

HEFLIN represents a rural State, Alabama, and he knows what's needed to maintain quality of life. He knows that everything which makes up the rural way of life—jobs, schools, hospitals, the rural infrastructure—depends on having a vibrant economic base.

As it is in North Dakota, agriculture is key to rural life in Alabama. Senator HEFLIN understands the need to preserve and protect the economic viability of American farmers in fiercely competitive global agricultural markets. He understands the complexities of world agricultural trade and has stood strongly behind U.S. farmers in their efforts to compete. A staunch defender of U.S. peanut growers, The Judge is always willing to go the extra mile to ensure their concerns are heard in the development of agricultural legislation. But more than that, he always works hard to convey to the nonagriculture community the importance of maintaining a strong, broad-based agricultural system in the United States.

Closely linked with agriculture is the rural infrastructure, and Senator HEFLIN knows perhaps better than anyone in this body that a strong infrastructure is absolutely crucial to preserving the economic base of rural areas. Rural electric and telephone cooperatives are the lifeblood of rural areas, and without them many citizens would receive poor service, expensive service, or no service at all. Senator HEFLIN fights off critics of Federal Government rural development efforts with stern determination, clear arguments and effective strategies. I truly admire him for it, and am glad to say I've joined him in that effort.

I'm sure every Member of this body has a favorite story about HOWELL HEFLIN. His character and personality have often brought easy smiles into what many times have been very difficult situations. One of my favorites occurred just last year in the Senate Agriculture Committee during negotiations on the 1996 farm bill. The Committee Democrats were present, waiting for our Republican counterparts to finish their caucus and enter the room. Suddenly, above the din of the Members, staff, and lobbyists came a bellying call, "Sound the pachyderm horns!" The Judge had made it known he wasn't interested in waiting for the Republicans any longer. They promptly returned.

But it will not be for just his wit that I will miss Judge HEFLIN. He is a good friend, a great Senator, and a remarkable American. I admire him greatly for all that he has done. And knowing that this week he admitted himself into an Alabama hospital, I can only say that I wish him a speedy recovery, my sincerest appreciation for the years we've served together, and my best heart-felt wishes for a long, happy, and comfortable retirement.

RETIREMENT OF SENATOR HANK BROWN

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute and bid farewell to

the distinguished Senator from Colorado, Senator HANK BROWN.

Senator BROWN has committed many years to the people of Colorado, spending 10 years in the House of Representatives and 6 here in the Senate. Though he has much to offer this body, Senator BROWN has chosen to limit his time in Washington. The Senate will certainly miss his leadership and commitment.

Senator BROWN and I share a common concern for getting this country's fiscal house in order, though, at times, that involves making difficult choices. I have had the great pleasure of working with Senator BROWN as a member of the Centrist Coalition, a bipartisan group of Senators. This group worked diligently to agree to an alternative budget plan. This plan incorporated the suggestions of the National Governors' Association on welfare and Medicaid issues, while preserving a safety net for our Nation's most vulnerable populations. Though our plan was narrowly defeated, it was the only bipartisan budget effort to receive strong support during the 104th Congress. I was honored to work with Senator BROWN on the effort.

Prior to his time in Congress, HANK BROWN served our country in Vietnam. A decorated veteran, he has maintained a commitment to ensuring that the United States dealings with Vietnam are appropriate and fair. His unique knowledge and perspective have made him an invaluable contributor to the debates on foreign policy and U.S. military involvement in the world community.

Senator BROWN has also exhibited leadership on behalf of ranchers; as a Senator from North Dakota, I fully appreciate his efforts in this area. During debate on the 1994 Interior appropriations bill, HANK BROWN led the fight against an amendment to raise grazing fees. I was proud to join him in this successful fight, and the ranchers of my State are thankful for his leadership.

Above all, it is Senator BROWN's integrity, thoughtfulness, and commitment to principles that make him a valued Member of the Senate. He will be greatly missed in this body, and I wish him well as he embarks on the next stage of his life.

HONORING THE TAFTS ON THEIR 65TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, families are the cornerstone of America. The data are undeniable:

Individuals from strong families contribute to the society. In an era when nearly half of all couples married today will see their union dissolve into divorce, I believe it is both instructive and important to honor those who have taken the commitment of "till death us do part" seriously, demonstrating successfully the timeless principles of love, honor, and fidelity. These characteristics make our country strong.

