NEW YORK STATE SENATE

THE STENOGRAPHIC RECORD

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REGULAR SESSION

SENATOR BRIAN A. BENJAMIN, Acting President

ALEJANDRA N. PAULINO, ESQ., Secretary

P R O C E E D I N G S

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: The Senate will come to order.

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

Color Guard, parade the colors.

(Whereupon, the 10th Mountain Division Color Guard entered the chamber through the rear doors and proceeded to the center of the chamber, presenting the colors.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: Everyone present, please join us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

(Whereupon, the assemblage recited the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: Color Guard, retire the colors.

(Whereupon, the Color Guard lowered the colors and marched to the rear doors, exiting the chamber.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: Chaplain Lieutenant Colonel James Foster, the Army Chaplain from the 10th Mountain Division, will provide today's invocation.

CHAPLAIN FOSTER: Thank you for

joining me in prayer.

Almighty God, today as we come together here and stop for just a moment, remind us of who we are and from where we come. Help us to remember that we are encouraged to give of ourselves rather than take from those around us.

Especially for those of us in this room, Father, who are called to serve rather than to be served, may we ever be examples of the virtues we hope are evident in the lives of those we lead.

You are the very source of righteousness and justice, and You give to us so freely and graciously. So teach us through the power of Your spirit to make wise decisions, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before You and the people we are blessed to defend in word and deed.

And now may the peace that passes all understanding be ours as You guide our hearts and minds. In that precious holy name I pray, amen.

(Response of "Amen.")

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: The reading of the Journal.

THE SECRETARY: In Senate, Tuesday,

February 25, 2020, the Senate met pursuant to adjournment. The Journal of Monday, February 24, 2020, was read and approved. On motion, Senate adjourned.

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

Presentation of petitions.

Messages from the Assembly.

The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Senator Benjamin moves to discharge, from the Committee on Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs, Assembly Bill Number 8094A and substitute it for the identical Senate Bill 6706A, Third Reading Calendar 400.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: The substitution is so ordered.

THE SECRETARY: Senator Hoylman moves to discharge, from the Committee on Health, Assembly Bill Number 9530 and substitute it for the identical Senate Bill 7304, Third Reading Calendar 423.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: The substitution is so ordered.

THE SECRETARY: Senator Kennedy

moves to discharge, from the Committee on Health, Assembly Bill Number 7915A and substitute it for the identical Senate Bill 7318, Third Reading Calendar 424.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: The substitution is so ordered.

Messages from the Governor.

Reports of standing committees.

Reports of select committees.

Communications and reports from state officers.

Motions and resolutions.

Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Thank you, Mr. President.

At this time can we please take up previously adopted Resolution 2869, by Senator Brooks, have that resolution read in its entirety, and recognize Leader Stewart-Cousins on the resolution.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Senate Resolution 2869, by Senator Brooks, memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim February 26, 2020, 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 more than three decades, 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, Members of the 10th Mountain Division have 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 selflessly made the ultimate sacrifice while dedicating themselves to the cause of defeating global terrorism; and

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

"WHEREAS, Four heroes serving with the 10th Mountain Division, Private First Class John D. Magrath, Sergeant First Class Jared C. Monti, Captain William D. Swenson, and Staff

Sergeant Travis W. Atkins, have received our military's highest honor, the Medal of Honor; and

"WHEREAS, In addition to its vital role in our nation's defense, Fort Drum is also the largest employer in Northern New York, the state's largest single-site employer, and an economic engine for the state and region, with a total impact of $1.9 billion; and

"WHEREAS, Between the Fort Drum and civilian communities exists a special bond and the 33,000 soldiers and family members of the installation are an integral part of the North Country who not only are considered defenders of our freedom, but also our 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 New York State; and

"WHEREAS, For the past nine 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 a 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 26, 2020, 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 Brian J. Mennes, Commanding General, 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum."

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: Leader Stewart-Cousins on the resolution.

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: Thank you, Mr. President.

And first I want to thank Senator

Brooks for this resolution -- Senator Brooks is the chair of our Homeland Security and Veterans Committee -- and just thank you for giving us an opportunity to once again, in this ninth year, to honor Fort Drum and the incredible servicemen and women who continue to bring us such great pride and such great strength.

I want to particularly thank Major General Brian Mennes, who I had the opportunity to meet last year, and we talked a lot about just our roles and such great respect for this body, for being able to carry out what it is we believe that we are doing here. And to have a mutual understanding of how our democracy works and how it is protected by you and people like you has just been an incredible privilege for me.

This year, Major General Mennes is joined by his wife Kellie, who -- we welcome you as well, Kellie -- and also Sergeant Major Jason Roark and his wife Deanna.

I especially wanted to tell people that the major general is going to be deployed to Afghanistan. He gave me his personal coin -- he's been all over, and I treasure that coin, I

will treasure it. And in April he'll be on his way for an undetermined amount of time to Afghanistan.

So once again, as we do what we do here, we are cognizant of how you are protecting our nation and our right to stand here and honor you.

So thank you once again for gracing us. We do a lot of things here, and as Majority Leader for the past year and a half, this is the second time I've had a chance to host you. And I will say that it is one of the high privileges that has come with this particular role.

I also want to thank Senator Ritchie, because this is your district and -- you know, in terms of helping us coordinate this day.

And of course all of the amenities of the house are open to you, today and always. And Godspeed, and thank you. Thank you for your patriotism, for your dedication, and for your love of country and your fellow man.

Thank you.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: Senator Brooks on the resolution.

SENATOR BROOKS: Thank you,

Mr. President.

What we'd like to do a little bit today is walk you through a little history of the fort. I'm going to take it to a certain point of time, and Senator Ritchie is going to take it up to today.

The area surrounding Fort Drum has a long history, military history in the United States. During the Civil War and through the early 1800s it served, with a number of forts in the area, to protect the country from a potential invasion from the British. As you know, Canada is part of Britain. And back at the American Revolution we were part of Britain too, working our way through it.

As the base continued to be used, the United States recognized that there was a need for training troops to prepare for activities out there. The post was expanded. There was some property in the area selected to serve in that training area. At the time the property that was selected, the area became known as -- I'm sorry -- Pine Camp. And from that facility, there was a continuation of expansion of the base with the objective of eventually

expanding the post.

