



Congresswoman Stephanie Murphy

Floor Statement

Floor Speech on Introduction of Legislation to Name Oviedo Post Office After Sergeant First Class Alwyn Cashe

*January 18, 2018*

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today I am filing legislation to honor an American hero. My bill would name the U.S. post office at 567 East Franklin Street in Oviedo, Florida, in honor of one of its native sons, Sergeant First Class Alwyn Cashe.

Scripture teaches us that there is no greater love than to lay down your life for your friends. On October 17, 2005, in an Iraqi province north of Baghdad, Sergeant First Class Cashe made the ultimate expression of love—disregarding his personal safety and enduring unimaginable pain in order to save multiple soldiers under his command from their burning vehicle after it hit an improvised explosive device.

His actions that fateful day were so remarkable that they almost defy description. Words like “courage” and “bravery” do not seem adequate to fully capture the deeds this soldier performed.

The actions that Sergeant First Class Cashe took resulted in his death, as he must have known they would. After his passing, Sergeant First Class Cashe received the Silver Star, the third-highest combat award that the Army confers.

Over the past years, there has been a passionate, painstaking and patient effort to have Sergeant First Class Cashe’s Silver Star upgraded to the Medal of Honor. Notably, this effort has been led by the battalion commander who nominated Sergeant First Class Cashe for the Silver Star. This individual—now a two-star general—came to believe that Sergeant First Class Cashe deserves the highest award for valor that our nation bestows. I strongly agree with this conclusion.

But, right now, I want to talk, not about medals, but about the man himself—because that is what matters the most.

Alwyn was born in 1970 in Sanford, Florida, and was raised in Oviedo, attending Oviedo High School. He was the youngest of nine children, five girls and four boys. The family didn’t have much money, but they had plenty of pride. When Alwyn was six, his father passed away. Alwyn’s mother Ruby Mae worked long hours at demanding jobs—working on an assembly line and, later, as a custodian at Florida Tech, since renamed the University of Central Florida.

One of Alwyn's sisters, Kasinal, who is now an ICU nurse, describes her brother as the baby of the family, rambunctious, a little spoiled by his siblings, and—of course—deeply loved. She remembers buying him a ten-speed bike, so he wouldn't be different than the other kids in the neighborhood, and how happy he was.

Alwyn enlisted in the military after high school. Kasinal told us it had a transformational effect, turning this aimless boy into a resolute man, the civilian into a soldier. And not just any soldier, but a soldier's soldier, a tough-as-nails infantryman, and an old-school leader in the best sense of the term.

As Kasinal put it, Alwyn "bled Army green" right from the start. The Army gave him a second family with even more brothers and sisters, bound together by the American flag on their uniform and the events they experienced and endured together, from boot camp to combat.

On October 17, 2005, Alwyn—now Sergeant First Class Cashe—was on his second deployment to Iraq.

The Bradley Fighting Vehicle carrying him, six other American soldiers, and the squad's interpreter struck an IED. The blast instantly killed the interpreter and ruptured the vehicle's fuel cell. Flames engulfed the vehicle. Initially only lightly injured, but covered in fuel, Sergeant First Class Cashe descended into the hull, extracted the driver, who was on fire, and extinguished the flames. At this point, six soldiers remained in the vehicle, one of whom managed to open the rear hatch.

Sergeant First Class Cashe rushed to the back of the vehicle, reached into the hot flames, and started pulling out soldiers. His fuel-soaked uniform caught fire and the flames spread quickly over his body. Despite what must have been terrible pain, he returned to the vehicle twice more to extract his soldiers—all while he was still on fire and exposed to enemy gunfire.

By the time all the soldiers were saved from the vehicle, Sergeant First Class Cashe's injuries were the most severe. Second- and third-degree burns covered 72 percent of his body. Nevertheless, he refused to be evacuated until all his soldiers were medevaced out before him.

When he arrived at the U.S. military hospital at Balad Air Base in Iraq, he was still fully conscious. What remained of his uniform had melted to his skin. Yet he tried to fight off the nurses, insisting that they treat everyone else first. Despite determined efforts to save his life at various hospitals abroad and in the states, he eventually succumbed to his wounds on November 8, 2005—surrounded by members of his biological family and his Army family.

Sergeant First Class Cashe's actions reflect the highest standards of servant leadership, devotion to duty, and sheer bravery.

We cannot bring Sergeant First Class Cashe back, or erase the pain felt by those who loved him and those who served alongside him. But we *can* pay tribute to his life and his legacy. We can engrave his name on a plaque and designate a federal building in his memory, so the public never

forgets this American soldier—this son of Oviedo—who laid down his life for his friends in service to our country.

I respectfully ask my colleagues to support this legislation.