

Joe, 49, officially succeeded Interim President Steve Gold on July 1; LSC offered Joe the position in February. For months, Joe traveled between Queens College, in New York City, where he was vice president for enrollment management and student affairs, and LSC, as part of his transition. Joe began his LSC tenure with a 100-day listening tour that involved the College and Northeast Kingdom communities. He has represented LSC twice in the nation's capital, and during his October 4 State of the College Address—preceded by a short, Chaplin-esque silent film about him—he rode into Academic & Student Activity Center, room 100 on his bike, donning a suit, and conveyed a clear message to 200 students, faculty, and staff.

"At Lyndon State College, students come first," Joe called the state of the college "excellent." Enrollment is up, the budget is balanced—with a surplus—and LSC has five new faculty and 15 new staff members and administrators this year.

"Every student has said to me, without fail, 'Joe, I love it here,'" he told his audience. Joe aims to bolster internal and external communications at LSC. His lengthy to-do list contains a new public relations campaign, with a focus on social media, and he wants to erase the off-campus community's perception of LSC as "Harvard on the hill" by continuing to build strong partnerships in the Northeast Kingdom.

He said LSC is a key stakeholder in Jay Peak Resort's plans to invest \$500 million in the region over the next decade—a plan that could mean more internships for LSC students and jobs for graduates.

"Lyndon State College is the college of the Northeast Kingdom," Joe said. Joe has also started an electronic suggestion box—"Joe Wants to Know"—where anyone can post anonymous concerns and comments. During his one-hour speech, Joe posed challenges to alumni: \$1 million for an all-weather athletic field, and \$1 million for a new version of the old Vail towers. "The response from our alumni has been great," he said.

Joe also asked faculty and staff to increase their in-house contributions, and he imposed a lighthearted, non-mandatory policy called "Go Green, Go Gold," where he asks the campus community to wear LSC colors each Wednesday. "If you haven't figured it out by now," he said, after dismounting his bike, before his speech, "I like to have fun. Life is too short, and the world is complicated enough."

"I believe I am where I'm supposed to be, and I believe I'll be where I'm supposed to be," he said. "It's been a long time since I've been in a place where I felt I haven't belonged."

Days later, while in his office—"a beautiful corner of the world," he said—Joe called himself a motivated, goal oriented Type A personality that leads by surrounding himself with the talent to implement his vision. He is a foodie, a Lion King fan, and textbook introvert who usually recharges alone.

"As soon as I hit the front of a group, or a stage, I'm on," he said. "I am representing and selling LSC. That's what I am doing. But I'm perfectly comfortable being by myself in the house at the end of a long day."

Joe's social circle was small during 16 years of Catholic School in Glendora, N.J. His Italian father, also a Joe, worked for AT&T. His Irish mother, Eileen, was a nurse. He played accordion competitively for 10 years (and still plays a little). When Joe entered the University of Scranton, Pa., in 1982, "There was a group for everyone," he said. "In high school, there are popular groups. In college, there aren't popular groups. There are different groups."

While earning his bachelor's degree in psychology/sociology in Scranton, Joe spent

some time in seminary school and his summers at Camp Ockanickon, where he surprisingly became "the go-to guy." He worked there for eight years, went on to become a board member and president, and will celebrate his 30-year relationship with Camp Ockanickon in the summer of 2013.

"Somehow, I became this listener, this counselor," he said of camp. "It just happened." That inherent and well-honed skill helped Joe build an impressive, 10-page curriculum vitae filled with publications, workshops, consulting, honors, awards, and practically every facet of education, from teaching to administration. He earned his doctorate from Columbia University's Teachers College in 2003.

After eight years at Queens College, Joe left this year with responsibility for 22 departments and more than 200 employees. He also created veterans' services and a wellness center on campus. "Joe stands out as a president who will attempt to engage, in an extremely supportive way, every single student we have," said Jonathan Davis, LSC Class of '97 and dean of students. "I've already witnessed that in the form of students walking into his office to ask a question or simply to chat."

Student recruitment and retention is also part of Joe's mission at LSC. He has charged Davis with co-chairing a team that would use data and strategies to increase the College's retention rates. Davis was an LSC student when Peggy Williams was president, in the 1990s. Williams was already one of Joe's mentors when he learned about the president's vacancy at LSC last December.

Joe was considering other job offers for higher salaries at larger schools, "but I just kept coming back to Lyndon," he said. Enamored after his first trip to campus, and he went with no expectations, he called his partner, Bil, in New Jersey and said, "The good news is I think I interviewed well, and I liked it. The bad news is I think I interviewed well, and I liked it."

He elaborated further in his office more recently: "Initially, I underestimated Lyndon in so many ways. Then, when I got here, it was nothing like I thought it would be. The people are passionate. The College is in great shape. I fell in love." Bil is in New Jersey for now, working at Rutgers University and living in the house he and Joe shared before Joe moved to Lyndonville. Joe converted the lower level of the LSC president's house—"our house," he calls it—to all-purpose meeting space. He lives upstairs.

"I believe I am where I'm supposed to be, and I believe I'll be where I'm supposed to be," he said. "It's been a long time since I've been in a place where I felt I haven't belonged."

#### TRIBUTE TO THE SOMERSET POLICE DEPARTMENT

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I stand here to pay tribute to the honorable men and women, past and present, of the Somerset Police Department in Pulaski County, KY, for 125 years of faithful service and tireless dedication.

Founded on March 13, 1888, the Somerset Police Department has admirably served the city and surrounding area and to this day represents the best of our State's citizens. One example of their thorough care for and involvement in the community is their annual charity basketball game. Typically, the officers challenge a local high-school team to an exhibition match—

this year they took on the local fire department, with the proceeds from the event going to support a local girl who suffers from Type I diabetes. Their reputation for "coming to the rescue" was displayed in a different way than their daily work, but displayed nonetheless, and their efforts certainly are appreciated by those in need who benefit from the support raised by their charity.

I rise not only to celebrate those who serve, but also those we have lost in service. We are grateful for dedicated officers of the Somerset Police Department who risk their very lives to protect and bring order to their city.

