

need to vote. Folks do not have to agree with it. They can vote no on the final bill. Let us vote. On behalf of the people we represent, let us vote on the bill. On behalf of 300,000 students and their families in Michigan, on behalf of hundreds of thousands of others who are looking for the opportunity to go to college, to be able to work hard and take all the risks that come with that to be able to have a better life, I ask we simply allow a vote. Let us vote on this bill.

It is time to get on and let people know we get it, we understand what families are going through, we understand the squeeze middle-class families are going through on every front right now, and we will make sure that access to college, a higher education, is not just there for the wealthy and connected but that it is available to everybody because we are a stronger country because of that.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

20TH ANNIVERSARY OF NEVADA'S HISPANIC MUSEUM

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize and honor the Hispanic Museum of Nevada—Museo Hispano de Nevada—for its 20 years of service to our community.

For the last two decades, Museo Hispano de Nevada has been guided by its mission: “dedicated to promote awareness, education and resources of the diverse Hispanic cultures and traditions to enhance intercultural understanding among community members.” This institution has played a critical role in educating Nevadans about the diversity of Latino heritage and promoting pride and cultural understanding.

The Museo Hispano de Nevada has sponsored numerous field trips and workshops, shedding light on the different cultural traditions of the Latino population and enabling future generations to learn about their heritage through historic artifacts and art exhibits. These programs and activities have served as learning tools for educating our community about the diversity in my home State of Nevada, where 26 percent of the population is Latino, accounting for 46 percent of growth in the Silver State.

As someone who has directly witnessed the importance of having a museum dedicated to preserving the history and telling the stories of Latinos in my home State, I am proud to be an original cosponsor of the Smithsonian American Latino Museum Act, S. 1868. It is my hope that a museum illuminating the richness of the Latino culture and history, as well as the numerous contributions Hispanics have made to the United States, will be built in our Nation's Capital in the near future.

I would also like to recognize Lynnette Sawyer, executive director of the museum, for her outstanding leadership and commitment to the museum. I extend a warm felt thanks to the staff and countless individuals who have worked over the years to make this great institution a resource for all Nevadans. Please join me in congratulating the Hispanic Museum of Nevada for 20 years of great work honoring the rich diversity among Hispanics and their many contributions to our great State. I wish the Museo Hispano de Nevada continued success in their future endeavors.

TRIBUTE TO RUBEN CURTIS “R.C.” WALKER

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today in honor of a man who has always been ready and willing to answer the call of distress in his hometown of London, KY, in Laurel County: Mr. Ruben Curtis Walker, better known by what everyone typically calls him, “R.C.” He has served as a member of numerous first-response teams for the local people of his community for almost 60 years.

A life-long passion for service in the rescue field began for R.C. in 1952, when he joined the London Fire Department. He has maintained some kind of position there, whether volunteer or paid, ever since. R.C. has a deep desire to extend a helping hand to those in need. He enjoyed his job and he enjoyed the work he was doing for his community so much, in fact, that in 1962 Fire Chief Gilmore Phelps noticed his display of passion and asked him to start the first-ever Laurel County fire department. R.C. took on the challenge and met it with flying colors. He went on to run an excellent fire department for 18½ years before finally stepping down as chief.

Having always been active in his community and anxious to help out, R.C. didn't just devote his time to the new County Fire Department; he was involved across the board in the service arena. He was deputy coroner, then eventually coroner in 1966, the same year that he ran for county sheriff. He opened the Bowling-Walker funeral home in 1965. He has also been deputy sheriff in Laurel County, and the county jailer from 1989 to 1993.

However diverse the life of R.C. Walker was, he did not stray far from the fire department. His first love was

fire and rescue, and that is where he is most at home. Although he does not fight fires with the department today, he does still participate in other activities with the firemen, many of whom refer to him as ‘Pap.’

Mr. Walker is not only a devoted public servant, but also a beloved family man. Aside from firefighter, he holds a few other titles—like husband, father, and grandfather. He and his wife of 25 years, Marie, have four children, Eddie, Steven, Stewart, and Deborah Greenwall. R.C. is dearly cherished by all who know him. I can say with certainty that his family, the boys at the fire department, and the local citizens of Laurel County feel safe knowing a man as honest and caring as Ruben Curtis Walker is watching out for them.