Over a period of time, Fort Drum continued to grow in its operation -- the training that was being done, the types of troops that were put in there. I had an opportunity in my military service to serve at that camp from 1971 to 1976. I served as a medic in an armored division in the National Guard. We were up there each summer for two weeks for military maneuvers. It was a very different post than it is today.

It was -- we spent most of our time out in the fields on the maneuvers. If you know anything about an armored division, it's a dangerous unit to work with. Injuries are common. Tanks and APCs are not too forgiving when you fall or bang into them.

From a medical standpoint, you know, I had an opportunity with the general today to take a look at the bag of a medic assigned to the post now, compared to what we had years ago. And I thought back to a time -- unfortunately, when we were down there during the summers, often people got injured. And I recall a time when we had a troop brought into the aid station that we had who had had the hatch of a tank come down and

open up a pretty good wound in his head.

I was in the aid station with our patrol leader, who was an outstanding medic who served in World War II and served with General Patton. And as we were looking at the individual and assessing the injuries, it was clear the individual was going to need stitches. And this was back in the '70s, so we cleaned him up, we numbed him up. He was quite nervous and upset. We're out in the woods going to have his head stitched.

And as I recall, I gave him four stitches. He was nervous, and he says, "That was pretty good." He says, "You do that a lot?" So I looked and I said, "You're it," and he passed out.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR BROOKS: So that told you the way things were.

But today, as we went through the equipment that the medics have today, and understanding the changes in the post and the fort that's there today, just how far our military has gone in the operation that we have here. Just how prepared our units are. And the

general pointed out the one thing the Army has always been is out front when it came to medical care.

Recognize that we're preparing generally, with medics, for a combat situation, when you're going to see significant wounds and you have limited time to address those wounds. In the time that I was trained down in Texas, that was during the height of the Vietnam War. And the training we gave then or we got then was the best you could have. And you were trained to deal with horrific incidents.

What I saw today in the bag of the medic is just how far the Army has come, the advancements that they have made. And I think the fort itself today reflects that advancement.

So Senator Ritchie is going to take you through the rest of the way. I left the fort for the last time in 1976, and Patty's going to take it the rest of the way to today.

Thank you.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: Senator Ritchie on the resolution.

SENATOR RITCHIE: Thank you, Mr. President.

It's my honor to stand and recognize Major General Mennes and the soldiers and officers of the 10th Mountain Division in Fort Drum, which is located in my district in Northern New York.

Our 10th Mountain Division is America's front line in the battle to protect our freedom. The most deployed division in the U.S. Army over the past two decades, these men and women are the best trained and the best motivated, always ready to go where our country needs them.

I know it's not always common for many to see men and women in uniform living in their communities, as I do back home. So I'm pleased to have the opportunity each year to share these soldiers with all of you and help tell their story.

If Fort Drum were a city, it would be the seventh largest in our state, ranked just after Albany, contributing more than 1.4 billion to our local and regional state economy. But Fort Drum is not a city. Unique among military installations across the country, Fort Drum was designed to be closely integrated into our

community. Soldiers and their families use our schools, our hospitals, our parks, our shopping centers, and our restaurants. And the federal and state investments in Fort Drum help sustain and improve these services and facilities and improve the quality of life for everyone who lives in the North Country.

The Army calls Fort Drum its best-kept secret. Fort Drum Day helps us shine a light on this remarkable place and also the remarkable men and women who serve there, like Major General Mennes. A native New Yorker from Amherst, General Mennes' service has taken him from West Point to Panama, Korea, Afghanistan and Iraq.

General, we are proud and grateful for your service and we are proud and grateful for the service of all our soldiers who are here today.

I would also like to take a moment to acknowledge the general's high school sweetheart is here, his wife Kellie. Thank you for your sacrifice as well.

We also have several native New Yorkers who are in the gallery: Captain Sean

Lewandowski, from Syracuse; Corporal John Cooper, from Wheatfield; and I have to give a special shout out to my own soldier from Fulton, New York, Captain Trevor Trovato. He's from Fulton, though Senator Gallivan and I have been fighting over you, because his wife was from his district. So we're going to share you, we agreed.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR RITCHIE: I'd like to take a moment to recognize one other soldier with us, Command Sergeant Major Roark, who is the highest ranking enlisted soldier at Fort Drum and has been our guest at Fort Drum Day for the last several years.

The command sergeant major is leaving the post in a few short weeks for his next assignment, and I want to wish you and your wife Deanna Godspeed and best of luck.

In closing, I want to say thank you to Senator Brooks for cohosting Fort Drum with me. He has been a great partner, and it's been a pleasure to work with you on planning this day.

And I also want to thank Leader Stewart-Cousins for continuing this tradition and

allowing us to bring these amazing soldiers and their families here.

Thank you, Mr. President.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: Senators and ladies and gentlemen, it is my honor to introduce to you the Commanding General of the 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum, Major General Brian Mennes.

(Standing ovation.)

MAJOR GENERAL MENNES: Thank you. Really, thank you for this warm welcome, this opportunity annually to, as much as anything, I think, celebrate this great democracy.

You know, both Senators Brooks and Ritchie, you know, I know there's no one that I know that loves soldiers more than me -- except for maybe Senator Ritchie and people like you.

Also, you know, Leader Stewart-Cousins, you're gracious, you're kind. I really -- I know how busy you are, I appreciate the time, the visit with you. Leader Flanagan, it's just awesome to be in your presence.

I like studying what you do, frankly, because I think it's important that Americans understand how our civics work. But,

you know, I'm just overly impressed with America's ability to still subordinate guys like me to you so that we're doing your bidding.

I want to recognize those heroes like Ortt and Sanders and Blankenbush and Walczyk also have served, so I really recognize all the service that's been provided from them.

It was really cool, I always -- as I talk to my soldiers about what's good in life and, you know, accolades you receive -- you know, the Sergeant Major and I were talking about it fairly recently. I told a subordinate that probably the best thing that's ever happened to me is someone sort of just outside my earshot said, Yeah, Mennes, he's a good dude.

(Laughter.)

MAJOR GENERAL MENNES: I think that's really, really powerful. Well, again, Rob Ortt, Cooper's father said that you're a good dude.

