

from the sanctuary in time for the 8:30 service. And, once again, he made sure that all six church fire extinguishers were distributed discretely to volunteer firefighters before that first Christmas Eve service, since it would end with the congregation—including the children—raising and lowering lit candles while we all sang “Silent Night.”

But despite the borderline bedlam that can mark this time of the year for us all, he tries not to lose sight of the blessings that come with that chaos. “What is most special for me every Sunday, but even more as we approach Christmas and Easter, is the realization that I get to speak the good news to people. Christian faith isn’t about rules and regulations, it is about our relationship with a God who loves us enough to choose to be with us.”

Indeed. So, while I remain impressed as heck with what Santa Claus and his reindeer just pulled off, I am mighty grateful as well for the work of David Wood and his peers.

Merry Christmas. Happy Hanukkah. Peace.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNIZING ELIOT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

• Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, today, I commend Eliot Elementary School of Eliot, ME, on being named a 2011 National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence. This prestigious recognition of high accomplishment was bestowed by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.

Created in 1982, the Blue Ribbon Schools Award is considered the highest honor an American school can obtain. Schools singled out for this national recognition reflect the goals of our Nation’s education reforms for high standards and accountability. Specifically, the Blue Ribbon Schools Program is designed to honor public and private schools that are either academically superior in their States or that demonstrate dramatic gains in student achievement.

This award recognizes that Eliot Elementary students achieve at the highest level academically. Eliot Elementary School is a top-performing school on State-required assessments, and staff at the school use assessments throughout the academic year as a tool for improving and customizing instruction. The school works closely with families to forge a strong school community where students are connected and encouraged to pursue their interests.

I applaud not only the students but also the administrators, teachers, staff, and parents of Eliot Elementary School. Together, they are succeeding in their mission to generate excitement and momentum for learning. They are making a difference in the lives of their students, helping them reach their full potential as independent, responsible learners and citizens.

I am pleased that the U.S. Department of Education has selected Eliot Elementary School for this well-deserved honor, and I congratulate the communities of Eliot and South Ber-

wick for this outstanding achievement.●

EVERYBODY WINS!

• Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to recognize two individuals for their extraordinary service to the Everybody Wins! Program in Iowa.

As many of my colleagues know, Everybody Wins! is a literacy and mentoring program for elementary school students. The program gives adults the opportunity to spend one lunch hour a week reading with a child in a public school.

Fourteen years ago, Senator Jim Jeffords recruited me to join him as a volunteer for the Everybody Wins! Program in Washington, D.C. Since then, I have been an Everybody Wins! volunteer at Brent Elementary School in Washington D.C. I have seen the tremendous impact this program has both on the adult volunteers and their young student partners.

I was very happy when Everybody Wins! was launched in my home State of Iowa in 2002. Two people I want to recognize today joined Everybody Wins! as volunteer readers and founding board members in 2003. Both of them retired in the last year after contributing to the solid foundation on which the Iowa program rests today.

Mary Ann Nielsen joined the board of Everybody Wins! Iowa in the spring of 2003. She continued her service, including as president of the board, until May of 2011. Her work on the board included serving on three executive director search committees, as well as on the personnel and executive committees.

Amy Elbert also joined the board in the spring of 2003, and continued her service until May of 2011. She devoted substantial time and energy to fundraising, two executive director search committees, as secretary of the board, and as chair of the outreach committee. Amy also has enjoyed reading relationships through the program for the past 4 years.

For their commitment to our youth, to literacy, and their long-time contributions to Everybody Wins! Iowa, I extend my sincere thanks to Mary Ann and Amy and wish them all the best in their future endeavors.●

REED COLLEGE

• Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, with great pride I wish to congratulate Reed College in Portland, OR, on its 100 years of delivering excellent higher education. Reed College has consistently demonstrated its devotion to academia and to developing the intellectual spirit of its students through demanding curricula, insightful research and stimulating classroom conversation. I am certain that the next century will prove to be as fruitful as the last for Reed and its students and that the strong academic tradition will continue to thrive in the Eastmoreland neighborhood of Portland.