I ask my colleagues in the United States Senate to join me in commemorating Mr. Ruben Curtis Walker for the great many contributions he has to his local community.

There was recently an article printed in the Sentinel-Echo: Silver Edition, a Laurel County, KY local newspaper magazine, which highlighted the countless accomplishments of R.C. Walker throughout his colorful life. I ask unanimous consent the article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the article was ordered to appear in the RECORD as follows:

[From the Sentinel-Echo: Silver Edition,
November 2011]

HE'S DONE IT ALL
(By Carol Mills)

He has been a first responder in many ways—firefighter, rescue worker, sheriff's deputy, coroner, and jailer.

Ruben Curtis “R.C.” Walker joined the London Fire Department in 1952, and has been a volunteer fireman for the city or county most of his life.

He has also been with the London-Laurel County Rescue Squad most of the time.

“I've really enjoyed being a firefighter. I've always been helpful on the rescue squad whether I was with the city or county. I remember rescuing this fellow out of an electric line. When they were clearing the bottom out to put the new sanitation system in, I got a call from the funeral home they found somebody they thought was dead down there. He was putting a new blade on a bulldozer and he swung his boom around and he got it into 6,900 volts of electricity. I jumped in the truck and pulled it away from the electric line. The door was open on the truck, so I took a running go and jumped in. He was passing in and out, but he wasn't dead.”

Back then, the funeral homes transported patients to the hospital because the ambulance service was established on Jan. 1, 1977.

“It's just wonderful that I could be of help to somebody. I've been through a lot of situations. I devoted the biggest majority of my life to fire and rescue. My son, Steven, is a sergeant in the state police and my son, Stewart, is chief of the city police.

“Gilmore Phelps was chief in 1952, and he talked me into joining the fire department with them,” Walker recalled. “I was working around a florist and a grocery store here in town, Acton's Grocery, here on Main Street. I was with the city in '54 when I starting working at House Funeral Home on East Fourth Street.”

In 1958, Walker left House Funeral Home, but he was still with the city fire department. He started working with Laurel Funeral Home on South Main Street where the Laurel Judicial Center is now.

"There used to be a big home there and we used it," he recalled. "And I sold cars for a while. In the meantime, while I was at Laurel Funeral Home, they talked me into starting the county fire department."

Walker was appointed the first Laurel County fire chief when the department was organized in 1962, a position now held by Tommy Johnston. Walker was chief for 18-and-a-half years before stepping down after getting injured.

In the meantime in 1965, he opened the Bowling-Walker Funeral Home on Dixie Street where the London-Laurel County Farmers Market is now. He sold out his part in the funeral business after he had back surgery.

While at Bowling-Walker, he was a deputy coroner and, when he ran for sheriff in 1966, he was the coroner. He has been a deputy with the Laurel County Sheriff's Office, too.

"That's why my boys picked up the police business."

He then ran for Laurel County Sheriff in 1970.

"I won the nominee on the Republican (ticket) out of 14 and then the Democrats beat me in the fall," Walker recalled. "I then went back to House Funeral Home in 1973 and worked until '80. In 1982, I went to work for Laurel Funeral Home, which had moved to (Ky.) 192 on the hill behind the school, Laurel County High."

Walker was Laurel County jailer from 1989 until 1993. When he was elected, he came back to the London Fire Department and has been there ever since.

Walker has been married to his wife, Marie, for 25 years and he has another son, Eddie, who lives in Texas, and a daughter, Deborah Greenwall, an attorney in Louisville.

"I've got a good relationship with the children and grandbabies," Marie Walker said.

Now at 77, Walker does not actively fight fires, but continues to participate in any of the department's other activities.

"I don't do much. They kind of take care of me. Some of them call me 'Pap.'"

ASIAN-PACIFIC AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH 2012

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the Asian and Pacific Islander community in the United States and celebrate the tremendous contribution these Americans have made to our Nation.

There are an estimated 17.3 million residents of Asian descent in our country and 5.6 million Asian-Pacific Americans living in California. I am proud that our State has the largest Asian population in the country.

California also boasts the highest number of Asian-owned businesses at 508,969, and the U.S. Armed Forces has more than 265,000 Asian-American veterans.

In 1977, Senators DANIEL INOUE and Spark Matsunaga of Hawaii introduced a resolution in the Senate and President Jimmy Carter signed a joint resolution officially establishing Asian-Pacific American Heritage Week to honor the first Japanese immigrants to the United States and the Chinese individuals who worked on the Trans-

continental Railroad. In 1992, May was officially designated Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month.

