

Constitutional doctrine and the Voting Rights Act.

These are just two examples of a broader indifference President Bush has shown to the social, economic, and legal obstacles African-Americans are forced to overcome in their ongoing effort to achieve real equality.

Affirmative action has proven beneficial in combating past discrimination and it remains necessary today. Judge Pickering is just one of a host of judicial nominees opposing civil rights. President Bush has put forth as part of a larger effort to pack the Federal courts with ultra-conservative ideologues.

Each of us must do our part to advance the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and to promote civil rights equality. I will continue to provide leadership in the 109th Congress to help minority businesses, increase access to education and health care, improve job growth, and fight racial profiling.

I hope that President Bush and the entire Congress will do the same.

TRIBUTE TO STEVE BEASLEY

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President. I rise today to say a few words of thanks to Steve Beasley, an outstanding agriculture economist at USDA who recently completed a year-long fellowship on the Senate Finance Committee. Steve's service to the committee, and by extension to the State of Montana, will be remembered fondly and with great appreciation.

A year ago I was able to snag Steve away from his job at the Foreign Agriculture Service at the Department of Agriculture. He brought to us years of experience in foreign market development and capacity-building. During his time with the committee, his expertise proved invaluable as he worked on calculating the effects of the North American Free Trade Agreement on Montana agricultural products, analyzing the effect of agricultural trade liberalization on crop prices over the past few years, as well as helping prepare me for trade missions to Australia, New Zealand, China, Japan, and Thailand.

Half of my State's economy is based on agriculture, and the work Steve did for us will serve us for the next several years as we examine the effects of trade on our economy's largest sector. I am sad to see him go, but I know the USDA is eager to get him back. I thank him for his hard work over this past year, and I wish him all the luck in the future.

TRIBUTE TO MR. PAUL KASTEN

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, Senator BAUCUS and I are honored today to pay tribute to Paul Kasten and thank him for the exceptional service and commitment he has given to the people of Montana. Mr. Kasten served faithfully with the U.S. Postal Service, particularly to Montanans along the Brockway, Paris, Watkins, and Flow-

ing Wells rural mail route loop. As he celebrates a well-deserved retirement, let it be known that he leaves behind a memorable and strong legacy, spanning 57 years of dedicated service to the U.S. Postal Service, his eastern Montana mail route loop, and the people of the State of Montana. We know Congressman REHBERG sends his support and congratulations as well for Paul's significant achievement.

Beginning with a team of horses, Mr. Kasten delivered the mail faithfully to this frontier mail route for 57 noteworthy years, honorably upholding the U.S. Postal Service's code of conduct. In fact, he has gone above and beyond the call of duty on many occasions, delivering groceries and other necessary items to many people along this remote mail route during his tenure. It is clear that Mr. Paul Kasten has ceaselessly served the U.S. Postal Service and the State of Montana for nearly six decades, and is justly deserving of the honor due to him today. It is with great pride that Senator BAUCUS and I bring to the attention of this great body the hard work that Mr. Kasten has completed, both to the State of Montana and to Montana's people. Thank you for all your commendable service, Paul, and we wish you and your family all the best in your future endeavors.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

HONORING DENNIS WIESE

• Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I rise today to publicly commend the work of Mr. Dennis Wiese, President of South Dakota Farmers Union, SDFU, for his 12 years of dedicated service to South Dakota's farmers, ranchers and rural people. After six and a half terms as President of SDFU, Dennis has decided not to seek reelection and will begin his own consulting business in his hometown of Flandreau, SD.

Over the years, Dennis has been extraordinarily committed to South Dakota agriculture and is a real ambassador for farming and ranching in the state. As chair of the National Farmers Union subcommittee that worked on the farm bill rural development section, Dennis' insight was invaluable, during negotiations on the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002.

