

group together that started using our supplies—we buy from ourselves when we build houses, apartments, hotels, and any other retail developments.”

Jim Booth has many things to be proud of—building an economic conglomerate from scratch, for one—but he is very modest when speaking of his business accomplishments. What he seems most proud of are the jobs and opportunities he’s been able to bring to the local people.

“We started the convenience stores in ’84. The first Fast Lane was in Lovely, KY. We have a really good team—James Mills manages Fast Lane, Fast Lane Tobacco Stores, and Mountain Petroleum, and he does a really good job. Fast Lane has been a great success—not just for Martin County but for the region. Locally, we do tremendous things for the school system. The Fast Lane Classic is second to none—I doubt there is a better pre-season basketball tournament in the state of Kentucky. It’s held at Sheldon Clark High School on the Saturday of Thanksgiving weekend, and some of the best teams in the tri-state participate. UK Wildcat Patrick Patterson participated in our tournament when he played at Huntington High.

“Through our businesses, we’re able to help a lot of these kids get into the workforce,” Jim continues. “They’ll tell me, ‘I got to buy a car because of Taco Bell or KFC’ because that’s where they work. There wouldn’t be those kinds of opportunities here for kids if we didn’t have the retail jobs.

“On the coal mining sector, we’ve allowed anybody from the area who wants to be a miner and is qualified to train and become a certified coal miner. To be honest with you, we need coal miners right now. We have several vacancies in our mining operations. We could hire qualified people right now.”

After Fast Lane, knowing the area needed a hotel, Jim and his team built the Inez Super 8 Hotel. He chose the location because the site had the necessary infrastructure. From there, they moved out from Martin County and began what he refers to as the Interstate Hotels—located in Mt. Sterling, Catlettsburg, and two in Huntington—all on I-64. They’re all doing well.

When asked to describe his business plan, Jim explains it very simply: “We have mostly grown from within based on common synergies. Almost everyone in management has started on the ground floor and worked their way through the system. Most are local residents. We have a lot of families that every member of the family has worked for us. We try to provide all the opportunities this area can support.”

The companies have ventured out of Martin County. Jim’s son-in-law, Jeff Fraley, operates the United States Achievement Academy in Lexington, which is similar to Who’s Who. They do all the printing for the book and have about 100 employees. Two other businesses in Lexington are Southeast Mail, the largest bulk mailer in Lexington, and a Bluegrass branch of Elite Insurance.

Booth Enterprises has gone into Louisa with the new Yatesville Crossing shopping center, containing retail businesses such as Wal-Mart, Appalachian Wireless, and Radio Shack. Plans are to build a medical center on the lower level. As an offspring of the building supply in Lovely, a Surplus Home Center has been opened in Louisa. The company buys oversupply items from different places and ships them to the Center. The buyer is Martin County native Carolea Mills who is also a board member of the Roy F. Collier Community Center.

Jim Booth really lights up when describing the Collier Community Center and its programs. “It is probably the most unique centralized facility Martin County has ever established, and it is highly utilized by the

community,” he says. “Roy Collier was one of my business partners when I started out, and he passed in 2005. I donated the property, so I was allowed to name the building in honor of Roy. The Community Center has four digital 3-D cinemas with surround sound, an indoor walking track, a gift store, a Fun Zone Arcade, a fitness center, video conferencing, a computer lab, and large rooms for receptions or meetings. Over 125,000 people per year make use of it. It’s a real drawing card—people come from surrounding counties—especially for the cinema.”

Jim was also instrumental in working with Morehead State University, where he has served as chairman of the Board of Regents, to bring the “Martin County on the Move” program to Martin County and the Collier Community Center. He and President Wayne Andrews of Morehead State University met with U.S. Representative Hal Rogers to discuss the problem of obesity in young people. The Congressman secured a year’s grant to encourage Martin County kids to be more active and to select healthy food. Although the program is based at the Collier Community Center, the health directors work through the local school system. One year, Jim bought pedometers for all the kids in 6th grade! Started in Martin, the program will progress into other counties, with Lawrence County the next possible choice. “Martin County on the Move” has been hugely successful in creating new health and wellness initiatives in the community.

Jim’s personal involvement throughout Inez is evident by his leadership as chairman of the Martin County Economic Development Board, which has oversight of the new Business Center. The Martin County Board of Education and the office of the Kentucky Health & Human Services were both in buildings that were falling apart around them. Now an open, light-filled, modern building with walls filled with art and the very best in technology stands as a beacon of progress in the community. It is home to both organizations and has additional leasable space as well. Built with coal severance tax money and the support of Judge Kelly Callahan, the county is allowed to keep the revenue to maintain the facility. Christi Brown, executive director of the Martin County Economic Development Authority, spearheaded development of the Business Center and presently manages the Center.

