

basic ingredient for success—fostering good relationships with its employees and local communities.

I am particularly proud of the relationship Cleveland-Cliffs has built with the State of Michigan. The Marquette Iron Range located in the Upper Peninsula has been a tremendous boost to the area's economy and Cleveland-Cliffs has continually demonstrated its community activism by infusing funds into the surrounding area. For example, the company generously provides "Legacy Grants" to local organizations and schools. These charitable acts offer just one example of the many ways in which Cleveland-Cliffs cares for the local community. I applaud their efforts and encourage other companies to follow their exemplary lead.

Mr. President, this sesquicentennial celebration of Cleveland-Cliffs, Inc founding marks a remarkable achievement. I am pleased to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Moore and the employees of Cleveland-Cliffs on celebrating this auspicious occasion and extend my best wishes for much continued success.●

#### IN RECOGNITION OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE

● Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to the people of India, as they prepare to commemorate the 50th anniversary of their nation's independence from Britain. Led by Mahatma Gandhi, whose philosophy and practice of nonviolent civil disobedience was the cornerstone of the people of India's campaign, their long struggle for self-rule came to a triumphant end on August 15, 1947. The victory won by the people of India served as a model for American civil rights leaders, like Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and inspired oppressed and disenfranchised people throughout the world. For these and many other reasons, I am pleased to be an original cosponsor of Senate Resolution 102, which designates August 15, 1997, as "Indian Independence Day: A National Day of Celebration of Indian and American Democracy."

The Golden Anniversary of India's independence provides people of Indian descent with an opportunity to celebrate the immeasurable achievements they have made in their homeland and in countries throughout the world. There are vital Indian communities from China to Michigan. In fact, Michigan's Indian-American community is one of the leading ethnic groups in my home State, and its members have made important contributions to the local economy and culture. Many of Michigan's Indian-Americans are professionals who play key roles in sectors like the automotive industry and the field of medicine. Many others are entrepreneurs, and Indian-Americans in Michigan own more than 600 businesses with thousands of employees.

Indian-Americans are justifiably proud of the tremendous strides their

homeland has made in the last 50 years. India is the world's largest democracy, with nearly 1 billion people. With a middle class of approximately 250 million, India is an increasingly important market for American goods. India's economy has been advancing rapidly, with a large stock market and strong high-tech enterprises like aircraft and automobile manufacturing, a computer industry, and its own space program.

Mr. President, the 50th anniversary of India's independence provides an opportunity to express our gratitude and appreciation to the Indian-American community. I know my colleagues join me in recognizing the profound contributions Indian-Americans have made to American society, and in offering congratulations to the people of India and their descendants throughout the world who are celebrating this important date in history.●

#### THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF INDIA

● Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the people of India on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of India's independence.

Independence days, like birthdays, are for celebrating. And we have much to celebrate in United States-India relations. The friendship between the Indian and American people today is stronger and more deeply rooted than ever—deeply rooted because it is based on shared values, and strong because it is shared by more Indians and more Americans than ever before.

The friendship between the United States and India is a friendship that goes back to the beginnings of the American Nation. In fact, the first Asian Indian-American is said to have come to the United States 200 years ago.

It is a friendship that was strengthened when the United States supported Indian independence in 1947. It was strengthened again when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was inspired by Mahatma Gandhi during the American civil rights movement. And it was strengthened most recently when India embarked on its bold strategy of economic openness.

It is a friendship based on mutual respect and understanding—understanding that the problems we face are mutual problems. In a shrinking world, India's challenges and India's successes are also those of the United States. Because radicalism and terrorism threaten all civilized countries, especially democracies. Because in a world economy, one nation cannot long prosper while its neighbors do not.

India and the United States stand on the threshold of a new era. In just the past few years, India has flung open its doors to the world, and emerged as a rising star on the world scene. We should commit ourselves to continue the progress of recent years.

We have a great advantage in this effort. It is the Indian-American commu-

nity. Indian-Americans are the magnet that will keep India and the United States moving closer together, making our friendship worthy of the world's largest and oldest democracies.

