

underserved communities. The award provides \$20,000 to each recipient for personal development and another \$105,000 to the project with which the awardee is affiliated. I am confident that this funding will be put to good use in Dr. Boyd's hands.

Dr. Boyd is a nursing assistant professor and a health programs coordinator for the University of Hawaii's Windward Community College, WCC. She is the first Native Hawaiian faculty member at the University of Hawaii to have earned a Ph.D. while also being a registered nurse. Carrying on a family tradition of nursing learned from her grandmother, she set out to better the health care system in Hawaii by improving nurse training and patient care.

To help achieve those goals, Dr. Boyd created the Pathway out of Poverty program at WCC. The program is founded on Native Hawaiian cultural values and seeks to encourage and train Native Hawaiian and disadvantaged students pursuing careers in nursing. She aims to reduce poverty, increase the number of Native Hawaiian nurses, and improve the quality of nursing care by producing more empathetic and culturally competent providers. Today, Dr. Boyd trains about 50 nurse's aides a year with approximately one-quarter of them going on to pursue an RN degree.

As an educator and former principal, I know firsthand about the countless hours that go into creating curricula and reaching out to students. It makes me proud to see outstanding educators receive well-deserved national recognition for their hard work. Dr. Boyd's dedication to her field and to the people of Hawaii is undeniable. I applaud her for earning this outstanding recognition, and I wish her much continued success in her future endeavors.●

#### 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF NEW MEXICO'S STATEHOOD

● Mr. BINGAMAN. Madam President, this month marked the 100th anniversary of New Mexico's statehood. In recognition of this occasion, the Senate Historian, Donald Ritchie, wrote a wonderful piece highlighting the political and ethnic issues surrounding New Mexico's efforts to become a State. I thought it would be nice to share this historical note with the public by including it in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

Mr. President, I ask that Mr. Ritchie's Senate Historical Minute, titled "New Mexico Enters the Union," be printed in the RECORD.

The material follows.

SENATE HISTORICAL MINUTE—JANUARY 6, 1912

#### NEW MEXICO ENTERS THE UNION

A century ago, on January 6, 1912, New Mexico entered the Union as a State. This ended a 64-year effort to achieve statehood, stalled by a combination of political and ethnic prejudice.

In 1848, the United States acquired vast territories in the Southwest under the Trea-

ty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, which ended the Mexican War. The problem was how to organize this territory without inflaming tensions between the North and South over the spread of slavery. The treaty had provided that inhabitants of the territories would become citizens and would be admitted into the Union as States "at the proper time (to be judged by the Congress of the United States)." President Zachary Taylor thought that sectional tensions might be eased if New Mexico and California immediately applied for statehood and avoided territorial status. The Compromise of 1850 admitted California but ignored New Mexico's application for statehood.

Over the next six decades, other Western States were admitted ahead of New Mexico. Congress at that time was often divided between a Democratic majority in the House and a Republican majority in the Senate. Each party tried to block the admission of a new State that might give the other party two more Senators. Because New Mexico was viewed as a potentially Democratic state, the Republican Senate thwarted its admission. In 1888, Republican majorities in both houses passed an omnibus statehood bill that enabled North and South Dakota, Washington, and Montana to move towards statehood, but omitted New Mexico.

Besides politics, New Mexico met resistance from Senators who questioned whether its largely Spanish-speaking, Catholic population was capable of self-government "in the Anglo-Saxon sense." Senator Albert Beveridge, who chaired the Committee on Territories, traveled through New Mexico and Arizona in 1902 and came back convinced that neither was ready for statehood. President Theodore Roosevelt, however, was anxious to settle the issue, and to break the logjam he proposed combining the territories of New Mexico and Arizona into a single State. Its capital would be in Santa Fe, but it would take the name Arizona. When submitted to the voters, New Mexico passed the proposal, but Arizona soundly defeated it.

In his last annual message to Congress, President Roosevelt abandoned the idea of a combined territory and proposed that each should gain statehood. Senator Beveridge continued to fight statehood, but in 1910 Congress adopted the Enabling Act to admit both New Mexico and Arizona. New Mexico immediately submitted an acceptable constitution, but objections were raised against Arizona's more progressive constitution. As a result, New Mexico's admission was blocked by a Senate filibuster until Arizona's constitution was also approved. New Mexico at last became a State on January 6, 1912, and Arizona followed a month later.●

#### TRIBUTE TO SHERIFF PAUL LANEY

● Mr. CONRAD. Madam President, I wanted to say a few words today about Paul Laney, who is the Sheriff of Cass County, ND. Sheriff Laney has just been named the Sheriff of the Year for 2011 by the National Sheriff's Association, and I can tell you that it is a well-deserved honor.