Since its establishment in 1914, South Dakota Farmers Union has consistently been a voice for family farmers and ranchers, always striving to improve the business climate for agriculture and the quality of life for all South Dakotans. Now, 91 years later, SDFU is regarded as the leader on issues concerning concentration in the agri-business sector. I have always been able to rely on Dennis and the SDFU for the backing needed to stand up for the family agricultural producers and the special position they hold America's business and cultural structure. Always looking to improve

the quality of rural living, Dennis has been a consistent champion for fair trade, even when the notion has been unpopular to some. Throughout his presidency, Dennis faced some difficult situations. However, he never lost focus on the concerns that are important to South Dakotans and continued to work for the betterment of rural America.

Under Dennis' leadership, SDFU has enhanced the lives of thousands of South Dakotans through various educational programs, particularly those aimed at the younger generation of farmers. Involvement in the SDFU education program jumped from 389 young producers enrolled in camps in 1997, to over 1,200 participants in the most recent camps. These camps teach young people about the benefits of cooperatives and shared responsibility, as well as the important rural values that make South Dakota stronger. As Dennis noted in his farewell speech to SDFU:

The most important Farmers Union is not the Farmers Union of yesterday. It is not the Farmers Union that I inherited from Dallas Tonsager, or the one we enjoy today. The most important Farmers Union is the one we turn over to the next generation of Farmers Union leaders. The most important Farmers Union is the Farmers Union of tomorrow.

Dennis' hard work as president is reflected in the impressive legacy he leaves behind. SDFU has a strong, expanding membership, and prosperous and thriving education program filled with innovative ideas to revitalize South Dakota's rural communities.

It is with great honor that I share Dennis' accomplishments with my colleagues and publicly commend him for excellently serving South Dakota and family farmers. I wish the very best for him, his wife Julie, and his children Dayton, Kyle, Owen, Austin and Elysa. •

HONORING DR. VINE DELORIA, JR.

• Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, it is with great honor that I publicly commend Dr. Vine Deloria, Jr., for receiving the American Indian Visionary Award.

Dr. Deloria, a member of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe, is a distinguished Native American scholar whose research, writings, and teaching span history, law, religion, and politics. This award, given by the Native American publication, Indian Country Today, honors those who display "the highest qualities and attributes of leadership in defending the foundations of American Indian freedom." This is an honor Dr. Deloria richly deserves.

Born in 1933 in Martin, SD., Dr. Deloria has been at the forefront of American Indian activism since the 1960s. As executive director of the National Congress of American Indians from 1964 to 1967, Dr. Deloria frequently worked with leaders whose experience dated back to the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. Consequently, Dr. Deloria attributes his involvement

in the Indian movement to working with those influential people, as they encouraged a new breed of activists.

For the past 4 decades, Dr. Deloria has been a voice of influence in Indian history, writing more than twenty books and countless articles and lectures. His works stimulated political thinking and discourse among Indian activists. As Wilma Mankiller, former Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, said of Dr. Deloria, "No writer has more clearly articulated the unspoken emotions, dreams and lifeways of contemporary Native people."

Now a retired professor of political science from the University of Arizona and retired professor emeritus from the University of Colorado, Dr. Deloria is still writing and inspiring young activists from his home in Tucson, Arizona. In fact, Time magazine recognized Deloria as one of the 11 most influential religious thinkers of the twentieth century. As Indian Country Today notes, "Vine Deloria Jr. provided enormous perception, guidance, strategy and sheer analytical heft to the struggle for respect and justice for American Indians."

Dr. Vine Deloria, Jr., is an extraordinary pioneer and supporter of Native American rights and the honor of winning the American Indian Visionary Award is one he highly deserves. He is a man of great scholarship and knowledge, and will continue to shape history for years to come. Dr. Deloria has never sought honors or recognition, but his scholarship has brought him well-deserved accolades. It is an honor for me to share his accomplishments with my colleagues and to publicly commend Dr. Deloria on his talent and commitment to history, understanding, and education.●

TRIBUTE TO DR. DAVID A. AUSTIN

• Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today to pay tribute to Dr. David A. Austin, an extraordinary man who touched many lives but passed away on November 4, 2004.

Dr. Austin lived a life full of vitality and enthusiasm. He had an accomplished career, always helped others without thought for himself and made his family the center of his life.