(Laughter.)

MAJOR GENERAL MENNES: So that's really powerful. So thanks for what you do. And that was high praise, I think, so good on you also.

You know, I'm really tickled pink to get a chance to know, you know, Senator Higgins. And so the New York, the Buffalo folks here, you know, we talk about the Sabres and the Bills. You can't do that with a smile on your face too often, so when you talk about the Sabres and Bills with company, it's fun to do.

But really, I'm impressed by your show of affection for us. I think that's really important. You know, with that great history we have of being, you know, New York's division, you know, we're one of 10 in your Army. Which is by far, you know, a very narrow, maybe, perspective. But, you know, the best fighting force the globe's ever seen, and one of our divisions is in this state.

And I think that's really important, that history that we heard discussed of why it's here. The state sold out, you know, eminent domain, we took back some space from folks, tried to gingerly move them out. But we've been training up there. There are 19,500 of us there. There's 27,000 family members. We employ 2500 civilians. So, you know, that city is very vibrant.

We, as Senator Ritchie said, you know, have been the most deployed division in the Army. We certainly think that because of that, it's a great place to come if you want to, you know, be on the cutting edge of defending your country. But we know it comes with a lot of personal turbulence and optempo. This unit's been deployed 12 times to Iraq, 34 times to Afghanistan. Just had a unit come back from Europe this week. I've got folks in Syria, Bosnia, Iraq -- you know, I'm just in my head of where everybody is right now.

Our aviation brigade deployed this year, they're in about Month 5. They support activities in Afghanistan, Darrell Doremus and his great team. If there's anything still dangerous in Afghanistan -- I just got back from there with Sergeant Major Roark a couple of weeks ago. If there's anything still dangerous, it's flying helicopters. You know, guys getting shot at daily.

And I -- I think -- I'm not -- I'm always mixed on whether, you know, America is paying attention to that. You know, I lost a -- we lost a kid -- a soldier, excuse me, two weeks

ago. And it sort of just happens and, you know, we don't -- you know, because you guys are supporting us so well, we're going to support those families as best we can and care for his friends. But I'm mixed on whether, you know, it's a good thing that we're out there doing our business and, you know, we're just getting after it without a lot of fanfare.

I think it's actually a fairly good thing that you trust us to get after it, that if we do lose a soldier, you know, you're expecting that hopefully Jason, Avat and I have done everything we can to make sure that didn't happen.

But I want you to know that your friends and cousins and loved ones are still out there taking risks on behalf of us. What I owe you is making sure that risk is well measured and that the people are well led. But Sergeant Major brought it to my attention that that optempo is not only when we're deployed, it's when we're home.

So Jason and I were out last night, I left the field in sort of tough conditions. Believe it or not, it's even warm, but when it's

warm, I got water on the ground so my guys -- we know, we had a guy with wet feet that probably shouldn't have yesterday.

So I've got 4,000 people out there right now learning to fight. And that's away from home. And they're -- they're -- you know, they're sleeping very seldomly and they're fighting cold and we've got people trying to hunt them. And so they've got to bond with their friends and they've got to grow as people. And that is really important, but that's hard work.

So not only do the soldiers, you know, pay a burden on their personal time, like these cats up here who are all -- three of the four are leaving for Afghanistan like in a week and a half, right? You know, they had to train a lot to get there. So nights away from home, countless nights away from dinner and nights away from baseball games with your -- watching your kids are numerous.

Our First Brigade, Sergeant Major again recognized, you know, some significance. Yesterday we rolled up their colors -- which I really love in this building, you've got a great display of regimental colors that are there. And

traditionally when a regiment stands down because we've used them, and back to the day when we were volunteers, we'd case those colors and we'd put them away hoping we'd never use them again. Because using them meant you had to go fight somebody.

Well, we still carry on that tradition. We just cased colors from our First Brigade, and they'll uncase them in Afghanistan. But that was America's first brigade in combat, the first brigade in combat in 2001.

And, you know, he brought that to our attention, those young people, many of whom have not been deployed -- as a matter of fact, a great majority of them had not been deployed. You know, the significance of that, where as I discussed further, that's just the business of your American Army today.

So with that, you know, I boast -- and Sergeant Major and I debate about this all the time, who has the best job in America? I'm convinced it's me. And I'm in charge, so it is me.

(Laughter.)

MAJOR GENERAL MENNES: But we

debate that because we get to work with America's treasures, your kids. And despite all that optempo, I was talking to folks today, we try desperately to make being in your Army a great place to grow as a person.

And hopefully you'll lead us with better leadership skills and management skills, grow -- you know, there's three things the Sergeant Major and I ask of people, is to be ridiculous at the skill that we trained you to be, because that's important to be a great teammate. To be really fit, because you've got to be fit to play this combat sport that we're in. And lastly, it's to grow as a person of honor.

And we spend a lot of time on that last piece, because we know how important it is to that team and how important it is to you that I help the person you send me become something that he or she wants to be.

So we'll try desperately to do all that. But I think what's really important is the community that supports that. So all the high-speed stuff that I'm talking about is better enabled when I have great community to support my

families.

Those two spouses down there and the spouses of other -- you know, these folks here, are volunteers that work for us to help bond this great network of community to my soldiers. And so we can only get after and keep this Army healthy with that high optempo if we have great community support from my family and the kids feel well cared for at home.

And that's a very significant part of what you guys do. Our North Country, we boast on them, they're recognized as the -- you know, one of the best communities in America. The title officially is, you know, they're the 2019 Great American Defense Community. There's only five in the country. We're one of them. And so it's representative of what your care, extended through them, provides us.

So lastly, you know, I just want to say thanks. I work with an amazing number of awesome people, some of them New Yorkers. I've got a Specialist Humbert {ph} from Rose, New York. He's a 21-year-old that just joined us fairly recently. Great high school person. He's one of our guys who works in my logistics

elements. But this cat, you know, he works hard all week and he goes home and he volunteers with the community. He's had -- I mean, they told me the other day, 700 hours as a volunteer firefighter with the local fire department. And he has great joy -- when I ask him why he does it, he goes, "Hey, sir, they support us. I got time, I want to support them."

