

many of our colleagues have chosen a metropolitan setting, where they concentrate on companion animals. As a result, the number of food animal graduates has slowed to a trickle. The reality, however, is that food animal practitioners are more important to society than ever before. There is an acute shortage of food animal veterinarians during a time when the world is threatened by zoonotic and foreign animal diseases. At the same time, we are experiencing the same crisis level shortages of public health veterinarians. Most new graduates are not choosing a career in this essential segment of veterinary medicine. The profession must find ways to encourage undergraduates to enter food animal and public health practice.

In an attempt to resolve the critical food animal veterinary shortage, AVMA has been working on a number of strategies and initiatives.

For example, as many of you know, the AVMA helped fund a study to estimate the future demand and availability of food supply veterinarians and to investigate the means for maintaining the required numbers.

AVMA also approved and financially supported the development of benchmarking tools for production animal practitioners by the National Commission on Veterinary Economic Issues. These benchmarking tools are designed to provide our current practitioners with help in ensuring that their practices are financially successful. That, in turn, will assist in attracting future veterinarians to food animal practice.

The government relations division of the AVMA is diligently working to convince Congress to provide Federal funding for the National Veterinary Medical Service Act. If fully funded, that act could go a long way toward encouraging recent graduates to practice food animal medicine in underserved areas and provide veterinary services to the Federal Government in emergency situations. Just last month, the Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee approved \$750,000 for a pilot program. We applaud the efforts of Representatives Pickering and Turner and Senators Cochran and Harkin, all of whom sponsored the original bill, and want to thank the Appropriations Subcommittee, especially Senator Brownback for his kind words and commitment to veterinary medicine.

AVMA is also lobbying our Federal legislators to pass the Veterinary Workforce Expansion Act—an important piece of legislation that will provide us with sorely needed public health and public practice veterinarians. Today's public health practitioners play an invaluable role in U.S. agriculture, food safety, zoonotic disease control, animal welfare, homeland security, and international standards and trade. Without an adequate number of public health veterinarians, the wellbeing of our Nation—yes, even the world—is at risk. Senator Allard has been invaluable and unwavering in his dedication to moving this act forward through the complicated legislative process. I intend to do everything I can as president to provide support to Senator Allard's effort to pass the Veterinary Workforce Expansion Act.

On the international education level, AVMA has been committed to the global unity of the profession for decades. The AVMA Council on Education has partnered with Canada since the accreditation system was developed and has accredited six foreign veterinary colleges. We are working with six additional schools. We are extremely proud of those colleges. As more inquiries come forward, it is self-evident that the world looks to us as the gold standard in educational goals and expectations.

At the same time, I will be supporting the efforts of our specialty organizations to attract and train the new practitioners they need. Currently, there are 20 veterinary specialty organizations comprising 37 distinct areas of expertise under the AVMA umbrella.

The AVMA economic report on veterinarians and veterinary practices has revealed a substantial difference between the incomes of specialists and nonspecialists practicing in similar disciplines. I will, as president, encourage the development of additional in-depth financial surveys that, hopefully, will motivate our undergraduates to further their education and achieve specialty status, thus helping ensure that public demands for advanced veterinary medical services are being met while, at the same time, increasing our economic base.

Hopefully, these additional specialists will serve as a resource for our veterinary colleges who are becoming increasingly understaffed.

In the past 15 years, we have seen a shift in the demographics of our profession. I will bet there were plenty of raised eyebrows when McKillips College, in 1903, and the Chicago Veterinary College, in 1910, graduated our country's first female veterinarians. It is hard to believe that as recently as 1963, the profession included only 277 female veterinarians.

We are proud of the fact that an increasing number of our graduates are women. Their contributions and leadership have strengthened our profession. However, the recent AVMA-Pfizer study confirmed lower mean female incomes within the profession. Now is the time to explore solutions to that problem, and I will do everything in my power to ensure that this issue is thoroughly investigated and addressed.

To achieve unity, I firmly believe that we must be inclusive, not exclusive. The public has always been well served by the diversity in our practice areas. Now, we must diversify our membership. The AVMA—with more than 72,000 members representing 68 constituent organizations in the House of Delegates—must now seek to represent every race, creed, and color. As a profession, we must mirror the public, and they us. We must become a profession more reflective of the population we serve.

Over 30 years ago, Dr. H.J. Magrane, then president of the AVMA, spoke often and passionately about the need for inclusion and equality in our profession. As a profession, we have still not made the advances in diversity that are necessary.

As the great social scientist, Margaret Mead said: "In diversity . . . we will add to our strength."

