

implement an appropriate solution to the outfall canal and pumping challenges which would be constructed under this authority. Evacuating storm water to the Mississippi River, rather than into the outfall canals, should be considered as part of any comprehensive plan constructed under this authority.

The conference agreement also includes bill language that authorizes the replacement or modification of non-Federal levees in Plaquemines Parish. The conferees urge the Secretary to expedite efforts that will supplement or compliment existing Federal protection adjacent to the Mississippi River banks associated with the New Orleans to Venice project.

Section 7012(b) clarifies that all work authorized pursuant to sections 7012(a)(2) through 7012(a)(9) and Section 7013 shall be performed at full Federal expense.

Section 7013 authorizes the closure and restoration of the Mississippi River gulf outlet ecosystem. It is the intent that the full restoration of the area be included as part of the program. The Secretary should progress with the closure as soon as possible and should consider using funds and authorization provided in Public Law 109-148 and Public Law 109-234 immediately upon enactment of this act.

Section 7014 requires the Secretary to submit actual project recommendations as part of the Louisiana coastal protection and restoration analysis and design. Despite several communications, the Secretary has continued down a course that is entirely inconsistent with congressional intent in regard to this analysis and design. It remains very concerning that the Secretary considers expending \$20 million to develop a document that will provide little guidance and not advance future protection efforts a wise use of taxpayer funds. Further, it is inexcusable that the Congress was forced to include this directive in statute to refocus this analysis and design on the intent of Congress. The original intent of the authorization was clear that Corps was to provide actual project recommendations, design, and a technical report. The intentional mismanagement of this effort by the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works is concerning, will cause delays in protection improvements, and may result in additional loss of life and property. Further, it is noteworthy that the statute requiring the development of this document placed the requirement upon the Chief of Engineers to provide this information to Congress. Yet the interim report was signed only by the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works. I commend GEN Carl Strock for the integrity he apparently demonstrated in this case.

LOUISIANA WWII VETERANS

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to pay

tribute to a group of 96 World War II veterans from the Acadiana region of Louisiana that is making their way to Washington this weekend. Here they will visit the World War II, Korea, Vietnam and Marine Corps memorials as well as Arlington National Cemetery to lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns.

The trip to the Nation's Capital this Saturday is being paid for by group in Lafayette, LA, called Louisiana HonorAir. The organization is honoring each surviving Louisiana veteran by giving them a chance to see the memorials dedicated to their service. So far this year, there have been two trips to these Washington memorials and three more are planned, including this one.

World War II was the deadliest conflict in our history. More than 60 million people worldwide were killed, including 40 million civilians, and more than 400,000 American servicemembers were slain during the long war.

In Louisiana, there remain today about 44,000 living WWII veterans, and every one of them has their own heroic tale of their experience in achieving a noble victory of freedom over tyranny.

Mervin Harmon from Lafayette was one of the Tuskegee Airmen, our country's first African American pilots. While serving his country, he had to endure the racism that was prevalent in our society during that era. Mervin, who is 80 now, joined the service at 18, becoming a mechanic and crew chief at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. He oversaw the P-51 Mustang fighters the Airmen flew during the war, ensuring that planes were safe for battle. When Mervin trained at Ft. Smith in Arkansas, he remembers German prisoners of war eating in restaurants while black MPs guarding them were not allowed to be served.

Mervin and the other Tuskegee airmen helped our country bridge the racial divide. He went on to serve in Lafayette Parish government for 14 years and had an upholstery business in the city.

I ask the Senate to join me in honoring Mervin Harmon, the other 95 Louisiana heroes we welcome to Washington this weekend, and Louisiana HonorAir for making these trips a reality.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

IDAHO'S ANGELS IN ADOPTION

• Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I am privileged today to honor an Idaho couple, Rick and Tina Betzer, who have been blessed with a heart and gift to minister to children. Rick and Tina are being honored today as Angels in Adoption by the Congressional Adoption Coalition. God grants each of us gifts; some of us use them, others don't, and the world is worse off for that neglect. Today I will share a different story—it is about two people who have chosen to use their gift to make an extraordinary

difference in the lives of others. Rick and Tina tell their story better than anyone. With the permission of the Chair, I will include their personal family statement as part of the RECORD. This is text from Rick and Tina Betzer's personal testimony:

