

spotlight on the total quality of life of working Americans.●

25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE VERMONT HOUSING FINANCE AGENCY

● Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I am honored to congratulate the Vermont Housing Finance Agency on its 25th Anniversary of providing Vermonters with access to safe, decent and affordable housing.

In 1974, the Vermont Housing Finance Agency, VHFA, was established to ensure that Vermonters of a variety of different backgrounds have access to affordable housing. Over many years of finding innovative ways to finance and stimulate the preservation and development of affordable housing, VHFA has multiplied the number of home ownership opportunities in Vermont many times over. This dedication to aggressively and compassionately provide affordable housing opportunities ensures that today's neediest Vermont families need not go without shelter.

As a Senator one of my highest priorities is to help secure for Vermont's low and moderate income families a home they can afford. We all know that having a home is a critical foundation to achieving success. Every year VHFA helps Vermonters build this foundation by making financing possible for thousands of Vermonters to purchase hundreds of dwellings. Over the years, VHFA has worked with private lenders, real estate professionals, builders, developers and nonprofit organizations throughout the state to get the job done. This dynamic approach to home financing has brought about dozens of healthy and safe Vermont communities where residents thrive and communities grow. The professionalism, reliability, and accomplishments of the staff at VHFA are unsurpassed.

I commend the Vermont Housing Finance Agency for its outstanding contribution and dedication to improving the quality of life for so many Vermonters. VHFA has my sincerest thanks and unending respect for its 25 years of commitment to Vermont and her people. I am both proud and honored to represent such an accomplished group of individuals in Washington as they are a national model for how to provide affordable, quality housing opportunities for those in need. As they celebrate their 25th anniversary at the end of this month in Vermont, the VHFA staff, past and present, should be proud that their leadership and continued perseverance will help ensure that every Vermonter has a place to call home.●

TRIBUTE TO THE EMTER FAMILY

● Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I rise today to take note of the superb performances given yesterday by the Emter family of Glen Ullin, North Dakota, on the Capitol lawn and later at the Kennedy Center. The Emters were

here in Washington as part of the Millennium Series being sponsored by the Kennedy Center. When the Kennedy Center asked me to make a recommendation of a group from North Dakota that might exhibit some of the cultural heritage of my state, the Emter family was a natural and immediate choice.

One obvious reason was their outstanding musical accomplishment. The Emters are button accordionists. Mr. President, the button accordion is a unique instrument, brought to America by settlers from Austria at the turn of the 20th century. Button accordions have been in this country for nearly 100 years, and have helped make polka one of America's most loved traditional dances. In North Dakota even today you'd be hard pressed to find a wedding reception or barn dance where a polka wasn't played and the entire room doesn't pour onto the dance floor. Accordion music may not have the popular following that it did before the advent of rock and roll, but its lyrical and nostalgic flavor still tugs at the heartstrings of this Senator and many other folks of my generation who grew up watching our parents polka the night away across the American Legion Hall dance floor, at Ted Strand's barn or at Hardmeyer Hall.

The Emter Family—parents Renae and Roger (who met at a polka dance), 18 year old son Adam, and three daughters Angelina, 16; Alida, 15; and Abigail, 13—has performed all over North America, from county fairs, church functions and Oktoberfests to national television and radio appearances. They have taken top honors at a number of international button accordion competitions. They are truly accomplished.

I have to tell you though, Mr. President, that it isn't just for their musical achievement that the Emter Family deserves our recognition and honor today. That's because this is a great family. Their presence on stage tells you this, the way they interact with one another and everyone around them tells you this, the message in their music tell you this. They are good people that exemplify the steadfast, positive attitude of the vast majority of rural America's families. They live in Glen Ullin, in southwestern North Dakota, a part of the state that has seen one of the most significant decrease in population. Times are desperate for many families in this region of my state, along with rural areas in most of our farm states. These people have every reason in the world to lose faith, to have negative attitudes, to let frustration get the best of them and give up. None of us could fault them for that. But, Mr. President, most of these families don't despair. They look forward, they continue to work incredibly hard, they still pack the American Legion Hall to dance the polka once and awhile. The Emters are a symbol of hope in these areas of our country, Mr. President, and I want to thank them for sharing that hope with us yesterday