At this time, I would like to applaud the Somerset Police Department on the 125th anniversary of its founding, and I request that an article recognizing this occasion from a Pulaski County, KY, newspaper be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the Commonwealth Journal, March 16, 2013]

125 YEARS OF SERVICE: SOMERSET POLICE DEPARTMENT FOUNDED MARCH 13, 1888—STAFF REPORT, COMMONWEALTH JOURNAL

SOMERSET.—The Somerset Police Department recently celebrated 125 years of service in the community.

The history of SPD dates all the way back to March 13, 1888, when Mayor A. Wolf appointed John B. Ingram as the first chief of police for the newly formed City of Somerset.

The police department would grow along with the city's population and physical boundaries over the next 125 years.

Still, some have lost their lives in the line of duty.

"As the department gets a year older, it is important to remember those officers who lost their lives serving the citizens of our city," stated Lt. Shannon Smith, with SPD.

Somerset Chief of Police Silas West was shot and killed in 1928 while attempting to arrest a drunk person on the square. Patrolman Walter McKinley Massingale was shot and killed on Halloween night in 1929 while investigating a bootlegger on South Maple Street. And in 1957, Police Chief Harold Catron was shot on his porch on Jasper Street, and he would later die from those wounds in 1964.

"Our 125th anniversary is a milestone to our department," said SPD Acting Police Chief Major Doug Nelson. "Through hard work, rigorous training, and an established level of professionalism, the men and women of the Somerset Police Department will continue to serve our community to make it a safe place to live and work."

#### 61ST NATIONAL PRAYER BREAKFAST

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, on behalf of Senator PRYOR and myself, I ask unanimous consent that the transcript of the 61th Annual National Prayer Breakfast be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

61ST NATIONAL PRAYER BREAKFAST, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2013, WASHINGTON, DC, CO-CHAIRS: SENATOR JEFF SESSIONS, SENATOR MARK PRYOR

Senator MARK PRYOR: Let me open by saying, "Good morning fellow sinners." My name is MARK PRYOR, from Arkansas, and this is my brother, JEFF SESSIONS, from Alabama. Together, Jeff and I chair the weekly Senate breakfast group, which means we get to chair this "slightly larger" event this morning.

Senator JEFF SESSIONS: Thank you all for taking on the adventure of getting here this morning. We have a challenging experience planned for you this morning. We call this the Prayer Breakfast, not only because we come together to pray, but because so much prayer goes into this event, and hopefully, so much prayer comes out of it.

Senator PRYOR: Everything that happens over the next 90 minutes has really come about through prayer. As a matter of fact, one of the hundreds of volunteers that make this morning possible, literally came in very early this morning and prayed over each place setting here—prayed over each of you.

Senator SESSIONS: Prayer is not a spectator sport. We hope this experience enriches your own life of prayer, for the good of the nation, for the world and for your family.

Senator PRYOR: Let us join our hearts in prayer. God of the universe, who we individually worship in many different ways and languages, bring us together this morning in a shared experience of praise, understanding and commitment. Our world and our lives fall short of what you created them to be. Use this time to bless us, to bless our leaders, and especially our President, with a sense of who you are and how we all need to change. We are thankful for the food we are enjoying and friendships old and new. Be present in each of our hearts today, in your Holy, precious and matchless name, Amen.

Senator SESSIONS: Enjoy (what's left of) your breakfast.

Good morning. We've had a wonderful time together to discuss issues and have a joyful noise. We thank you for your attention.

Senator PRYOR: It's overwhelming to think of the pathways that each person took to get to this event today. Some from little villages halfway around the world and some from just 12 blocks away, so thank you all for coming.

Senator SESSIONS: This huge event, which has taken place for 61 years now, began with a group of people who happened to be leaders wanting to get together for breakfast and for prayer. One thing I know for sure is that life is complicated and is likely to get more complicated tomorrow than yesterday. But as members of the weekly Senate prayer breakfast group, we've learned that taking time each week to meet, to take off the disguises that we wear and pray and share our lives together, makes life better.

Senator PRYOR: In the modern world and especially in a city like this, there are thousands of things that drive us apart—politics, ideology and even religion. Today, though, we come together in the Spirit of Jesus who taught us to love one another, treat others as we want to be treated and to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. It would be a whole lot better world if we just listened to Him.

Senator SESSIONS: As you look around the room, understand that you're sharing this meal with people from more than 140 countries, all 50 states, heads of government, and leaders of all kinds. Through prayer, we believe God has brought us together for a reason. As you listen closely to the program, try to figure out what God is saying to you. And as you've heard, this event is hosted by

members of the House and Senate and I would like to ask all the members of the House and Senate who are present, to stand at this time. We're also honored to be joined by two prime ministers, the Prime Minister of Serbia, His Excellency Ivica Dacic, and the Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo, His Excellency Augustin Matata Ponyo. Thank you so much for being with us.

Senator PRYOR: I would like to introduce the head table that will lead us through this experience. I'll start on my right. Today you could say that you ate breakfast with the President and a gold medalist. At the end of our program, our closing prayer will be offered by Olympic champion, Gabrielle Douglas, whose new book is appropriately subtitled "My Leap of Faith." Next to her is former U.S. Senator, Cabinet member and President of the Red Cross, Elizabeth Dole. Elizabeth, believe it or not, was our breakfast speaker 26 years ago. She will give a reading from the Holy Scriptures. Next to her is California Representative, JANICE HAHN, one of two co-chairs of the House prayer breakfast group, and next year she'll be standing in my place here. Then we have Admiral and Mrs. Jonathan Greenert. He is the U.S. Chief of Naval Operations, which puts him in charge of about 300,000 sailors, 300 ships and 3,500 aircraft. He will offer a prayer for our national leaders. Next, we have the spouse of my co-chair, Mary Sessions. And please join me in welcoming the passionate, principled and inspirational First Lady of the United States, Michelle Obama.