We met in Jr. High and have been best friends since. We just celebrated our 30th wedding anniversary. We are privileged to be called mom and dad by 16 wonderful children. Our oldest 5 are biological and the youngest 11 have been adopted over the last 10 years. Our first born is Eric. He is now 31 years old married and has 2 step sons and 2 beautiful little girls. He owns his own tree-trimming business, and they raise quarter horses on their small farm in Chester Idaho. Next is our daughter Gina, who is now 30 years old. She is married to Zac Clawson and they have 3 sons. Zac works for the Federal Government in Washington D.C. They live in Dumfries Virginia. Next is our daughter Amber. She is 28 years old. At this time she is living with us in Shelley and she works for Eastern Idaho Special services and is a transportation specialist for the homeless shelter in Idaho Falls. Our daughter Jessica is 22 years old and is married to Jacob Hackman. They live in Boise and are expecting their first child in June. Our daughter Brittney is 20 years old, graduated High School with honors, and is attending BYU Hawaii. We moved to Shelley in August 2004, from Ashton where we had been living for the past 15 years. While in Ashton, both Rick and I worked for the State of Idaho Department of Juvenile Corrections as a Nurse and as a Therapy Technician. It was at the Juvenile correction center that we became aware of the need for committed foster parents. In the fall of 1990, we became licensed foster parents. Over the next 10 years, we fostered 38 children. On December 12, 1993, a case worker knocked on our door with a beautiful 2 year old boy in his arms. At first sight, we knew this little guy belonged to us. This was the first day of the rest of our lives. We adopted Shallon 3 years later. We thought we were a complete family, then, several years later, we were prompted to call LDS services to apply to adopt a special needs baby. A few months later we did not have a baby, but 3 active little kids. Breann, Daniel, and Courtney joined our family at the ages of 5, 6, and 7. At that point we were sure our family was complete. Again, several years went by and we could not get the thought out of our minds that someone was missing from our family. I talked Rick into another home study, and 1½ months later we were headed to Florida to pick up our 9-week-old daughter, Zoe. At this point, we started to joke that we would stop at 12 kids, not ever intending to go that far, then someone introduced us to the Internet. Thousands of foster children in the United States that are awaiting adoption are listed there. Three little children pulled me in and I contacted their case workers. One was in Texas, one was in Ohio and one in Missouri. We were hoping to be able to adopt one of the three. During this time, Tazier came home for good—he had been our foster son 4 years earlier. A month after his arrival, we brought D'Asia home from Ohio then, 3 months after that, we brought Isabelle home from Missouri, but no word from Texas. Again, we thought we are done. Then, a year later, a phone call from Georgia: Were we interested in one more child? We hesitated and the case worker read us his profile off the Internet. Half way through we stopped her and said "that's Dakota; he lives in Texas." She almost dropped the phone, and asked how we knew that—there were thousands of kids on the Net. We explained that his picture had been on our

refrigerator for 2 years! It took almost 3 years from the time we saw him and a case worker in Georgia that didn't know either us or this little guy, but in September of 2002, Dakota came home. While in Texas picking Dakota up from his foster home, Rick heard a noise from a back bedroom of the home and went to investigate, he came back into the room with our next son in his arms, Delarion. He came home in September 2003.

Our children have changed our lives in many ways. Our world consists of therapists, special education and doctors. Our van could find its own way to Salt Lake and Primary Children's Hospital. We are on a first-name basis with doctors and nurses there and in Idaho Falls at Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center. From February to November of last year, our children had 9 surgeries and countless procedures that enable them to function as best they can. We had 3 surgeries scheduled in September. Our days are filled with medications, tube feedings, diapers, bottles, wheel chairs, leg braces, glasses, hearing aids and, above all, miracles. It is so humbling to watch these children overcome the obstacles in their lives. Nothing seems to stop them; they have more determination than all of us put together. We remember a Monday night a few years back when, as Tina sat in a chair in our living room holding our 5 year old daughter Zoe, Zoe reached over to the end table and picked up her bottle put the nipple in her mouth and took a drink. We cried. This was a little girl who doctors told us to walk away from, a little girl born with only half a brain, that specialists said would only eat and sleep the rest of her life. At the age of 3, she started playing songs on the piano, by ear because she is blind, with her left hand because her right one doesn't work; a little girl who can scoot on her behind across the floor with amazing speed; a little girl who sings country music, says her ABC's, and counts to 22. These are the miracles in our lives—a little boy born weighing just one pound whose mother was found lying unconscious on the ground in a hospital parking lot, a little boy so tiny that he was thought to be a girl for the first month of his life, a little boy who at the age of 4 would never walk or talk, who now, at the age of eight, runs up to us, puts his little face to ours and says, I want to take a bath. These are some of the reasons why we do what we do . . .

