

AL, in November of 1955, she came into this world only 3 weeks before the Interstate Commerce Commission issued its ban on racial segregation in interstate commerce and 2 weeks before Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white passenger on a bus in Montgomery. Yolanda was 7 years old when her father, in his famous "I Have a Dream" speech, said "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a Nation where they will not be judged by the color of the skin but by the content of their character."

In a 2004 statement entitled, "The Meaning of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday," Coretta Scott King recalled that "Dr. King once said that we all have to decide whether we will walk in the light of creative altruism or the darkness of destructive selfishness. Life's most persistent and nagging question . . . is what are you doing for others?"

Yolanda led a life that made her family and her Nation proud. She was an actress, an author, and a producer. But she also worked in service to others. The world will remember her as an activist for peace, an ardent supporter of nonviolence, and a torchbearer for Dr. King's dream of racial harmony.

Through her actions, the King family legacy lives on. Like her parents, Yolanda inspired a generation of youths to dedicate their lives to service. Her life is a shining example that we all can make a difference, and her deeds will continue to inspire generations to come.

Our thoughts are with the King family today. I salute Yolanda's life, and hope that our Nation will continue its march towards a more inclusive democracy.

PITTSBURGH HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, today I have sought recognition to comment on legislation to increase the authorized spending level for the ongoing consolidation project at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, VA, Pittsburgh Healthcare System.

In May 2004, then-VA Secretary Anthony Principi announced the final results of the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services, CARES, plan, a nationwide effort to identify buildings and functions which do not merit continued operation and to create long-term budget efficiencies by getting rid of underutilized facilities while improving access to care. As a result of this process, the Highland Drive VA Medical Center, VAMC, in Pittsburgh was targeted for closure, and the facility's functions are to be consolidated within Pittsburgh's University Drive VAMC and H.J. Heinz VAMC. However, in order for this consolidation to move forward and for the VA to realize the desired savings, significant construction is necessary at the University Drive and Heinz campuses.

Initial estimates placed the total cost for construction at these two facilities at \$189.2 million. I introduced legislation which authorized construction at this level and have helped secure \$102.5 million in appropriations towards this effort—\$20 million in fiscal year 2004 and \$82.5 million in fiscal year 2006. I have pushed for Congress to fully fund this project in order to avoid cost overruns and to help the VA realize long-term savings which can be used to better serve our Nation's veterans.

Despite the Pittsburgh project being ahead of schedule and ready for additional funding, I was disappointed to see that the administration did not seek funding for any component of the Pittsburgh project in its fiscal year 2007 budget request. On February 28, 2006, Senator Rick Santorum and I wrote VA Secretary Jim Nicholson a letter seeking clarification on VA's future plans for funding the project. According to his May 8, 2006, response, "Funding for construction of the mental health and research facilities at the University Drive VAMC and the ambulatory care center at the Heinz VAMC will be incorporated into VA's fiscal year 2008 budget request." The response also stated, ". . . closure of the Highland Drive Division will not be accomplished until all construction is completed." I will ask that this letter be printed in the RECORD.

However, I was disappointed to learn that the VA's fiscal year 2008 Budget request indicates that the estimated total cost to complete these projects has risen dramatically to \$248 million. Further, the VA has only requested \$40 million for these projects in fiscal year 2008, which would leave \$105.5 million remaining to be appropriated to complete construction. I believe Congress should fully fund this project now in order to avoid additional cost increases in the future.

This bill simply raises the authorization to the level indicated by the VA necessary to complete these construction projects. I urge my colleagues to support this technical legislation, which is intended to allow the VA to realize the savings envisioned by the 2004 CARES process on an expedited basis, making more money available for the care of our Nation's veterans.

I ask unanimous consent that the February 28, 2006, letter Senator Santorum and I wrote to Secretary Nicholson and the Secretary's May 8, 2006 response be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS,
Washington, May 8, 2006.

HON. ARLEN SPECTER,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR SPECTER: Thank you for your letter and continued support of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Pittsburgh Healthcare System Major Construction Project. I regret the delay in this reply.

