

Desert refuge offers a truly varied landscape.

The Desert National Wildlife Refuge was originally established for the preservation and management of Nevada's desert bighorn sheep population, which had begun to decline as early as the 1880s. The desert bighorn sheep is the State animal of Nevada and, thanks in large part to the refuge and the work of groups such as the Fraternity of the Desert Bighorn and Nevada Bighorns Unlimited, our bighorn sheep population has been steadily rising in recent years.

I would be remiss if I didn't also take a few moments to talk about the incredible sheep range that runs up the east side of refuge. Rising nearly 10,000 feet out of the desert floor and running over 50 miles in length, this mountain range has engaged the imaginations of Americans since well before southern Nevada was settled. This most memorable natural landmark is one of the key reasons that President Nixon proposed much of the refuge for wilderness designation in 1974.

On this occasion of the 80th anniversary of the founding of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge, I thank all those who have worked to protect these lands. I also salute those visionary individuals—some generations ago—that recognized the need to preserve this incredible habitat for desert bighorn sheep and the myriad of other species that still thrive on these lands.

CELEBRATING THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF TOYOTA MOTOR MANUFACTURING, WEST VIRGINIA

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, West Virginians are both a prayerful and a prideful people. We cherish our State, honor its unique heritage, and revere its citizenry. Our respect for one another and for our joint accomplishments is apparent in every corner and cranny of this wondrous State, filled with unparalleled scenic beauty, old-fashioned hospitality, and a sincere commitment to excellence. Our belief in ourselves and in our abilities is apparent when we welcome our troops home from service overseas; when we watch our sons and daughters receive their high school diplomas; when our communities band together to overcome tragedy; or when we gather together to celebrate shared and lofty achievement. It is always the same: Mountaineer pride runs strong and deep in West Virginia.

West Virginia pride is particularly on display today in Buffalo, WV, where Toyota Motor Manufacturing, West Virginia, TMMWV, is celebrating its 10th anniversary. I commend Toyota on its commitment to West Virginia, and I heartily congratulate the company on its celebration of 10 years in the Mountaineer State.

I have seen, over the past decade, how hundreds of West Virginians each day have committed themselves to their work at Toyota. The high stand-

ards that have been set by the men and women who work at Toyota's facility in Buffalo show that our State, though small in size, successfully plays host to one of the world's largest, most successful, and well-respected companies. Toyota's plant in Buffalo truly deserves its fine reputation, based on its gains in productivity, its high standards for fine quality, and its unfailing commitment to the future.

Toyota Motor Manufacturing established its operations in West Virginia in 1996, and currently produces four-cylinder engines for the Toyota Corolla, the Matrix, and the Pontiac Vibe. It also produces V6 engines for the Toyota Sienna and Solara. The plant also manufactures automatic transmissions for the U.S.-built Solara, Sienna and Avalon, the Canadian-built Lexus RX 350, and the Japan-built Highlander, providing quality jobs for over 1,000 West Virginians. And employment there is projected to grow to 1,150 workers when the existing transmission plant is expanded as promised.

In fact, last year Toyota announced that it would undertake a \$120 million expansion of its engine and transmission plant in Buffalo. As a result, beginning in 2007, Toyota Motor Manufacturing in West Virginia will build 240,000 additional automatic transmissions per year. This will bring the plant's total automatic transmission capacity to 600,000 units, and this fifth expansion by Toyota in West Virginia will bring its total investment there to near the \$1 billion mark.

Every day, in Buffalo, hundreds of West Virginians commit themselves to superior performance. Toyota has become a highly valued member of the West Virginia business community, and the company's commitment to its continued expansion in our State sends a clear message to the world not only that West Virginia's workforce is top of the line, but also that communities throughout West Virginia make our State a beacon for business, including international investment. The employment provided by Toyota at Buffalo constitutes exactly the type of well-paying jobs, with accompanying health and pension benefits, that West Virginia workers so richly deserve.

Mr. President, I would like to take this opportunity to once again congratulate Toyota on its 10th anniversary in West Virginia. I thank Dr. Toyoda for believing in West Virginia. I also congratulate Toyota Motor Manufacturing, West Virginia President Yutaka Mizuno and the men and women of this plant for its all of its truly spectacular achievements in its first decade in our fair State.