Sheriff Laney has long been known for his tireless, diligent and innovative efforts on behalf of the people of Cass County. He is always out in public putting the best face on the Sheriff's Department and working hard to strengthen community bonds in that part of the Red River Valley. Last year he received the 9-1-1 Government Leader Award from the E9-1-1 Institute for

his work in helping create the Fargo-Moorhead regional dispatch center, which was the first in the nation to integrate services across State lines.

Sheriff Laney also played a strong and pivotal role in coordinating response to major flooding in both 2009 and 2010 in Cass County. The flooding in 2009 was the worst ever seen in the region, and his leadership made a major difference in a situation that many thought would end in catastrophic loss.

I congratulate Sheriff Laney for being named Sheriff of the Year. I know the citizens of Cass County, like me, greatly appreciate all he has done on their behalf.●

#### VERMONT STUDENTS' ESSAYS

● Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, I ask to have printed in the RECORD these essays written by Vermont High School students as part of the Second Annual "What is the State of the Union?" essay contest conducted by my office. The following essays were selected as "Honorable Mentions."

The Statements follow.

HANNAH APFELBAUM, CHAMPLAIN VALLEY UNION HIGH SCHOOL (HONORABLE MENTION)

[January 23, 2012]

America is not living up to its full potential. We have one of the highest child poverty rates in the Western world, a high unemployment rate, and test very low in math and science compared to other developed countries. And that's not all—we also face environmental challenges and the decline of the middle class. We must use our differences to unite us by tackling all aspects of the issues we face. But America is asking how, specifically, do we solve these problems?

First, we need to decide what problems not to solve. Iraq and Afghanistan are not in ideal condition. This does not mean, however, that we should be pouring all of our money into military efforts there. Instead, we need to make more money available for the most pressing issues in our own country.

One way to make more money available is to stop giving the wealthiest people the biggest tax cuts. It is understandable that politicians are concerned about backlash from these influential citizens, but the majority of people in this country—the middle class—needs to be taken into account. With the national debt becoming greater and greater, these tax cuts simply are not sustainable.

So where should our money go? The first priority should be education. Successful experiences in the early years of school make children much less likely to drop out or end up in prison—an entity that tax dollars pay for, with less than stellar results. Investment in public elementary schools benefits both the children and the general public. We also need to spend money on college financial aid programs. The most successful students who cannot pay their own tuition deserve to have this opportunity, and will most likely make a large contribution to society in their adult lives. All contributions to education will help make Americans qualified to obtain jobs that will provide them with comfortable wages, and stimulate the economy.

We also need to spend money on healthcare. Every American has the right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Life, especially, is very hard to maintain without adequate healthcare. The right to be safe is something that needs to be provided

to all citizens. It is simply not acceptable for a child in need of a treatment such as chemotherapy to not be able to access it. It is time that we live up to this responsibility. And in providing safety, a clean environment is also essential. Clean air helps reduce our risk of cancer, lung disease and numerous other health issues.

America—now is the time to make choices for the benefit of our national community. We need to fund education. We need to fund healthcare. We need to take environmental action. It is time for each of us to advocate and actively work for these policies so that America can reach its full potential.

ERIN CLAUSS, CHAMPLAIN VALLEY UNION HIGH SCHOOL (HONORABLE MENTION)

[January 23, 2012]

My fellow Americans, as we move into 2012, there are serious issues that must be resolved. The American middle class is in crisis. Hard-working Americans are losing their jobs, and are unable to care for and provide for their families. This nation is drowning in debt. Americans are unable to pay for basic needs, like healthcare.

The Occupy Wall Street movement has brought to all of our attention how important fixing the economy is. As of November 2011, 7.6 million Americans have lost their jobs during this recession. The unemployment rate is declining, but there is still much work to be done. These people want to be able to support themselves. They don't want to be living off food stamps and have their homes foreclosed on. They want to work. They want to be able to afford to give their children a college education. The United States has the most expensive college tuition in the world, leaving young adults struggling with debt. They have difficulty paying off that debt when they are unable to find a decent job after graduation.

Part of the solution must be to raise taxes on America's wealthiest citizens. This isn't about class warfare. It's about saving the American economy. Those who can afford to pay more have the responsibility to do so. To be able to pay off our debt and bring back the so-called "American dream," we desperately need to raise revenue, and this is the clear solution.