And, you know, again, I think it's the extension of the love that you guys, you know, send through you to our community that I think helps enable that. So I really want to thank you personally. It makes my job not only easier, if that's possible, but also enjoyable.

And so again, we really thank you for what you do. We thank you for all the support. We thank you for contributing to the health of this great nation. There's no other spot on the earth that any of us would rather live, right?

And despite our differences, I'm always buoyed by the enthusiasm I see to support this nation's flag and all it means. So thank you for that.

And again, thank you for our

opportunity here. God bless you, this great nation, and your United States Army.

Thank you very much.

(Extended standing ovation.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: Senator Ortt on the resolution.

SENATOR ORTT: Thank you, Mr. President.

I will be -- I'll be brief. But I wanted to certainly thank Leader Stewart-Cousins, Minority Leader Flanagan. I want to thank my colleague and chair of the Veterans Committee here in the Senate, Senator Brooks, and of course Senator Ritchie, who has hosted Fort Drum and who has the privilege and honor of having many of these folks as her constituents.

And that is a special privilege. We all have special parts of our district. She gets to call Fort Drum -- that's in her district. That's pretty awesome. You can see why, you can see why today. So today we'd all like to be Patty Ritchie.

But, Mr. President, you know, Senator Ritchie and Senator Brooks talked about the history and the economic impact to New York

State and to your district. I want to focus on the human capital that is at Fort Drum, the -- our most precious natural resource, which are the people who wear the uniform.

And as the Command Sergeant Major said earlier today, usually when people come to the 10th Mountain, they do 36 months. And for those 36 months, wherever they may be from, they are New Yorkers. And for those 36 months that they are here, let's call it what it is, they are here training to go and fight America's enemies. And when they're not training, they're actually fighting America's enemies. Those are the two things you do when you're part of the 10th Mountain. And for those 36 months, we call them New Yorkers and they call New York home.

But I could not be more proud -- you heard the General speak. He's a native New Yorker. He's from Amherst, New York, just outside my district and Senator Ranzenhofer's district. Hearing him speak and hearing his bio -- and for those that don't know, you see on his chest he's got a lot of what to civilians might look like fancy decorations. But I can tell you, all those things mean something. And

to someone who's served, it means that he knows what the hell he's talking about. And it means that anything he asks of his soldiers, he has done himself, and maybe done more. And probably done better.

And so I could not be more proud, not only that he's leading the 10th Mountain but that he is a native New Yorker and that he is leading our most precious resource. That's a major general. You can see why there's not a lot of major generals, because when you're going up against a General Mennes to get the spot, there's probably not anyone better.

And so, General, we're certainly honored to have you here again. We're honored to have you leading the best America has to offer.

The Command Sergeant Major, I want to thank him as well. As the General knows, every good officer knows, you listen to your sergeants, listen to your noncommissioned officers, and you'll be all right. I have no doubt the General listens to the CSM and has hopefully most of the time, CSM -- maybe not all the time but most of the time.

And they're both here with their

wives because, as anyone who's ever served knows, you don't do it alone. You know, when you deploy multiple times, your wife or your family deploys with you.

And so I want to thank them for their support of these brave soldiers and for their support of the spouses of the soldiers that they lead, through the family readiness group and through other volunteer organizations on Fort Drum.

And I will just sum up by saying that a couple of days from now, some of the soldiers who are here today will be in harm's way. And I think that contrast is so -- so unbelievably humbling for all of us that, you know, they were out there in the cozy confines of the Concourse today and they were showing people their gear and some of their weapons systems, and it seemed pretty cool. Right? It was pretty neat. And most of them -- not all of them, but most of them probably couldn't have been more than 23 years old.

And it struck me a couple of days from now they're going to be in Afghanistan and they're going to be fighting America's enemies.

And it struck me that the greatest fighting force in the world is largely comprised of people who we would otherwise call kids. But don't let those smiles fool you. Don't let the acne fool you. Those kids are the best warriors in the world, because they're trained at places like Fort Drum to be the best in the world. Because they serve under men like General Mennes and Command Sergeant Major Schultz, to be the best in the world.

So thank you very much for what you do. I want to give a shout out to the soldiers who are in the gallery. Corporal Cooper, who I know is here from Wheatfield, in Niagara County, he is a sniper. I know some of you are thinking there must be something about snipers in Niagara County.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR ORTT: Sometimes I snipe in this chamber a little bit, right? But that's a different type of sniping.

But Corporal Cooper has gone through sniper school. He has been trained to be a sniper. That is a dangerous mission. And he'll be in Afghanistan bringing all those skills to

bear on behalf of democracy, on behalf of freedom, on behalf of liberty -- not only for us, but liberty and freedom for people in Afghanistan, people who otherwise have had not a lot of experience with things that we take for granted here.

We debate a lot of issues here on this floor. The men and women in that gallery and the men and women who you met today, they're going to go make it a reality. They're the ones who make it real because they're willing to put their lives on the line for it. And for that we should all be grateful. I know we all are grateful.

So, Mr. President, thank you for your indulgence.

God bless you, and God bless the United States Army.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: Senator Akshar on the resolution.

SENATOR AKSHAR: Mr. President, thank you.

I just want to take a moment, if I may, to welcome the General and the Sergeant Major and their wives and all their staffs here

to what is really a beautiful chamber. It's your house. It's certainly not ours, it's the people of this great state.

I was reminded today of just how great America is. I really -- I really was. And America is great not because of its elected officials, not because of its sports figures, not because of the singers or the actors -- it's because of the men and women of our military. That's why America is so great. And I can tell you unequivocally I've never, ever been prouder to be an American.

General, you said you wondered if America was watching, if America was paying attention. I promise you, she is watching and she is proud as hell of the work that you, your staff, and the folks at Fort Drum are doing.

Thank you, Senator Brooks, of course, for the resolution.

I do want to take a moment, though, and thank our colleague Senator Ritchie. Your passion and your love for Fort Drum and for the 10th Mountain Division is unparalleled. Nobody -- nobody could match that.

And General, I am telling you

Senator Ritchie would walk through hell with a smile on her face to protect the people of the 10th Mountain Division. You are incredibly lucky to have her representing Fort Drum and the 10th Mountain.