Rick and Tina are more than deserving of the distinguished honor of 2007 Angels in Adoption. Their daily challenges are much more than most of us could imagine, let alone choose to experience at any time in our lives: they have chosen to become parents to children with disabilities including quadriplegic spastic cerebral palsy, blindness, vision impairedness, hearing loss, auditory neuropathy, traumatic brain injury, fetal alcohol syndrome, reactive attachment disorder, attention deficit disorder and genetic optic nerve atrophy. They are selfless examples of a loving commitment of time, energy and resources. Perhaps most difficult, but most rewarding as well, they have committed their hearts and emotions to children in need. The Betzers humble us with their actions they are the angels in their children's lives and examples to us all.●

CONGRATULATING THE UNITED STATES WOMEN'S GYMNASTICS TEAM

● Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, one of the great joys of my job as a Senator is the opportunity to recognize exceptional people. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize seven exceptional people: Ivana Hong, Nastia Liukin, Samantha Peszek, Alicia Sacramone, Bridget Sloan, Shayla Worley, and Shawn Johnson. These young ladies make up the U.S. women's gymnastics team.

In September of this year at the World Artistic Gymnastics Championship in Stuttgart, Germany, the U.S. women's team won a total of four gold, two silver, and one bronze medal, placing them first overall in the women's team competition. I congratulate the members of this team, their coaches, and families on their success and for their exemplary representation of our country.

As an Iowan, I would like to recognize a particular member of the U.S. women's team, Ms. Shawn Johnson of West Des Moines, IA. Ms. Johnson won the all-around women's gymnastics title at the 2007 World Artistic Gymnastics Championship. With this great achievement, she became just the fourth U.S. woman ever to win a world all-around title.

Receiving such a title takes incredible talent and athletic ability. But, without a doubt, it also takes a lot of hard work. At the age of 3, Ms. Johnson began her gymnastic training at Chow's Gymnastics in West Des Moines, IA, where she continues to train today. As a result of years of hard work and training, she has competed and won at progressively higher levels of competition. In 2006, she won the U.S. Junior National Championship; in 2007, the Visa National Championships and the Pan American Games, where she won four gold and one silver medal. Next, Ms. Johnson will be competing for a spot on the U.S. women's gymnastic team at the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

I extend my sincere congratulations to the U.S. women's gymnastics team on their success and I wish them luck on their future endeavors.●

HONORING MIKE KURLE

● Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, today I want to pay tribute to Mike Kurle, who retired earlier this year as the longtime manager of the West River/Lyman-Jones Rural Water System. I have worked with Mike for nearly my entire congressional career and value his friendship, professionalism, and typical South Dakota steadfastness. I know that Mike and his wife Marlene are looking forward to being able to travel a little more and spend some time with their children who are scattered across the country. However, I want to take a few minutes and explain to the Senate the role Mike played in

bringing reliable supplies of drinking water to the towns and ranches of western South Dakota.

As manager of West River/Lyman-Jones, Mike guided one of the four local project sponsors that constitute the Mni Wiconi Rural Water System—one of the largest Federal drinking water projects constructed in the last 30 years. Mike managed the project practically from the beginning and over the past 16 years has always put first the interests of the communities, ranches, and farms served by the system. On Mike's watch, 2,200 rural customers now receive reliable drinking water piped hundreds of miles from the Missouri River. The towns of Philip, Presho, Kennebec, Murdo, White River and, very soon, Kadoka benefit from the Mni Wiconi project. Mike has overseen Federal transfers in excess of \$55 million and constantly delivered good value and on-time performance from contractors. Most importantly, Mike is someone that could be trusted and he worked well with the system's three other sponsors—the Oglala Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, and Rosebud Sioux Tribe. The project is a collaboration between the area's American Indian tribes, the Federal Government, and the western South Dakota communities in Lyman, Stanley, Jones, Mellette, Jackson, Haakon, and Pennington counties. Mike spent countless hours on the road traveling from one project sponsor meeting to another and on the phone and in Washington, DC, meeting with Bureau of Reclamation officials and the South Dakota congressional delegation to keep the project on track. Because of Mike's good work, the project is close to the finish line with about 70 percent of the system in the ground and delivering water to thousands of residents. These are all great goals and accomplishments.

So, in closing, I want to thank Mike Kurle for his service and professionalism and most of all friendship and guidance over these many years. I know that Mike can't stay away from the West River/Lyman-Jones office forever but hope that he can enjoy moving at a slower pace knowing that future generations will be well served by his efforts.●

HONORING PENOBSCOT BAY MEDIA, LLC

● Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, today I pay tribute to a small company in my home State of Maine, run by a female service-disabled veteran, that has made remarkable strides in the information technology industry, and particularly in robotics. Penobscot Bay Media, LLC—known to most as Pen Bay Media—is headquartered in Camden, on Maine's beautiful coast, where it specializes in the development of information visualization solutions by using geographic information systems, GIS, interactive distance learning, and other similar technologies. For example, Pen Bay has developed a type of