, New York, where I grew up, had a gin mill. They said, What did you expect the Irish to do? They don't know nothing else but drinking. That's a shame today to think about that.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have a program, it's called "Black History," and we have it in all of my high schools. And I want to hear a story. I don't want your mother or father to

write your -- and I've told this to the teachers, and I've told it to the counselors -- I want to know that you've done research about some of them.

For me, one person that I will never forget is Dr. Abernathy. Everybody says Martin Luther King. But they don't know, when we were at Selma waiting to march and everybody -- we need pictures, we need pictures, we need pictures. And I said to Dr. Abernathy, We're marching. And he went to Dr. King and he said, "They're looking out for theirself, Martin. Let's march." And we did.

I never saw a word in there talk about what a distinguished individual he was. And he's the one who told Dr. Martin Luther King, Don't go to Tennessee. And others said you've got to show that you support union sanitation workers. And he got killed, he got shot to death.

What are we doing to ourself? I pledge myself that I'll do everything. I have biracial children, two adopted -- grandchildren, by the way. And they're mine. At mass on Sunday, somebody come up to me and said "God, I

can't believe Grace is this big." She looks and she said, "I'm not this big, I'm THIS big" (gesturing).

We're proud of those children, so everybody else should be proud of your own. And these other children are our children. They're our future leaders of this nation. Get off your duffs and start to tell people this is the greatest country in the world. And we're one nation and we're one community. We are an American community. We are not a divisive community.

I invite you to come to the armory in Newburgh, and you will find that we don't have a diversity. The chess team that went down and beat New York City, there was 12 of them. And there was no picking and, See, there's six of this and six of this. Someone said, "How come you've got six of this and six? And our chess champion instructor said, "I don't have six and six, I have 12."

Ladies and gentlemen, it's our job, it's our responsibility to make sure that people understand black history is a subject matter of what happened in the past tense. It's our job to

show the future that we love and respect you as we do anyone else.

Thank you all.

(Applause.)

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Senator Benjamin. No?

SENATOR BENJAMIN: Who did you say?

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Senator Benjamin, we had --

SENATOR BENJAMIN: That's what I thought. Because Senator Sanders jumped up.

(Laughter.)

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: No, we have Senator Sanders as well.

Go ahead, Senator Benjamin.

SENATOR BENJAMIN: Thank you, Mr. President.

I rise today to celebrate Black History Month along with my leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and others. And I want to thank Senator Larkin for his comments; they're very timely.

Let me just say that when we came in here earlier, we pledged allegiance to the flag. And we said "I pledge allegiance to the flag of

the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, with liberty and justice for all."

Unfortunately, for too much of American history, liberty and justice for all did not apply to African-Americans. And many of us fought, many of the generations before us fought to try to make this a country where liberty and justice was for all.

And I don't want to get into the back and forth of who did what, but as we move forward today, I think it's important to remember there are implications of our history. And it's important that we make sure that it is shared. Because one of the key items that that all comes back down to is the issue of fairness.

What is fair? Is it fair that young kids of color could stay at Rikers Island for years on end and not have trial? I don't think that's fair. Everyone has to decide what they believe is fair.

Is it fair that many companies of MWBE descent haven't had opportunities for contracts -- state contracts, city contracts, federal contracts? And in the RFPs it states,

well, you need to have experience. But if you didn't have the opportunity before because you were prevented from having opportunities such as that, how could you have the experience today?

And so I guess I want us to keep in mind that when we talk about our history, it's not just a thing of the past. There are implications of that past that carry on into the present, and it's incumbent upon us to make sure that we try to create fairness to compensate for some of our past indiscretions as a country.

I'm a proud American. I love this country. I love where I was born. I was born in Harlem, USA. I claim Harlem, USA as the black capital of America. But I also know that we have a ways to go to address some of our past indiscretions as a country. And for us to do it, we have to do it together. All of us have to do it together.

And so just keep that in mind. I know it's easy to either just kind of listen to what people say -- and I know some -- you know, I know there's a desire to say, Oh, okay, well, that happened back then. And I'm not racist, I'm not this, I'm not that, I'm accepting of

everyone, so all of that from the past is the past, and let's just leave it there.

And I just want to implore you to think about the fact that there are consequences to previous decisions. If you have parents who are of a certain mindset and certain skills, you benefit from those one way or the other. This is just a part of human nature. And so as we celebrate Black History Month, I want us to all to keep in mind that when some of us fight so hard for issues like criminal justice reform and making sure that people of color get contracts, get opportunities to participate in the American economy, try to make sure that people of color get the opportunity to get pension fund money so that they can be owners and do amazing things, it is because we recognize our history and we're trying to create a more perfect union.

Thank you, Mr. President.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Senator Sanders.

SENATOR SANDERS: Thank you, Mr. President.

I jumped up earlier because I was just so in awe of my colleague that I just wanted

to claim his name. It didn't work well.