Senator SESSIONS: Continuing down the table, we have our friend and former colleague, the good Vice President of the United States, JOE BIDEN. On the other side of our speaker is my colleague and friend, CHUCK SCHUMER. He's the pride of P.S. 197 in Brooklyn, New York and a dedicated member of Congress for amazingly 30 years, and a key member of the Democratic leadership. Chuck will be offering a reading from the Holy Scripture. Next to him is another good friend and former colleague of ours, the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, Ken Salazar. In his day job, Ken is responsible for more than 500 million acres of United States land. He is a former chair of this Senate prayer breakfast and will be offering a prayer for world leaders. Next to him is JANICE HAHN's sidekick for the next year, co-chair of the House breakfast group, LOUIE GOHMERT. He is a member of the House for 8 years and is from East Texas. And finally, visiting from Italy, Mr. Andrea Primicerio, and our soloist, Andrea Bocelli. Mr. Bocelli has gone from a small farming village near Pisa, Italy to selling more than 80 million records worldwide. I read that, at last count, in addition to song writing, he plays 9 instruments. This morning, he will play the most beautiful instrument God has created, the human voice. Join me in welcoming our soloist, Andrea Bocelli. [Song.]

Senator CHARLES SCHUMER: Good morning. In the Jewish tradition, we are given not only an English name but a Hebrew name and my Hebrew name is Yesha'yahu—Isaiah. So I was particularly honored when Mark asked me to read from the Book of Isaiah. This is Isaiah 55:6-13.

"Seek the Lord, while He may be found, call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake their ways, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them turn to the Lord and he will have mercy on them; and to our God, for He will freely pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. As the rain

and the snow come down from the heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth, and making it bud and flourish so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth; it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace. The mountains and hills will burst into song before you and all the trees of the fields will clap their hands. Instead of the thorn bush will grow the juniper and instead of briars the myrtle will grow. This will be for the Lord's renowned for an everlasting sign that will endure forever."

Representative LOUIE GOHMERT: It is such a pleasure to be here and it's such a pleasure to share our Thursday morning prayer breakfast with you. My co-chair in the House is JANICE HAHN. It's a surprise for some people, after they see the way we go back and forth and debate, to see that the Prayer Breakfast is truly bipartisan. We work together. We pray together. And there's something that really brings people together when you pray together. It's the belief in the power of prayer that brings us together.

My wife and I have tried to teach that to our three girls. When they were old enough to pray, Cathy and I and our three girls would gather around one of the girls' beds and we would pray each night. One night we had some nose spray that a doctor prescribed for our middle daughter, Caroline—she'd been having real serious sinus problems. She didn't want it up her nose—but I was bigger than her. It was going to be good for her according to the doctor, so we got it up the nose. But there was a lot of crying, wailing and gnashing of teeth. But once the nose spray had been administered and the tears subsided, the crying stopped, we gathered for prayers. Katie prayed first and then Caroline and Caroline finished her prayer by saying "And please God, help Sarah (the little one), mind her own business and quit being such a pest. And help her to just leave me and Katie alone." Little Sarah had the last prayer, and in her little angelic voice she said, "Please God, help Daddy stick some more medicine up Caroline's nose." We had taught them how to pray but not necessarily what it was for.

So on Thursday mornings we gather, not to pray that God will help us to stick something up our opponent's nose, but we pray; and God grants mending and healing and blessing and leadership, and it's a beautiful thing to see those come together. It does make us better. It makes us stronger. And it makes the government work better. Which is why Benjamin Franklin, in his own words—his own handwriting—said, "In the beginning contest with Great Britain when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayer in this room. Our prayers are heard and they were graciously answered." Janice and I and our other colleagues have seen those prayers answered and it's what brings us together. Thanks for joining with us today.

Representative JANICE HAHN: Good morning. Mr. President, Madam First Lady, Mr. Vice President, Senators, distinguished guests; I'm so delighted to be here this morning with all of you. It's such an honor to co-chair the House Congressional prayer breakfast with my friend and colleague, Congressman LOUIE GOHMERT. His colleagues have said, "This is the only chairmanship that Speaker BOEHNER can't remove him from for bad behavior." Only God can do that.

Today's Prayer Breakfast offers an opportunity for us to set aside political labels and come together to be inspired and pray for the critical issues that are facing our nation and the world. I was elected to Congress in the middle of one of the most bitter, rancorous

and divided periods in our nation's history. But in the midst of that discord, there was one place that I found that we could set aside our partisan bickering and our differences and come together—a place where once a week, we could be there for each other with our God. That place was the weekly Congressional prayer breakfast. I've found some unlikely friends in that breakfast. But they have helped me to be a better member of Congress and to better serve my God and my constituents.

Faith has always been a strong part of my life and my story. I grew up in the church. My grandparents on my mother's side were missionaries to Japan. And my grandmother on my father's side, in a moment of deep despair and helplessness, turned to God for help in raising her seven little boys under the age of 10 when her husband died suddenly. That decision that my grandmother Hattie made, helped me find my journey of faith. Every week when a member of Congress comes to our prayer breakfast and tells their own journey of faith, it gives us a bond that can't be broken. We believe in the power of prayer and every week, we give thanks when God has answered our prayers. Abraham Lincoln said, "I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I have nowhere else to go. My own wisdom and that of all about me seemed insufficient for the day." May we all continue to believe that our own wisdom is insufficient. God bless you all.

Admiral Jonathan Greenert: Good Morning, Mr. President, Mrs. Obama, Mr. Vice President, Senators, Congressmen, distinguished guests. Many times many of you have said, even today, to those of us that wear the cloth of the nation, "thank you for your service." And on behalf of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coastguardsmen, may I say thank you for your service and your support to your armed forces. Please join me in a prayer for our national leaders.

Oh Lord, we come before you today, thankful for the many blessings you have bestowed upon our nation. And we humbly ask for your continued guidance and strength. On this day, we are reminded to give thanks for the extraordinary freedoms that we enjoy, made possible by the efforts of past generations of men and women who have served this great nation. Your word tells us of King David whose willingness to place his faith in you during difficult times serves as an example for us all. Like David, there are many in this nation who have answered the call to serve, both in and out of uniform. Lord, we are thankful for their dedication, their passion, their perseverance and for the families that support their every effort. When it comes to our search for inspiration, Scripture clearly speaks about where we should begin charting our course—we begin with prayer. We ask that you continue to guide our leaders with wisdom and understanding as they weather the storms that confront our nation. Provide them, God, with the vision necessary to see the way ahead. The strength required to act on difficult decisions and the compassion to care for the wellbeing of those that they lead. Fortify the resolve of the men and women who lead our great nation and provide us with bold, confident and accountable leaders capable of carrying out those actions that your wisdom directs. In your Holy Name we pray, amen.