Mr. President, my prayer, of course, is that God will keep a watchful eye and keep His mighty and powerful hands on not only you, General, and your staff, but the young men and women who go into harm's way to keep America great.

Mr. President, thank you.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: Senator Helming on the resolution.

SENATOR HELMING: Thank you, Mr. President.

I rise today in support of this resolution. But more importantly, I rise to express my appreciation on behalf of the people of the 54th Senate District to all of those great folks, the soldiers and all of the servicemembers from Fort Drum and beyond.

General, I can't thank you enough for your tremendous service to this great country of ours and for your phenomenal leadership. From

the bottom of my heart, I thank you for everything you've done.

To your beautiful wife, thank you for being there. As a member of a military family, I can't say that I know that the sacrifices that you've made; I know only a small portion of them. But thank you for being there, for supporting not only your husband but all of those at Fort Drum.

And to the Command Sergeant Major, thank you for your service as well, and your leadership. And to your wife, thank you for being there. I wish you both a beautiful, beautiful retirement.

To our soldiers who are here with us today, thank you for your service. I wish you all of the best in your future endeavors. I wanted to give a special mention to PFC Jackson Lamme. It was great to see you today. I look forward to seeing you back in Canandaigua. In the meantime, much success to you, and climb to glory, sir.

Thank you.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: Senator Ranzenhofer on the resolution.

SENATOR RANZENHOFER: Thank you, Mr. President.

I'd also like to share a few thoughts on today and this very special day.

And thank you to Senator Brooks for the resolution. And I was interested to hear that you in a prior life spent some time at Fort Drum when you were in the service. My father spent some time at Fort Drum when he was in the Reserves. I shared that with the General today. He was not quite cut out for the military, but we'll leave that for another story.

But for years I would sit in this chamber and I would listen to other members stand up and talk about the men or the women that they had from their district that were here for Fort Drum Day.

And I wanted to digress for a second, because we heard how long Fort Drum has been around, but we didn't have a Fort Drum Day until Senator Ritchie introduced that when she came to the chamber. And I just think it's so very, very important that we have this very special day for the men and women that serve our nation and reside at Fort Drum.

Fort Drum courses through the veins of Senator Ritchie. I mean, this is a day when we -- which is spectacular and we're celebrating. But I -- in getting to know Senator Ritchie, it's 365 days a year. This is her life, this is her community. And thank you very much for bringing it to a culmination today.

So back to the point where I would listen to my fellow Senators stand up and talk about members from their community that were here and were visiting with us. Last year I was advised that, well, after eight years, there was finally somebody from my district, from my hometown that was here. So I was getting very excited to meet the young soldier who was going to be spending the day with us, and I found out that that young soldier was General Brian Mennes.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR RANZENHOFER: So I felt very honored that I went right to the top, we have the top guy from my district here. And in meeting Brian last year and meeting Brian and talking to Kellie earlier today at the luncheon, when his reference -- we were talking about the Bills and the Sabres. Some of it was

commiserating because the Sabres are not really doing so well, but we still enjoyed talking about it.

And the thing that I was struck in talking with the General and his wife is -- and you could hear it in the speech when, you know, he talked to us a little bit earlier, is -- and the men in the gallery, you know, I hope you can appreciate that -- but the emotion and the caring, as if he feels personally responsible for each and every serviceman and -woman under his command.

And this is not, you know, one of thousands, but every single individual is a human being, and he is deeply concerned and deeply, deeply cares, not about -- well, yes, about the whole global mission, but the safety and the security of each person and how it -- and their mental health and their family and to make sure that things are okay.

And I think that's where the "good dude" comes in that, yes, this guy -- this guy really cares about the men and women under his command.

So with a little bit of bragging

rights and pride, I do want to mention that both Brian and Kellie hail from the Town of Amherst. They went to Sweet Home High School, one of the high schools in my community, home of the Panthers. And their families still reside there, they go back and visit occasionally.

But I am so very proud to share and to be part of this day. This will be my last Fort Drum Day, so I'm very appreciative of Senator Ritchie and Senator Brooks for continuing this tradition. This is an important tradition, one which we should all honor, respect, and continue.

So thank you very much for allowing me to share a couple of my thoughts with my colleagues today.

Thank you, Mr. President.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: Senator Sanders on the resolution.

SENATOR SANDERS: Thank you, Mr. President.

I want to thank the sponsors, Senator Brooks, Senator Ritchie.

But if you'll allow me, Mr. President, I will say just a few words to our

guests. I'm going to tell you a Marine Corps secret. Now, it is rumored there is a rivalry between the Army and the Marine Corps. As both of us know, as all of us know, there's no truth to that whatsoever.

But I will tell you this. I will say that in the Marine Corps, if we find ourselves in places of difficulty and problems, as we usually do, we look for organizations like the 10th Mountain Division because we know that they have incredible training, incredible discipline, and they too believe in leaving nobody behind.

So I am here to commend you for you, Major General, and the Sergeant Major, for keeping up a tradition that goes back to the beginning of this nation. I'm here to tell my other colleagues about a wall -- not so much a wall being built on the border, but there is a wall between America and those who want to do harm to America. There is a wall. It's not made of bricks and stone, it's made of quiet foxholes, it's made of quiet places where no one is really around, and it's very lonely on that wall often.

And it takes a certain type of

person to stand on that wall. And the reason that they stand on the wall is so that we can have meetings like this, so that we can have conversations like this -- so that we can disagree. So that we can have real loud, noisy disagreements, as long as we remember that our children are on a wall somewhere and they have taken a position that anyone who wants to do danger to America, anybody who wants to hurt this country, has to come through them.

And that's the essence of all of this, that a person is just going up there and saying, You know what? I believe in it enough that if anybody wants to do harm, they've got to come through me first. And it's an individual thing, because we don't so much -- maybe we do it for God and country, but we certainly do it for the units that we're in. We certainly don't believe in letting down the units that we're in. One of the greatest things would be to let down our fellow out there -- nah, you can't come back here if that's the case.

So I just wanted to stop and take a moment to say that I understand and I really appreciate what you're doing, and be aware that

now that I find myself in such a great place -- and it's a great place -- that I hold my responsibility very high too, that we should have vigorous conversations, vigorous debates -- especially if we talk about sending our children into harm's way, let there be vigorous debates. Because the closer you've been to war, the more you want peace.