through their music and their presence in Washington.●

JIM BATTIN COURTHOUSE

● Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, today I rise to pay tribute to one of Montana's greatest citizens, the Honorable James F. Battin, Sr. Jim Battin was born in Wichita, Kansas, and at the age of four, moved to Billings, Montana, where he was raised. After graduating from high school, he served for three years in the U.S. Navy during World War II, spending most of that time in the Pacific theater. Following the war, Jim returned home to continue his education, graduating first from Eastern Montana College in Billings and later receiving his J.D. from George Washington University. He continued his career in public service as a city attorney in Billings, and in 1958, he was elected to the Montana state legislature. Only two years later, he successfully ran for a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, where he was quickly assigned seats on the House Committee on Committees, as well as Ways and Means, two very prestigious seats for a freshman member of Congress. Jim later served on the House Foreign Relations and Judiciary Committees, and was ultimately elected five times by the people of his district, which then covered the eastern half of the state of Montana. During his congressional career, which lasted from 1961 to 1969, Congressman Battin played an instrumental role in a good deal of legislation, including the bill which created Montana's Bob Marshall Wilderness Area, at the time the largest wildlife area in the United States. Jim also served as one of two U.S. Congressional Representatives to the Inter-Governmental Committee on European Migration, which met in Geneva. This group helped individuals who were expelled from behind the Iron Curtain to re-establish businesses in other countries, or to find work in other occupations. In 1968, Congressman Battin was President Nixon's representative to the Platform Committee at the Republican National Committee, and shortly thereafter, in early 1969, he became President Nixon's first judicial appointment. He served as a U.S. district judge for the district of Montana for 27 years, becoming its Chief Judge in 1978. During his time on the bench, Judge Battin issued key rulings affecting the lives of Montana citizens, among them his ruling which preserved access to the Bighorn River for people throughout the state, and his creation of the precedent for the now universally accepted six-man federal jury in civil cases. A dedicated and hard working man, James F. Battin Sr. remained on the bench until his passing in the autumn of 1996.

It was with these facts in mind, Mr. President, that led to my support of H.R. 158, a bill which would designate the United States courthouse located at 316 North 26th Street in Billings,

Montana, as the "James F. Battin United States Courthouse". Congress passed H.R. 158 earlier this year, and it was signed into law by the President on April 5th, 1999, as Public Law 106-11. I believe that the renaming of this courthouse, which Judge Battin presided over for so long, is the most fitting tribute that the United States Congress and the people of Montana can pay to this great man, whose outstanding career in public service spanned over 40 years. Come next Monday, when this building is officially rechristened with its new name, I think all of us should take a moment to tip our hats in thanks to Judge Battin for a job well-done. Mr. President, I yield the floor.●

TRIBUTE TO ROBERT TOBIAS

● Mr. ROBB. Mr. President, I rise to pay tribute to Robert Tobias, a man who has shown untiring commitment to the concerns of Federal employees. Recently I had the opportunity to attend one of the receptions in his honor hosted by the many Federal employees he has represented and led so effectively.

Mr. Tobias, who is retiring after four terms as president of the National Treasury Employees Union, NTEU, has proven his dedication to the fair treatment, professional development and quality of life for Federal workers time and time again. During his 31 years of service, the organization has grown to the point that it now represents over 155,000 men and women who serve our Federal Government. For the past 16 years, Mr. Tobias led the NTEU, spearheading initiatives to ensure fair workplace policies for Federal workers and pursuing effective labor-management policies for more efficient service from Federal agencies. But perhaps most importantly, he's championed family friendly policies to help our outstanding Federal workers continue to meet demands and increase productivity. These innovations include implementing alternative work schedules and negotiating child care facilities for busy Federal families.

Because of his outstanding reputation, he's won many awards and appointments, most notably his appointment to the National Partnership Council and the Commission to Restructure the IRS among them. Under his leadership, he's ensured that Federal employees are included in the many decisions to help Federal agencies run more efficiently and that they are publicly recognized for all the hard work they perform.