The Honorable Elizabeth Dole: Mr. President, Mrs. Obama, Mr. Vice President, honored guests, ladies and gentlemen. It's my privilege today to read selected portions of Hebrews 11, which has been called the Hall of Faith. And I'll end with Hebrews 12 versus 1–3 and verse 14.

"Now, faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. By

faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. And without faith, it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. By faith, Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By faith, Abraham, even though he was past age and Sarah herself was barren was unable to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. By faith, Abraham when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son even though God had said to him "it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death. By faith, Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future. By faith, Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff. By faith, Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. By faith, Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born because they saw he was no ordinary child and they were not afraid of the king's edict. By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. By faith, he left Egypt not fearing the king's anger. He persevered because he saw him who is invisible. By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land. By faith, the walls of Jericho fell after the people had marched around them for seven days. By faith, the prostitute Rahab because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient. And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barack, Sampson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets who through faith, conquered kingdoms, administered justice and gained what was promised. Who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames and escaped the edge of the sword, whose weakness was turned to strength. Others were tortured and refused to be released so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced years of flogging while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned, they were sawed in two, they were put to death by the sword. These were all commended for their faith. Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and let us run with perseverance, the race that is set before us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him, endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him, who endured such opposition from sinful men so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy, for without holiness no one will see the Lord."

The Honorable Ken Salazar: Mr. President, Mrs. Obama, Vice President BIDEN, members of the United States Senate, fellow Cabinet members, members of the House of Representatives and distinguished guests. The following prayer was written by Cesar Chavez, the great leader of the United States Farm Workers of America. Last year, President Obama visited the gravesite of Cesar Chavez and his office at a place in La Paz, California; and there, he made this place a national monument so that we can honor the work of a true hero and a follower of Christ and a follower of Gandhi. It was a moving time for the President and all of us who were there that day.

Chavez was a servant leader who followed the teachings of Jesus Christ. He followed the teachings of Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King. He was ever prayerful to Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe (Our Lady of Guadalupe). Today as the world, in many different places, rages in a debate about the peopling of our nations and immigration, and as our nation does the same thing, let us pray that all of our world leaders and all of our leaders here in the United States, will be inspired by the true story of the peopling of our nations and give voice to those who now live in the fear of the shadows of our society. And so, inspired by the teachings and life of Saint Francis and Jesus Christ, let us pray as Cesar Chavez prayed, as he fasted for those who have no voice, who are the most vulnerable in our society.

He prayed: "Show me the suffering of the most miserable, so that I will know my people's plight. Free me to pray for others, because you are present in every person. Help me to take responsibility for my own life, so that I can be free at last. Grant me the courage to serve others, for in service there is true life. Give me honesty and patience, so that I can work with others. Bring forth song and celebration, so that the Spirit will be alive among us. Let the Spirit flourish and grow, so that we will never tire of the struggle. Let us remember those who have died for justice, for they have given us life. Help us love even those who hate us, so we can change the world." God bless you, God bless the United States of America, God bless all of our leaders.

Senator SESSIONS: Of all of the complex things in the world, perhaps the most complex is the human brain. How come I can remember the words of the preamble of the Constitution but can't find my glasses? We've invited as our guest speaker this morning a gentleman for three reasons: he loves Jesus, he has a compelling life story and he is a distinguished man of science and healing. We hope that he can help us sort some things out. May I introduce, the director of Pediatric Neurosurgery at one of the world's great hospitals, Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, Dr. Benjamin Carson, Sr.

Dr. Benjamin S. Carson, Sr.: Thank you so much, Mr. President, Mr. Vice President, Mrs. Obama, distinguished guests—which includes everybody. Thank you so much for this wonderful honor to be at this stage again. I was here 16 years ago and the fact that they've invited me back means that I didn't offend too many people—so that was great. I want to start by reading four texts, which will put into context what I'm going to say.

Proverbs 11:9, "With his mouth, the godless destroys his neighbor, but through knowledge the righteous escape."

Proverbs 11:12, "A man who lacks judgment derides his neighbor, but a man of understanding holds his tongue."

Proverbs 11:25, "A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed."

2nd Chronicles 7:14, "If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and heal their land."

I have an opportunity to speak in a lot of venues—this is my fourth speech this week—and to talk to a lot of people. And I've been asking people—what concerns you? What are you most concerned about in the terms of the spirituality and the direction of our nation and our world? I've talked to very prominent Democrats, and very prominent Republicans and I was surprised by the uniformity of their answers. And those have informed my comments this morning.

It's not my intention to offend anyone. I have discovered, however, in recent years that it's very difficult to speak to a large group of people these days and not offend someone. And I know people walk around with their feelings on their shoulders waiting for you to say something—"Ah, did you hear that?" And they can't hear anything else you say. The PC police are out in force at all times. I remember once I was talking to a group about the difference between a human brain and a dog's brain. And a man got offended—he said, "You can't talk about dogs like that." But people just focus in on that and completely miss the point of what you're saying. We've reached the point where people are afraid to actually talk about what they want to say—because somebody might be offended. People are afraid to say, "Merry Christmas" at Christmastime. It doesn't matter whether the person you're talking to is Jewish or whether they're any religion—that's a salutation of greeting, of good will. We've got to get over this sensitivity. It keeps people from saying what they really believe.

I'm reminded of a very successful young businessman who loved to buy his mother these exotic gifts for Mother's Day. And he ran out of ideas, and then he ran across these birds. These birds were cool. They cost 5,000 dollars apiece—they could dance, they could sing, they could talk. He was so excited, he bought two of them; sent them to his mother; couldn't wait to call her up on Mother's Day, "Mother, mother, what did you think of those birds?" And she said, "They was good." He said, "No, no, no, mother, you didn't eat those birds; those birds cost 5,000 dollars apiece—they could dance, they could sing, they could talk." And she said, "Well, they should have said something." And that's where we end up too if we don't speak up for what we believe. What we need to do in this PC world is forget about unanimity of speech and unanimity of thought and we need to concentrate on being respectful to those people with whom we disagree—that's when I think we begin to make real progress.