Those who have never been to war, they -- you know, those are those guys. But, but, but if the day comes when we need to, then let's pursue it and win it. And thank God we have groups like -- yes, I have to say it -- the 10th Mountain Division from the Army, and the Marine Corps and other great groups, to ensure that we can have these conversations. So we need to have a Marine Corps Day up here.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR SANDERS: But until we have that day, thank God we have the 10th Mountain Division and the good people, men and women, and their wives and their spouses, who uphold the traditions of America. Thank God for all of you.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: Senator Gounardes on the resolution.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: Thank you, Mr. President.

I rise and hearing the comments of our colleagues, you know, the district that I represent in southern Brooklyn does not have a direct connection to Fort Drum or to the individuals who are here today, but I do represent the only active duty military installation in the City of New York and that is Fort Hamilton Army Base. And I represent a very large VA hospital as well, just off the Army base's campus.

And one of our colleagues spoke earlier about the fact that our soldiers who are garrisoned at these installations, Fort Drum and elsewhere, you're not just there as a soldier, you're there as a part of the community. And I can speak firsthand to that community-building aspect that my garrison in my district, Fort Hamilton Army Base, plays in our neighborhood. They open their doors constantly to the community, hosting events, building a relationship with the people that they are there to protect. And it is a relationship that I value very deeply.

And so on behalf of my constituents and the Army base and the garrison that I represent -- and I'll take the liberty and say Colonel Zieseniss, who's the commanding officer of Fort Hamilton Army Garrison, I thank you for being here, I thank you all for your service, I thank you all for the courage to serve and protect this nation, and I wish you all well, and God bless you all.

Thank you.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: The resolution was previously adopted on February 25th.

Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Thank you, Mr. President.

At this time can we move to previously adopted Resolution 2592, by Senator Martinez, read it in its entirety, and recognize Senator Martinez.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Senate Resolution 2592, by Senator Martinez, congratulating the Brentwood Varsity Boys Soccer Team upon the

occasion of capturing the New York State Public High School Athletic Association Class AA Championship.

"WHEREAS, Individual and team championships are highly sought after in high school sports; this Legislative Body commends rare athletic achievements and pays special recognition to those who pursue such excellence and become examples for the youth of this great Empire State; and

"WHEREAS, Excellence and success in competitive sports can be achieved only through strenuous practice, team play and team spirit, nurtured by dedicated coaching and strategic planning; and

"WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly proud to congratulate the Brentwood Varsity Boys Soccer Team upon the occasion of capturing the New York State Public High School Athletic Association Class AA Championship on Sunday, November 17, 2019, in Middletown, New York; and

"WHEREAS, To the praise and applause of their excited fans, the Indians were able to surmount their opponents in the New York

State Championship Match and accomplish the utmost high school sporting accomplishment in this great Empire State; and

"WHEREAS, The athletic talent displayed by this team is due in great part to the efforts of Coach Ron Eden and his team of outstanding assistant coaches, skilled and inspirational tutors, respected for their ability to develop potential into excellence; and

"WHEREAS, The Brentwood Varsity Boys Soccer Team finished the season with a perfect record of 22-0, and the team members were loyally and enthusiastically supported by family, fans, friends and the community at large; and

"WHEREAS, The hallmarks of the Brentwood Varsity Boys Soccer Team, from the opening game of the season to participation in the championship, were a brotherhood of athletic ability, of good sportsmanship, of honor and of scholarship, demonstrating that these team players are second to none; and

"WHEREAS, Athletically and academically, the team members have proven themselves to be an unbeatable combination of talents, reflecting favorably on their school;

and

"WHEREAS, Coach Ron Eden and his dedicated staff have done a superb job in guiding, molding, and inspiring the team members towards their goals; and

"WHEREAS, Sports competition instills the values of teamwork, pride and accomplishment, and Coach Ron Eden and the outstanding athletes on the Brentwood Varsity Boys Soccer Team have clearly made a contribution to the spirit of excellence which is a tradition of their school; now, therefore, be it

"RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to congratulate the members of the Brentwood Varsity Boys Soccer Team: Andy Acosta, David Akpan, Emerson Alfaro, Cristian Alvarado, Christopher Amaya, Edgar Argueta, Nathaniel Austin, Bryan Balcarcel, Aiden Benitez, Bryan Caballero, Christopher Cerna, Cesar Cruz, Enderson Duque, Hendry Escobar, John Espinoza, Bruce Essuman, Alex Garcia, Edwardo Guzman, Juan Gomez, Marlon Hernandez, Chris Interiano, Jordan Julien, Elvis Lopez, Marc Losse, Erick Maldonado, Carlos Martinez, Brandon Mendez, Daniel Mendez, Anthony Molina,

Kelbis Moreno, Oscar Moreno, Remberto Ramirez, Juan Ramirez, Odir Ramirez, Bryan Rivera, Mike Trujillo, Joey Velasco, Sergio Ventura, Adrian Vides, and Brandon Yanez, Head Coach Ron Eden, and Assistant Coaches Victor Farfan, Joel Iglesias, and Rich Castello; and be it further

"RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the players and coaches of the Brentwood Varsity Boys Soccer Team."

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: Senator Martinez on the resolution.

SENATOR MARTINEZ: Thank you, and good afternoon.

First of all, what a great day today -- not only honoring community leaders, but also our military men and women. Being a proud aunt of a serviceman, it's great to see them here.

And again, I just want to say thank you for allowing me to rise today to recognize a group of young individuals, young men, and these are the boys of the Brentwood High School Soccer Team, varsity, and we welcome them to our

Capitol.

Our Brentwood Indians, who are to the left of me, they won last season 22 and 0, winning the state championship, led by Coach Ron Eden. But not only did they win the championship, they were also ranked the number-one public school in the nation for having the best team. So that, to me, is so rewarding, being a graduate of Brentwood myself.

But the team topped all public schools nationally in the Soccer Institute of Montverde Academy's Fab 50 rankings. The supreme display of the athleticism, their teamwork and dedication to their sport, and passion, has allowed this team to be ranked number one in the state for the second time. The last time that they had this great honor was back in 2008.

Not only are they amazing students, but they're also scholars who are going to great schools here in the State of New York and beyond.