Robert Tobias leaves an indelible mark on the Federal workplace by the hard work he has done on behalf of NTEU—indeed, the nation—and we are indebted to him for his service. I wish him continued success as he moves on to teaching and writing, knowing we can still rely on his voice and experience when it comes to the critical needs of Federal employees.●

RECOGNITION OF THE FEDERAL WAY SCHOOL DISTRICT'S INTERNET ACADEMY

● Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, when I began my Innovation in Education Award Program earlier this year, I endeavored to find and recognize programs, schools, and individuals whose work in improving education deserves recognition. The Federal Way School District's Internet Academy is just such a program and one which I am proud to present with my Innovation in Education Award.

The Internet Academy is the brain child of recently departed Superintendent Tom Vander Ark, who is widely credited with injecting new life into the Federal Way District. The Academy has a standards-based curriculum that provides a comprehensive course of study designed to meet state guidelines and instructional objectives. What is innovative, however, is the way in which the Academy engages students under the continuous guidance of state accredited teachers. The Academy offers a full range of courses for school credit, via the Internet, for grades K-12. The program was created only 3 years ago as a pilot K-8 program and has expanded significantly since then. In June of 1998 it had 65 enrollees—by June of 1999 it had expanded to over 800.

As our society's use of technology has increased, it is important that our public education system keep abreast of such transformation and provide opportunities using technology to encourage student learning. By offering an interactive curriculum that is accessible 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, the district's Academy is ensuring that students are given maximum opportunity to access a good education.

Today's best instructional technologies can enhance the learning environment by eliminating the time and space boundaries present with the traditional classroom. This alternative learning environment also allows for an increasingly active role for families in the education of our children. It is a common-sense proposition that increased parental involvement promotes a richer educational process. This aspect of learning is especially critical for home-schoolers in search of instruction for specific topics or seeking to tap into the resources of the public education system.

The parent of one home-schooled child noted: "Home-school can be really challenging sometimes. It is great to have a resource like the Internet Academy for my son."

Meanwhile, a 10th grade student said: "I like the Internet Academy because I can work at my own pace. The on-line curriculum gives me a better understanding than what I can get in a classroom with 30 other students. The approach allows me to explore areas that interest me while completing the course work."

I have heard from many educators that they sometimes struggle to main-

tain the interest and energy of their students. The Federal Way School District, through its Internet Academy, has shown that creative means to keep students engaged in today's multimedia environment are not only possible but, can be highly successful.

Our economy, powered in large part by a strong hi-tech sector, has achieved an impressive record of growth in recent months and it stands to reason that creatively injecting hi-tech tools into our education system can have equally rewarding results. I applaud the Federal Way School District's vision in establishing the Internet Academy, I endorse their efforts to ensure that students are given every possible opportunity to access and learn from our public education system. I hope my colleagues will join in my recognizing the Internet Academy's innovative work.●

TRIBUTE TO PAT THOMAS

● Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to an outstanding Vermonter, Patricia Thomas, formerly the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) of Chittenden and Grand Isle Counties. Pat's commitment to improving the health status of Vermonters serves as a model to us all. She is, and will remain, a stunning example of how one person can positively affect so many.

Pat has served Vermont in a variety of capacities. As a teacher and college administrator, as a government official and director of Vermont's largest United Way, and on various boards and commissions, Pat always strived to improve the quality of life here in Vermont. Most recently, she served the people of Vermont at the helm of our State's largest VNA. It is this role that I wish to elaborate upon today before the U.S. Senate.

Throughout Pat's 7-year tenure at the VNA, her leadership was instrumental in sustaining Vermont's unique, nonprofit home health care system, while maintaining its high-quality, cost-effective service. Ironically, when this nationally renowned system was severely challenged by an unintended consequence of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, Pat's advocacy easily convinced me and other lawmakers that corrective action was essential. With such an impressive track record and with so many Vermonters relying on her agency's care, it was an easy argument to both make and adopt. Certainly, being a key member of my Health Care Advisory Board, there have been numerous occasions when I have relied on Pat's wise counsel, but none was more critical than during the last year's debate. Vermonters were fortunate to have such an advocate and leader in Pat Thomas.

In addition to being an effective advocate on the Federal level, Pat led her VNA through a dynamic and critical