

and how to cast votes based on ethical values and a deep commitment to our fellow men and women, not based on political expediency.

For that leadership, both as a great female legislator and as an accomplished legislator with a lifelong commitment to improving the lives of all Americans, we honor her.

Mr. BEGICH. Mr. President, today I wish to pay tribute to my esteemed colleague, Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI from the great State of Maryland. I am honored to recognize the historic achievements of my fellow Senator. On Saturday she became the longest-serving woman in congressional history after serving more than 35 years in both the House and Senate. Originally a social worker and community organizer in Baltimore, Senator MIKULSKI's congressional legacy began in 1976 when she was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. Ten years later with her election into the U.S. Senate she became the first female Senator from Maryland as well as the first woman to be elected to both the House and Senate. Senator MIKULSKI deserves great honor and reverence for her dedication to the people of Maryland, the United States, and to the institution of the Senate.

Three years ago I entered these chambers as a freshman from a far-away State. Senator MIKULSKI was already known as a legend, to me and so many of my constituents. Since then, she has been an inspiration—and, to no one's surprise, a straight shooter and passionate advocate of her issues. More than once, when I have not yet signed onto one of her bills—usually something near and dear to her, like child abuse prevention—she has cornered me. And in a tough stance, all 4 feet 5 inches of her, she'll tell me why it is my duty to sign the bill. She is always right, and I am happy to follow her lead on such issues.

Throughout her time in Congress Senator MIKULSKI has been a champion for civil rights, fighting to end discrimination of all kinds. As the chairwoman of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions she has continually fought to end discrimination in the workplace. In 2011 she was a sponsor of the Paycheck Fairness Act, which ensures equal pay, regardless of gender.

She has also defended our Nation's teachers and students by fighting for more affordable and accessible education and supporting the needs of rural school districts. Just this year she introduced legislation that would ensure veterans who receive educational assistance from the Department of Veterans Affairs also receive adequate counseling when considering their educational options.

Senator MIKULSKI's accomplishments are numerous and diverse, from the day-to-day needs of workers, business owners, and students to the strengthening of scientific innovation and research. Senator MIKULSKI deserves

great honor and esteem for her dedication to fighting for the good of the people of Maryland and the Nation.

I am honored to serve alongside such a devoted advocate, and I look forward to her continued service in the U.S. Senate. She began her tenure in 1977 as one of 21 women serving in the House and today is one of 17 women in the Senate. She has helped paved the way for future generations. Yet she likely would not agree that women have come a long way over those years; instead she will say there is a long way to go.

Today I congratulate and pay homage to Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI. She is a friend, a mentor, and—so very often—the good conscience of the United States Senate.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to speak in honor of Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI. I join my colleagues in recognizing her for becoming the longest serving female Member of Congress in our Nation's history.

I know Senator MIKULSKI is more interested in results than milestones, but this is an appropriate moment to congratulate her for all that she has accomplished. She is both a tenacious fighter and gracious colleague.

The true measure of a society is how we treat people in the dawn and twilight years of their lives. By that standard, Senator MIKULSKI's career has been extraordinary.

From the start of her career in public service as a Baltimore social worker helping at-risk kids and seniors to today, she has been a champion for children and the elderly. She has been a champion for education, research, and veterans, and she has been an unflinching champion for Maryland.

Senator MIKULSKI has also been a friend since my first days in the Senate. Early on she reached out to me to explain the appropriations process in the Senate. My father, who spent his entire career in the U.S. House of Representatives, was always suspicious of the Senate. So to a freshman Senator making the transition from the House, hers was a welcome and reassuring gesture, kind of like the folksy gesture of calling me "cowboy," which always brings a smile to my face.

Senator MIKULSKI's style is a powerful counter to the old Washington joke that there are actually three political parties: Democrats, Republicans, and appropriators. She always values the input of other Senators and strives to balance the many competing priorities of all the Members of this body. For example, we have worked together on the Joint Polar Satellite System. This program is over budget and behind schedule, but it is also indispensable to public safety and our economy. As an appropriator, she has the unenviable challenge of striving to continually put this program on firm financial footing. In the process, she has repeatedly asked for my perspective and welcomed me into the process. This is above and beyond the call of duty but is so typical of BARBARA MIKULSKI.

Many have compared Senator MIKULSKI's streak to another famous Marylander's—Cal Ripken, Jr. I think Cal would agree with Barbara when she said, "It's not only how long I serve, but how well I serve."

She has undoubtedly served this institution, this country, and Maryland very well.

I commend Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI for her 35 years of service in Congress and look forward to her future successes.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

PORTLAND'S FIRST AME ZION CHURCH

• Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, it is with great pride that I congratulate the First African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in Portland, OR, on its 150 years of devotion to God and the Portland community.

In 1862, the A.M.E. Zion Church convened as the first of its kind in Portland, just 3 years after Oregon became a State. First Church's humble beginnings started in the home of Mrs. Mary Carr on A Street, now Ankeny Street, under the leadership of Rev. J.O. Lodge. Since then, the congregation has grown substantially and has weathered four relocations. It now has settled at its current home on North Vancouver and North Skidmore Avenue.

