

Here is a copy of the stamp that was issued in 1962—a postage stamp commemorating the original Homestead Act. A sod house from North Dakota was commemorated on that postage stamp.

President Lincoln signed the Homestead Act into law. The purpose of that was to encourage people who wanted to seek new opportunity to populate the middle part of our country—the heartland of our country. And people did go to the heartland of America.

My great-grandmother, a Norwegian immigrant who lost her husband to a heart attack, along with her six children, got on a train and went to Hettinger County, ND, and pitched a tent. She raised her family, built a home, started a farm, and ran a family farm.

That courageous Norwegian immigrant widow did what many Americans did. They just made an opportunity out of something that was there for them—the Homestead Act.

Then she had a son. That son had a daughter and that daughter had me. And that is how I came from Hettinger County, ND.

A lot of Americans have a similar story in their background about how they are living in this country.

But the Homestead Act was successful in moving people out to start farms, ranches, and small communities in this country.

One-hundred forty years later, this is what is happening to our country. You will notice that in the middle of our country—in the heartland of America—we are being systematically and relentlessly depopulated once again. As you will see, North Dakota has a substantial loss of population in almost all of its rural counties. In North Dakota, the chart shows what is happening. Ninety-one percent of our counties are suffering from substantial out-migration: Montana, 54 percent; South Dakota, 73 percent; and, Nebraska, 66 percent.

There is this relentless depopulation of the central part of our country.

Some wring their hands, gnash their teeth, and ask what they can do, and say perhaps nothing. I happen to think we can do something.

Last March, the Bismarck Tribune ran an Associated Press story talking about the cycle of what is happening in many of these States, from North Dakota to Texas. Schools are closing. Farmers are giving up. Young people are moving out, leaving behind the elderly in communities struggling to keep their names on the map.

The latest census number shows dozens of counties in South Dakota, North Dakota, Missouri, Nebraska, Kansas, and Illinois have lost people in the 1990s. The question is, What, if anything, can we do about that?

I have introduced a piece of legislation here in the Congress with my colleague Senator HAGEL from Nebraska. Very simply, our legislation is similar to the Homestead Act of 140 years ago,

except we don't have land to give away anymore. So we say to people who would move in and stay in these local areas that are rural by nature and which have been losing population, here are the reasons for you to stay. There are incentives for you to stay.

Much of the country aspires to have what they have in many of these rural counties and local communities: good places in which to live, great places to raise a family, good neighborhoods, safe streets, strong schools and other things that people aspire to have. Yet we are trying to recreate that in other areas of the country, even as we are losing it in the heartland.

Again, the question is, What can we do about that? Senator HAGEL and I have introduced a piece of legislation called the New Homestead Economic Opportunity Act.

It says to people, if you live and work in these out-migration counties after you graduate from college, we will forgive part of your college loan.

We will provide a tax credit for a home purchased by individuals living in these counties that are suffering from out-migration.

We will protect home values by allowing losses in home value to be deducted from your Federal income tax. In many of these small towns, when you build a home, it is worth less immediately after it is built than the cost of construction.

We will establish Individual Homestead Accounts to help build savings and increase access to credit if you are living in one of these rural counties.

Then there are business incentives as well. Say you create or keep a business in one of these rural counties losing population, States can offer investment tax credits for newly constructed buildings and accelerated depreciation for equipment purchases. There are a whole series of things that represent business incentives, either to stay there and start a business or come there and create a business.

The New Homestead Economic Opportunity Act also recognizes in order to be successful in starting or keeping business in rural areas, you have to have venture capital. Our legislation would establish a national venture capital fund in order to do that.

The National Association of Counties has endorsed the New Homestead Economic Opportunity Act, saying:

As you are aware, some of America's rural counties are facing critical hurdles . . . many rural counties are experiencing an out-migration of youth to more urbanized areas of the country due to a lack of economic opportunities . . . Your legislation is a good attempt to ameliorate this out-migration from rural America and we fully support your efforts.

The same is true with many other organizations. I will put up a chart showing just a few of them: The National Telecommunications Cooperative Association, the North Dakota Association of Builders, the North Dakota Association of Realtors, bank groups, credit unions, and more.