One last thing about political correctness—which I think is a horrible thing, by the way. I'm very, very compassionate and I'm not ever out to offend anyone, but PC is dangerous because in this country, one of the founding principles was freedom of thought and freedom of expression and it muffles people, it puts a muzzle on them. And at the same time, keeps people from discussing important issues while the fabric of their society is being changed. And we cannot fall for that trick. What we need to do is start talking about things, talking about things that are important, things that were important in the development of our nation. One of those things was education. I'm very passionate about education because it made such a big difference in my life. But here we are at a time in the world, the information age, the age of technology, and yet 30 per cent of people who enter high school in this country do not graduate. 44 percent of the people who start a four year college program do not finish it in four years. What is that about?

Think back to a darker time in our history. 200 years ago when slavery was going on, it was illegal to educate a slave, particularly to teach him to read. Why do you think that was? Because when you educate a man, you liberate the man. And there I was as a youngster placing myself in the same situation that a horrible institution did because I wasn't taking advantage of the education, because I was a horrible student. Most of my classmates thought I was the stupidest person in the world. They called me "dummy." I was the butt of all the jokes. Admittedly, it was a bad environment—a single parent home—my mother and father had gotten di-

vorced early on. My mother got married when she was 13. She was one of 24 children; had a horrible life, discovered that her husband was a bigamist, had another family, and she only had a third grade education. She had to take care of us, in dire poverty. I had a horrible temper, poor self-esteem; all of the things that you think would preclude success. But I had something very important, I had a mother who believed in me. And I had a mother who would never allow herself to be a victim, no matter what happened. She never made excuses and she never accepted an excuse from us. And if we ever came up with an excuse, she always said, "Do you have a brain?" And if the answer was "Yes," then she said, "Then you could of thought your way out of it; it doesn't matter what John or Susan or Mary or anybody else did or said." And it was the most important thing she did for my brother and myself because if you don't accept excuses, pretty soon people stop giving them and they start looking for solutions and that is a critical issue when it comes to success.

We did live in dire poverty and one of the things that I hated was poverty. Some people hate spiders, some people hate snakes—I hated poverty. I couldn't stand it. But my mother couldn't stand the fact that we were doing poorly in school. She prayed, she asked God to give her wisdom, what could she do to get her young sons to understand the importance of developing their minds, so that they could control their own lives? And you know what? God gave her the wisdom, at least in her opinion. My brother and I didn't think it was that wise because it was to turn off the TV. She let us only watch two or three TV programs during the week. And with all that spare time, read two books apiece from the Detroit public libraries and submit to her written book reports, which she couldn't read but we didn't know that—she'd put checkmarks and highlights and stuff. But you know, I just hated this, and my friends were out having a good time. Her friends would criticize her, they would say, "You can't make boys stay in the house reading books, they'll grow up, they'll hate you." I would overhear them and I would say, "You know, mother, they're right." But she didn't care. But after a while, I actually began to enjoy reading those books. Even though we were very poor, between the covers of those books, I could go anywhere. I could be anybody, I could do anything. I began to read about people of great accomplishment. And as I read those stories, I began to see a connecting thread. I began to see that the person that has the most to do with you and what happens to you in life is you. You make decisions. You decide how much energy you want to put behind that decision. And I came to understand that I had control of my own destiny. At that point, I didn't hate poverty anymore because I knew it was only temporary. I knew I could change that. It was incredibly liberating for me, it made all the difference.

And to continue on that theme of education, in 1831, Alexis de Tocqueville came to America to study this country. The Europeans were fascinated—how could a fledgling nation barely 50 years old already be competing with them on virtually every level. This is impossible—de Tocqueville was going to sort it out. And he looked at our government and he was duly impressed by the three branches of government—four now because now of special interest groups, but it was only three back in those days. And he said, "Wow, this is really something." And then he said, "Let me look at their educational system," and he was blown away. Anybody finishing second grade was completely literate. He could find a mountain man on the outskirts of society—the man could read a

newspaper, could have a political discussion, could tell him how the government worked.

If you really want to be impressed, take a look at the chapter on education in my latest book, "America the Beautiful," which I wrote with my wife; it came out last year. And in that education chapter, you will see questions extracted from a sixth grade Exit Exam from the 1800's—a test you had to pass to get your sixth grade certificate. I doubt most college graduates today could pass that test. We have dumbed things down to that level. And the reason that that is so dangerous is because the people who founded this nation said that our system of government was designed for a well informed and educated populous. And when they become less informed, they become vulnerable. Think about that, our system of government, and that's why the education is so vitally important.

Now some people say "Ah, you're overblowing it, things aren't that bad, and you're a doctor, a neurosurgeon, why are you concerned about these things?" I've got news for you. Five doctors signed the Declaration of Independence. Doctors were involved in the framing of the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and a whole bunch of things. It's only been in recent decades that we've extracted ourselves—which I think is a big mistake. We need doctors and we need scientists, engineers, we need all of those people involved in government, not just lawyers. I don't have anything against lawyers, but here's the thing about lawyers—and I'm sorry but I got to be truthful—what do lawyers learn in law school? To win, by hook or by crook, you got to win. So you've got all these Democrat lawyers and you've got all these Republican lawyers and their side wants to win. We need to get rid of that. What we need to start thinking about is: how do we solve problems?

Now, before I get shot, let me finish here. I don't like to bring up problems without coming up with solutions. My wife and I started the Carson Scholars Fund 16 years ago after we heard about an international survey looking at the ability of eighth graders in 22 countries to solve math and science problems; and we came out number 21 out of 22, barely beat out number 22, very concerning. And we'd go into schools and we'd see all these trophies, All State basketball, All State wrestling, All State this, that and the other. The quarterback was the big man on campus, What about the intellectual superstar? What did they get? A National Honor Society pin, a pat on the head, "there, there little nerd"—nobody cared about them. And is it any wonder that sometimes the smart kids try to hide; they don't want anybody to know that they're smart? This is not helping us as a nation. So we started giving out scholarships to students from all backgrounds for superior academic performance and demonstration of humanitarian qualities. Unless you cared about other people, it didn't matter how smart you were. We've got plenty of people like that, we don't need those. We need smart people who care about other people. We will give them money, the money would go into a trust, they would get interest on it and then when they went to college, they get the money. But also, the school gets a trophy, every bit as impressive as the sports trophies. It goes right out there with the others. They get a medal. They get to go to a banquet. And we try to put them on the same kind of pedestal as we do the All State athletes.