First Church has impacted countless lives over the course of its 150 years. It has provided shelter and clothing for the homeless, food for the hungry, and scholarships to young students chasing their dreams to college. Today, they continue their good work keeping youth off the streets and reducing gang violence. The church is a strong, positive force in the Portland community.

To Pastor Robert Nelson Probasco, Sr., and the First African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church of Portland: Thank you for your dedication, conviction, and faithful service to the people of Portland. •

ARGO MARKETING GROUP

• Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, as the American economy becomes increasingly global, small businesses specializing in telecommunications and direct-response marketing provide essential services to businesses throughout the world. Today, I rise to commend and recognize Argo Marketing Group, located in Lewiston, ME, for being among the best in this expanding industry.

Jason Levesque founded Argo in 2003 to provide consulting and direct-response marketing services to companies in Maine and throughout the world. Since that time, this small firm has continued to expand despite the turbulent economy, adding numerous jobs throughout the State. In 2011, Argo Marketing moved from Auburn to Lewiston to allow for a company expansion, which included the doubling of

employees from 25 to 51. Moreover, the firm recently added 25 additional employees in January of this year to its new location in Pittsfield. This remarkable expansion provides high-quality jobs for Mainers, which is especially vital after the closing of Global Contract Services in Pittsfield, leaving 65 employees without jobs.

With cutting-edge technology, Argo is a leader in call center service and support. The company prides itself on having the best integrated system in the industry that is customized to handle a vast array of clients. Moreover, Argo has always firmly believed that having dedicated professionals as part of the Argo family helps direct the path of any given project. There is a pervading philosophy in the telecommunications, marketing, and customer service industry that retaining a current customer is easier than finding a new one. Indeed, customer care is a top priority, especially for small businesses competing with larger companies with more resources and cheaper products. This quality investment in customer service has been a key component in Argo's success.

Further, Jason understands the importance of an engaged staff and giving back to the local community. He consistently works to increase company morale and provide an atmosphere where people enjoy coming into work every day with a positive attitude. As a dedicated part of the Lewistown-Auburn community, this company also donated to Sand Castle Pre-School in Lewistown which assists disadvantaged youths.

Small businesses drive the American economy by consistently creating jobs in the private sector while spurring investment in their local community. Argo's success and expansion is a glowing example of why these firms are so critical to America's economy. It is innovative entrepreneurs like Jason Levesque who are going to lead us out of our economic morass by creating jobs and opportunity all across our Nation. Despite these difficult economic times, he has clearly fostered a winning strategy, and I congratulate him and everyone at Argo Marketing for their dedication to excellence and for maintaining an impressive record of job creation in central Maine. I offer my best wishes for their future endeavors.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Pate, 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 placed on the Executive Calendar under Privileged Nominations.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 10:41 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, 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. 3298. An act to establish the position of Special Assistant for Veterans Affairs in the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and for other purposes.

H.R. 3309. An act to amend the Communications Act of 1934 to provide for greater transparency and efficiency in the procedures followed by the Federal Communications Commission.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bills were read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 3298. An act to establish the position of Special Assistant for Veterans Affairs in the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

H.R. 3309. An act to amend the Communications Act of 1934 to provide for greater transparency and efficiency in the procedures followed by the Federal Communications Commission; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bills were read the second time, and placed on the calendar:

H.R. 2682. An act to provide end user exemptions from certain provisions of the Commodity Exchange Act and the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, and for other purposes.

H.R. 2779. An act to exempt inter-affiliate swaps from certain regulatory requirements put in place by the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act.

H.R. 4014. An act to amend the Federal Deposit Insurance Act with respect to information provided to the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection.

ENROLLED BILL PRESENTED

The Secretary of the Senate announced that on today, March 28, 2012, she had presented to the President of the United States the following enrolled bill:

S. 2038. An act to prohibit Members of Congress and employees of Congress from using nonpublic information derived from their official positions for personal benefit, and for other purposes.

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-5501. A communication from the Vice President of Government Affairs and Cor-

porate Communications, National Railroad Passenger Corporation, Amtrak, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to Amtrak's Executive Level 1 salary for 2011; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-5502. A communication from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod by Catcher/Processors Using Trawl Gear in the Western Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska" (RIN0648-XB014) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 21, 2012; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-5503. A communication from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod for American Fisheries Act Catcher/Processors Using Trawl Gear in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area" (RIN0648-XB028) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 21, 2012; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-5504. A communication from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pollock in Statistical Area 630 in the Gulf of Alaska" (RIN0648-XB010) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 21, 2012; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-5505. A communication from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic; Closure" (RIN0648-XA989) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 21, 2012; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-5506. A communication from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Atlantic Herring Fishery; Sub-ACL (Annual Catch Limit) Harvested for Management Area 2" (RIN0648-XB001) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 21, 2012; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-5507. A communication from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Atlantic Herring Fishery; Sub-ACL (Annual Catch Limit) Harvested for Management Area 1B" (RIN0648-XA971) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 21, 2012; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-5508. A communication from the Acting Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, National Marine Fisheries Service, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Atlantic Herring Fishery; Adjustment to 2012 Annual Catch Limits" (RIN0648-BB50) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 21, 2012; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-5509. A communication from the Acting Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, National Marine Fisheries