Due to this recession, many Americans cannot afford to buy health care. They are uninsured and unprotected. Over 44 million Americans do not have health insurance. This is an outrage. Health care is a basic right that should be guaranteed for everyone. If, in the Declaration of Independence, we, as a nation, claim to guarantee the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, we must do so. By allowing insurance companies to deny our people adequate medical care, we are taking away their right to life. This must be remedied.

What we really need now is compromise. Nothing can or will be achieved if the leaders of our nation, the representatives of the people, refuse to compromise and work together towards the betterment of our country. This crisis is not unsolvable. We have the tools to fix the situation in our nation today, but only if both sides are willing to make concessions to help us move forward into the future as a powerful nation.

Thank you.

YAMUNA DAHAL, WINOOSKI HIGH SCHOOL (HONORABLE MENTION)

[January 23, 2012]

The United States of America is country of opportunity and success. We believe in our country and our confidence. We believe that we would eventually succeed overcoming any obstacles. We never fear to try something new. We are always trying to show the world

our power of unity and diversity. We got the best entrepreneurs in this country whose continues hard work and confidence made our country the best among the world, we do have some issues that need to be fixed.

Our parliament system is based on equality and liberty. Our democratic governmental system enhances the public voice to be heard. Anyone, who is capable and willing of leading this country, could be elected freely regardless of their ethnicity, race or social background.

For the last decade, our country is facing many problems. The average income for the American family is falling down. Many of our American families are losing their jobs because companies outsourced their jobs to foreign land. Companies and rich peoples are getting richer whereas the average income families are falling towards the poverty line. There are others concerns like illegal immigration, and increasing crime. There are also issues such as recovery of hurricane Katrina at New Orleans, Oil spill at the Gulf of Mexico and California fire. I could go on and on and never finish mentioning our problems.

However, for our generation increasing college tuition is a matter of headache. Our parents' incomes are spent paying their college loans and home mortgages. Today 'saving for the children's college' is rarely heard from average income family parents. Today, it's very hard to get accepted for scholarship at colleges and university so the only way to go to college is to 'take a loan.' However, in this economy, many of our college graduates are jobless and are under the debt of more than 100K dollars. And the numbers of those college graduates are increasing along with their debts. Many students get frosted about their college loans and choose to go to community college. Universities and research centers are beyond their imagination. It is decreasing our confidence and our hope for the better future. As a young high school student, I myself have to start thinking about college and my future jobs as early as my eighth grade.

To prevent ruining our future the government should put a limit for private colleges and universities tuition. There should be more scholarships available for needy students. High school students should get opportunity to take college courses during summer to reduce their semesters when they actually go to college. They should be properly trained about money management and time management. The government should increase and improve community colleges and government state universities and reduce the price. The number of colleges and universities should be increased in the remote site of the country and make it more accessible for everybody.

JULIENNE DEVITA, CHAMPLAIN VALLEY UNION HIGH SCHOOL (HONORABLE MENTION)

[January 23, 2012]

Dear Fellow Americans: Today, I stand before this great nation, to speak to the concerned, hardworking Americans, with the intent of bettering the state of this country. I would like to bring to your attention three of the most pressing issues which I feel need to be addressed in 2012 in order for the United States of America to reach it's full potential; the environment, our economy, and college education costs.

This past year, after 10 years of war, and frustration, the United States Military Forces found and defeated a key leader of the Al Quaida movement; Osama Bin Laden. This brought relief and feelings of security back to Iraqi and American citizens. We ended a war and are bringing our troops back home. Now however, it is the time for our government to focus on domestic issues,

three important things that need to get done in our country.

Firstly, fossil Fuels are a finite commodity in our world today, and whose dwindling supply has lead our country to face the unavoidable subject of Global Warming. We need to focus the public's attention not only on the devastating effects of the environment, but ultimately what will happen to human life on this planet. There needs to be more public awareness of the long-term disastrous affects that global warming will inevitably bring to our world. We need to commission scientists to create more practical and affordable solutions to this problem.

Another issue that is of paramount importance is the state of our economy. We must invest in America; American jobs, American-made products, and the American people. Companies need to be rooted in this country so that more jobs can be made available to the 8.6 percent of unemployed Americans. Financial incentives must be available for businesses to stay in the U.S. and employ the American workers.

America needs to close the vast gap between rich and poor in this country. Actions that progress the wealth down through the middle and lower class are essential. Since 1978, the cost of college tuition has increased more than 900 percent. Costs of a college education have to be more affordable for our young adults who are planning and investing in their futures.

As we reach towards these goals, our country's leaders have to come together and put aside their religion, skin color, or the fact that they are a Democrat or Republican in order to address these issues and find solutions. We must put aside our differences and compromise towards the common good. Individually we are not as strong as when we all work together.