In order to achieve our diversity goals, we must initiate both practical and creative ideas to arrive at an enriched membership. It is up to us, all of us, to reach out to young people and to nurture their interests and talents so that we become the shining example of professional diversity. We need to be involved in youth groups, in churches and in our public schools, and united in our quest, so that others say: We must emulate the AVMA.

Once in veterinary school, our students, all our students, need to know that we, as a profession, are there to mentor and to help them through the special challenges they face. None of us got to where we are today without at least one special person—one special veterinarian—who took us under his or her wing and proved to be our own personal cornerstone. We can do no less for those who are striving today to become members of our profession.

In what programs is the AVMA currently involved concerning diversity? First, at its April 2005 meeting, the board approved the

establishment of a task force on diversity. That task force will recommend steps that we must take to meet our goals in diversity.

But here is something you can do in the immediate future. Tomorrow, our convention will offer a full day diversity symposium, including an appearance by Dr. Debbye Turner, veterinarian, former Miss America, and contributor to the CBS Early Show. I hope many of you will plan on spending part of your day attending these important meetings, if time permits.

Diversity will also be an integral part of the 2006 Veterinary Leadership Conference. Each of these opportunities is designed to help us achieve the diversity we have talked about for so long.

So what is on our want list for 2005? As I have mentioned, critical shortages exist in food animal and public health veterinarians. But we also are desperately in need of teachers and researchers. We need policy experts and homeland security professionals. We need legislative leaders, and we need veterinarians who are visionaries and who can lead us in this era of globalization. There exists such critical shortages in so many areas that some days I wonder if our small numbers can, in fact, make a difference.

But then I am asked to speak somewhere. And I look at the enthusiastic faces in my audience—established veterinarians who are deeply involved in their State and local associations, students who live and breathe only to count off the days until they can touch their dream, high school students with straight A's who are anxious to know what else they have to do to make it into veterinary school, third graders with a commitment to animals that rivals the grit and determination of a Jack Russell terrier—and I know that we will not only survive but thrive.

As I have said, my presidency will be dedicated to re-energizing the unity that has always been our strength and foundation. As another President from the Northeast, John F. Kennedy, once said, "Let us not be blind to our differences—but let us also direct attention to our common interests."

Ladies and gentlemen, our common interests are so much greater than our differences. Like the society and world around us, we are changing. And change is never easy. But with your help, and our combined dedication and attention to preserving and protecting our unity of purpose, we will thrive and remain one of the most admired and respected professions in the world.

During the coming year, I will be looking to you for help. I will listen and I will participate. I will follow your lead and I will lead to enlighten. I implore each of you to participate in this great organization and make it your own. For you are the teachers, you are the visionaries, you are veterinary medicine.

CHANGE OF VOTE

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Pennsylvania is recognized.

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that on rollcall vote No. 209, regarding the Central American Free Trade Agreement, I be recorded as having voted nay instead of my previous vote in favor of the measure. I understand this change will not affect the outcome of the vote. I thank the majority leader and the Democratic leader.

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

Mr. SPECTER. I thank the Chair.

40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I rise to pay tribute to a piece of a landmark civil rights legislation on the occasion of its 40th Anniversary: the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Before the passage of the Voting Rights Act, African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and others were routinely prevented from voting. The various tactics used to impede and discourage people from registering to vote or turning out on election day ranged from literacy tests, poll taxes, and language barriers, to overt voter intimidation and harassment.

On August 6, 1965, when President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965, America took a critical step forward in its quest for inclusiveness. Just a year earlier, President Johnson had signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, proclaiming that in America,

We believe that all men are created equal, yet many are denied equal treatment. We believe that all men have certain unalienable rights, yet many Americans do not enjoy those rights. We believe that all men are entitled to the blessings of liberty, yet millions are being deprived of those blessings, not because of their own failures, but because of color of the skin.

President Johnson knew then what we still recognize today. The enactment of both of these critical pieces of legislation was only one step in our country's journey to become an inclusive America where all its citizens enjoy the rights and protections guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.

When he recalled this day, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wisely pointed out that "the bill that lay on the polished mahogany desk was born in violence in Selma, AL, where a stubborn sheriff had stumbled against the future." Dr. King was, of course, referring to "Bloody Sunday," the March 7, 1965, incident where more than 500 non-violent civil rights marchers attempting a 54-mile march to the state capital to call for voting rights were confronted by an aggressive assault by authorities.

In our country's history, we have stumbled, but great leaders such as Dr. King, and countless others who toiled and gave their lives, made certain that we got back up and continued on our path toward progress.