Dr. Austin was born in Brattleboro, VT, where he graduated from St. Michael's High School and received his Bachelor of Science from St. Michael's College. From there he went on to medical school at the University of Vermont where he began his lifelong career of healing and helping others.

After receiving his Naval Medical Officer commission, he continued his education, graduating from the Naval Deep Sea Diving School here in Washington, DC and the School of Submarine and Undersea Medicine in New London, CT.

After completing his active duty and residency at St. Albans Naval Hospital in New York, Dr. Austin opened his

medical practice in Rutland in 1970. When not practicing medicine, he was busy serving the community as a member of the Christ the King Elementary School Parent-Teacher Association and the Mount St. Joseph Academy school board, on both of which he served as president for a time.

Later in life, when many people his age were settling into retirement, he was called up during the first Gulf War to Bahrain to serve his country once again, after which he was awarded the Presidential Meritorious Service Medal.

But one of his greatest honors came last April when his peers in the medical community awarded him the Physician of the Year Award. A better man could not have been recognized.

Dr. Austin will be missed by family, friends and all those he touched with his healing hand.●

TRIBUTE TO ADAM GARDNER, YILEI YANG, ASHLEY SMITH, JACK HARTZ AND BENJAMIN GOWAN

• Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, I wish to pay tribute to Adam Gardner, Yilei Yang, Ashley Smith, Jack Hartz and Benjamin Gowan as five truly outstanding students from the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

The National Honor Society organizes a Scholar's Bowl to foster a spirit of aspiration and hard work in America's students. These Scholar Bowls include testing of each student in five different categories: English, math, science, social studies, and general knowledge. The tests are rigorous and they require a longstanding history as a good student.

Being recognized by this organization is truly an honor and I am pleased to hear that these five students from Kentucky have become the National Honor Society's Scholar Bowl Champions. The four students from duPont Manual High School in Louisville, KY successfully defended their school's title as National Honor Society National Scholar's Bowl Champions. They are Adam Gardner, Yilei Yang, Ashley Smith, and Jack Hartz. One student, Benjamin Gowan, from Nelson County High School in Bardstown, KY, took first place in the test on the individual science subject category. Thanks to the hard work of these young men and women, four out of five of the top scoring students at last year's Scholar's Bowl were from the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

In their letter to me, the National Honor Society informed me that "these Kentucky students truly exhibited superlative performance." I congratulate these five students for their hard work and their achievement.●

CELEBRATING WILLIAM BEAUMONT HOSPITAL'S FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

• Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, on behalf of Senator STABENOW and myself, I con-

gratulate the William Beaumont Hospital on 50 years of dedicated service to the Michigan community.

William Beaumont Hospital opened its doors in Royal Oak in 1955 as a result of a survey in southeast Michigan which showed an overwhelming need for medical assistance in the area. The survey was quickly proven correct. Within its first week of operation, the hospital performed over 40 major surgeries and delivered over 30 babies. As the need continued to grow, Beaumont opened a second hospital in 1977 in Troy.

In the past 50 years, Beaumont has grown significantly, logging nearly 1.7 million inpatient admissions and nearly 3.3 million emergency visits. It works closely with several universities in Michigan to provide premier residency and fellowship programs and the Beaumont Research Institute conducts more than 800 active studies funded by grants.

Today, Beaumont is ranked among the top hospitals not just in Michigan but in the Nation. With staff representing over 90 different medical and surgical specialties, Beaumont has been honored with numerous awards including AARP's "Top 50 Hospitals," one of "America's Best Hospitals" by U.S. News and World Report, a "100 Top Hospitals—National Benchmarks for Success" by Solucient, and one of Michigan's "Best Places to Work" by Crain's Detroit Business.

Senator STABENOW and I are delighted to have the opportunity to thank the former and current staff of Beaumont Hospital for their enormous contributions to the State of Michigan and to congratulate them on reaching this significant milestone.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Ms. Evans, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

EXECUTIVE REPORT OF COMMITTEE

The following executive report of committee was submitted:

By Mr. CRAIG for the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

* Jim Nicholson, of Colorado, to be Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

* Nomination was reported with recommendation that it be confirmed subject to the nominee's commitment to