For these important reasons, I rise today to honor Clarence and Ethel Taft

of Springfield, MO, who on September 10, 1996, will celebrate their 65th wedding anniversary. My wife, Janet, and I look forward to the day we can celebrate a similar milestone. Clarence and Ethel's commitment to the principles and values of their marriage deserves to be saluted and recognized.

TRIBUTE TO RETIRING SENATOR DAVID PRYOR

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, today I salute one of my Democratic colleagues who is retiring at the end of this Congress, Senator DAVID PRYOR of Arkansas. I have been privileged to serve with David PRYOR not only in the Senate but also on the Finance and Agriculture Committees. Senator PRYOR is a true gentleman, a thoughtful statesman, and a champion for all taxpayers, farmers, and senior citizens. His presence in the United States Senate will be missed.

Senator PRYOR's service to his constituents in Arkansas and the Nation is remarkable. He was elected to the first of three terms as a U.S. Congressman for the Fourth District of Arkansas in 1966. He became Governor in 1974. In 1978, the people of Arkansas elected him to serve in the U.S. Senate. Senator PRYOR was elected to his third Senate term in 1990 without a challenger.

Through his service on the Senate Finance Committee, Senator PRYOR has made a difference in the day-to-day life of every American. The Taxpayer Bill of Rights will be considered as one of Senator PRYOR's lasting legacies. Thanks to his efforts in enacting this legislation, taxpayers are guaranteed certain basic rights when dealing with the Internal Revenue Service.

The Agriculture Committee provided Senator PRYOR with the perfect venue to improve the lives of America's farmers and ensure an abundant and safe food supply for this country and the world. He has been a watchdog for the interests of Arkansas farmers. His work on improving food quality and safety will be remembered by many future generations.

Senator PRYOR is probably best known for his work on behalf of our senior citizens. The Senate Special Committee on Aging was chaired by Senator PRYOR for 6 years and he currently serves as the ranking minority member. Senator PRYOR fought to save the Social Security system and reform the nursing home industry. He also focused the Nation's attention on the soaring prices of prescription drugs. His dedication to the issues facing our senior citizens is inspiring.

Mr. President, dedication, integrity, and humility are characteristics that best describe Senator PRYOR's presence in the Senate. He has worked tirelessly on behalf of his Arkansas constituents

and the Nation to achieve important goals in health care, aging issues, and agriculture. His accomplishments have been remarkable, and will be recognized for many years. I have been deeply honored to serve with my distinguished colleague Senator PRYOR, and wish him every happiness and good health in the years to come.

SENATOR SAM NUNN

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I rise to pay tribute to one of the Senate's most respected and accomplished Senators, SAM NUNN of Georgia. Despite the counsel of Democrats, Republicans, and even the President to seek an assured and well deserved fifth term, Senator NUNN has decided to retire from the Senate at the end of the 104th Congress.

Clearly, Senator NUNN's departure is this Chamber's loss. As anyone who has attended or testified before a hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee over the last 24 years is well aware, there is no member on Capitol Hill today who understands defense issues better than the Senior Senator from Georgia. Throughout his nearly two and a half decades on the Armed Services Committee and 10 years as its chairman or ranking member, Senator NUNN has been routinely consulted by Senators—including this one—when particularly difficult and complex issues have been before the Senate. With little doubt, few Senators in the history of this distinguished body have shown Senator NUNN's acumen for balancing Congress' prerogative to raise and support our Armed Forces with respect for the judgment of our military's leadership.

Mr. President, in his capacity as chairman and ranking member of the Armed Services Committee and as a member of this Chamber, my friend from Georgia has conducted his career in the best tradition of the Senate. The reputation of Senator NUNN's committee for bipartisanship is due in part to the leadership of the Georgia Senator. Better than most, SAM NUNN has understood that compromise is absolutely essential if the Senate is to function as effectively and fairly as the American people expect, and deserve.

Although I do not expect it to last, Senator NUNN's departure from the national stage will be the Nation's loss. His influence has been apparent in the policies of every administration since the senior Senator from Georgia was elected to this body in 1972, and has been especially evident over the last decade. Since the end of the cold war, Senator NUNN has guided the reorganization and reduction of our global military posture, effectively balancing the necessity to maintain forces appropriate for an increasingly complex threat environment, with the need to put our fiscal house in order. Senator NUNN's participation in a bipartisan budget coalition testifies to his commitment to the cause of responsible

deficit reduction, and it has been my honor and privilege to work with him toward this important end.