The Martin County Historical Society was also built on property Jim and Linda Booth donated. The Historical Society has a small privately owned gift shop, located on the first floor of an adjoining building, and the rent helps with operating expenses of the Society. Mike Duncan, president of Inez Deposit Bank, allows students from their summer intern program to volunteer at the Society. The students work at the bank, participate in cultural programs, hear business speakers (including Jim Booth), and work on their own family trees at the Historical Society.

Jim transitions seamlessly from recalling the past to looking toward the future. “County Judge/Executive Kelly Callahan wants to build a new courthouse and continue to utilize the existing facility as a re-designed cultural center. We’re also looking at doing some redevelopment on the east side of Inez’s Main Street. We want to remodel or replace most of the buildings, and we hope to make retail space downstairs and office or living quarters upstairs. We’re working with the Appalachian Regional Commission to develop a plan.”

It’s safe to say that whatever Jim puts his efforts into will exceed expectations, will definitely be something to benefit both Martin County and southeastern Kentucky, and will be a source of pride and inspiration.

It’s plain to see that Jim Booth is dedicated to making things happen in Martin County, but why does he put such effort and heart into every project?

“This is home,” he says. “Linda and I decided to stay here; build here and improve our community for the next generation.” That they have done, and they are to be commended for their efforts.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, yesterday I came to the floor to express my hope that Republicans would join together with Democrats to end the damaging filibusters of judicial nominations. With a judicial vacancies crisis that has lasted years, and nearly 1 in 10 judgeships across the Nation vacant, this is something the Senate needs to do. I hoped that we could work together to ensure that the Federal courts have the judges they need to provide justice for all Americans without needless delay.

Today there are 22 circuit and district court nominations ready for Senate consideration and a final confirmation vote. They were all reported favorably by the Judiciary Committee after thorough review. All but a handful are by any measure consensus nominations. There was never any good reason for the Senate not to proceed to votes on these nominations. It should not have taken cloture motions to get agreement to schedule votes on these qualified, consensus judicial nominations. A dozen of the nominations on which agreement has now been reached have been stalled for months and were reported last year.

These are qualified judicial nominees. They are nominees whose judicial philosophy is well within the mainstream. These are all nominees supported by their home State Senators, both Republican and Democratic. The consequence of these months of delays is borne by the nearly 160 million Americans who live in districts and circuits with vacancies that could be filled as soon as Senate Republicans agree to up-or-down votes on the 22 judicial nominations currently before the Senate awaiting a confirmation vote.

In light of the agreement reached between the leaders, the Senate will finally be allowed to consider the nomination of Judge Gina Groh of West Virginia. Her nomination has been stalled for more than 5 months. We will also finally be able to consider other long-stalled nominations like that of Michael Fitzgerald to fill a judicial emergency vacancy on the Central District of California, which has been ready for a vote for well over 4 months. The delays in confirmations mean justice delayed for millions of Americans.

I went back and checked my recollection of how we considered consensus Federal trial court nominees in President Bush’s first term. Nearly 60 were confirmed within a week of being reported by the Senate Judiciary Committee. By contrast, there have only been two judicial nominees voted on so

promptly since President Obama took office. I said at the time we were able to vote on the Alabama nominee supported by Senator SESSIONS, who was at that time the committee's ranking Republican member, and on Judge Reiss of Vermont that I hoped they would become the model for regular order. Instead, they stand out as isolated exceptions to the months of delay Senate Republicans have insisted on before considering consensus Federal trial court nominees of this President.

I am glad that there is finally agreement to proceed, as well, with circuit nominees. Two delayed from last year are outstanding women: Stephanie Dawn Thacker of West Virginia, nominated to the Fourth Circuit, and Judge Jacqueline Nguyen of California, nominated to fill one of the many judicial emergency vacancies on the Ninth Circuit. Ms. Thacker, an experienced litigator and prosecutor, has the strong support of her home State Senators, Senators ROCKEFELLER and MANCHIN. Judge Nguyen, whose family fled to the United States in 1975 after the fall of South Vietnam, was confirmed unanimously to the district court in 2009 and would become the first Asian Pacific American woman to serve on a U.S. court of appeals. Both were reported unanimously by the Judiciary Committee last year and both should be confirmed by the Senate without additional damaging delays.

I am pleased that the majority leader and the Republican leader have now come to an understanding and a path forward on these important judicial nominations. Their agreement not only helps work through the backlog of nominations stalled before the Senate, it paves the way for votes on 14 of the 22 current judicial nominations and provides a pattern for continuing to make progress beyond those 14 and beyond the current 22. There are another 8 judicial nominees who have had hearings and are working their way through the committee process. In addition, there are another 11 nominations on which the committee should be holding additional hearings during the next several weeks. By working steadily and by continuing the resumption of the regular consideration of judicial nominations, I hope the understanding between the leaders' signals we can have a positive impact and reduce judicial vacancies significantly before the end of the year. In 2004 and 2008, both Presidential election years, by working together we were able to reduce judicial vacancies to the lowest levels in decades.