Thank you for the opportunity. I want to thank you, Madam Leader, for bringing this to the floor.

Black history is American history. American history cannot be separated from black history. In a few seconds, a few moments, I want to take you through a tour of some military history, since we're speaking of the military today. I want to remind us -- and I'm sure everyone in this body knows -- that the first person to die for American freedom was Crispus Attucks. He was a black man. The first person to die for American freedom, up in Boston, was Crispus Attucks.

But there was a time when, in the military, it was believed that -- in fact, they didn't want blacks in the military because they did not think that they would fight. They thought they were cowards who would run away. In fact, all of the -- although there was enough history to show a difference, they really thought that these folk would not fight.

This myth was shattered in the Civil War by a group known as the 54th Massachusetts

Colored Regiment. And the movie Glory was made about them. They were given an impossible task: Invade an area where the enemy knows you're coming, go after a fortified position where you have no shelter, no shade, they have plenty of supplies, and we want you to take that. Suicide.

They fought, they did amazingly. They did not take that position because it simply couldn't be taken. But at the same time the myth of cowardice with this group went down the drain at that point.

From there we can go quickly to the famed Buffalo Soldiers, the "Smoked Yankees" of the Plains Wars that were fought. Of course you couldn't speak of Teddy Roosevelt and his Rough Riders without realizing he had a portion of his troops who were black.

Speaking of black, Black Jack Pershing, in World War One, was one of the military commanders who had black units there. World War Two saw, of course, the Harlem Hellfighters, the Tuskegee Airmen, who went out there and showed the Nazis, the fascists, they have another thing coming to them when they speak of a master race. There was no master race then;

there is no master race now. There's the human race.

The militaries were united after World War Two; segregation in the military was ended. Of course there were fights, and plenty of them, for justice and freedom even within the service, as there are fights to this day.

My friends, in this short tour that we've taken, I trust that I've shown you a little bit that American history cannot be separated from black history. And black history should not be separated from American history. We should applaud all of these histories. The history of the black population is a history of this American experiment. An experiment. Not a perfect thing, an experiment, ways that we can make society better, ways that we can make the world better. And all of us will play our role in this great experiment.

Having said that, sir, I think that I've experimented enough for the morning. I thank you very much, Mr. President, and I shall take my seat.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Senator Bailey.

SENATOR BAILEY: Thank you, Mr. President. I also rise in support of this wonderful resolution. I'd be remiss in not stating that, my leader, you are black history, as the first woman to lead a caucus. I salute you.

I salute my mentor in the other house, Assembly speaker Carl Heastie, who I interned with in 2004. He is black history.

As I walk through the halls and I see interns and staff members, be reminded that you are part of black history, we are all part of black history.

There are pivotal moments in certain people's lives where they say, Where were you on this day? Well, that day for me was November 4, 2008. Some people say where were you when Dr. King was killed, where were you when Kennedy was shot? Well, I can tell you about November 4, 2008.

Woke up at 6:00 in the morning with all the vigor in the world, ready to go vote. Going to my poll site, St. Luke's Episcopal Church on 222nd Street and Barnes Avenue. I had voted in pretty much every election since I was

able to, so I figured if I got there at 6:00 I'd get out at 6:05 and I'd be fine. But no, there was a line -- from 222nd Street to 225th Street, three city blocks.

And usually when you have lines that extend three city blocks, there's a level of consternation, there's a level of disarray or anger. Not on this day. Not on November 4, 2008, when we were primed to elect President Barack Obama.

That day, going from that line and waiting on line and speaking to people about how excited they were, about the opportunity that they finally had to vote for an African-American to be the president, to be the leader of a country that had in the past enslaved them -- what a moment.

That night, watched the election results and called my grandfather James. Born in 1929, my grandfather would have never thought to see the day where a black man would be president of the United States. All I heard on the other end of the line was silence, but it was the most comfortable silence that I had ever heard.

My grandfather was so happy and so

proud that day that something that he could never imagine, growing up in rural North Carolina, took place. The impossible, some would have it, happened. That's where I was on November 4, 2008.

On November 5, 2008, I realized why we still need to have Black History Month. I was very excited about the election results, but I arrived at a place where certain people were not exactly too happy about that. And I realized that we need to come together as one.

Understanding why this is such a milestone for people of color, whether you voted for him or not, whether you agree with his policies or not -- the fact that you don't understand why it was a milestone is a problem. We can agree to disagree on many things, but milestones are milestones. Accomplishments are accomplishments. That's where I was, that where-were-you moment.

Now, in the 21st century way of thinking, my 3-year-old daughter Giada, the other day she was going through my phone and she saw a Bitmoji, she saw a "Celebrate Black History" Bitmoji and she said, "Dad, what's that?" "Oh,"

I said, "this is black history." And she said, "What's black history, Dad? I'm brown."

You are, my dear. But part of your history as a young African-American and Puerto Rican is to understand that what came before you will shape where you're going.