VA planned to fund the consolidation of the Highland Drive psychiatry, mental health, research, and administrative functions within the University Drive and the H. John Heinz VA Medical Center (VAMC) in Pittsburgh over a 3-year period from 2004 through 2007. Planning for this project began in 2003. This preplanning led to \$35 million being made available in fiscal year (FY) 2005, one year ahead of the initial schedule.

This \$35 million plus \$20 million appropriated in FY 2004 supported design and construction of the 1,500 car parking garage for the University Drive VAMC; demolition of vacant structures at the Heinz VAMC; and master design services and multiple renovation projects to immediately enhance care. These projects are being completed on time and within budget. In FY 2006, \$50 million is being used for the construction of the 98-bed residential living center, administration building, and various infrastructure and support facilities at the Heinz VAMC. These projects are also on time and within budget.

Funding for construction of the mental health, and research facilities at the University Drive VAMC and the ambulatory care center at the Heinz VAMC will be incorporated into VA's FY 2008 budget request. The project can still be completed with a marginal delay in schedule. As various buildings are completed, services will be gradually relocated; however, full closure of the Highland Drive Division will not be accomplished until all construction is completed.

Your assistance and support have been instrumental in ensuring this project remains on schedule and fully funded. A similar letter has been sent to Senator Rick Santorum, who co-signed your inquiry.

Sincerely yours,

R. JAMES NICHOLSON.

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, February 28, 2006.

The Hon. R. JAMES NICHOLSON,
Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Department of Veterans Affairs, Washington, DC.

DEAR SECRETARY NICHOLSON: We write today with regard to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Fiscal Year (FY) 2007 budget, particularly with respect to funding levels to support the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) recommendations.

As you know, the recent VA CARES process closed the Highland Drive VA Medical Center (VAMC) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. As a result, that facility's psychiatry, mental health, research, and administrative functions are to be consolidated within the University Drive VAMC and the H. John Heinz VAMC in Pittsburgh. VA officials promised Congress that there would be no termination of services at the Highland Drive facility until construction of the new facilities is completed and the transfer of patients from the Highland Drive VAMC to the University Drive VAMC and the Heinz VAMC is completed.

Included in the VA Budget Request for FY 2007 is a request for \$457 million for the CARES program, which includes funding for the continuation of specific medical facility projects and the funding of new projects. Notably absent from this request is funding for the continuation of the VA CARES construction project within the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System. We are concerned that any delay of funding for this crucial initiative will negatively impact the construction

of the Ambulatory Care Center at the Heinz VAMC and the Behavioral Health Pavilion at the University Drive VAMC.

It is our understanding that the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System is currently progressing on schedule and within its budget. Since the Highland Drive VAMC cannot close until the construction on the other facilities is complete, we ask for your clarification on the VA's future plans for construction project funding for the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System.

Thank you for your attention to this inquiry.

Sincerely,

RICK SANTORUM,
ARLEN SPECTER,
U.S. Senate.

SENATOR TED STEVENS OF ALASKA

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, on April 13, 2007, my dear friend and colleague Senator TED STEVENS became the longest serving Republican Senator in the history of this body. Today, I would like to pay tribute to my friend and his more than 38 years of service to our Nation and the people of Alaska.

I have known and worked with TED for over 34 years. We have served together on the Appropriations, Budget, and Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committees and many others. TED and I have been in the Senate together for so long some of the committees on which we served no longer exist. We have collaborated on more pieces of legislation than I can remember and worked to resolve many issues. Most recently, I was thankful for his hard work in the effort to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and increase the strategic security of the country.

I am happy to say TED has made the trip to New Mexico and I to Alaska so we could appreciate the needs of each other's home States. I have also had the pleasure of taking several trips with TED abroad, some more enjoyable than others. One that stands out in my mind is the fact-finding trip we took to North Korea several years ago to better understand the threat that nation poses to the world. I don't believe many people can say they have traveled there, even fewer can say they did it with TED STEVENS. I am very thankful I can.

I think it is safe to say TED has had a remarkable life and career, born in Indianapolis, he has lived in California, Oregon, and Montana—finally settling in his beloved Alaska. During the Second World War, TED left college to join the Army Air Corps and became a decorated pilot. After the war TED attended Harvard Law School, became a U.S. Attorney, worked in the Department of the Interior, started his own law firm, and was elected to the Alaska House of Representatives. For most individuals these accomplishments, all before he came to the Senate, would have marked a full and successful life. However, for TED it was just the beginning and I believe this Nation is lucky it was.