I would also like to thank my dear friend and colleague, Senator JAY ROCKEFELLER, who worked so tirelessly and in such good faith to bring Toyota to West Virginia. JAY and I, and all West Virginians, are pleased and proud to have Toyota in Buffalo, WV. May this be the first of many more decades of partnership and accomplishment for

our State and for Toyota Motor Manufacturing.

Mr. BAYH. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate Toyota Motor Manufacturing of Indiana, on celebrating the 10th anniversary of its truck assembly plant in Princeton. Since opening its doors 10 years ago, Toyota's Princeton plant has spurred economic growth in southwest Indiana and brought quality, good-paying jobs to the State, giving more workers the opportunity to provide for their families and live the American dream.

When I was Governor, I was proud to join with Toyota Motor Corporation, TMC, Chairman Hiroshi Okuda in bringing the Toyota truck assembly plant to Princeton as part of my economic development for a growing economy, EDGE, initiative. Over the past 10 years, Toyota's Princeton plant has experienced remarkable growth, which has had a substantial, positive economic impact on the State of Indiana as well as the local economy.

Toyota's initial investment of \$700 million in the Princeton assembly plant led to the immediate creation of 1,300 family-wage jobs and resulted in the production of approximately 100,000 trucks per year. Today, Toyota's investment has grown to more than \$2.6 billion, and its truck assembly plant now employs more than 4,700 men and women who produce more than 300,000 vehicles each year, including the Tundra full-size pickup truck, Sequoia sport utility vehicle, and Sienna minivan.

This exceptional growth and the recent announcement of Toyota's collaboration with Subaru in Lafayette have made it one of Indiana's largest auto manufacturers. Toyota's efforts demonstrate its continued commitment to the State and highlight the contributions Toyota has made to the United States and local communities in Indiana.

It is estimated that Toyota's annual economic impact on the State of Indiana is equal to about 31,385 jobs, nearly \$503 million in employee compensation, and \$5.5 billion in business sales. A study conducted by the University of Evansville and the University of Southern Indiana estimates that in Gibson County alone, Toyota is annually responsible for 8,865 jobs, approximately \$119 million in employee compensation, and \$519 million in business sales.

I am honored to have the opportunity to enter this tribute in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of the Senate and commend Toyota Motor Manufacturing of Indiana for all that it has done for Hoosier working men and women over the past 10 years.

DAY OF PRAYER FOR COLOMBIA

Mr. JOHNSON. This Sunday, members of Lutheran World Relief, in conjunction with churches and people of faith, will pray for a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Colombia. Lutheran World Relief advocates for those

around the world suffering from poverty, hunger, or injustice. It is a voice for the most vulnerable worldwide, and this weekend Lutheran World Relief will shine a bright light on the current situation in Colombia.

For over 40 years, Colombia has been engulfed in a civil conflict pitting guerrilla groups against the Colombian Government. As a result, innocent civilians have been kidnapped and ransomed; illicit coca production and drug trafficking continue to plague the country; and thousands have died or have been forced from their homes in order to flee violence.

The United States has provided assistance to Colombia, both military and economic, in order to stem the illegal trade in drugs and promote a peaceful resolution to the civil conflict. However, Colombia remains the leading supplier of the world's cocaine, and it is home to at least three illegally armed groups that have been designated foreign terrorist organizations by the U.S. Department of State. Without question, Congress must assist countries in eradicating drug crops and combating terrorism. However, we must also remember that societies are based on the rule of law, and human rights must be respected. We should not sacrifice one goal in order to achieve another.

Lutheran churches in South Dakota around the Nation are in solidarity with peace communities in Colombia. I commend Lutheran parishioners and worshippers of other faiths, as they pray for peace and remember all those who have perished in the conflict. As a Lutheran myself, I believe protecting human rights in Colombia must remain a high priority.

RETIREMENT OF LEONIDAS RALPH MECHAM

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, today I rise to pay tribute to Leonidas Ralph Mecham, who recently retired after more than 20 years as Director of the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts. As that agency's longest-serving Director, Ralph ably guided the judiciary through some turbulent and challenging times, and for such he deserves the praise and commendation of this body.