We plant trees under a shade that we may never see, but we still plant trees. Not simply for the oxygen that the trees provide so that we can breathe, not simply for the shade or the sap if it's a maple tree, or what fruits may come from it, but we plant that for the next generation, for my 3-year-old, Giada, and my 1-year-old, Carina, black history is -- again, as Senator Sanders and everybody else said, it's American history.

And understanding that as they come into contact with people in other areas and of other ethnic backgrounds, to be proud of who they are is very important. So I ask that we don't reflect on black history just in February, that we think about black history as American history and think about the black people who have done amazing things to let this country be where we are today.

You know, last year I spoke about Curt Flood, who challenged the reserve clause, who is the modern father of free agency. We have to think about these things we think about what happens in everyday life. People of color have been involved in the development of this country, and don't let anybody ever tell you that it's the other way around.

Thank you, Mr. President.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Senator Comrie.

SENATOR COMRIE: Thank you, Mr. President.

I want to commend Leader Cousins for doing this annual recognition of Black History Month. I want to thank Senator Larkin for his heartfelt speech and reminding us that we are all one people and we all need to remind each other every day that we are one people, in the true spirit of America.

It's appropriate on Fort Drum Day, when we honor our military, that they're here during Black History Month -- American History Month. That every day should be about the history of our people, about what we do as

Americans, how we bring each other together, how we find our common purpose and how we can continue to respect our history, acknowledge our heroes and sheroes of what has gone on before us.

And as I see the Future Farmers of America that are here today also, I would also encourage them to explore your history, explore and accept your culture, embrace your history, embrace your parents' past, embrace your ethnicity, and always celebrate yourself.

This is a month that is technically Black History Month, but it's a time for us to all reflect on who we are and who got us here, whose shoulders we were able to walk upon and follow and emulate to give us the wherewithal to be legislators, to give us the desire to be public servants, to give us the opportunity to be elected to office.

I've reflected, during this time, on the people that gave me the idea and inspiration to be in public service. I grew up in an Episcopal church. My parents have come from Jamaica, West Indies. My church, during the time that I grew up, was a safe haven. It was a place where people acted, they didn't talk. They came

to church every Sunday, they mentored us by their example, they gave us a safe environment to be, they gave us people that mentored us in small ways and large ways. I grew up in a church that was loving to people that they didn't know, and they led by example. They understood that if they looked back and took care of their young people, if they looked back and worked in a Sunday school, if they looked back and they worked on the altar, if they looked back and they were the church treasurer, they took time to reach down and to let young people know that there was a living example of steady, compassionate, dedicated service.

And it was that that gave me the roots to understand that I wanted to be in service as well.

My parents, the most dedicated people, that continued to work every day. We look to -- oftentimes we look to great heroes and to illustrious figures, but we have many people in our communities today that are the real heroes and sheroes of our community. And I wanted to stand up today to just applaud all of them, those people that set examples by getting up and going

to work every morning, by getting up and volunteering in groups, by getting up and being part of civic associations, part of different organizations to give back to the youth or help seniors.

Those are our heroes and sheroes. Those are the people that we need to make sure that we honor on a daily basis. Those are the people that are passing on their culture, passing on their ethnicity, passing on their history. And Black History Month is a time to reflect on all of that. It's bigger than just one culture or one people. It's the understanding that we all have to move together to make this a better union, to make this a better country, to make this a better State Senate, and to make our lives better for our children. Because at the end of the day, we're all trying to make life better for the next generation.

So I stand today to acknowledge Black History Month and thank the speaker and thank all the speakers today. But I just want to remind us that we're all here to try to do better for the next generation.

Thank you, Mr. President.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Senator Parker.

SENATOR PARKER: Thank you, Mr. President.

I guess I rise to add my voice to my colleagues who are celebrating Black History Month this year. And let me begin, as many of my colleagues did as well, by acknowledging Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins and the amazing work that she has done as both our leader and as living history in this body.

We don't think about it, but as I'm in my 16th year here I've had an opportunity, over every single time, to vote and elect for an African-American to lead the Democratic Conference of the State Senate. And that's history within itself. Right? That's the longest contiguous stretch of African-American leadership in the entire State of New York. Right? And so we don't think about the fact that all of us are part of that history.

And I'm going to talk a little bit, I guess, not just talking about Black History Month but really using what I think is a more appropriate phrase in African-American History

Month. And I'm changing the lexicon around, African-American from black, for very specific reasons. And in part because when you talk about African-American, it puts you in a global context of understanding that the people that we are talking about just don't appear out of nowhere, but they come from a very specific place.

Black History Month was created in 1926 by Carter G. Woodson, a historian, who had started an organization, the Association for the Study of African American Life and History. And in creating that organization, it really was about giving African-Americans an understanding of who they were on not just a global stage, but historically. Because there was an attempt to essentially erase the contributions of African people from the face of history in this world, literally. Literally.