Mr. President, I am a proud cosponsor of a resolution in the Senate designating August 15, 1997 as "Indian Independence Day: A National Day of Celebration of Indian and American Democracy." This resolution reaffirms the democratic principles on which the United States and India were established, and it requests that the President issue a proclamation calling upon the people of the United States to observe the day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution. And to the people of India, Indian-Americans, and all those who support the ideals of liberty and democracy, I wish you a happy independence day!●

#### VOTE JUSTIFICATION—AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS FISCAL YEAR 1998

● Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise today to explain my votes on the fiscal year 1998 appropriations bill. This legislation, which is every bit as important as the Farm bill passed by Congress in 1996, was acted upon and quickly passed last week.

The first amendment considered by the Senate was an effort by Senator DURBIN to deny crop insurance to tobacco growers. This legislation also prohibited payments for tobacco under the Non-Insured Disaster Assistance Program.

Mr. President, in fiscal year 1996, the federal government spent \$69 million for net losses on tobacco crop insurance. The dangers of this commodity have become abundantly clear in recent years, and while I understand that crop insurance is an invaluable tool for today's farmers, I am troubled by the government support of a product which is responsible for thousands of deaths every year. For that reason, I voted against the motion to table the Durbin amendment. Unfortunately, the amendment was tabled on a 53-47 vote.

After this vote, the Senate turned to consideration of a Helms amendment to increase the tax on ethanol by 3 cents per gallon. The funds raised from this tax were to be set aside to fund an anti-smoking trust fund. Regardless of the ultimate destination, this account was to be funded by a substantial tax increase on fuel. At a time when Americans are already fighting to keep every dollar they earn, I refuse to support another tax increase. Therefore, I supported the motion to table the Helms amendment and it was overwhelmingly defeated by a 76-24 margin.

Shortly after disposing of the Helms amendment, a Harkin amendment to increase funding by \$29 million for enforcement efforts to prevent kids from smoking was debated. The amendment would have fully funded a program

which was established to punish establishments that sell tobacco to individuals under 18 years of age. While I support efforts to curb underage smoking, this amendment sought to impose a new, \$34 million dollar tax on smokers. In light of the tobacco tax increase already adopted in the budget agreement, and considering the penalties expected in the tobacco settlement, I believe Senator HARKIN's additional tax was excessive and I voted to support the 52-48 tabling vote.

The next amendment considered was a Bryan amendment to reduce the amount of funds appropriated to the Market Access Program [MAP]. Identical to the one offered on the fiscal year 1997 appropriations bill, the Bryan amendment would have eliminated funding of MAP if the aggregate amount of funds and value of commodities under the program exceeded \$70,000,000. Formerly known as the Market Promotion Program, MAP has provided funding for large, lucrative corporations. I believe the Market Access Program is a clear example of corporate welfare, and I have consistently supported elimination or reduction of this unnecessary government subsidy. I supported Senator BRYAN's amendment which was tabled by a vote of 59-40.

A vote on a Grams amendment to complete a comprehensive economic evaluation of the Northeast Dairy Compact was scheduled to follow the Bryan amendment, but was instead adopted by unanimous consent. The compact allows dairy producers in the Northeast to artificially set minimum prices for dairy products within the region. I have consistently opposed the new bureaucracy established by the Compact and was pleased to be a cosponsor of the Grams amendment.

Following disposition of these three amendments, the 1998 Agriculture appropriations bill was passed, with my support, by a vote of 99-0. I urge the conferees to act quickly to finalize this legislation and once again demonstrate America's commitment to its farmers. ●

#### HONORING CONNECTICUT'S BLUE RIBBON SCHOOLS

● Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to six elementary schools from my home state of Connecticut whose achievements have earned them the honor of being named blue ribbon schools. The blue ribbon schools program was established in 1982 to honor the best elementary and secondary schools in the country. This program promotes excellence in education by providing national recognition to a diverse group of schools that display an uncommon ability to help their students to reach their potential.

These blue ribbon schools, with their varied socioeconomic, geographic, and educational needs, prove that, with the right tools, all of our schools can be successful. They display the qualities of excellence that are necessary to prepare our young children for the chal-

lenges of the next century. Their formula for success is no secret. Each has strong leadership, a sense of mission, parental involvement, high quality teaching, and high standards and high expectations for each and every student.

