

ever in our history, and we are not teaching what it means to be an American.

You don't get to be an American by the color of your skin or where you come from. You get to be an American by understanding what we believe in. The common school itself was created 150 years ago, according to the late president of the American Federation of Teachers, Albert Shanker. He said the public school was created to help immigrant children learn the three Rs, and what it means to be an American, with a hope they would go home and teach their parents. The civic purpose of the public school is being fundamentally ignored in many parts of our country and this is one small step in that direction.

I am delighted that a bipartisan group of Senators and House Members—Mr. BOEHNER, Mr. MILLER, Representative BLACKBURN from Tennessee, and the principal sponsor, ROGER WICKER of Mississippi—played a role. I thank them for that.

AMERICAN BALD EAGLE COMMEMORATIVE COIN ACT

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I mention one other piece of legislation that may have a chance of passing. At least I can report there are now 68 U.S. Senators who have agreed to sponsor S. 2889 which will celebrate the recovery and restoration of the American bald eagle by making \$5- and \$10- and 50-cent commemorative coins.

Very often these so called coin bills are especially parochial. That is why we are required to have 67 Senators agree before we do one; usually by practice, nearly 300 House Members. Well, 300 House Members have agreed and nearly 70 Senators. That is because in 1782 the Founding Fathers established the bald eagle as the national emblem of the United States. Since then, the bald eagle has come to represent the spirit of American freedom, democracy, and strength.

It is my hope before we finish our business today we will honor and protect the symbol of America and cosponsor and enact the American Bald Eagle Commemorative Coin Act.

One reason Senators have signed on is that the eagle has been roaming the Halls with its handler, going into different offices. A number of Senators have called me from their office with the eagle perched in front of them. The eagle is a very successful lobbyist for himself.

If we cannot get the commemorative coin enacted today before we adjourn, I am sure we will be able to do so early next year.

I thank the Senator from Minnesota and the Senator from Ohio for giving me an opportunity to conclude my remarks.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The distinguished Senator from Minnesota is recognized on this glorious Saturday afternoon.

HELPING A VETERAN FAMILY WITH AIDS

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. President, I had the great pleasure of sitting in the Presiding Officer's chair yesterday when one of our colleagues said goodbye, the distinguished minority leader. It was a very stirring and moving speech about what this institution is all about.

I sat in the Senate when the senior Senator from Oklahoma said goodbye after 20-something years in this institution. I was in the chair when the candidate for the Vice President of the United States said goodbye after serving one term in this institution.

It is pretty humbling, to understand how incredible it is to be part of this body and all the things that one can do.

I am standing right now to say thank you to a Member who is still serving, who I hope will serve for a long time, the Senator from Missouri, Mr. BOND. Sometimes we wait until folks leave until we express our deep appreciation for all they do and all they have accomplished. For me, I feel moved to do this for a little act of kindness, of help he gave some constituents of mine.

In the Omnibus bill we will vote on, hopefully, sometime this afternoon, there is \$388 billion laid out to be spent in that bill. The very last item of the 133 pages of the section that appropriates funds for the Veterans Administration and HUD, had to do with two individuals from Minnesota, Brian and Eric Simon, to receive \$200,000, to be split between them. That constitutes 1/20,000th of 1 percent of the allocations in that bill, but to those young men it is so important. Let me tell a little story about why it is important and who these young men are.

In 1983, Douglas Simon, the father of Brian and Eric Simon, served in the Army National Guard at Fort Benning, GA. He was injured. He required emergency medical surgery. Mr. Simon's surgery was performed at Fort Benning, GA. As part of the surgery, a blood transfusion of nine units was required. The blood he received was not screened and contained the AIDS/HIV virus.

In 1984, Mr. Simon married Nancy and they had three children together, Brian, Eric, and Candace. Before the virus took their lives, and ultimately the lives of Candace, the daughter, and the mom Nancy, the Simons were a smalltown American family: hopeful, conventional, meat and potatoes, church every Sunday, Roman Catholic family with a Virgin Mary statute in the front yard. Old Glory hung on the flagpole every clement day.

I am reading from and reflecting on an article written in 1994 about the Simons.

Doug and Nancy had met in high school. They got married after they graduated. He joined the Minnesota Army National Guard out of high school. He had an accident and underwent surgery. Nancy was older than a year by Doug and grew up close by, a

place called New Prague, MN, 1 of 11 children. She was quiet, timid.