This year's Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month theme, "Striving for Excellence in Leadership, Diversity and Inclusion," is embodied in the accomplishments of numerous Asian-Pacific Americans.

In Congress, my colleagues, Senators DANIEL INOUE and DANIEL AKAKA, are joined by California Representatives JUDY CHU, MIKE HONDA, and DORIS MATSUI as examples of good public servants.

A number of California cities are led by Asian-Pacific Americans, including: Mayor Ling-Ling Chang of Diamond Bar, Mayor Edwin Lee of my hometown of San Francisco, Mayor Jean Quan of Oakland, Mayor Richard Sun of San Marino, Mayor Jeremy Yamaguchi of Placentia, and Mayor Vincent Yu of Temple City.

Additionally, it is appropriate to acknowledge the outstanding contributions of Asian-Pacific Americans who sit on the bench in California.

Judge Edward M. Chen just finished his first year as a U.S. district court judge in San Francisco.

Associate Justice Goodwin Liu was recently appointed to the Supreme Court of California.

Judge Jacqueline H. Nguyen has served with distinction as the first Vietnamese-American Federal judge since 2009, and was nominated to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in 2011. She has won confirmation to the Ninth Circuit, which makes her the first Asian-American female Federal appellate judge in the Nation.

Public service is by no means the only area in which Asian-Pacific Americans have made great strides forward.

National Basketball Association phenomenon Jeremy Lin, a California native, has provided inspiration well beyond the Asian-Pacific American community. From young children to adults, the Harvard-educated athlete has proven to millions that no dream is too big to achieve.

Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month is particularly relevant in 2012, as we recognize the 70th anniversary of the Japanese-American relocation during World War II, under Executive Order 9066.

I remember this shameful page in our history. As a young girl, my father took me to the Tanforan Racetrack, near San Francisco, which was a staging point for Japanese Americans en route to more permanent detention centers. Seeing the barbed wire, and the men, women, and children housed in horse stables and small buildings on the infield of the racetrack was an experience I will never forget.

It is important that our Nation acknowledge mistakes, no matter how far in the past. I am proud to have cosponsored and voted in support of a resolution expressing congressional regret for decades of legislation targeting Chinese people for physical and political

exclusion, as well as reaffirming the commitment of the Senate to preserve civil rights and constitutional protection of all Asian-Pacific Americans.

The future of the Asian-Pacific American community is bright, and I have no doubt it will see many triumphs in the years ahead. Today, it is my honor to recognize the ongoing determination, ambition, and success of Asian-Pacific Americans during Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month.

TAIWAN'S PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURATION

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, on May 20 the world will see an encouraging sight. On that day, President Ma Ying-jeou of the Republic of China will be sworn in for a second term on the island of Taiwan. I was so pleased to see yet another free, fair, democratic election take place on January 14. I want to take a moment to wish President Ma and the people of Taiwan success and prosperity as their young democracy continues to flourish and serve as an example for other countries in the region.

The difference in governance can be striking when Taiwan is compared to some of its neighbors in the region. Taiwan's experiment with democracy is less than two decades old, but it has demonstrated spectacular progress, holding direct democratic elections in every Presidential election since 1996. The people of Taiwan vigorously exercise their right to vote—three out of every four Taiwanese citizens voted in the January elections—and they feel empowered to petition their government, voice their grievances, peacefully assemble, and, in general, enjoy many of the political freedoms that Americans hold dear.

Taiwan is an important economic partner of the United States and is a robust and growing market for American exports. Just last month, as chair of the Senate Finance Subcommittee on International Trade, I held a hearing on agricultural export opportunities to Asia. As Asia continues to experience impressive economic growth, it is important to remember that Taiwan is the sixth largest destination for American agricultural exports. More can be done to improve bilateral trade between our two countries though, and I hope President Ma and his colleagues in the Legislative Yuan will move quickly to resolve the outstanding issues surrounding American beef imports.

President Ma made good progress in his first 4 years in improving cross-strait relations and has worked hard to promote peace and prosperity in the region. I commend both sides' work in developing and signing the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China. I am confident that President Ma will continue to work to ensure cross-strait stability and cultivate an environment free from intimidation.