It is important that we make every child in this country believe in themselves, and blue ribbon schools are challenging our students to try harder and demand more from themselves.

Of the 76,000 elementary schools across the country, only 263 are honored as blue ribbon schools, and I am proud of the fact that all six nominated schools from Connecticut were chosen to be honored. These six schools from Connecticut are Ellen B. Hubble Elementary School in Bristol, Highland Elementary School in Cheshire, East Farms School in Farmington, the Center School in Litchfield, the Peck Place School in Litchfield, and West District School in Unionville. Each is different and unique, but they hold in common a commitment to helping all their students achieve high standards. I would like to briefly mention some of the unique accomplishments of each of these schools.

Ellen P. Hubble School in Bristol is a center for innovation in education, where learning is fun. The school brings excitement to learning by developing building-wide themes. In the past, the school has been transformed into a farm, a forest, and a circus, and the children have responded by bringing uncommon enthusiasm to their schoolwork. The students of Ellen P. Hubble have also been very active in their community. Through the random acts of kindness and make a difference day program, students have worked on activities ranging from supporting a shelter for battered women to providing help for Bosnian refugees.

Highland Elementary School is a reflection of the town of Cheshire's dedication to provide each young person with a nurturing, motivating, and enjoyable learning environment. Highland Elementary has formed a collaborative intervention team, composed of teachers and administrators, whose role is to identify and address the complex needs of each individual student. The teachers set high standards for their students, but the results have shown that great teaching inspires active learning. In addition, Highland is a member of the national network of Partnership 2000 schools, which fosters home-school partnerships.

The East Farms School in Farmington is centered around the belief that all children are capable of becoming skillful, lifelong learners. The staff works within collaborative teams which develop an engaging interdisciplinary curriculum. East Farms is the first school in Connecticut to establish their own publishing center. For 3 years, parents have assisted children and teachers in the publication of over 1,000 original books each year. This effort has not only brought stu-

dents, parents, and teachers together in a learning exercise, it has also reinforced the value and importance of written work.

At the Center School in Litchfield, lessons are planned around student inquiry, and teachers serve as facilitators rather than lecturers. In addition, students at the Center School are taught that the best way to solve a problem is by cooperating with others, and students are instilled with a strong sense of community. The school has been at the forefront of instructional reform, and the school's thematically arranged, interdisciplinary units of instruction have been hailed as exemplary by local, state, and national educators. The Center School was the first elementary school in Connecticut to be accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, and they recently received the Connecticut Award for Excellence.

Teachers are at the center of efforts to provide children with a quality education at the Peck Place School in Orange. This school has invested in highly-qualified staff with 92 percent of the staff holding advanced degrees. Beyond an excellent traditional elementary schools curriculum, Peck Place also offers both French and Spanish to its students. Students and parents are enthusiastic partners in this effort. The Peck Place School proves a strong learning environment leads to improved performance by students. Connecticut mastery test scores have shown significant improvement in every grade, and grade four scores have jumped from 25 percent meeting or exceeding the State goals in 1993 to 74 percent in 1995.

West District School in Unionville is a true neighborhood school where nearly half of the students walk to school every day, and many of them are the children of former students. West District is committed to the belief that all students are capable of learning at a high level if you nurture each student's special strengths. West District has formed a school development council, made up of teachers, staff, and parents, to work on ways to improve the school and to develop priorities for each school year. Last year the school chose to focus its efforts on addressing the needs of low-performing students, and the school worked diligently to bridge the gap between their most successful students and those who struggle with their classwork. The results have been successful as the vast majority of students are now performing at the high levels. West District boasts some of the highest Connecticut Mastery scores in the State, with 84 percent of sixth graders and 80 percent of fourth graders reaching the excellent level on the Connecticut mastery test in math. In addition, 80 percent of sixth graders achieved excellence in reading and 75 percent of fourth graders reached the excellence level in writing.

Once again I would like to congratulate these six schools for being honored