We are joined here today by their principal, John Callan, who was my boss at one point, as a principal, I was his assistant principal. And we also have Kevin O'Reilly; he is the athletic director of the Brentwood School

District.

And joining them are our captains of the 2019 winners, and that's Alex Garcia, Anthony Molina, Sergio Ventura, and Brandon Yanez. I would love to congratulate them, and if you can all join me in congratulating them and giving them just the honor of being presented here before us, I would really appreciate that.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: To our guests, I welcome you on behalf of the Senate. We extend to you the privileges and courtesies of this house.

Please rise and be recognized.

(Standing ovation.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The resolution was previously adopted on January 22nd.

Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Thank you, Mr. President.

Next we have previously adopted Resolution 2708, by Senator Thomas. Please read its title only and recognize Senator Thomas on the resolution.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The

Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Senate Resolution 2708, by Senator Thomas, commemorating the 200th Anniversary of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows on April 26, 2019.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Senator Thomas on the resolution.

SENATOR THOMAS: Thank you, Mr. President.

I want to start out by saying friendship, love and truth to all who are here today. This is the ethics of one of the earliest and oldest fraternities in the United States today, the Independent Order of the Odd Fellows.

Odd Fellows are advocates of genuine friendship, the strongest bond of a fraternity that teaches goodwill and harmony. Odd Fellows are enactors of love, the basis for all life's ambitions, service to others, and family.

Odd Fellows are pursuers of truth, the standard by which they value people and the foundations of their fraternity.

And today I am proud to recognize their 200th anniversary. Past members include Presidents Franklin Roosevelt, Ulysses Grant,

prime ministers like Sir Winston Churchill, and the former King of Sweden. And we have all of you here as well.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR THOMAS: The Odd Fellows are an international fraternal organization with a storied history. Organized Odd Fellowship emerged from 18th century England, where the lodges were set up to protect and care for their members and communities at a time when there were still no social security systems, national health insurance, service clubs or modern-day charitable organizations.

Members then traveled to the United States in the early 19th century, and lodges were set up here.

For over 200 years, Odd Fellows across our state and nation have dedicated themselves to become better citizens by providing hundreds of scholarships, supporting veterans programs, the elderly and less fortunate.

Odd Fellows are welcoming of all people regardless of their religion, race, gender, sexual orientation and national origin.

Today approximately 600,000 members

belong to the 12,000 lodges in 26 countries, including several locations here in New York State.

We are joined by Odd Fellows from East Meadow, Rockville Centre, Rochester, Warwick, Buffalo and even Union City, New Jersey.

The 200 years of the Odd Fellow existence have been a noble one, as it strived to be the relief to those in need. And I hope that in the years to come, they continue to uphold its ethics and service of our communities.

Mr. President, please extend to the Independent Order of the Odd Fellows all the privileges of our house. Thank you.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: To our guests, I welcome you on behalf of the Senate. We extend to you all the privileges and courtesies of this house.

Please rise and be recognized.

(Standing ovation.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The resolution was previously adopted on February 4th.

Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Mr. President,

next we have previously adopted Resolution 2861, by Senator Gounardes. Please read its title only and recognize Senator Gounardes on the resolution.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Senate Resolution 2861, by Senator Gounardes, commending Hunter College of the City University of New York upon the occasion of celebrating its 150th Anniversary.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Senator Gounardes on the resolution.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: Thank you, Mr. President.

I am proud to rise today and sponsor this resolution commemorating the 150th anniversary of my alma mater, Hunter College.

Hunter College was originally founded as the Normal College of the City of New York in 1870, by an act of the New York State Legislature. It was founded as the nation's first free teacher's college, and at that time it was an all-female institution designed to be a

counterpart to the all-male City College, which had been founded 23 years earlier.

In 1914, Normal College was renamed Hunter College after the institution's first president, Thomas Hunter, who led the college for 37 years.

For 150 years, Hunter College has invited students to challenge their intellect and to broaden their horizons, to realize their power and activate their passion to change the world. That was true for alumnae like Rosalyn Sussman Yalow and Gertrude B. Elion, who both became Nobel Prize Laureates for their groundbreaking scientific achievements in medicine. That was also true for alumna Antonia Pantoja, civil rights leader and recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom and founder of Boricua College. That was true for the path-breaking Congresswoman Bella Abzug and for countless other alumni who went on to become Pulitzer Prize winners, Presidential Medal of Freedom winners, Nobel Medal of Science winners, Nobel Laureates, elected leaders, and so on and on and on.

And for those of you that have heard me sing karaoke, you know that my favorite song

is by none other than Hunter College's most famous musical performer, Bobby Darin, and of course I'm referring to "Mack the Knife."

(Laughter.)

SENATOR GOUNARDES: The motto of Hunter College is "Mihi Cura Futuri": The Care of the Future is Mine. That can be said of Hunter College as an institution, as it perpetually graduates thousands and tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of young leaders who are prepared to take on the world and leave it for the better.

But that motto can also be said true of each of Hunter College's graduates. Hunter's alumni leave the college armed with the knowledge, values and integrity to understand that they have an obligation as, a citizen of their city, their nation and their world, to leave the world better than they found it.

As a graduate of Hunter College, part of the City University of New York, I proudly vote aye for this resolution.

Thank you.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Senator Stavisky on the resolution.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Yes, thank you.

Thank you, Senator Gounardes, for introducing it. I too attended Hunter College Graduate School. Half of my graduate credits are from Hunter.

And I just want to remind everybody that Hunter has the 150-year tradition of providing affordable, accessible education, high-quality education. And it is our hope that they will continue for many years to come, and we will continue our investment in the City University of New York because of all of the reasons that were outlined here in the resolution.

Thank you, Mr. President.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The resolution was previously adopted on February 25th.

Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Mr. President, all of the resolutions we took up today, including the one for Normal College and the Odd Fellows, are open for cosponsorship.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The resolutions are open for cosponsorship. Should

you choose not to be a cosponsor of the resolutions, please notify the desk.

Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Can we please take up the reading of the calendar.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 126, Senate Print 2570, by Senator Bailey, an act to amend the Real Property Tax Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 2. This act shall take effect on the first of January.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 59.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 127, Senate Print 2930A, by Senator Brooks, an act to amend the Real Property Tax Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 2. This act shall take effect on the second day of January.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 59.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 247, Senate Print 3561A, by Senator Kennedy, an act to amend the State Finance Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 4. This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 59.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 253, Senate Print 6057, by Senator Brooks, an act to amend the Executive Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Read the last section.

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

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 59.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 270, Senate Print 4495A, by Senator Martinez, an act to amend the Agriculture and Markets Law and the General Business Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 3. This

act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 59.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 296, Senate Print 3647, by Senator Gounardes, Concurrent Resolution of the Senate and Assembly proposing an amendment to Section 6 of Article 5 of the Constitution.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Call the roll on the resolution.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 59.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The resolution is adopted.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 399, Senate Print 3471A, by Senator Brooks, an act to amend the Executive Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 2. This act shall take effect on the 120th day after it shall have become a law.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 59.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 400, Assembly Print Number 8094A, substituted earlier by Assemblymember Barrett, an act requiring the Division of Veterans' Services to review issues relating to veterans' abilities to access state parks.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Read the last section.

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

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Senator Benjamin to explain his vote.

SENATOR BENJAMIN: Thank you, Mr. President.

I want to thank Senator Brooks and I want to thank our leader, Andrea Stewart-Cousins, for helping to get this bill to the floor.

I also want to thank Senator Brooks for his role earlier today, and Senator Ritchie. Today being Fort Drum Day, I think it's important for us to think about how our soldiers move to becoming veterans.

You know, today we felt so much pride and honor -- I was standing up there and I felt so much pride and honor in listening to Major General Mennes and just thinking about all of the sacrifices that our troops make on behalf of this country and on behalf of all of us.

And the question for us has to be, when they come back home and they are no longer serving, what do we do then?

And this bill came to me by Assemblymember Didi Barrett, and I want to thank her for bringing me to this bill. Because what

that bill actually does is it gives -- it says we want the Division of Veterans' Services in six months to come up with a report, working with a number of entities -- working with the Office of Parks, working with the Department of Environmental Conservation, working with the Department of Health and Office of Mental Health -- to say what can our state parks, what can we -- how can they be used in order to help with outdoor-based therapy to help deal with things like PTSD, substance use disorder?

And quite frankly, as many of us know, a lot of our state parks, these are free spaces. I have Riverbank State Park, now known as Denny Farrell State Park, Shirley Chisholm State Park, and all over the state we have state parks. We should be using every square ounce of this state to make sure that we do everything we can for our veterans.

It is really heartbreaking to me when I hear some of the statistics around our homeless veterans. There should not be one homeless veteran in this country. Given what our veterans, who were soldiers, who we celebrate as soldiers -- given the sacrifices they made, we

should not have one homeless veteran.

And quite frankly, it is even more concerning to me that within that population, 13 percent of our veterans are black and brown, but 45 percent of our homeless veterans are black and brown. So that's of enormous concern because many of them live in districts like mine.

And I want to make sure that if there's something that we could be doing with our parks -- and quite frankly, we do know we need the resources. I know a lot of us talk about the resources we need to bring to our veterans. But there's some easy things that we can do, utilizing resources that we already have available to us, and this bill will facilitate that.

So I want to thank all of you for giving me some time to share these few words. And it's great to be here on this day, because this is one of the days when we're very bipartisan. But I think we have to be very bipartisan with how we treat our veterans as they continue on with their lives.

So thank you, Mr. President, for giving me this time to say a few words. And I

look forward to getting this bill signed by the Governor.

Thank you.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Senator Benjamin to be recorded in the affirmative.

Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 59.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 423, Assembly Print Number 9530, substituted earlier by Assemblymember Gottfried, an act to amend the Public Health Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Read the last section.

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

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Senator Hoylman to explain his vote.

SENATOR HOYLMAN: Thank you, Mr. President, for allowing me to explain my vote.

I echo the sentiments of my colleague on this day of honoring Fort Drum and all veterans in the State of New York.

As you know, those of us who have hospitals in our district, there's been a trend towards mergers, consolidation, and even worse, closure of these hospitals. In fact, it seems like in the State of New York it's much easier to close a hospital than it is to open one.

Well, it's the Public Health and Health Planning Council, known as PHHPC, that makes these decisions. It has broad powers over construction and closure of hospitals and other facilities and can make rules and regulations on almost any issue relating to public health.

The problem is the composition. Hospitals, health systems, nursing homes are well-represented on the council -- in other words, the entities that are in the business of healthcare have a seat at the table -- but in general, the public is not. Consumers are not. Ordinary people are not. The people who use emergency rooms, who depend on life-saving Level 1 trauma centers are not well-represented.

Well, this bill goes to the issue

that consumers deserve a voice in these critical decisions that affect their health and well-being, such as the approval to close or diminish services at hospitals.

This bill has been updated since the last session, Mr. President, to address concerns of the Executive about an earlier version of the bill we passed.

Given the enormous power wielded by PHHPC, it's important to ensure that more members of the council are representative of consumer advocacy organizations, of ordinary people, giving low- and moderate-income folks more of a voice in important healthcare decisions.

I vote aye. Thank you.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Senator Hoylman to be recorded in the affirmative.

Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: In relation to Calendar Number 423, those Senators voting in the negative are Senators Akshar, Amedore, Borrello, Funke, Gallivan, Griffo, Jacobs, Jordan, Lanza, O'Mara, Ortt, Ranzenhofer, Serino, Seward and Tedisco.

Ayes, 44. Nays, 15.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 424, Assembly Print Number 7915A, substituted earlier by Assemblymember Magnarelli, an act to amend the Public Health Law and the Environmental Conservation Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 3. This act shall take effect one year after it shall have become a law.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: In relation to Calendar 424, voting in the negative:

Senator Lanza.

Ayes, 58. Nays, 1.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The bill is passed.

Senator Gianaris, that completes the reading of today's calendar.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Is there any further business at the desk, Mr. President?

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: There is no further business at the desk.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Then I move to adjourn until tomorrow, Thursday, February 27th, at 11:00 a.m.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: On motion, the Senate stands adjourned until Thursday, February 27th, at 11:00 a.m.

(Whereupon, at 4:33 p.m., the Senate adjourned.)