After serving with TED for so many years I know of no one who cares more about the people of Alaska and this Nation or serves either with more dedication and distinction. I would like to personally thank TED for his friendship and hope to have the honor of serving alongside him for many years to come.

CONGRESSMAN JIM JONTZ

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, it is with great sadness that I note the loss of former Congressman Jim Jontz, who died last month after a 2-year battle against colon cancer. All of us, and especially our Nation's political discourse, are much the poorer for the loss of Jim's energetic voice for progressive politics and his use of grassroots organizing to connect people not only to elective politics, but even more important, to the politics of governing—to the art of making our government institutions respond and work for the people they serve.

Jim's indefatigable, tireless approach to politics put him in the Indiana House of Representatives at age 22. He won that race, against the sitting House majority leader, by two votes, which he claimed to have picked up in a laundromat late in the night just hours before the election. He served in the Indiana House for 10 years, then in the Indiana Senate for 2 years.

Jim was elected to Congress in 1986 and served in the House of Representatives from 1987 to 1993. A big part of his successful congressional campaign was his call for more effective Federal action responding to the worst economic crisis in American agriculture since the Great Depression. It was typical of Jim that he saw the pervasive ramifications of the farm crisis as striking at the heart and character of rural America. And he fought to turn that situation around.

During his time in Congress, Jim emphasized environmental issues, as he had in the Indiana Legislature, including pushing for protection of forests in the Pacific Northwest. As a member of the House Agriculture Committee during debate on the 1990 farm bill, he was out front, in truth ahead of his time, in calling for a greater emphasis on promoting and supporting more effective agricultural conservation and environmental practices.

As could be expected, some who were beholden to the conventional wisdom sought to portray Jim as attacking the very underpinnings of U.S. agriculture. There was the politics of division, of contriving threats and sowing fear, but his approach, as usual, was not to deepen divisions but rather to find common ground.

In Jim's proposals, stronger Federal policies to help agricultural producers practice better conservation and stewardship would also improve their prospects for making a living and remaining in agriculture, while enhancing the environment and quality of life for their families and others living in rural communities.

Looking back from today's vantage point, much of what Jim was proposing for the conservation of our Nation's resources is now widely accepted as a fundamental part of our Nation's agricultural policy—although we still have a long way to go to fulfill the vision Jim did so much to instill.

For a second-term Congressman working on his first farm bill, Jim played an unusually significant and effective role in the 1990 farm bill. Many of his amendments promoting agricultural conservation and sustainable agriculture were adopted in the House bill and ultimately in the conference report enacted as the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990. He also successfully pushed for initiatives involving packer concentration, grain quality, food aid, agricultural research and farm income assistance.

After leaving Congress, Jim served for several years as the president of Americans for Democratic Action, and in recent years served as ADA's president emeritus. In that capacity, he led ADA's Working Families Win project which focused on heightening the profile of fair trade and environmental issues among presidential and Congressional candidates. True to his grassroots organizing origins, Jim employed the Working Families Win project to activate and motivate local efforts on outsourcing, minimum wage and health care issues.

Jim's untimely death at age 55 leaves a big hole in the leadership of America's progressive politics. We should all take inspiration and instruction from this master in the art of deploying grassroots organizing and high-minded politics toward the highest ideals and aspirations for our great Nation.

Along with my colleagues, I extend my deepest sympathy and condolences to Jim's mother, stepfather, sister and three nieces, and to the many friends and people he touched in his abundant but too short life.

FISCAL YEAR 2008 BUDGET RESOLUTION

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I believe that my service in the Senate has been highlighted by my interest in the budget process.

As this year's budget negotiations continue, I would like to draw the attention of other Senators to a recent editorial in the Wall Street Journal concerning the single largest day of tax collection in U.S. history. The editorial is entitled "April Revenue Shower."

I think this editorial raises some very interesting points that are particularly relevant as Congress debates the fiscal year 2008 budget resolution. The Wall Street Journal points out that in April alone the U.S. Government collected \$70 billion in tax receipts above the same month last year and for the current fiscal year tax receipts are up 11.3 percent or \$153 billion from last year. I am not sure if most