

hearts. While a grateful nation could never adequately express their debt to men like George Bennett, it should take every opportunity to honor them and their families for the sacrifice they have paid on our behalf.

TRIBUTE TO JENNIFER LAWSON

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, this week the Vermont Department of Education announced that Jennifer Lawson of Waltham, VT, has been named Vermont's 2011 Teacher of the Year. I am proud to call her selection to the Senate's attention, and I offer hearty congratulations to Ms. Lawson and thank her for her dedication to the students of Vermont.

A graduate of the University of Vermont with a bachelor's degree in elementary education and a master's degree in education from Connecticut College, Jennifer Lawson has spent 12 years in the classroom. Prior to her current role as a social studies and language arts teacher at Vergennes Union High School, she taught as an elementary school teacher in Vergennes. Her success as an educator stems from her ability to inspire students to challenge themselves and their peers in a positive learning environment. She champions her students' individuality and encourages them to bring their life experiences into the classroom.

In Vermont, schools are at the core of our communities. Our kids are the seed corn of the future that we want for our state and its people. Vermonters understand the importance of giving our children a quality education, and they understand that a child's education begins well before their first day of school and will continue long after their last graduation day. Jennifer Lawson brings this philosophy into practice every time she enters the classroom. She recognized quickly that educating students involves so much more than just talking about a subject.

Even outside the classroom Jennifer is involved in improving the education in her community. She serves on several of her school's committees, including the Adequate Yearly Progress Team for Literacy; she is a coleader of the Afterschool Program for Reading and Math; and she serves as a member on the assessment design and research team. Along with her efforts close to home she has been published nationally on alternative energy sources for schools and has given a presentation on Expeditionary Learning Schools for Outward Bound. I am glad that she will expand her role within our State even further this year as she consults with other educators throughout Vermont in her role as Teacher of the Year.

As I told Jennifer when I called her this week, Marcelle and I are proud of her and the extraordinary work she does on behalf of Vermont children. Vermont will be superbly represented in the national competition for Teacher of the Year next spring. I congratu-

late her on this honor, and I hope she spends many more years inspiring young minds.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a copy of an article in The Burlington Free Press about Ms. Lawson.

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

[From Burlington FreePress.com]

VERGENNES TEACHER IS STATE'S BEST, JENNIFER LAWSON PLAYS TO HER STUDENTS' STRENGTHS

(By Lynn Monty)

Teacher Jennifer Lawson looked classy—but cool—dressed in tall green leather boots that matched her mohair vest and nail polish this morning as she guided her class through a lesson called “echoes.”

One student said, “They say I’m spoiled” as another echoed back, “I say I’m fortunate.”

Another said, “They say I’m a geek,” as another echoed back, “I say they don’t know me.”

The students wrote each statement and echo. The exercise is just one of the many tools 38-year-old Lawson, of Waltham, uses to empower her students and is part of the reason she was chosen 2011 Vermont Teacher of the Year.

Lawson is a middle school language arts and social studies teacher at Vergennes Union High School. As winner of the state award, she will travel across Vermont to work with other teachers and compete for the National Teacher of the Year award. In the spring, she heads to Washington for a reception at the White House. Lawson is a native Vermonter who has worked at VUHS for six years.

“It’s amazing, humbling and flattering,” Lawson said. “It’s an award for my students more so than for me because it’s the students who get me excited.”

Lawson said it’s important to her to know students individually and to recognize who they are. She said her goal as a teacher is to celebrate her students and broaden their perspective of the world. “In a lot of ways school is home away from home,” she said. “The experiences here should be celebrated and connections should be made with their life experiences outside of school.”

Lawson taught at Vergennes Union Elementary School prior to taking the position at the high school. She has 12 years of classroom experience and holds a master’s of education from Connecticut College and a bachelor’s in elementary education from the University of Vermont.

Lawson’s father, Robert Lawson, recently retired from the University of Vermont after 44 years of teaching. He has observed his daughter in the classroom on many occasions.

“It’s a wonderful recognition,” he said of the award. “Jennifer is very fond of this community. She gives from her heart and mind and she teaches her students to problem-solve, to be cooperative, to read and to be friendly. I am just very happy for her today.”

As students left the soft lighting and comfy couches in Jennifer Lawson’s classroom to attend the assembly being held in her honor, eighth-grader Dana Ambrose, 13, praised his teacher. “She’s really great and helps us a lot. Personally I don’t read that great, but she has helped me improve. I am thankful for that. She’s a great teacher and just loves to help everybody.”