When she and Doug first got married, they dreamed of having lots of kids. The oldest son is Brian. He was 10 in 1994 and he is 19 now. I got to know him. He was born before Doug and Nancy were infected. Eric escaped the virus, although he was born after Nancy had been infected.

They were just regular kids, lived a regular life, with a mom and a dad. They had a young sister, Candy. Candy was diagnosed with AIDS when she was 18 months old, in 1989. The doctors had treated her for a number of conditions. She had persistent diarrhea. She failed to thrive. She had countless CAT scans and blood tests. She learned how to push the plunger of a syringe as the myriad of medications increased. She went through a lot. She was, as her brothers tell me, a mischievous little girl, hamming it up, wearing Elton John-like oversized sunglasses, or a poster-child angel, always a mommy's girl.

Three months before preschool started, she complained about stomach pains. You know why it hurts? Because I have a bad tummy.

For her doctors, it was a little more puzzling than that, and x rays revealed spots on her colon the size of chicken pox. She suffered greatly. She suffered greatly. I almost tear up as I reflect on what this young girl went through. She died on June 25, wrapped in her mom's arms. She was a couple days shy of her sixth birthday. The mother also contracted AIDS and went through great pain and great suffering. Mom ultimately died of AIDS.

I got to know the family. My predecessor, Senator Wellstone, worked in trying to do something for them.

The VA provides health care to some 2,800 veterans who have contracted AIDS in the manner that Mr. Simon contracted AIDS. They provide disability compensation to veterans with AIDS and death and education benefits to the families of veterans who have succumbed to AIDS. In this respect, the VA treats AIDS like other service-connected health conditions.

But in an important way, AIDS is different. It is not like other connected services; it can be transmitted to the spouses and unborn children of servicemen. That is what happened here with Doug Simon. By law, the VA cannot provide any sort of benefits for illnesses contracted by these family members.

Last year, I introduced S. 1509, the Eric and Brian Simon Act. I thought it was a starting point to give a fair deal to veterans and their families with AIDS to provide a one-time \$100,000 benefit to veterans who receive AIDS as a result of a blood transfusion from the service-related injury. For spouses who contracted AIDS from contact with the infected veteran, and offspring of the veteran or spouse infected with AIDS at birth, in the event that the veteran or family member has already

succumbed, compensation would be given to survivors.

That is what has happened here. Douglas Simon is still alive. He is wheelchair-bound, and he suffers from AIDS and AIDS-related conditions, but mom and Candy are gone.

We could not get the bill through. We worked hard. I went to my friend and colleague. We actually had a hearing on this, thanks to the goodness and magnificence of Senator SPECTER. It was an opportunity for Mr. Simon and the boys to come forward and explain what happened. We were not able to move the bill forward, but I met with my friend, Senator BOND, champion of the VA/HUD appropriations committees and laid out this story, this great tragedy of two young men whose lives have been just so excruciatingly painful but not as painful as what their little sister suffered, not as painful as what their mom suffered. Why I am so moved by this issue is perhaps because I have a sister who died from AIDS. I know what this is about, and I know the great pain.

So my colleague, Senator BOND, said: We have to try to figure out a way to help. So in the very last portion of the \$388 billion bill, there is a provision to provide this \$100,000 benefit for these two individuals.

In terms of the scope of this bill, this is a little nothing. But in terms of two kids from Minnesota, who have been through so much, whose dad served this country and suffered such great pain, this is something.

We work on a lot of things in this body. We deal at times with millions and billions of dollars. I have sat with my colleague, Senator TALENT, to my right, and at different points we talk about millions or tens of millions of dollars, and it gets almost abstract. It gets almost so impersonal at times. But the ability to help one family, to touch that one life, to make a difference in that life, to put a smile on their face, to say we are doing our best to correct an injustice, something that went wrong, to be able to deliver on that is very meaningful. It is very special.

As I look at what has come out of that Omnibus bill, and with this provision, it certainly has made me very proud to serve in this body. It has made me appreciative of the kindness and the consideration of my senior colleagues, such as Senator BOND, and I must say his staff member, Jon Kamarck, who worked on this legislation.

We often wait until folks say their goodbye, and we hear very moving and very stunning reflections on lives of service and what it means to be a part of this magnificent institution, the greatest deliberative body in the world, the U.S. Senate. I am humbled to be here, I am thankful to be here, and I am deeply appreciative of the actions and the conscience and the heart and the ability of my colleagues, and in this particular case of the chairman of

the Appropriations VA-HUD subcommittee, the senior Senator from Missouri.