We are a country rich of talent, knowledge, and resources. By vowing to work together on the issues of the environment, our economy, and college education costs, we will be ensuring a better future for all Americans. Let's make our future one to look forward to.

ALDEN FLETCHER, CHAMPLAIN VALLEY UNION HIGH SCHOOL (HONORABLE MENTION)

[January 23, 2012]

Our union is a union of people, a people who recently have been vocal about the state in which they find themselves. From the tea party to Occupy Wall Street, everywhere there is a movement rising up, demanding similar changes to a broken system. The people are hurting, they have lost their jobs, they are dealing with a harsh economic recession and thus far our government has failed them.

Our government has proven itself incapable of effectively dealing with the diverse and complicated problems currently threatening this nation. Our legislative body is crippled by partisan gridlock, the executive branch has been lenient in its duty to protect the American people and their rights, and, the power of common citizens in politics is being marginalized in favor of the interests of the wealthy. The need for reform is evident.

First the influence of special interests in government must be diminished; legislators should be motivated by a desire to ensure public good, not a job at a lobbying firm. In addition, the effects of *Fec v. Citizens United* must be reversed, and new restrictions must be established that limit an organization's media power and its access into the political system.

Second, we must be certain that the federal government is vigorous in its regulatory capacity. Whistleblowers, people who report

nefarious or negligent activity against the public, must be protected to the utmost; further initiatives need to be taken that increase accountability within the government bureaucracy. This will guarantee that the federal government does not abuse its power in the same manner as it has with national security.

Our country is a democracy, and it is the citizens' prerogative to keep government in check. However, many states have instituted laws that place unnecessary burdens upon voting rights. In order for a democracy to function it requires popular participation and it should be the imperative of government to encourage all those who are eligible, to vote. Through the means of a constitutional amendment, the federal government must be granted increased jurisdiction over national elections. Thus the government can create standardized voting requirements, implement automatic voter registration and facilitate absentee balloting, all of which are vital steps to giving underrepresented groups, for instance young people, more of a say in the national debate.

Finally there must be a new sentiment of cooperation and compromise in Washington if there is to be progress. A government that continually threatens to shut down due to petty disputes does little to serve the people. Changing the way this nation is governed will allow us to tackle issues from climate change to inequality, from the rising cost of college education to promoting human rights across the globe. However, if no action is taken we can accomplish nothing, and it is our responsibility to be an educated and vigilant electorate, to ensure that this does not happen.

JACK DU PRE, VERGENNES UNION HIGH SCHOOL  
(HONORABLE MENTION)

[January 23, 2012]

The state of this nation is declining. It has become an age where men and women of higher education status can't find work and an age where the natural order of employment has been shaken by a decline in productivity and availability of jobs. Teens, like me, cannot find work due to the fact that many "white collar" workers have no choice but to take jobs that they would normally not consider. At a resort near my school, the common denominator of the wait staff this summer was that most held Masters Degrees and two held PhD level educations. Waiting tables was what they could find for work.

From our youngest days in school we are charged to go to college and further our education. We are taught that the American dream is alive, well and available for those diligent and hard working. The present realities make that seem more like a fairy tale and the realities of the current economic situation more of a harsh reality. America is in need of a direct approach to stimulate the economy. The answer is not pouring more money into the economy, but deciding what will be made here and made with precision, passion and pride. The economy is stagnant because of lack of direction and focus.

In conclusion, the mending needs to come from three places. It needs to come from a Congress joined by a common interest—America and not divided by partisan rhetoric and a current state of blaming the other side. It needs to come from American corporations who decide to invest in America and in American ingenuity. Lastly, it needs to come from the people who are mired in frustration and apathy. If all three forces face the future and address the issue of what America truly needs, then the country can begin to live as it has in the past, as a beacon for other countries as a place where dreams can come true.

EMMA HAMILTON, CHAMPLAIN VALLEY UNION  
HIGH SCHOOL (HONORABLE MENTION)

[January 23, 2012]

At the dawn of 2012, the United States is facing a multitude of pressing issues. Currently, the U.S. poverty rate is 15.1 percent, the highest since 1993; the unemployment rate is 8.6 percent; and an unprecedented string of natural disasters has overcome our country in 2011. Compounding all these problems is our divided Congress, which has proven to be largely ineffective in addressing these daunting issues in a concerted and resolute manner. In this critical time, it is imperative that change comes soon.

The root of many of our country's problems originates with our degraded education system. There is a great gap in opportunities for early education, which is in large measure based on income. Studies have proven that a quality early education is essential for a successful future. Re-building and strengthening our early education system must become a top priority if the country wants to see future positive change.