And so it's nice to talk about, you know, people here and -- you know, and all the things that are going on, but there really has to be an understanding about why we celebrate this month. This month just doesn't come about because black people feel bad for themselves because they've been oppressed and they need

something to uplift themselves. But this really, in 1926, was about life and death. This really was about people not having access to the understanding of history.

So now we can go back and we can name all these people and we understand the historical context, but all that comes because Carter G. Woodson, you know, decided that this was something that needed to be done, and he decided that that was going to be his contribution to our history, was to have us understand and focus on history.

He chose February because of two reasons, because of the birthday of Lincoln, which is February 12th, and then the birthday of Frederick Douglass, which was February 14th. And we heard, vis-a-vis Senator Funke's resolution a couple of weeks ago, about Frederick Douglass and his contribution.

And so this month is critical, but I want us to understand that the history of African-Americans doesn't begin in 1619 with the first ships bringing African people in enslavement here to the shores of America. Right? That the history of African people and

African-Americans begins in Africa. And so you can't understand African-Americans unless you understand Africa. Right?

Malcolm X was famous for saying that, you know, just because a cat has kittens in the oven, it doesn't make them biscuits. Right? We didn't transform ourselves -- we're not -- we are people of African descent. We are African people. Just because we were born here in America don't make us any less African. Right? And the same way you heard Senator Larkin earlier stand up and refer to himself as being Irish. Right? Different oven, different cat, still not a biscuit. Right?

African people are no less African because we were born in North Carolina or Detroit or New York or Trinidad, Jamaica, Haiti, Cuba or Brazil. We're still African people. And so you have to understand that history in order to understand the undergirdings of what you get when you get here in the United States.

And that's part of what Carter G. Woodson wanted people to understand, is to give a global and historical context. When you go and you look at the great civilizations of the world,

you know, we often begin with, you know, Greece and Rome. Which are great places to start, Senator Gianaris. But we oftentimes skip over Africa, right, the great civilization of Kemet. Right?

The people of Kemet, it says that if -- let me just go back and say this. If you want to understand this history, let's go all the way back. And when you find not just the first humanoid, but when you find the current humanoid, right, Homo sapiens sapiens, all of those humanoids are actually found on the continent of Africa. Right? So to the degree we have an Eden, if Eden exists, right, regardless of what your religious context is, if Eden exists, Eden exists on the continent of Africa. Right?

And those people who started both Nubia, Kush, and what's called Kemet -- or what you commonly refer to as ancient Egypt -- say that they began in a place where they say that we came from the valley at the base of the Mountain of the Moon. Right? Those of you who know geography know that the Mountain of the Moon is Kilimanjaro. Right? Functionally becoming the cradle of civilization, the first significant

cradle of civilization in the world.

And so when you look at, you know, ancient Egypt and you look at the Pyramids and the Sphinx and all those things -- Aba symbol -- you're talking about African history. You're talking about the underpinnings of where African people come from. African people did not come to this continent -- sorry, come -- well, come to the New World, let me phrase it that way, come to the New World tabula rasa -- in Latin, a blank slate. Right? They didn't come here tabula rasa.

But the history was told to people in a way that African people had not contributed anything to the world. And that was done systematically in order to justify the enslavement of African people. You can't enslave people and use them as chattel if you first don't dehumanize them. Right? Which is why certain kinds of names -- people go, like, what's in a name? Right? Shakespeare teaches us a rose by any other name smells just as sweet. However, what Shakespeare misses is that calling something what it's not allows you to treat it in a different way.

And so we don't understand African people as people. Which is why I say, you know, African people were never slaves. They were enslaved, but never slaves. A slave is a thing. And they never succumbed to their condition.

So when you study the history, one of the things you find is a history of resistance. African people did not sit on, you know, plantations just working day by day and not fighting back, which is what people would have you believe.

And that history of fighting, if you understand African history, is a history that you see. But also the history of -- that history of fighting on the continents is also what allowed Europeans to come in and exploit that division. That's why it's important for everyone to understand the history and understand that Carter G. Woodson wasn't actually explaining the history for everybody, he was really saying African-Americans need to understand their own history. Right? Going back to Egypt.

They say, on one of the important pyramids, "Know thyself." Know thyself. Or, as my father used to tell me all the time, how do

you know where you're going if you don't know where you've been? And if you don't know where you're going, then any road will take you there. Right?

And so African-American History Month is an opportunity for us to begin looking at our own history as people of African descent.

And Senator Sanders is absolutely right that African-American history is certainly American history and certainly ought to be not just studied as a discrete course, but also integrated into all of the courses that are taught, not just K through 12, but also in our universities.