I just wanted to take this time to say thanks, to say it on the RECORD, to say it very loud and clear, to speak for two young Minnesota men who will be getting a little something back. You cannot take away and compensate for all the pain and all the suffering, but you can show that we care, and in this body we do care. I am honored to be part of this body.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ALLEN). The Senator from Ohio.

INTERNET TAX MORATORIUM

Mr. VOINOVICH. Mr. President, on Wednesday of this week, by unanimous consent, the Senate adopted S. Con. Res. 146, which made slight modifications to S. 150, the Internet Tax Non-Discrimination Act.

I am pleased that the House passed S. 150 with the Senate changes, thereby clearing the legislation for President Bush's signature. It is long overdue.

This action ensures that Internet access will remain free from taxation, a policy that has existed since 1998, when, as Governor of Ohio and president of the National Governors Association, I helped negotiate the first moratorium.

I rise to commend my colleagues in the House and the Senate for resolving this issue in a bipartisan manner. Just over a year ago, the Senate became engaged in a spirited debate over the future of the Internet tax moratorium.

The sponsors of S. 150 argued that an expanded and permanent Internet tax moratorium was necessary to facilitate the growth of broadband Internet technologies.

On the surface, this sounded like a very reasonable position. In fact, after studying this issue, I realized that not all Internet technologies were being treated equally. For instance, some States treated digital subscriber line, DSL, service, which uses phone lines to provide high-speed Internet access, as a "telecommunications service" and therefore taxed it. Other States treated DSL Internet access as an "information service" exempt from taxation. The inconsistent treatment of DSL service created a competitive disadvantage for some Internet service providers, and I was willing to help level the playing field. However, several of my colleagues and I, including Senators ALEXANDER, CARPER, FEINSTEIN, and BOB GRAHAM of Florida, had more serious concerns with S. 150.

Specifically, the CBO stated that the new and expanded definition of "Internet access" in S. 150 was an unfunded mandate. Therefore, it was believed that S. 150 would cause significant revenue losses for our State and local governments at a time when they were facing their worst economic crisis in a generation.

In fact, the State of Ohio projected revenue losses of up to \$350 million per year if the Commerce Committee's version of S. 150 passed the Senate. As a former mayor and Governor, I knew my State could not afford to lose \$350 million per year.

Fortunately, the debate on S. 150 was taken off the floor, where Members and staff could try to close the chasm that separated the two sides. From November 2003 to April 2004, Members and staff worked feverishly to find common ground. Both sides listened and worked in good faith. Although it took a few months, I was pleased with the end result.

The final bill, which passed the Senate on April 29, 2004, by a vote of 93 to 3, created a level playing field for Internet service providers sought by the bill's sponsors, while at the same time protected State and local governments from any immediate financial harm.

I was pleased that the original grandfather clause was extended for the length of the moratorium because it provided protections to States, including Ohio, from losing further revenue.

Finally, the negotiated 4-year term of this legislation provides Congress with the necessary time to examine and understand how the new and expanded definition of "Internet access" affects both the growth of broadband Internet service and the revenue base of State and local governments. There has to be some balance.

Senator STEVENS assures me that the Commerce Committee will closely re-examine these issues next Congress. In fact, we just talked about it 10 minutes ago, about the fact he wants to move forward very expeditiously to tackle this very complicated subject.

I commend the Presiding Officer, Senator ALLEN, and Senator WYDEN for their leadership and commitment to this issue. Certainly, no two Members of the Senate have spent more time on it. I also thank Senator MCCAIN for his patience and perseverance and willingness to offer a reasonable compromise upon which both sides could agree.

Additionally, I offer my thanks to Senators ALEXANDER and CARPER. Their vision and steadfast determination to protect State and local governments is commendable, and I was proud to work so closely with my colleagues and former Governors on this issue.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not thank the staff of the Presiding Officer and the staff of other Senators for their hard work and dedication. They really rolled up their sleeves and went to work. They spent hours, countless hours, negotiating subtle yet important nuances in the legislative language in order to reach a compromise. Some of those nuances I had a very difficult time understanding, but they understood them, thank God. The debate and end result of the Internet tax moratorium proves we can work through difficult and highly technical issues in a bipartisan manner.