Our courts need qualified Federal judges, not vacancies, if they are to reduce the excessive wait times that burden litigants seeking their day in court. It is unacceptable for hard-working Americans who turn to their courts for justice to suffer unnecessary delays. When an injured plaintiff sues to help cover the cost of his or her medical expenses, that plaintiff should not have to wait 3 years before a judge

hears the case. When two small business owners disagree over a contract, they should not have to wait years for a court to resolve their dispute.

Never before in the Senate's history have I seen the confirmation of qualified, consensus district court nominees supported by their home State Senators and reported by the Judiciary Committee blocked for months. We remain 40 confirmations and 9 months behind the pace we set during 2001 through 2004, during President Bush's first term. The judicial vacancy rate remains nearly double what it was at this time during his first term.

We 100 Senators stand in the shoes of over 300 million Americans. It is good to see the Senate agreeing to end the partisan stalling and schedule votes on these long-delayed and much-needed judges.

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF ITALIAN UNIFICATION

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, for the past year the people of Italy have been commemorating the 150th anniversary of Italian Unification with a series of events and exhibitions throughout Italy and the world.

In this country, the Italian Embassy hosted a series of concerts, museum exhibitions, and lectures, which were widely attended and have educated and entertained Americans about the stirring story of Italy and the beauty of its culture. The Ambassador of Italy who initiated this series of commemorative events, Giulio Terzi di Sant'Agata, deserves recognition for organizing this remarkable program for the American people. We wish Ambassador Terzi well in his new job as Foreign Minister, and we welcome his successor, Claudio Bisogniero, as the new Ambassador of the Italian Republic to the United States.

There were many outstanding moments on the road to Italian unification—most notably March 15, 1861, the day Victor Emmanuel II was proclaimed the King of a single Italian state. But several weeks earlier, on February 18, 1861, the future King of Italy convened the first Italian Parliament in Turin, establishing an Italian democratic tradition that has known both triumph and tragedy. Of course, Americans don't have to go to Italy or a cultural event to appreciate the Italian roots of our own democratic tradition. Not only did Roman history and conceptions of government inform and inspire the Founders of our own government, but the sons and daughters of Italy are all around us serving the cause of American democracy. It would be impossible to name more than a few, but even a partial list gives a sense of the magnitude of the Italian-American contribution to our democracy: John Pastore, the first Italian-American elected to this Senate; Fiorello LaGuardia, the legendary mayor of New York; Geraldine Ferraro, the first woman to be on a national

ticket; NANCY PELOSI, the first female Speaker of the House; Supreme Court Justices Antonin Scalia and Samuel Alito; and Leon Panetta, our current Secretary of Defense.

This week the Senate adopted a resolution that I introduced commemorating this anniversary and the abiding relationship between our two countries. I am glad to be joined by my colleagues, Senators BARRASSO, CASEY, ENZI, GILLIBRAND, LUGAR, SCHUMER, and SHAHEEN, as original cosponsors.

This 150th anniversary year closes during challenging times for a new generation of Italians. It is worth pausing here in Washington to salute our ally, from whom we have drawn so much talent and inspiration. We wish the citizens of the Italian Republic our best, with knowledge that during the past 150 years their Republic has endured many challenges and confidence that they will rise even higher.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO XURON CORPORATION

• Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, the American manufacturing sector is critical for economic expansion and job creation, employing nearly 12 million Americans across the country. Today, due to global economic downturns and increasing competition from abroad, American firms must adapt to compete in an international marketplace by incorporating creative and innovative designs. With this in mind, I rise to commend Xuron Corporation, located in Saco, ME, a shining example of an American company adapting and succeeding in an increasingly complex international economy.

Xuron, originally founded in Danbury, CT, began producing high-grade precision hand tools in 1971. In 1986, this small firm relocated to Maine to take advantage of expansion opportunities and the State's expert workforce. For over 40 years, this company has been an industry-leading developer, manufacturer, and seller of high-grade precision hand tools for multiple industries from aerospace to jewelry. With hundreds of distributors, Xuron tools can be found in factories and workshops around the world.

Just recently, the National Institute of Standards and Technology's Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership, MEP, program recognized Xuron for "Making it in America" due to their innovative designs, access to foreign markets, and continually creating jobs for American workers. While the great recession drastically affected businesses across the United States, Xuron surmounted all obstacles by readjusting their operations to combat the economic downturn. For instance, the company began cross-training its employees to perform a multitude of tasks ranging from manufacturing to accounting. Furthermore, the company actively removed inefficiencies along