When American children are born, they are told that if they follow the rules: go to school, work hard, and attend college, then they will be rewarded with a promising future. Nowadays, graduates fresh out of college find that even though they followed the rules, they struggle to find the promising future that they were led to believe would be there. America needs to find a way to put our educated people back to work with jobs that will build our economy, community, and country.

This past year extreme tornadoes ripped through the southeast. Hurricanes and tropical storms flooded communities along the eastern seaboard. Furthermore, the summer of 2011 was the hottest ever in Texas, New Mexico and Oklahoma, causing heat waves and record droughts. This extreme weather has cost our country over \$35 billion dollars. Most can agree that the climate is drastically changing at unprecedented rates. The time has come that the human race faces the effects it has on Mother Earth. The United States emits more than 5,425 million tons of carbon dioxide every year, ranking it second highest worldwide. We must join together as a nation to find quick solutions to this ever-growing problem before it is too late.

In 2011, Congress proved to be one of the most divided and uncompromising Congresses the American public has ever seen. In a time of crisis, America needs congressional leadership with creative solutions and a willingness to work together to get things done. It is vital that Congress moves forward without partisan bickering and focuses on making positive change.

During a time of high unemployment, living with a degrading education system, and increasing environmental catastrophes, our country cannot afford to wait anymore. The time has come for Americans to come together to solve the problems we are facing. Although we are confronted with many issues, there is hope for a brighter future. America has repeatedly shown it is strong and can and will restore itself to become the thriving and great nation it is capable of being.

ZACH HOLMAN, CHAMPLAIN VALLEY UNION  
HIGH SCHOOL, (HONORABLE MENTION)

[January 23, 2012]

I stand before our great nation to address the current state of the nation. 2011 was a struggle for many people, students were ending college carriers thousands of dollars in debt, scraping every last penny to cover medical bills because health insurance is too costly, or many were just not able to find a job whether he or she was an adult or teen-

ager. 2011 is behind us and 2012 is here, things will improve. For this year there are three crucial changes our government must make to make America truly great again and fully prosperous we must get people working, enact a one-payer healthcare system that ensures coverage to all, and a higher education program that makes college affordable for levels of income and status.

The past few years have led to the demise of the middle class. This is due to the fact higher paying positions do not exist and no one is hiring. Everyone from the age of 16 to 65 is under pressure to find work and yet most cannot. This year, 2012, it will change. At the end of the 2011 the unemployment rate dropped to 8.6 percent, an improvement, not a solution. We must make it so those able to and willing to work can. My plan is to start programs that train a work force for different skilled positions that there is a demand for. Then I will make sure that these positions are available. If this means subsidizing certain industries to increase demand and promote hiring, I see that it happens. It is time to get America working again whether you are a teenager or elderly adult jobs will be available.

This country has attempted to tackle the healthcare problem, and each time it does not succeed in the way most hope. It is time to throw away the old system and start new; it is a new year and a time for new ideas. The only way to bring quality healthcare to all Americans is through a one-payer system. A system that makes sure no citizen goes uncared for. To make this possible we must de-privatize insurance companies and give coverage to all. Life is not a luxury only people of certain socioeconomic statuses deserve, it is a basic human right and a one-payer system is the only way to make it possible.

Education is my last topic for the night. Today only students in dire need of financial aid receive it to attend college. This is not right and does not work. Middle class families barely can afford the outrageous price of tuition for one child let alone two or more. We must enact new forms of aid that make college affordable for all and give everyone an equal opportunity.

The country needs help, but with a few small changes success is possible. God bless you and God bless the United States of America.

KATIE LEAVITT, WOODSTOCK UNION HIGH  
SCHOOL (HONORABLE MENTION)

[January 23, 2012]

Crises encourage friendships. They force people to act as a community and work together, especially when they involve those that they care about. They create situations that bring out the good in people who would otherwise never step up to lend a hand.

The town of Woodstock has lived through a crisis this past fall: Hurricane Irene. In the months and weeks afterward, the town saw first hand that people come together and do the right thing when they need to. Community members recognized that friends and relatives who were dear to them were in trouble, so they stepped up to help make a change, because in light of a crisis, they cared. When a tree lay across my road after taking out a power line, everyone in my neighborhood helped those who weren't able to get to their homes by providing them with food, showers, and shelter. My family even created a path through our field to allow people to drive through to the other side. Crises involving family, friends, and neighbors force people into action, and they create a better environment through a sense of urgency and caring.