Vermont Education Board Chairwoman Fayneese Miller said that when the Depart-

ment of Education chooses a teacher of the year, the goal is to choose someone who has the ability to excite young people, to encourage them to use their imagination and to think about possibilities. “I think that’s what she embodies,” Miller said. “She cares about her students and loves learning and encourages learning in her students. She’s a highly effective teacher.”

But it’s not only the students that Lawson is teaching. Para-educator Erika Lynch is a newly licensed teacher who has been working alongside Lawson for two years.

“Being in rooms with her is really good for me because I can learn from her,” Lynch said. “I am picking up things that hopefully I can use one day in my own classroom. Jenn creates a learning community where kids feel safe and take chances, where they are challenged but they are able to meet those challenges. It’s because she meets kids at their level. She does a great job of creating an environment that makes it easier for kids to learn.”

Miller introduced Lawson at the assembly. “By the round of applause it is obvious Jennifer Lawson is someone who is revered, respected and loved,” she said.

As Lawson accepted the crystal apple that Miller handed her, she received a standing ovation from the packed auditorium and said above the din, “I love my job and I love you guys.”

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

ARKANSAS’S FINALISTS FOR “TEACHER OF THE YEAR”

• Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, today I congratulate 14 Arkansas teachers who were recently named regional finalists for Arkansas Teacher of the Year. These educators represent the best of our State, and I join all Arkansans to thank them for their efforts to educate and inspire our Arkansas youth. These teachers devote themselves to ensuring a bright, successful future for their students, and I commend them for their pursuit of professional excellence and their dedication to learning and knowledge.

The finalists are Blair Ballard, Walnut Ridge Elementary; Vickie Beene, an English teacher at Nashville High School; Julie Boyd, Hurricane Creek Elementary in Bryant; Jeannette Dempsey, College Hill Elementary, Texarkana; Oretha Faye Ferguson, an English teacher at Fort Smith Southside High School; Karen S. Hart, a biology teacher at Jonesboro High School; Kristy Parish, Westside Elementary, Searcy; Mary Katherine Parson, a biology teacher at Little Rock Central; Kathy A. Powers, Simon Intermediate School, Conway; Therese Thompson, John Tyson Elementary, Springdale; Rebecca Vaughn, Wedlock Elementary, West Memphis; Maryann Walker, M.A. Hardin Elementary, White Hall; Carolyn Whisenant, Mountain Home Kindergarten; and Emily Kathryn White, Monticello Elementary. •

ARKANSAS BLUES AND HERITAGE FESTIVAL

• Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, today I celebrate the 25th anniversary of the

Arkansas Blues and Heritage Festival, a beloved, time-honored tradition in my hometown of Helena, AR.

The Arkansas Blues and Heritage Festival, formerly known as the King Biscuit Blues Festival, is one of the Nation's foremost showcases of blues music. Held for 3 days annually in October, tens of thousands of blues enthusiasts converge on historic downtown Helena. This year's festival features legendary blues musician B.B. King, along with nearly 50 other blues performances. The event will be held October 7 to 9, with projected attendance figures of nearly 80,000.

I have often joined my fellow Helena residents to celebrate and enjoy this annual tradition, and I am proud of the community's efforts to keep alive the history and heritage of blues music.

Founded in 1986, the first festival was a 1-day event, with a small gathering of local residents and a flatbed truck as a stage. Since then, the festival has grown to a 3-day event, with three stages and several activities, such as the Kenneth Freemyer 5K Run, the Blues in Schools program, and the Tour da' Delta bicycle tour.

I congratulate the organizers and leadership of the Arkansas Blues and Heritage Festival, along with all my fellow Helena residents. I wish them all the best as they celebrate 25 years of the Arkansas Blues and Heritage Festival.●

RECOGNIZING DIRK LEACH RUSTIC ARTS

● Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, as lobster bakes and vacations along the picturesque northeastern coast fade with the summer months, today I honor a craftsman and small business owner in my home State of Maine who keeps the feeling of the season alive by marrying function, comfort, beauty, tradition, and love of the outdoors—quintessentially Maine characteristics—with the iconic Adirondack chair.