I'm supportive of a bill that Senator Hamilton has that actually would require African-American history to be taught in our public schools. It's certainly something that we should be thinking about taking up this session and making it the law in the State of New York, being that, you know, we feel so good about African-American History Month today. Maybe we'll take it up. We've got -- what's today's date? We've got about 21 more days, or something like that, to take it up. Let's take that bill

up and pass it on the floor of the Senate as a worthy tribute.

Senator Larkin challenged us to do something. What are we doing about African-American history, he said. Here's an opportunity for us to do something. Take up Senator Hamilton's bill, let's pass it, let's make African-American history a required course in every single school in the State of New York. Because that history is American history, and people have to understand that context.

By understanding that history, you understand certain things like, for instance, the role of the black church. Oftentimes we talk about the black church, we think that -- we talk about the black church as a default institution. We talk about it like the only thing that black people could do is go to church, so that's why they organize in churches now.

And although that's logical from the history, it's actually wrong. And you have lots of great historians who get this point absolutely wrong. And they get it wrong because they begin in 1619 instead of going back to Egypt.

If you look at great

civilizations -- not just Egypt, but you look at the Mali Empire, not to be confused with Mali the country, which actually took its name from the empire. If you look at the great Ghana Empire -- again, the country of Ghana took its name from the Empire of Ghana. Right? If you look at the Yoruba societies, right, the Akan, the Fulani, the Twa, right, the Khoisan people, who were the first people on the planet, right, who you refer to as the pygmies, right, when you look at these societies, they are very spiritual societies. In fact, they have no secular societies in traditional African culture. Which means that nothing exists outside of God.

So that when African people get here and they start getting introduced to God, they're like, Oh, yeah. Yeah, we know who God is. We got that. Oh, in fact we organize everything under God. That in fact you look at the Yoruba people and you find somebody called the Oluwo Ifa, who is their spiritual leader. He's both president and pope. Amongst the Akan people in Ghana, right, you have the Asantehene. And the Asantehene is both president and pope.

So then when you come here and you

start -- you know, people are enslaved and they have rebellions, who are they organizing under? Nat Turner, Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey, to name a few. All what? Pastors. Because for African people, you can't have -- leadership is not divine leadership.

It is not any mistake that you in fact find that the first thing that Marcus Garvey, who creates the largest black organization in the world, the UNIA, the Universal Negro Improvement Association -- the first thing he creates is the African Orthodox Church. Right? It is the African Orthodox Church and the army he produces that produces a gentleman named the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, which creates the Nation of Islam, and which Malcolm X comes out of.

Right? And so there's a lineage that is connected in this history that comes out of the fact that African people really understand and have what I refer to as an African spiritual epistemology. That is, they understand truth and knowledge vis-a-vis their relationship to the spirit world.

And so it doesn't really matter what

religion it is, right, they're not organized around religion. They happen to be primarily Christians and Protestants, because that was what they had exposure to. But most of you know that 50 percent of the Muslim population in the United States is African-American. Right? What you don't find is the National Association of Black Atheists.

But again, this is something that you only would know and understand if in fact you study the history. Right? And that history then allows us to understand the way in which we need to interact with people and how people move through the world.

And so as I close, I challenge us not just to look at the famous names and places of people -- certainly people like Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman, Nat Turner, Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, Medgar Evers, Marcus Mosiah Garvey, Honorable Elijah Muhammad, Martin Luther King, Ralph Abernathy, Stokely Carmichael. Not only are these names important, just as individual heroes and sheroes of African-American movement, but to really understand the context in

which African-Americans have moved and how they have contributed to the larger society.

Certainly people like the first African-American president are critical for us to understand. But even he comes out of -- you know, one of the big debates was about his church upbringing. Which was critical for him, because he needed to in fact give the signal to African-Americans that, look, I'm one of y'all. I'm one of y'all. Right?

And so this becomes, I think, an opportunity, a jumping-off point. This shouldn't be the end of our conversation about African-American history, but this month should become the jumping-off point from which we integrate African-American history and understanding throughout the year. Which then also allows us to add other people's understanding to the conversation. And that's what becomes the beauty and really the strength of America.

So despite what we see, you know, coming out of Washington, really the strength of America, or what Senator Sanders calls this great American experiment, is about the strength in our

diversity. Right? The fact that we are stronger together. And that by working together, we can go further. They say the -- let me end with this African proverb. If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.

Thank you, Mr. President.

(Applause.)

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: A brief announcement. There will be an Investigations Committee Meeting immediately following session, instead of the original scheduled time, in the LOB in Room 816. And that's again the Investigations Committee.

With that, Senator Hamilton.

SENATOR HAMILTON: Mr. President, I rise for Black History Month. And I welcome all the young boys and girls in the gallery for being here, up in Albany, in the Senate chambers.

And I just wanted to follow up with Senator Parker and follow up with Senator Larkin. And Senator Larkin asked us, what are we doing about black history? What are we doing to make America great?