Reed’s story is much like the city of Portland’s. The founders of Reed wanted to approach higher education differently. They wanted to focus on creating leaders who think outside the box and who know that the answers of the past are not necessarily the answers of the future. Reed has put an emphasis on the progress of the individual student, emphasizing intellectual development over the pursuit of grades.

Colleges and universities like Reed allow people to continue their pursuit of knowledge, to debate problems and to develop ideas. Higher education is also a driving force behind social mobility and has broken down divisions of race, religion, gender and socio-economic class. Reed College embraces this mission, as reflected in the small class sizes filled with diverse students.

One hundred years of commitment to liberal arts education has produced 31 Rhodes Scholars, a great number of Fulbright grant recipients and countless well-educated members of the Oregon community and our Nation. To Colin Diver, the President of Reed College, and to the faculty and students of Reed: congratulations on a century of academic excellence.●

REMEMBERING JUDGE LIONEL “RED” NOONAN

• Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I was saddened over the holidays to learn of the death of a good man and friend, Judge Lionel “Red” Noonan of Mobile, AL, at the age of 86. Judge Noonan was a wonderful man. He knew it was all about service to others, and the courtesy, ease, and empathy he displayed to all he came upon was noticed and appreciated and remembered. Many think good politicians are the smooth folks, always ready with the right words, always thinking, always plotting, but Judge Noonan was a great politician because he served his constituents with grace and it came back to him in respect and in votes.

As a practicing lawyer in probate court, he always treated me the way he treated everyone. I was a rock-ribbed young Republican and he a loyal Democrat, yet I couldn’t have been more fairly treated by him. I had always heard, from my Republican friends, what a good man he was. As I have gotten older, I have come to see that in a place such as Mobile, where people really know one another, those who have good reputations are invariably good people. Judge Noonan’s good reputation was justly earned over a lifetime of honest dealing.

The Republicans were always hoping that he would switch parties and join them. That is in itself a high compliment to be courted by two parties. But to the Democrats he remained true.

Judge Noonan retired in 2001 after serving 18 years as the Mobile County probate judge. Prior to that he had served 8 years in the Alabama State

Senate and was a 4-year starting full-back for the Alabama Crimson Tide after World War II.

He and his wonderful wife Ruby have been a fine team. They have always been active politically for causes they believed in in the classical sense of the American ideal of good government and what is good for America. Of course, there is the sausage making part of politics. Sometimes, it is not all cookies and cream. Politics can be tough. Yet, for Ruby and Red, it was always about what would make Mobile, AL, and America a better place, and I have always admired that in them.

His wife Ruby has lost a great partner, his children, Ruth, Kelly, and Lionel, Junior, a great father and mentor, and Mobile, one of the best loved citizens to ever have walked the streets.●

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 and four withdrawals which were referred to the appropriate committees.

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

REPORT ON THE STATE OF THE UNION DELIVERED TO A JOINT SESSION OF CONGRESS ON JANUARY 24, 2012—PM 37

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States, together with an accompanying report; which was ordered to lie on the table:

To the Congress of the United States:

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice President, members of Congress, distinguished guests, and fellow Americans:

Last month, I went to Andrews Air Force Base and welcomed home some of our last troops to serve in Iraq. Together, we offered a final, proud salute to the colors under which more than a million of our fellow citizens fought—and several thousand gave their lives.

We gather tonight knowing that this generation of heroes has made the United States safer and more respected around the world. For the first time in nine years, there are no Americans fighting in Iraq. For the first time in two decades, Osama bin Laden is not a threat to this country. Most of al Qaeda's top lieutenants have been defeated. The Taliban's momentum has been broken, and some troops in Afghanistan have begun to come home.

These achievements are a testament to the courage, selflessness, and team-

work of America's Armed Forces. At a time when too many of our institutions have let us down, they exceed all expectations. They're not consumed with personal ambition. They don't obsess over their differences. They focus on the mission at hand. They work together.