A major issue in our country today is the poverty crisis. One cannot enter a city without passing someone with all their belongings in a bag, asking for any money to help alleviate their situation. The majority will walk by and do nothing. The whole country begs for change: an end to poverty, yet they walk right by when a person in need asks for help. The only feeling in walking by is guilt that you have more than they, and can relieve the guilt by handing them a dollar or two. However, this does nothing to solve the problem as a whole; it only gives one temporary peace of mind. They do nothing to truly help because there is no intrinsic pull to help them, just a sudden guilt. They feel no real sense of urgency to do anything, as they have no connection to the person. It is the sense of caring for this person and the urgency to alleviate their situation that they lack.

The solution to the crisis of poverty is to replicate this feeling. To find a way to make people truly care about those that they walk by in the street everyday to get to work. Organize committees to issue government grants to motivated groups of people who will find a way to engender the feeling of community in their own hometowns and cities. Grant them the money for them to create ways for the poor and wealthy alike to become friends, and begin to form a community. That's all it takes: when you know someone, and you realize they are having a crisis, you go out of your way to help fix the problem, because that's the way it always works: absolute neediness from people you care about brings everyone together. The wealthier people will begin to look around and realize that their new friends are deep in the middle of a crisis, and they will do something about it. Trust me. I've seen it.

THEOPHILA LEE, SOUTH BURLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL (HONORABLE MENTION)

[January 23, 2012]

As a nation, the most pressing concern we currently face is our current education system. An issue of vital importance to the next generation of this country, and therefore to the nation itself, I am dismayed by the lack of progress our nation seems to be making in this area. Instead of further sensationalizing the statistics of the abysmal standards of U.S. students in comparison with their international cohorts, I have decided instead to give some practical suggestions.

The change has to come from all levels—from the students, the teachers, the schools, and the communities. At the basic levels, subjects should be taught in a more integrated way. History, literature, and art should be interwoven and studied together. This ability to reach across traditional disciplines and explore their relationships will develop increasing well-roundedness in student. It will force pupils to make interdisciplinary connections, an educational experience that I believe ultimately makes a better informed, creative, and open-minded student. Collaboration should be encouraged more often. For teachers, teaching skills should be continually sharpened, with time to take courses, attend conferences, and share lessons and tips with other teachers, online and in person. Should school districts want to explore the option of merit pay, they should base it on the above criteria, certainly not test scores of a teacher's students. Additionally, schools (with the assistance of the community at large) should require that students complete various internships with businesses, government agencies, etc. This allows students to explore their passions and expose them to the world of work through school-to-career programs and internships.

Finally, I find it appalling that lowering the cost of college tuition while still main-

taining the quality of our higher education system is still not a high enough priority.

Our higher education system is something America should be proud of; every year, the Ivy League and top liberal arts colleges receive an increasing number of international applicants, all who recognize the superiority of a U.S. education. However, the price tag is an entirely different issue. While it's understandable that cutting costs will inevitably create conflict, couldn't college presidents be held more accountable for the rising costs? This previous semester, a Stanford professor tried an experiment where he opened up his class to anyone online—for free. Expecting to get only 10,000 people, he instead found that by the end of his course, 140,000 pupils from all around the world had enrolled. Perhaps the government should encourage top colleges to explore technology in higher education through government subsidies. More paying students would lead to lower prices. It would also reduce the frenzy of high-school seniors as we find ourselves competing with as many as 10 other students for a place in our top choice college. I believe this would be a win-win situation for both parties involved.

GIOVANINA MIER, ST. JOHNSBURY ACADEMY (HONORABLE MENTION)

[January 23, 2012]

In the eternal words of our country's Preamble of the Constitution, it is stated that the purpose of the United States is "to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty for all". Today, over 224 years later, these words may seem distant and unreachable. However, they still remain the foundation of our government and ideals that we, as the American people, should strive to achieve.

In recent years, our government and political systems have become increasingly polarized and radical. While this is not inherently unfortunate, it has led to the inability of groups of differing opinions to compromise. Without compromise, democracy cannot function. In order for the people to exercise their sovereignty in such a way as to spark change and improvement in both our country and the world, we must first be able to express the will of the majority. With two equally unbending political parties pitted against each other, our government has become stagnant. This effects even minor problems, but is especially crucial in the economic recovery that is the desire of every American. With the inability to come to agreements on smaller negotiations, how can we expect to solve the larger problems of our staggering debt, unemployment, and inflation? The economic recession has injured every American, from the college student unable to find a job with a Master's degree in their field to the small business that must close its doors.