The question for this Congress is, Will we do something about what is happening to rural areas in the heartland of our country?

When America's cities were suffering a crisis and inner-city blight, America went right to work. It put on its work clothes and said: All right, we're going to help America's cities, we're going to do a model cities program and an urban renewal program, and we will not allow our cities to fail.

I supported that. Good for us. The fact is, many of our big cities have turned around completely, and they now have economic life and vitality. The question for the Congress and the country is, Will we do something to restore economic opportunity in the heartland of this country? I hope we will.

So I wanted, on the 140th anniversary today of the original Homestead Act, to point out there is a new Homestead Act that has been introduced in Congress by Senator HAGEL and myself. And we have done that for a very important reason. We hope our colleagues will join us in allowing us to move that piece of legislation in this Congress.

CUBA

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, I want to say a word on another matter, if I might, about a speech given by President Bush this morning.

President Bush, this morning, gave another speech about Cuba and said: No, our 40 years of embargo against Cuba really work. We want to continue this embargo. And we want to get even tougher now.

The President is going to Florida this evening for a \$25,000-per-person fundraiser. I suspect there is a lot of politics and probably very little policy in this speech. But let me say this: I do not think it does anything to hurt Fidel Castro to continue an embargo that has failed for 40 years.

An embargo that punishes Americans for traveling in Cuba, an embargo that makes it impossible, and now difficult, for our farmers to sell into Cuba, is not an embargo, in my judgment, that represents this country's best policy interests. It does not make any sense for me to embrace policies that don't allow Fidel Castro to ever miss a meal. He has never missed breakfast, lunch, supper, or dinner because of these embargoes. It is just poor, sick, and hungry people in Cuba who have been injured by these policies.

This 40-year embargo is at odds with everything else we are doing. We say, let's trade with Communist China. Why? Because China is a Communist country, yes. But trading with them will actually open up opportunities and bring democracy to China more quickly. We say, let's do that same thing with Vietnam. Yes, it is a Communist country, but engaging with Vietnam will have more impact than not engaging.

If that is the case, why is that not the case with Cuba? The answer is, of

course it is the case. It is just that there is a barrelful of politics and a teaspoonful of policy in these pronouncements we have heard this morning.

My hope is just as the Senate has expressed itself with 70 percent of the Senate, saying that what we ought to do with Cuba is what we do with China and Vietnam: Open up that market. The quickest way to get rid of Fidel Castro, in my judgment, and move to democratic reforms is for Americans to travel in Cuba, for Americans to trade with Cuba, and that replacing the policy of failure for 40 years makes much more sense for this country.

Madam President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO SENATOR JIM JEFFORDS

Mr. REID. Madam President, I come to the floor today to pay tribute to my friend and my colleague, JIM JEFFORDS.

Although he made news and history last year—and it will be widely discussed again this week because, of course, it is the anniversary of his changing political parties—JIM JEFFORDS really prefers to be outside the limelight, though he has been in the limelight this past year. As a result, few people knew much about him before a year ago, despite his many accomplishments in Congress and contributions to our country during this remarkable career he has had in public service.

JIM JEFFORDS grew up in Vermont where the Jeffords family first settled during the 1700s.

After graduating from Yale University, he served in the Navy, on active duty for 4 years, from 1956 to 1959. He later served in the Naval Reserve, retiring as a captain in 1990.

Senator JEFFORDS' late father was a distinguished attorney who served as chief justice of the Vermont Supreme Court. No doubt this influenced Senator JEFFORDS' decision to study law.

After graduating from Harvard Law School, he returned to Vermont to practice. This very quiet, soft-spoken man is a person who has a tremendous education: Yale undergraduate degree, Harvard Law School degree.

Within a few years after returning to Vermont to practice law, he was elected to the Vermont State Senate and then the attorney generalship of that State. From 1975 to 1988, he represented the Green Mountain State in the House of Representatives. That is where I first met him. I had the opportunity to serve with him in the House of Rep-

resentatives. I was impressed then by his knowledge of the issues and his dedication to the public well-being.