On the dawn of its 40th anniversary, Congress is preparing for the reauthorization of key provisions in the Voting Rights Act that will expire in 2007. I hope that the Senate can rise above the partisanship that often plagues this body to renew the promise of inclusiveness that the Voting Rights Act has sought to achieve since its inception. In the past, we have been able to accomplish this and the results have been truly extraordinary.

Since the passage of the Voting Rights Act, the doors to opportunity

for political participation by previously disenfranchised groups have swung open. Their voices have been heard and counted. The result has been an America where the number of black elected officials nationwide has risen from 300 in 1964 to more than 9,000 today. In addition, there are over 5,000 Latinos who now hold public office, and there are still hundreds more Asian Americans and Native Americans serving as elected officials.

However, in order to continue to make progress, Congress will need to reauthorize and maintain its enforcement of the Voting Rights Act. Today, as we work to promote democracy in Iraq and other regions of the world, I wish to honor the legacy of this milestone in our own Nation's democracy and to thank all those who have been a part of the civil rights movements.

I thank the President and yield the floor.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT RESOLUTION

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I rise today on the 15th anniversary of the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act to commemorate its passage, commend its many authors, and suggest some actions we should take to protect, preserve, and advance its legacy as a vital component of our laws on civil rights.

Fifteen years ago, President George Herbert Walker Bush signed into law the Americans with Disabilities Act, a landmark piece of legislation that extended civil rights protections to individuals with disabilities.

Prior to the passage of the ADA, far too many of our fellow Americans with disabilities faced utterly unnecessary obstacles. Many lacked accessible transportation, reasonable workplace accommodations, and entree to government buildings.

Passionate reformers of all stripes sought to change this, and we cannot discuss the ADA without first mentioning the name Justin Dart, Jr. Never without his trademark cowboy hat, Justin Dart worked tirelessly for enactment of the act. His efforts came to national attention in 1981, when President Reagan appointed him to be the vice-chair of what is now known as the National Council on Disability. Mr. Dart and others on the council drafted a policy that called for civil rights legislation to end discrimination against people with disabilities, a policy that eventually would form the basis for the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Widely respected and beloved by both sides, Justin Dart passed away in 2002.

Another champion for Americans with disabilities was, without question, our former colleague, Bob Dole. It was 1942 when, at the age of 19, Bob Dole joined the Army to fight in World War II. A year later, in the hills of Italy fighting the Nazis, Senator Dole was hit by gunfire. The shot shattered his

right shoulder, fractured vertebrae in his neck and spine, paralyzed him from the neck down, and damaged a kidney.

Of course, he recovered to become one of the most influential legislators of the 20th century. Urging Congress to pass the ADA, he said, "This historic civil rights legislation seeks to end the unjustified segregation and exclusion of persons with disabilities from the mainstream of American life."

A study of the legislative history of the act reveals that it was, in every sense, a bipartisan accomplishment. The legislation supports a notion in which President Reagan deeply believed. He used to say that there is no limit to what you can accomplish if you don't care who gets the credit.

The act was then signed into law by another great American, President George H. W. Bush. In signing the legislation, President Bush spoke of what he felt the law would offer Americans with disabilities. He said "This Act . . . will ensure that people with disabilities are given the basic guarantees for which they have worked so long and so hard: independence, freedom of choice, control of their lives, the opportunity to blend fully and equally into the rich mosaic of the American mainstream."

Since the passage of the ADA, we have seen significant improvements in the employment and economic well-being of citizens with disabilities. In 2003, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that over the previous 15 years, the employment rate for working age men with a disability had increased by more than 25 percent. Other evidence of the ADA's impact was even more readily apparent. For instance, the barriers to mobility once posed by public transportation have been largely eliminated. Here in Washington, DC, for example, 95 percent of the Metro system is accessible to persons with disabilities.

However, anniversaries are not just for looking back and celebrating the achievements of the past. They must also be an occasion for looking forward to the challenges that still lie before us.

A report issued by the Institute for Higher Education Policy in 2004 revealed that less than two-thirds of youths with disabilities receive standard high school diplomas. Although this graduation rate represents a significantly higher rate than 15 years ago, it remains inadequate, and significantly behind the rate for individuals without disabilities.

We in Congress must maintain high expectations for all Americans. Americans with disabilities can compete and cooperate at the same level as Americans without disabilities. I was happy to work on the No Child Left Behind Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, both of which incorporated the principle of high expectations for all, regardless of race, gender, or disability.

We also must incorporate the latest technology to help further incorporate