Now, I have nothing against athletics or entertainment, please believe me. I'm from Baltimore, the Ravens won, this is great, okay. But what will maintain our position in the world, the ability to shoot a 25 foot jump

shot or the ability to solve a quadratic equation? We need to put things into proper perspective. Many teachers have told us that when we put a Carson Scholar in their class room, the GPA of the whole class goes up over the next year. And it's been very gratifying. We started 16 years ago with 25 scholarships in Maryland; now we've given out more than 5,000 and we're in all 50 states. But we also put in reading rooms. These are fascinating places that no little kid could possibly pass up. They get points for the amount of time they spend in their reading, the number of books that they read, and they can trade them in for prizes. In the beginning, they do it for the prizes, but it doesn't take long before their academic performance begins to improve. We particularly target Title 1 schools where kids come from homes with no books and they go to schools with no libraries. Those are the ones who drop out and we need to truncate that process early on because we can't afford to waste any of those young people. For every one of those people that we keep from going down that path, that path of self-destruction and mediocrity, that's one less person you have to protect yourself and your family from. One less person you have to pay for in the penal or the welfare system. One more tax paying productive member of society who may invent a new energy source or come up with a cure for cancer. They're all important to us and we need every single one of them, it makes a difference. When you go home tonight, please read about it, Carson Scholar Fund, [CarsonScholars.org](http://CarsonScholars.org).

But, why is it so important that we educate our people? Because we don't want to go down the same pathway as many other pinnacle nations have who have preceded us. I think particularly about ancient Rome—very powerful, nobody could even challenge them militarily. But what happened to them? They destroyed themselves from within—moral decay, fiscal irresponsibility—they destroyed themselves. And if you don't think that can happen to America, you get out your books and you start reading. But you know we can fix it. Why can we fix it? Because we're smart; we have some of the most intellectually gifted people leading our nation. All we need to do is remember what our real responsibilities are so we can solve the problems. I think about these problems all the time and my role model was Jesus and he used parables to help people understand things.

One of our big problems right now—and like I said, I'm not politically correct so, I'm sorry—our deficit is a big problem. Think about it. Our national debt, 16½ trillion dollars, you think that's not a lot of money. I tell you what, count one number per second, which you can't even do because when you get to a thousand, you can't, it'll take you longer than a second, but one number per second. You know how long that'll take you to count to 16 trillion? 507,000 years—more than a half a million years to get there. We have to deal with this. Here's the parable. A family falls on hard times—dad loses his job or is demoted, gets part time work, has five children. He comes to the five children and he says "We're going to have to reduce your allowance." Well, they're not happy about it; but he says, "Except for John and Susan, they're special. They can keep their allowance; in fact, I may give them more." How do you think that's going to go down? Not too well. Same thing happens, enough said.

What about our taxation system? So complex there is no one who can possibly comply with every jot and tittle of our tax system. If I wanted to get you, I could get you on a tax issue. That doesn't make any sense. What we need to do is come up with something that is simple. When I pick up my

Bible, you know what I see? I see the fairest individual in the universe, God. And he's given us a system, it's called, tithe. Now, we don't necessarily have to do it 10 per cent, but it's the principle. He didn't say, "If your crops fail, don't give me any tithes." He didn't say, "If you have a bumper crop, give me triple tithes." So there must be something inherently fair about proportionality. You make 10 billion dollars, you put in a billion. You make 10 dollars, you put in one. Of course, you've got to get rid of the loopholes. But now some people say, "Well that's not fair because it doesn't hurt the guy who made 10 billion dollars as much as the guy who made 10." Where does it say you have to hurt the guy? He just put a billion dollars in the pot; you know we don't need to hurt him. It's that kind of thinking that has resulted in 602 banks in the Cayman Islands. That money needs to be back here building our infrastructure and creating jobs. And we're smart enough to figure out how to do that.

We've already started down the path of solving one of the other big problems, health care. We need to have good health care for everybody. It's the most important thing that a person can have. Money means nothing, titles means nothing, when you don't have your health. But, we've got to figure out efficient ways to do it. We spend a lot of money on health care, twice as much per capita as anybody else in the world and yet we're not very efficient. What can we do? Here's my solution. When a person is born, give them a birth certificate, an electronic medical record and a health saving's account to which money can be contributed pre-tax from the time you're born to the time you die. When you die, you can pass it on to your family members so that when you're 85 years old and you've got six diseases, you're not trying to spend up everything, you're happy to pass it on and there's nobody talking about death panels. That's number one. And also, for the people who are indigent, who don't have any money; we can make contributions to their HSA each month because we already have this huge pot of money. Instead of sending it to some bureaucracy, let's put it in their HSA's. Now they have some control over their own health care. And what do you think they're going to do? They're going to learn very quickly how to be responsible. When Mr. JONES gets that diabetic foot ulcer, he's not going to the emergency room and blowing a big chunk of it. He's going to go to the clinic. He learns that very quickly. He gets the same treatment in the emergency room they send him out to the clinic and say "Now let's get your diabetes under control so you're not back here in three weeks with another problem. That's how we begin to solve these kinds of problems. It's much more complex than that and I don't have time to go into it all but we can do all of these things because we're smart people.

And let me just begin to close here by another parable. A sea captain is out on the sea, near to the area where the Titanic went down. He looks ahead and there's a bright light right there, another ship he figures. He tells his signaler; signal that ship, "Deviate 10 degrees to the south." Back comes the message "No, you deviate 10 degrees to the north." Well he's a little bit incensed, he says, "Send a message, This is Captain Johnson, deviate 10 degrees to the north." Back comes the message, "This is Ensign 4th Class Riley, deviate 10 degrees to the south." Now he's really upset. He says, "Send me a message, this is a naval destroyer." Back comes the message, "This is a light house." Enough said.

What about the symbol of our nation, the eagle, the bald eagle. It's an interesting story how we chose that but a lot of people

think we call it the bald eagle because it looks like it has a bald head. That's not the reason. It comes from the Old English word, piebald, which means crowned with white; and we just shortened it to bald. Now use that the next time you see somebody who thinks they know everything—you get them with that one. But, why is that eagle able to fly high, to fly forward? Because it has two wings, a left wing and a right wing. Enough said.