And so I -- in Albany, a young lady came to my office and she said, "Senator

Hamilton, how come in school the only thing we learn about black history is slavery, Martin Luther King, Frederick Douglass, and Harriet Tubman?" And I said to myself, you know, why are we only teaching a limited amount of facts of what African-Americans have contributed to America?

And then I had some young ladies come for a hackathon from Brownsville to Medgar Evers College, and they came to Medgar Evers College, and I asked them, "Do you know where you're at?" And they said, "We're at Medgar Evers College." And then I asked the young ladies, "Do you know who Medgar Evers was?" And none of them could mention Medgar Evers' name.

And through that, I said black history should not be only once a month, the shortest month of the year, but black history should be taught in our classes from kindergarten through high school.

And so when Senator Larkin asked what are we doing to make America better, what we can do is incorporate the accomplishments of African-Americans in our schoolbooks so our young boys and girls can see positive images of

themselves when they go to school.

So I plead upon my colleagues in the Senate that when this bill comes up to introduce African-American history not just one day, one month out of the year, but all through the school year from kindergarten through 12th grade, we can incorporate what we've done in math, in science, literature, like Langston Hughes.

So we have contributed so much, but for some reason black history is excluded from the history of our state and of our country. So I plead upon everybody and my Senators to vote on the bill that will include black history in our curriculum and have more diversity in how we teach each other, and to make this country a better country where we're all working together peacefully rather than working apart.

Thank you everyone, and thank you for everybody coming here today. Thank you, take care.

(Applause.)

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: No other members wishing to be heard? Okay.

Okay. The question now is on the resolution. All in favor please signify by

saying aye.

(Response of "Aye.")

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Opposed, nay.

(No response.)

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: The resolution is adopted.

Senator Stewart-Cousins has agreed to open this resolution up for cosponsorship. If a member would like to be a cosponsor, they should notify the desk.

Senator Funke.

SENATOR FUNKE: Mr. President, we have several groups in the gallery that we want to recognize today, including some important youth groups that are here. Would you call on Senator Akshar for that.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Senator Akshar for purposes of an introduction.

SENATOR AKSHAR: Mr. President, thank you very much for your indulgence.

It is certainly a busy day here in this chamber, but nonetheless it's a great day. I'm reminded, by the conversations that we're having down here on the floor, how incredibly

blessed I am to be serving in this great house.

It's a great day for our young people to be in this chamber. We are talking about and celebrating Fort Drum, Black History Month. We're talking about history, we're talking about service, talking about diversity. And you can feel the passion regardless of what people are talking about.

And today I'm standing up to acknowledge a group of young people who have a great deal of passion in everything that they do. Mr. President, we have with us the New York State Reality Check Regional Youth Advocates of the Year.

And Reality Check, as many of us know in this room, is a youth action program that is funded by the New York State Department of Health, Bureau of Tobacco Control. And they aim to decrease tobacco use in youth and protect our youth from exposure to tobacco marketing.

Smoking costs the taxpayers of this state nearly $10.4 billion a year. Of course we know how big the budget is, but I'm not here to acknowledge budget deficits or talk about numbers today, I am here to talk about the good work that

all of our young people are doing.

And I want to acknowledge them because I'm proud of the work that they are doing in their respective communities, specifically in Senate District 52 and throughout this great state. So if you'll indulge me, I want to give a brief shout-out. And I'll ask you to stand if you're in the audience, of course.

The Capital Region Youth Advocate, Mikhail Hailu -- if I didn't say that right, I apologize -- Schuylerville Central School. The Western Region Youth Advocate, Zoe Kaminski, Depew High School. Morrow Region Youth Advocate of the Year Ryan Minard, Wallkill Senior High School. And finally, the Central Region Youth Advocate of the Year, Jacob Brady, from Johnson City High School, repping SD 52 like a champ. Thank you, I'm glad to see you're doing well.

Let me just talk about Jacob if I may, very briefly. All of the young people who are standing -- and Senator Funke I know is going to acknowledge others -- are incredibly talented, they're passionate, they're motivated young people. And Jacob, I just want to acknowledge your good work back home in Senate District 52.

You have engaged local community leaders, which is not always an easy thing to do, especially when you're a young person. To my understanding, you didn't shy away from the news media either, which isn't always our friend, of course. I'm glad you took the message right to the media and you made sure that they understood what you stood for.

And thanks to your good work, it's my understanding that the mayor in Johnson City has listened to you, and he's currently working with the village board and they're exploring licensing tobacco retailers.

I also want to give a shout-out to Keonna Browne -- Keonna, stand up -- statewide Honorable Mention Youth Advocate from Binghamton High School, doing remarkable work.

So I want to thank all of you for the work that you're doing. I want to thank the advocates that are with you.

I tell young people all the time when I'm back at home, you can do anything you want in life, you can accomplish whatever it is -- and this is for all of the young people that are in the chamber today -- if you do two

things. If you work hard and you dream big, you can accomplish whatever it is that you set out to do.