Located along the Saco River in the town of Buxton, Dirk Leach Rustic Arts is a one-of-a-kind business devoted to one man's dream of creating the perfect Adirondack chair. The company's owner, Dirk Leach, maintains the tradition of "rustic artistry" by walking through Maine's woodlands in late fall and winter to gather materials for one of his Shaker creations. An artist and an innovator, Mr. Leach describes himself as "obsessed with the Adirondack chair form," and draws inspiration from the simple, functional forms of Shaker design. Mr. Leach's sketches help him translate his varying ideas into unique prototypes and, finally, innovative seating pieces with wide seat planks, thick arm rests, and clean lines.

Since the mid 1990s, Dirk Leach has fashioned Adirondack chairs and settees from a variety of trees native to Maine, such as red oak, white ash, yellow birch, and sugar maple. Perhaps most creatively, Mr. Leach transforms

pin cherry and gray birch into hand-hewn candlesticks and a number of accessories. Mr. Leach lovingly builds, paints, signs, and dates his exceptional and unique creations, which are all beautifully handcrafted and guaranteed for life. While his most popular designs include the traditional Weekender chairs to the more eclectic Nor'easter chairs, Mr. Leach has pledged to design 100 variations of the outdoor classic by alternating back height, seat angles, hardware, and color. Moreover, chairs can be built to withstand even the coldest of Maine's winters, as they are constructed of weather tight white oak and finished in the finest exterior house paint on the market.

And although Mainers have come to anticipate traditional white Adirondack chairs assembled along campfires and lazily arranged in the backyard, Dirk Leach is renowned for applying layers of paint in colors inspired by nature itself, from colors such as iris, prairie grass, and warm earth, to vivid shades of crocus, coral, and pistachio.

Touted as the "Best Maine Adirondack Chair" by Down East Magazine in July 2010, Dirk Leach Rustic Arts has been working to keep up with demand since the Maine publication hit newsstands. And when he wasn't drawing up his newest designs, Mr. Leach has spent time traveling to Wisconsin, New York, and throughout Maine—from July to September—demonstrating his rustic woodworking craftsmanship and techniques.

While small businesses are most notably touted as drivers of our national economy, and rightly so, they can sometimes be overlooked for their often more subtle contributions to design, quality, and innovative vision. Whether his customers utilize these chairs to gaze out at the ocean or sit around a campfire, Dirk Leach's designs are functional works of art meant to last for generations. I commend Dirk Leach on the passion he lends to his craft, and I wish him nothing but success in the years to come.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Williams, 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.)

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 10:38 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by

Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 2923. An act to enhance the ability to combat methamphetamine.

H.R. 3470. An act to authorize funding for the creation and implementation of infant mortality pilot programs in standard metropolitan statistical areas with high rates of infant mortality, and for other purposes.

H.R. 4195. An act to authorize the Peace Corps Commemorative Foundation to establish a commemorative work in the District of Columbia and its environs, and for other purposes.

H.R. 4347. An act to amend the Indian Self-Determination Act and Education Assistance Act to provide further self-governance by Indian tribes, and for other purposes.

H.R. 5152. An act to adjust the boundary of the Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park to include the Wallis House and Harriston Hill, and for other purposes.

H.R. 5194. An act to designate Mt. Andrea Lawrence, and for other purposes.

H.R. 5494. An act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to transfer certain properties to the District of Columbia.

H.R. 5809. An act to amend the Controlled Substances Act to provide for take-back disposal of controlled substances in certain instances, and for other purposes.

H.R. 5811. An act to amend the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo and Alabama and Coushatta Indian Tribes of Texas Restoration Act to allow the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo Tribe to determine blood quantum requirement for membership in that tribe.

H.R. 6130. An act to amend title XI of the Social Security Act to expand the permissive exclusion from participation in Federal health care programs to individuals and entities affiliated with sanctioned entities.

The message also announced that the House has agreed to the following concurrent resolution, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H. Con. Res. 294. Concurrent resolution commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Blue Ridge Parkway.

The message further announced that the House has passed the following bill, without amendment:

S. 2781. An act to change references in Federal law to mental retardation to references to an intellectual disability, and change references to a mentally retarded individual to references to an individual with an intellectual disability.

The message also announced that the House agrees to the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 1454) to provide for the issuance of a Multinational Species Conservation Funds Semipostal Stamp.

ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

At 11:33 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bills:

H.R. 4505. An act to enable State homes to furnish nursing home care to parents any of whose children died while serving in the Armed Forces

H.R. 6102. An act to amend the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 to extend the authority of the Secretary of the Navy to enter into multiyear contracts for F/A-18E, F/A-18F, and EA-18G aircraft.

The enrolled bills were subsequently signed by the President pro tempore (Mr. INOUE).