And I want to close with this story. 200 years ago this nation was involved in a war, the War of 1812. The British, who are now our good friends, thought that we were young whippersnappers; it was time for us to become a colony again. They were winning that war, marching up the Eastern Seaboard, destroying city after city, destroyed Washington D.C., burned down the White House; next stop, Baltimore. As they came into the Chesapeake Bay, that armada of ships—war ships as far as the eye could see—it was looking grim; Fort McHenry standing right there. General Armistead, who was in charge of Fort McHenry, had a large American flag commissioned to fly in front of the fort. The admiral in charge of the British fleet was offended and said, "Take that flag down. You have until dusk to take that flag down. If you don't take it down, we will reduce you to ashes." There was a young amateur poet on board by the name of Francis Scott Key, sent by President Madison to try to obtain the release of an American physician who was being held captive. He overheard the British plans; they were not going to let him off the ship. He mourned as dusk approached. He mourned for his fledgling young nation. And as the sun fell, the bombardment started, bombs bursting in air, missiles, so much debris. He strained trying to see—was the flag still there? Couldn't see a thing. All night long it continued. At the crack of dawn he ran out to the banister, he looked, straining his eyes, but all he could see was dust and debris. And then there was a clearing and he beheld the most beautiful sight he'd ever seen—the torn and tattered stars and stripes still waving. And many historians say that was the turning point in the War of 1812. We went on to win that war and to retain our freedom. And if you had gone onto the grounds of Fort McHenry that day, you would have seen at the base of that flag the bodies of soldiers who took turns propping up that flag. They would not let that flag go down because they believed in what that flag symbolized. And what did it symbolize? One nation under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all. Thank you, God bless.

Senator PRYOR: Thank you Dr. Carson. It is now my great honor to introduce our President. One of the striking measures of the passage of time since you first were with us Mr. President is the comparison photographs of your daughters at your first Inauguration and you're second. You have a beautiful and wonderful family. And they remind us of the core American values of faith, family and optimism in the future. Mr. President, we want to express our love and our respect for you this morning. You carry burdens none of us in this room can imagine. Thank you for keeping the unbroken commitment of ten former presidents to join us for breakfast and prayer. Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States, Barack Obama.

President Barack Obama: Thank you very much. Please have a seat. Mark, thank you for that introduction. I thought he was going to talk about my gray hair. It is true that my daughters are gorgeous. That's because my wife is gorgeous. And my goal is to improve my gene pool. To Mark and Jeff, thank you for your wonderful work on behalf of

this breakfast. To all of those who worked so hard to put this together; to the heads of state, members of Congress, and my Cabinet, religious leaders and distinguished guests. To our outstanding speaker. To all the faithful who've journeyed to our capital, Michelle and I are truly honored to be with you this morning.

Before I begin, I hope people don't mind me taking a moment of personal privilege. I want to say a quick word about a close friend of mine and yours, Joshua Dubois. Now, some of you may not know Joshua, but Joshua has been at my side—in work and in prayer—for years now. He is a young reverend, but wise in years. He's worked on my staff. He's done an outstanding job as the head of our Faith-Based office. Every morning he sends me via email a daily meditation—a snippet of Scripture for me to reflect on. And it has meant the world to me. And despite my pleas, tomorrow will be his last day in the White House. So this morning I want to publically thank Joshua for all that he's done, and I know that everybody joins me in wishing him all the best in his future endeavors—including getting married.

It says something about us—as a nation and as a people—that every year, for 61 years now, this great prayerful tradition has endured. It says something about us that every year, in times of triumph and in tragedy, in calm and in crisis, we come together, not as Democrats or Republicans, but as brothers and sisters, and as children of God. Every year, in the midst of all our busy and noisy lives, we set aside one morning to gather as one community, united in prayer. We do so because we're a nation ever humbled by our history, and we're ever attentive to our imperfections—particularly the imperfections of our President. We come together because we're a people of faith. We know that faith is something that must be cultivated. Faith is not a possession. Faith is a process.

I was struck by the passage that was read earlier from the Book of Hebrews: "Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and He rewards those who diligently seek Him." He rewards those who diligently seek Him—not just for one moment, or one day, but for every moment, and every day. As Christians, we place our faith in the nail-scarred hands of Jesus Christ. But so many other Americans also know the close embrace of faith—Muslims and Jews, Hindus and Sikhs. And all Americans—whether religious or secular—have a deep and abiding faith in this nation.

Recently I had occasion to reflect on the power of faith. A few weeks ago, during the inauguration, I was blessed to place my hand on the Bibles of two great Americans, two men whose faith still echoes today. One was the Bible owned by President Abraham Lincoln, and the other, the Bible owned by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. As I prepared to take the sacred oath, I thought about these two men, and I thought of how, in times of joy and pain and uncertainty, they turned to their Bibles to seek the wisdom of God's word—and thought of how, for as long as we've been a nation, so many of our leaders, our Presidents, and our preachers, our legislators and our jurists have done the same. Each one faced their own challenges; each one finding in Scripture their own lessons from the Lord. And as I was looking out on the crowd during the inauguration I thought of Dr. King. We often think of him standing tall in front of the endless crowds, stirring the nation's conscience with a bellowing voice and a mighty dream. But I also thought of his doubts and his fears, for those moments came as well—the lonely moments when he was left to confront the presence of long-festered injustice and undisguised

hate; imagined the darkness and the doubt that must have surrounded him when he was in that Birmingham jail, and the anger that surely rose up in him the night his house was bombed with his wife and child inside, and the grief that shook him as he eulogized those four precious girls taken from this Earth as they gathered in a house of God. And I was reminded that, yes, Dr. King was a man of audacious hope and a man of relentless optimism. But he was also a man occasionally brought to his knees in fear and in doubt and in helplessness. And in those moments, we know that he retreated alone to a quiet space so he could reflect and he could pray and he could grow his faith. And I imagine he turned to certain verses that we now read. I imagine him reflecting on Isaiah, that we wait upon the Lord; that the Lord shall renew those who wait; that they shall mount up with wings as eagles, and they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint. We know that in Scripture, Dr. King found strength; in the Bible, he found conviction. In the words of God, he found a truth about the dignity of man that, once realized, he never relinquished.