Imagine what we could accomplish if we followed their example. Think about the America within our reach: A country that leads the world in educating its people. An America that attracts a new generation of high-tech manufacturing and high-paying jobs. A future where we're in control of our own energy, and our security and prosperity aren't so tied to unstable parts of the world. An economy built to last, where hard work pays off, and responsibility is rewarded.

We can do this. I know we can, because we've done it before. At the end of World War II, when another generation of heroes returned home from combat, they built the strongest economy and middle class the world has ever known. My grandfather, a veteran of Patton's Army, got the chance to go to college on the GI Bill. My grandmother, who worked on a bomber assembly line, was part of a workforce that turned out the best products on Earth.

The two of them shared the optimism of a Nation that had triumphed over a Depression and fascism. They understood they were part of something larger; that they were contributing to a story of success that every American had a chance to share—the basic American promise that if you worked hard, you could do well enough to raise a family, own a home, send your kids to college, and put a little away for retirement.

The defining issue of our time is how to keep that promise alive. No challenge is more urgent. No debate is more important. We can either settle for a country where a shrinking number of people do really well, while a growing number of Americans barely get by. Or we can restore an economy where everyone gets a fair shot, everyone does their fair share, and everyone plays by the same set of rules. What's at stake are not Democratic values or Republican values, but American values. We have to reclaim them.

Let's remember how we got here. Long before the recession, jobs and manufacturing began leaving our shores. Technology made businesses more efficient, but also made some jobs obsolete. Folks at the top saw their incomes rise like never before, but most hardworking Americans struggled with costs that were growing, paychecks that weren't, and personal debt that kept piling up.

In 2008, the house of cards collapsed. We learned that mortgages had been sold to people who couldn't afford or understand them. Banks had made huge bets and bonuses with other people's money. Regulators had looked the other way, or didn't have the authority to stop the bad behavior.

It was wrong. It was irresponsible. And it plunged our economy into a crisis that put millions out of work, saddled us with more debt, and left innocent, hard-working Americans holding the bag. In the six months before I took office, we lost nearly four million jobs. And we lost another four million before our policies were in full effect.

Those are the facts. But so are these. In the last 22 months, businesses have created more than three million jobs. Last year, they created the most jobs since 2005. American manufacturers are hiring again, creating jobs for the first time since the late 1990s. Together, we've agreed to cut the deficit by more than \$2 trillion. And we've put in place new rules to hold Wall Street accountable, so a crisis like that never happens again.

The state of our Union is getting stronger. And we've come too far to turn back now. As long as I'm President, I will work with anyone in this chamber to build on this momentum. But I intend to fight obstruction with action, and I will oppose any effort to return to the very same policies that brought on this economic crisis in the first place.

No, we will not go back to an economy weakened by outsourcing, bad debt, and phony financial profits. Tonight, I want to speak about how we move forward, and lay out a blueprint for an economy that's built to last—an economy built on American manufacturing, American energy, skills for American workers, and a renewal of American values.

This blueprint begins with American manufacturing.

On the day I took office, our auto industry was on the verge of collapse. Some even said we should let it die. With a million jobs at stake, I refused to let that happen. In exchange for help, we demanded responsibility. We got workers and automakers to settle their differences. We got the industry to retool and restructure. Today, General Motors is back on top as the world's number one automaker. Chrysler has grown faster in the U.S. than any major car company. Ford is investing billions in U.S. plants and factories. And together, the entire industry added nearly 160,000 jobs.

We bet on American workers. We bet on American ingenuity. And tonight, the American auto industry is back.

What's happening in Detroit can happen in other industries. It can happen in Cleveland and Pittsburgh and Raleigh. We can't bring back every job that's left our shores. But right now, it's getting more expensive to do business in places like China. Meanwhile, America is more productive. A few weeks ago, the CEO of Master Lock told me that it now makes business sense for him to bring jobs back home. Today, for the first time in fifteen years, Master Lock's unionized plant in Milwaukee is running at full capacity.

So we have a huge opportunity, at this moment, to bring manufacturing