He has served in the Senate since 1989 where he has continued to be a strong advocate for dairy farmers and other Vermonters but also someone from whom people in Nevada have benefited because of his legislative record. He does not focus only on issues dealing with Vermont, even though these issues come first. He has been a champion of disabled Americans, an outspoken proponent of international environmental protection. He is a person who has dealt heavily in education. While serving as chairman of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, Senator JEFFORDS developed a lot of legislation.

One bill I would like to pinpoint is a bill to allow the importation of prescription drugs from other countries in an attempt to help make medicine more affordable to Americans. His bill passed overwhelmingly in July of 2000 and was ultimately signed into law.

He has also proposed a "DrugGap" program to help low-income Medicare recipients get prescription drug coverage. He has worked to double funding for the Ryan White CARE Act.

Senator JEFFORDS has been a leading supporter of funding for services for the developmentally disabled and assisting disabled workers. He has been a key cosponsor of hate crimes legislation and antidiscrimination legislation.

He is now chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee. There his work has been exemplary. He has always been a defender of the environment. I have been either chairman or ranking member for the Energy and Water Subcommittee of Appropriations for a number of years. No matter what we did dealing with renewables, we thought we had done a lot; JIM JEFFORDS wanted more. He always kept us on our toes. We had to come forward with something that would show we were doing more than the normal for renewable energy. He was visionary, as indicated by the energy bill we just passed.

He has been a defender of the environment. He has fought against the Bush administration to roll back protections. Some that come to mind are arsenic, allowing toxic levels of arsenic to be in the water, he has fought that. He, of course, has fought, along with Senator BOXER, to make sure that children are tested for lead poisoning; that the water is tested that children drink.

He has called on President Bush to honor America's commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to include carbon dioxide in laws addressing air quality and aggressively enforce laws against polluters.

Clearly, JIM JEFFORDS has demonstrated to me and, of course, to the people of Nevada that one person can make a difference. If we ever think what can one person do, it is a huge world, a big country, we come from

States with thousands and millions of people in them; what difference can one person make. He has certainly shown that one person can make a difference. When he announced almost a year ago, on May 24, that he would no longer be a Republican, he made a difference. For months after, the impact of Senator JEFFORDS' switch was defined for many of us by a changed Senate agenda, changed chairmanships, and a return to divided government, some said.

But it wasn't until about 4 months later that we fully appreciated the import of what Senator JEFFORDS really did. When the attacks of September 11 shook our Nation, the service he did for our country became very clear.

Just days after the attacks, Congress, Democrats and Republicans, came together to craft an unprecedented response to the terrorist act and threats. Together we approved \$40 billion in aid to New York and Virginia to recover and to help protect the Nation from future threats. Roughly 1 month after that, we enacted sweeping antiterrorism legislation to improve law enforcement to respond to terrorist threats. That was led by Senator PAT LEAHY, chairman of the Judiciary Committee.

Both of these measures—these are two of many—were incredibly important. We passed them swiftly in response to a national emergency. Because of what Senator JEFFORDS did, these measures were balanced and reflected the will of all Americans, not just the will of this administration. There was a check; there was a balance. That is all because of JIM JEFFORDS. We afforded the President the power to respond to a national crisis, preserved important checks on his authority and important protections for the civil liberties that make America great.

Every Senator has a list of issues they consider important which were affected by JIM JEFFORDS' principled and courageous decision last May. From protecting national treasures such as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, ANWR as it is known, to preserving the balance on the Federal judiciary, providing a voice for the unemployed, campaign finance reform—we could not have done it without him—preserving Social Security, he has allowed us to have a platform to talk about the fact that we did have a \$4.7 trillion surplus 10 years ago. We don't now. We are now spending Social Security surpluses. Election reform, Medicare, education, he has allowed us to have a voice on these issues and not simply ram them down the throats of the Senate.

For me, his greatest contribution was in preserving the essence of democracy, debate, consensus, and representation during an unprecedented national crisis.

JIM JEFFORDS is my friend. More than my friend, he is someone I will always look to for inspiration, knowing that one person, one of us, and anyone