These problems facing the American people cannot be solved by simply holding fast to one's beliefs. While it is valuable to have those in government that adequately and accurately represent the ideas, morals, and beliefs of the American public, compromise does not mean that one has to entirely renounce everything they hold to be right and true. Instead, compromise asks that we come to a place at which both parties can agree upon one idea or principle. Does that seem so much to ask? Of course, compromise in practice is more difficult than in theory, but by striving for this ideal, we can create a foundation upon which compromise becomes possible. The intensive media coverage extended to the extreme ends of the political spectrum drowns out the rest of the American public;

yet listening to the less heard voices of the moderate American people is one of many ways in which we can begin to meet the challenges of compromise.

To restore our country to prosperity and success that will extend to all Americans, we must listen to both the minority and majority. We must not allow the media to create entertainment and triviality out of such serious matters of government and politics that affect all of us so greatly. We must overcome our differences and disparities to become a more unified nation truly built upon compromise, and achieve the dreams articulated in the Preamble of our Constitution.

TRAVIS KENT REED, VERGENNES UNION HIGH SCHOOL (HONORABLE MENTION)

[January 23, 2012]

In the past our country has been a world leader in freedom and democracy, but this unfortunately is no longer true. When I was little, I remember my father explaining to me that in places like Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany if people were suspected of opposing the government or expressing a divergent viewpoint, they would simply disappear. Today the United States government has made moves toward emulating its past enemies and even such fictional totalitarian states as "The Party" from the book *1984*, by passing bills that designate the world as a battlefield and allowing the indefinite detention of any person suspected of terrorism, including American citizens, without trial or other Constitutional rights.

Recently Occupy Wall Street protestors have been labeled in the same vein as domestic terrorists and the United States military has been mobilized to stop these protestors who are being attacked and brutalized for attempting to carry out their rights to peaceable assembly guaranteed in the Bill of Rights. Just recently a bill was sent to committee to be discussed. Called "Stop Online Piracy Act", it was introduced by Representative Lamar Smith of Texas. This bill is one that would seriously engender freedom of speech on the Internet by allowing for copyright holders to take down any website with a copyright claim against it. For sites like YouTube, and Reddit that had previously been protected by the Digital Millennium Copyright Act of 1996, this would mean death. What is the terrifying thing about this bill is that it isn't the only one like it. In the Senate there is a bill called Protect IP ACT, introduced by Senator Patrick Leahy which will perform the same function as the SOPA. These bills have been introduced into a nation that has long criticized countries like China for censorship and the suppression of human rights.

Our nation has long prided itself on how it treats its citizens and how the rights of the individual are the backbone of our democracy. It seems today our country is going away from this model and the value placed on the citizen is less and less important. While the wars of terrorism are being fought, a greater threat is looming, and the rights of the American people are slipping away, quietly and with deliberate purpose.

DAHLIA SOMERS, SOUTH BURLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL (HONORABLE MENTION)

[January 23, 2012]

America has been able to spread her objectives of freedom and democracy throughout the world. Together we have overcome one difficulty after another and now we face a new challenge: to create an even greater and more progressive America. To remain a world leader change is inevitable: otherwise our country will take a back burner to rising super powers. We will always be a great nation, but to remain an important one the

issues of economy, education, healthcare, and environment must be addressed.

Currently we are in debt to China for over \$15 trillion; this means our population of roughly 311 million citizens has a debt share of around \$49 thousand each. East Asian countries and European countries surpass us in education—especially in the academic subjects of math and science. Japan has a universal health care system and an average population life expectancy of 82.25. Germany understands that our environment has a finite supply of resources and imposes an environmental tax on its citizens.

Focusing on the economy, we need to generate more jobs and discontinue outsourcing. It is time for heavy regulation, and an end to the laissez-faire relationship with big businesses. This is evident in the Wall Street bailout, the outraged 99 percent, and the unacceptable (though declining) unemployment rate of 8.5 percent. The warfare against the middle classes must be addressed, and the lower classes must be bolstered.

Education is success. The focus of education should be aimed at life achievement rather than standardized tests. The problem now is that schools don't have a large enough budget: if teachers had larger salaries more competition would be created and our children would be taught by the best qualified. Parents, when they motivate and assist their children, can become invaluable components in this exciting process.

Our healthcare system is a painful topic. America has the most expensive healthcare system without the better results of less expensive European systems. We should follow the European models. Well, at least all children, seniors, and disabled should have assured healthcare. Vermont is an innovator in healthcare, and if we are successful the rest of America might follow our example.