I would argue that you're already doing those things. You're already working incredibly hard and you're dreaming big because you are incredibly successful.

So our future is in good hands because of the hard work that all of you young people are doing. And please know that you always have the support of Team Akshar.

Mr. President, thank you for your indulgence.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Not at all, we are -- oh, Senator Funke.

SENATOR FUNKE: Thank you, Mr. President. I wanted to take the opportunity to recognize Lauren Sibel, a senior at Pittsford Sutherland High School, on her outstanding achievement in being awarded Reality Check of New York's Youth Advocate of the Year Award for her outstanding advocacy on the numerous and deadly effects of tobacco use.

Due to Lauren's advocacy efforts over the three years that she was involved in the

Monroe County Reality Check program, the program has seen outstanding growth and great success. Monroe County is truly lucky to have you, Lauren, and we thank you for being here today and we thank all of the advocates for being with us today.

And perhaps they could stand, Mr. President.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: On behalf of the Senate, we are very proud to be honoring today Reality check and all of the youth advocates, their volunteers and chaperones and faculty who make this possible. We'd ask you all to please stand and be recognized by this body.

(Standing ovation.)

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Senator Funke.

SENATOR FUNKE: Mr. President, would you now call on Senator Gianaris to introduce a group in the gallery.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Senator Gianaris, for purposes of an introduction.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Thank you, Mr. President.

There's been numerous references

this session to the young people who are in our gallery, and I want to thank them for their patience. They've seen a number of remarks and legislative activity today, and they're here to learn.

I have a group from Western Queens here called the Growing Up Green Middle School. They come here every year. They are a great part of Western Queens, and a school that hasn't been around for too many years -- we were there at its opening. But they're doing terrific work, and their student government is here to watch us work today. In fact, I think one of them chose to vote on the last resolution when you asked who was in favor.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR GIANARIS: So they're getting ready.

But I do want to acknowledge their presence here. We have the entire student government here, but particularly I want to call out President Piyush Barua, Secretary Megan Tehomilic, 8th Grade Rep Elly Tuffy, 7th Grade Rep Dina O'Leary. Alex Gobright is the teacher and staff sponsor for the student government,

who's also come with them. And of course my good friend Erin Acosta, who is the community and family engagement coordinator. And they're also joined by several of their parents as well as other students.

So, Mr. President, if you would extend the courtesies of the house to them and welcome them once again here to the Senate chamber, I would appreciate it.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: We would like to extend our congratulations to all of the individuals who have come from Growing Up Green Middle School, students from student government. We extend to you the privileges and courtesies of the house -- oh, there you are, sorry. And we would ask that you all please stand so that this body may acknowledge you.

(Applause.)

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Senator Funke.

SENATOR FUNKE: Mr. President, can we take up previously adopted Resolution Number 3374, by Senator Ritchie, read the title only, and then call on myself to speak about that. Thank you.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Legislative Resolution Number 3374, by Senator Ritchie, memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim February 17-24, 2018, as FFA Week in the State of New York.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Senator Funke.

SENATOR FUNKE: Mr. President, I rise today to recognize not only FFA Week but also to welcome guests from FFA chapters from across the state.

We all know that farmers have one of the hardest jobs there is, working from sunup till sundown growing fresh healthy food that feeds people from across the globe.

My dad was a vegetable farmer, so I can attest to what it's like to do the weeding and the watering and the picking. That's why I find it so admirable that these young people who are visiting us today have decided to be part of New York State's leading industry.

The skills these students are developing through FFA are helping them not only

to learn about farming, but also to learn about being leaders. And when you meet these young people, they are so incredibly impressive.

As a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I am proud to work with Chairwoman Ritchie and my colleagues to encourage young people to join the ranks of our hardworking farmers. And I know that because of their hard work and interest in farming, the future of this industry in New York State is in good hands.

The theme of this year's FFA Week is "I can, we will." I'd like to thank the students here today and all of those who are part of FFA across the state for their desire to be part of the changing face of agriculture, and for being a key part of making sure that this industry remains vibrant for many years to come.

You can, and you will. And we need to do our part in the Legislature as well.

Thank you, Mr. President.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Senator Golden on the resolution.

SENATOR GOLDEN: Thank you, Mr. President.

I rise and I look up into the

gallery and I see so many young minds that are sitting up there observing all of our statesmen today, whether it was on Black History Month, with Senator Stewart-Cousins and Senator Larkin, and of course Camp Drum Day, our military and the great work that they do, not just for our state but for our nation and for the world.

And of course I have a great school up there from Brooklyn, we have a charter school up there, the Hellenic Classical Charter School in Brooklyn. Christina Tettonis is the principal, and Mrs. Kapetanakis is the leading, I guess, principal as well for the Hellenic School.

Give these kids a round of applause, ladies and gentlemen, for their great work in being here today and observing our statesmen and observing what's going on here, as well as our farmers.