Mr. President, Senator NUNN has established the benchmark for sound leadership, and I have no doubt that his influence will continue to be felt once he leaves the Senate. As my friend from Georgia is aware, there has been speculation for years that he would one day become Secretary of Defense or Secretary of State. But as many of his colleagues have knowingly observed, Senator NUNN has long exercised influence on defense matters worthy of the Secretary's job itself. I wish Senator NUNN the very best as he begins a new chapter of his life. As a Senator and citizen, I offer my sincere thanks to the Georgia Senator for his excellent service, for which we are all better off. I know that I speak for all Senators when I say that Senator SAM NUNN will be sorely missed, but never forgotten.

TRIBUTE TO ALAN SIMPSON

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, the Senate this year will lose a long-time friend, ALAN SIMPSON of Wyoming. Senator SIMPSON has served his state well for three decades, including 18 years in this chamber, and 12 years before that in Wyoming's House of Representatives. As many here know, he was raised in politics: his father Milward was a former governor and U.S. Senator.

While I congratulate Senator SIMPSON on his retirement, I also have to say I am sorry to see him go. As members of different parties, we have not always seen eye to eye. But even in those times I have disagreed strongly with him, I have always been impressed by his passion. He is a formidable opponent, and any Senator who challenges him better be fully versed on the issue and ready for a tough debate. Because ALAN SIMPSON is always ready. This smart, principled legislator also possesses a unique sense of humor that can inject laughter into even the most difficult situations. And on many issues, such as the current immigration debate which he has led in the Senate, he has shown a willingness to find a bipartisan solution to our mutual problems.

In a Congress that has become increasingly more partisan, many of Senator SIMPSON's colleagues in both chambers and on both sides of the aisle, would do well to heed his example. Compromise and cooperation are seen by some as a lack of leadership. But the "my way or the highway" attitude often short-changes the American people. Senator SIMPSON's willingness to achieve solutions for the greater good is the embodiment of leadership.

On the Senate Finance Committee, Senator SIMPSON and I have examined some of the most pressing issues before us; reduction of our national debt and the future of entitlement programs like Social Security, Medicare, Medic-

aid, and veterans' benefits. As colleagues on the bipartisan Centrist Coalition we worked together to find a fair and reasonable solution to reducing the deficit and controlling the growth of entitlements, when the White House and congressional leaders reached an impasse.

Anyone who works with him on these issues knows without a doubt that Senator SIMPSON cares as deeply about the future of our country as anyone in Congress. Federal spending on entitlement programs is growing at an alarming rate, but suggesting change to entitlement programs is considered political suicide by some. But that has never stopped Senator SIMPSON. His work on the Bipartisan Commission on Entitlement and Tax Reform confirms that he is willing to advocate tough solutions to these growing problems. I may disagree with some of his conclusions, but the fight to reform these programs, as well as the fight to reach a fair balanced budget, is ongoing. I am saddened that he is not staying on to help lead these fights. But perhaps in the coming years, all of us in Congress will learn to embody the virtues of courage and leadership that we have seen in ALAN SIMPSON.

RETIREMENT OF SENATOR NANCY KASSEBAUM

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, today, I offer tribute to my friend and colleague, Senator Nancy KASSEBAUM. The Senate will miss this respected and fair minded policy maker. While the distinguished Senator from Kansas may no longer physically be present on the floor of the Senate to fight the battles she believes in, she will leave a legacy of intelligence, honesty, and common sense that will always be respected and never forgotten.

Among her many accomplishments, Senator KASSEBAUM will go down in the textbooks of American history as the first woman to Chair a major Senate committee, the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources. This fact makes a statement about the strength of Nancy KASSEBAUM as a leader. Senator KASSEBAUM successfully challenged institutional gender biases, paving the way for other women who aspire to become powerful Members of the Senate. I compliment Senator KASSEBAUM for this significant accomplishment.

Throughout her 18 years of dedicated service as a member of the Senate and her tenure as Chair of the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources, Senator KASSEBAUM has fought to preserve the health and dignity of America's families, children, and the poor. She was a moderating force throughout the welfare debate. Her strong stance on issues such as ensuring abused and neglected children are protected, increasing the availability of child care for low-income families, and preserving child care health and safety standards was a key to the successful passage of