The environmental issue is not to be taken lightly. Global warming is real and we perpetuate the harm caused to our planet. It is our responsibility to work with other powerful countries to limit our ecological footprints and conserve the world's natural resources. Steps must be taken not only on a political level but on a cultural one as well. It must become part of our culture to consume less extravagantly and recycle more diligently.

To make these ideals a reality our government must find harmony between the Democrats and the Republicans. We need to remember that this is not an issue of which party is most correct, but what can be compromised to create a better America. We still haven't seen all America can be, she is still growing and we, the present and the future, must guide her to the best outcome.

KIDDER SPILLANE, CVU, (HONORABLE MENTION)

[January 23, 2012]

Dear Fellow Americans, I am reporting to you as the New Year is starting I would like to inform the state in which the country is in and in which subjects we are going to push our efforts toward.

I believe the most important subject to address first is our problem with oil. We depend a lot on Middle Eastern countries for their foreign oil. The oil is running out and we need to put a lot of our efforts into alternative energy sources including solar, wind and even hydroelectricity. We can't just make this happen overnight it's going to take a lot of time and effort; this can be looked upon as a positive. This brings me to my next subject, if we create more alternative energy productions this will open a lot more opportunities for job creation. In November of 2011 the unemployment rate dropped to 8.4 percent from 9 percent. There

are still over 13 million American without a job, and these alternative energy products can reduce that number significantly.

The next subject I would like to address is healthcare. Healthcare is a necessity that I feel every American should be able to have with no cost. Healthcare shouldn't be something people have to worry about, our country should provide universal healthcare across the nation it is our right to get the treatment they need to survive.

The country is in debt, that's the truth we are in a deficit of \$1.48 trillion. This is a cause of overspending by the U.S. simply just raising the taxes for everyone is not the answer. I believe the way people should be taxed is the answer if a wealthier individual has the money to be able to pay more in taxes than he is doing than he should be paying more than somebody who is working a middle class job living in the suburbs. There needs to be a higher minimum tax payment on the less wealthy citizens. Not just a low percentage of somebody's income.

I also believe we need to support student loan reforms. In the future almost 60 percent of future jobs will require more than a high school diploma. We want every American to have the opportunity, and the ability to get a college diploma. People shouldn't have to be in so much debt from their loans. We need to help the people that aren't able to pay for college by themselves. The interest rate on student loans will be lowered.

Thank you fellow Americans. It is not just congress job to make this happen we need to unite as a nation everybody needs to be a part of the action of strengthening our nation. This is a tough time right now with the economy it's going to take effort from all Americans. Thank you for your time America. God bless you and may god bless the United States of America.●

## MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

### ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

At 2:02 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bills:

H.R. 3800. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the funding and expenditure authority of the Airport and Airway Trust Fund, to amend title 49, United States Code, to extend authorizations for the airport improvement program, and for other purposes.

H.R. 3801. An act to amend the Tariff Act of 1930 to clarify the definition of aircraft and the offenses penalized under the aviation smuggling provisions under that Act, and for other purposes.

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

## MEASURES READ THE FIRST TIME

The following bill was read the first time:

S. 2041. A bill to approve the Keystone XL pipeline project and provide for environmental protection and government oversight.

## EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-4678. A communication from the Chairman, National Transportation Safety Board, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the Board's competitive sourcing efforts for fiscal year 2011; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4679. A communication from the Administrator, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the National 911 Program; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4680. A communication from the Secretary of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the awarding of funding made available by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4681. A communication from the Administrator, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "NASA: Key Controls NASA Employs to Guide Use and Management of Funded Space Act Agreements are Generally Sufficient, but Some Could Be Strengthened and Clarified"; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4682. A communication from the Acting Secretary of the Federal Trade Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the Do-Not-Call Registry Fee Extension Act of 2007; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4683. A communication from the Director, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Direct Investment Surveys: BE-12, Benchmark Survey of Foreign Direct Investment in the United States—2012" (RIN0691-AA80) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 6, 2012; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4684. A communication from the Assistant Chief Counsel for Hazardous Materials Safety, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Hazardous Materials: Miscellaneous Amendments; Response to Appeals; Corrections" (RIN2137-AE84) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 30, 2011; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4685. A communication from the Regulatory Ombudsman, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Hours of Service of Drivers" (RIN2126-AB26) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 13, 2012; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4686. A communication from the Deputy Bureau Chief, Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "911 Service, Phase II Accuracy" (FCC 11-107) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 13, 2012; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4687. A communication from the Chief of Staff, Media Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Amendment of Section 73.202(b), Table of Allotments, FM Broadcast Stations (Milford, Utah)" (MB Docket No. 11-64, RM-11598) received during adjournment of the Senate in