I've got to tell you, I shook your hands downstairs, I've seen the future of this great state and the future of our country coming into the 21st century. You are going to lead that great economics that we will have here, the the driving economics from farming that you will bring to it.

And I'm impressed when I talk to each and every one of you. From our Hellenic School here in Brooklyn to our farmers across our great state, I am impressed with all of these young minds. And we have more young minds up here. Stand up, all you farmers. Get up there, all these farmers. Up, up, up, up, up, up, up. Come on. The Future Farmers of America.

Give it up for our charter school, give it up for our Future Farmers of America, ladies and gentlemen, up behind us here as well.

(Standing ovation.)

SENATOR GOLDEN: Thank you, God bless you, and keep up your great work. You're learning a lot here today. You see what a great state we live in, and you're going to make it that much better a place to live, to raise a family, and to stay in this great, great state.

Thank you, and God bless you.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Senator Funke.

SENATOR FUNKE: Mr. President, can we now take up the noncontroversial reading of the calendar.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: First, the

resolution, having been previously adopted, is open for cosponsorship. If you would like to be a cosponsor, please notify the desk.

The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 20, by Senator Peralta, Senate Print 7292, an act to amend a chapter of the Laws of 2017.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 2. This act shall take effect on the same date and in the same manner as a chapter of the Laws of 2017.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 60.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 27, by Senator LaValle, Senate Print 7299, an act to amend the New York State Urban Development Corporation Act.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 6. This

act shall take effect on the same date and in the same manner as a chapter of the Laws of 2017.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Senator Sanders to explain his vote.

SENATOR SANDERS: Thank you, Mr. President.

I am not clear on why we need to put this -- we all voted, we said this was a good thing, we said that we will have regional revolving loan funds. And I have no idea why we are putting this off.

The need for the funds is there. I suspect that the state has the money for the funds. If that's the case, need and the money, let's put the money out.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Senator Sanders will be recorded in the negative.

Announce the result.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 59. Nays, 1. Senator Sanders recorded in the negative.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: The bill

is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 84, by Senator Funke, Senate Print 839, an act to amend the Agriculture and Markets Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 3. This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 60.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 141, by Senator Marchione, Senate Print 1048, an act to amend the Highway Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 3. This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 60.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 153, by Senator Croci, Senate Print 945, an act to amend the Public Health Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 3. This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 60.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 178, by Senator Griffo, Senate Print 2421, an act to amend the Banking Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 4. This act shall take effect on the first of November.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Senator Kavanagh to explain his vote.

SENATOR KAVANAGH: Thank you, Mr. President.

I commend the intent of the sponsor of this bill to ensure that certain situations where somebody is attempting to rob a financial institution may be threatening violence but not actually displaying a weapon, that that crime be treated in a manner similar to other Class E felonies.

However, I believe this bill goes too far in that direction by essentially making it a Class E felony if you steal the property that is owned by any banking institution or credit union. It does not seem to restrict itself to a situation where there's a threat of violence.

It does not even seem to restrict itself to what we typically think of as a bank robbery. It seems to me that under this bill it would be a Class E felony to steal a pencil or a chair from a banking institution.

So while I applaud the sponsor for the effort, and the Credit Union Association --

some of my favorite institutions in my own district are credit unions -- I think this bill is off the mark, and I'll be voting no.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Senator Kavanagh to be recorded in the negative.

Announce the result.

THE SECRETARY: In relation to Calendar 178, those recorded in the negative are Senators Comrie, Hoylman, Kavanagh, Montgomery and Sanders.

Ayes, 55. Nays, 5.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 187, by Senator Felder, Senate Print 3241, an act to amend the General City Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 60.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: The bill

is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 193, by Senator Larkin, Senate Print 2387, Concurrent Resolution of the Senate and Assembly.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Please call the roll on the resolution.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 60.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: The resolution is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 195, by Senator Helming, Senate Print 4539, an act to amend the Real Property Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 60.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 206, by Senator Valesky, Senate Print 1860, an

act to amend the Canal Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 3. This act shall take effect on the 180th day.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 60.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 208, by Senator Griffo, Senate Print 2539, an act to amend the Vehicle and Traffic Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 2. This act shall take effect on the 90th day.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 60.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number

210, by Senator O'Mara, Senate Print 4086A, an act to amend the Vehicle and Traffic Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 60.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: The bill is passed.

Senator Funke, that completes the reading of the noncontroversial calendar.

SENATOR FUNKE: Mr. President, one more reminder. Investigations is going to meet following session in Room 816 in the Legislative Office Building.

Is there any further business at the desk?

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: There is no further business before the desk.

SENATOR FUNKE: I move we adjourn until Monday, February 12th, at 3:00 p.m., intervening days being legislative days.

ACTING PRESIDENT CROCI: On motion, the Senate stands adjourned until Monday, February 12th, at 3:00 p.m., intervening days being legislative days.

(Whereupon, at 1:27 p.m., the Senate adjourned.)