Ralph Mecham was born on April 23, 1928, in Murray, UT. He earned a bachelor's degree with highest honors from the University of Utah, a law degree from George Washington University, and a master's degree in public administration from Harvard University. Ralph's first stint here in Washington began more than 50 years ago, when he served as a legislative assistant and administrative assistant to Senator Wallace Bennett of Utah, the father of our colleague Senator BOB BENNETT. Ralph returned to our State to serve as vice president of his alma mater, the University of Utah, where he also taught constitutional law and was responsible for creating the University of Utah Research Park.

Ralph could not stay away from Washington and returned to serve as Special Assistant to the Secretary of Commerce. In July 1985, Chief Justice Warren Burger appointed him Director of the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts. The Administrative Office provides internal administrative support to the judicial branch and communicates on behalf of the judiciary with Congress, the executive branch, and the public.

Ralph served in this capacity during a particularly challenging time for the judiciary. Providing effective judicial administration in the face of budgetary constraints is difficult when the Federal judiciary's caseload continues its upward spiral. Cases filed in the U.S. Court of Appeals, for example, more than doubled during Ralph's time as Director. The number of bankruptcy cases skyrocketed from 365,000 to over 1,780,000 in that same period. In addition, national tragedies such as the terrorist attacks of September 11, as well as catastrophes such as Hurricane Katrina, created their own unique challenges to the continued functioning of the judiciary. Ralph met each challenge effectively. His extensive background in public administration and experience in both the legislative and executive branches served him well in equipping the judicial branch for its critical tasks even through these challenges and troubled times.

Ralph also helped guide the judicial branch through a period of increased public attention and even criticism regarding judicial decisions. Protecting judicial independence while also enhancing public understanding of the function of judges in our system of government is just the kind of balancing act Ralph was prepared to tackle. He did so effectively with a steady hand.

The Director of the Administrative Office serves as secretary of the Judicial Conference and as a member of its executive committee. The judges who chaired the executive committee during Ralph's tenure also have praised his work.

The current executive committee chairman, U.S. District Judge Thomas F. Hogan, says that "[w]atching Ralph operate is like watching a master conductor guide the philharmonic orchestra through a complicated Bach symphony." If only this could be said of us Senators and our work on our committees or on this floor.

Judge Carolyn Dineen King, Chief Judge of the Fifth Circuit, chaired the executive committee from 2002 to 2005. In tackling a wide range of problems, she says, "Director Mecham exhibited his usual inventiveness, intensity, tenacity, and judgment and his remarkable ability to inspire others . . . to do the very best they were capable of."

Judge Wilfred Feinberg of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit chaired the executive committee from 1987 to 1989. He has said that "Ralph handled this difficult job with confidence, competence and dedication. It

is a testament to his hard work and dedication that today the federal courts to a large extent so successfully manage their own resources and operations."

Judge Ralph K. Winter, also a former Chief Judge of the Second Circuit, chaired the executive committee a decade later, from 1999 to 2000. He believed that Ralph showed "a remarkable capacity for keeping the long view in mind while putting out the short-term fires that would relentlessly pop up in various directions."

Perhaps the best applause for Ralph Mecham's leadership comes from Sixth Circuit Judge Gilbert Merritt, who chaired the executive committee from 1994 to 1996. "The judiciary is in much better shape administratively than it was 20 years ago." Whether in our families, our communities, or our work, we should each strive to leave those in our charge better off than we found them.

I was pleased to hear that Ralph recently received the 2006 National Public Service Award in recognition of his excellence in a half-century of public service. The award announcement noted his support for the Judicial Conference by providing high-quality services to judges and the courts, and by building relationships both inside and outside the judiciary.

Ralph Mecham has been married to the former Barbara Folsom for more than 55 years. With 5 children and 14 grandchildren, he is a devoted family man. Ralph has served in various positions in church and community, including time as a missionary in Great Britain, chairman of the Utah State Heart Association, chairman of the Salt Lake County Cancer Association, and chairman of the University of Utah National Advisory Council. His commitment to the community and to his church continues.

The judicial branch and the country are better because of Ralph's service. I want to commend him for his commitment and for setting a good example of public service. His record tells me that, even in supposed retirement, Ralph Mecham will continue helping and serving those around him.

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.)