We know Lincoln had such moments as well. To see this country torn apart, to see his fellow citizens waging a ferocious war that pitted brother against brother, family against family—that was as heavy a burden as any President will ever have to bear. We know Lincoln constantly met with troops and visited the wounded and honored the dead. And the toll mounted day after day, week after week. And you can see in the lines of his face the toll that the war cost him. But he did not break. Even as he buried a beloved son, he did not break. Even as he struggled to overcome melancholy, despair, grief, he did not break. And we know that he surely found solace in Scripture; that he could acknowledge his own doubts, that he was humbled in the face of the Lord. And that, I think, allowed him to become a better leader. It's what allowed him in what may be one of the greatest speeches ever written, in his second Inaugural, to describe the Union and the Confederate soldier alike—both reading the same Bible, both prayed to the same God, but "the prayers of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes." In Lincoln's eyes, the power of faith was humbling, allowing us to embrace our limits in knowing God's will. And as a consequence, he was able to see God in those who vehemently opposed him.

Today, the divisions in this country are, thankfully, not as deep or destructive as when Lincoln led, but they are real. The differences in how we hope to move our nation forward are less pronounced than when King marched, but they do exist. And as we debate what is right and what is just, what is the surest way to create a more hopeful—for our children—how we're going to reduce our deficit, what kind of tax plans we're going to have, how we're going to make sure that every child is getting a great education—and, Doctor, it is very encouraging to me that you turned out so well by your mom not letting you watch TV. I'm going to tell my daughters that when they complain. In the midst of all these debates, we must keep that same humility that Dr. King and Lincoln and Washington and all our great leaders understood is at the core of true leadership. In a democracy as big and as diverse as ours, we will encounter every opinion. And our task as citizens—whether we are leaders in government or business or spreading the word—is to spend our days with open hearts and open minds; to seek out the truth that exists in an opposing view and to find the common ground that allows for us as a nation, as a people, to take real and meaningful action.

And we have to do that humbly, for no one can know the full and encompassing mind of God. And we have to do it every day, not just at a prayer breakfast. I have to say this is now our fifth prayer breakfast and it is always just a wonderful event. But I do worry sometimes that as soon as we leave the prayer breakfast, everything we've been talking about the whole time at the prayer breakfast seems to be forgotten—on the same day of the prayer breakfast. I mean, you'd like to think that the shelf life wasn't so short. But I go back to the Oval Office and I start watching the cable news networks and it's like we didn't pray.

And so my hope is that that humility carries over every day, every moment. While God may reveal His plan to us in portions, the expanse of His plan is for God, and God alone, to understand. "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known." Until that moment, until we know, and are fully known, all we can do is live our lives in a Godly way and assume that those we deal with every day, including those in an opposing party, they're groping their way, doing their best, going through the same struggles we're going through. And in that pursuit, we are blessed with guidance. God has told us how He wishes for us to spend our days. His Commandments are there to be followed. Jesus is there to guide us; the Holy Spirit, to help us. Love the Lord God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. Love your neighbor as yourself. See in everyone, even in those with whom you disagree most vehemently, the face of God. For we are all His children. That's what I thought of as I took the oath of office a few weeks ago and touched those Bibles—the comfort that Scripture gave Lincoln and King and so many leaders throughout our history; the verses they cherished, and how those words of God are there for us as well, waiting to be read any day that we choose. I thought about how their faith gave them the strength to meet the challenges of their time, just as our faith can give us the strength to meet the challenges of ours. And most of all, I thought about their humility, and how we don't seem to live that out the way we should, every day, even when we give lip service to it.

As President, sometimes I have to search for the words to console the inconsolable. Sometimes I search Scripture to determine how best to balance life as a President and as a husband and as a father. I often search for Scripture to figure out how I can be a better man as well as a better President. And I believe that we are united in these struggles. But I also believe that we are united in the knowledge of a redeeming Savior, whose grace is sufficient for the multitude of our sins, and whose love is never failing. And most of all, I know that all Americans—men and women of different faiths and, yes, those of no faith that they can name—are, nevertheless, joined together in common purpose, believing in something that is bigger than ourselves, and the ideals that lie at the heart of our nation's founding—that as a people we are bound together.

And so this morning, let us summon the common resolve that comes from our faith. Let us pray to God that we may be worthy of the many blessings He has bestowed upon our nation. Let us retain that humility not just during this hour but for every hour. And let me suggest that those of us with the most power and influence need to be the most humble. And let us promise Him and to each other, every day as the sun rises over America that it will rise over a people who are striving to make this a more perfect union. Thank you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.



Senator SESSIONS: Thank you. Thank you Mr. President. We're not of the same political party, sometimes we disagree, but speaking as an American, we are one nation and we have one President who serves us all. Thank you for being my President, thank you for being our President.

So let's all enjoy now a final selection from Andrea Bocelli.

[Song]

Mr. Andrea Bocelli: Thank you very much. I'm very ashamed of my English because I would like to tell you many, many things but I can't because my English is very poor. But I live this moment like a dream, because very often my country has been in trouble, just because the left and the right never are able to speak with each other. And in this country where I received a lot, a big, big affection, incredible affection, today I received also a big teaching. I will try going back to my country, Italy, to transmit this will that for me is the most important thing—the will to pray together. Thank you very much.

Senator PRYOR: Thank you Andrea. Just like your songs that was very beautiful. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock." Let's be wise people in the important roles that we're about to step back into in a few minutes and put what we've heard and learned here into practice.

Senator SESSIONS: Love God. Love your neighbor. Let's make that simple rule our guide and make our complex world a better one today. And to offer our closing prayer, please welcome Olympic gold medalist, Gabrielle Douglas.

Ms. Gabrielle Douglas: Thank you. It's such an honor to be here today with so many distinguished leaders, especially Mr. President, Mrs. Obama, Mr. Vice President and the Honorable MARK PRYOR and the Honorable JEFF SESSIONS. Now please, please join me as we bow our heads and pray.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the many continued blessings. We uplift every leader from every nation and ask that you continue to give them wisdom as they govern. Teach us to walk in humility, strengthen us as we strive to fulfill your plan, your purpose for our lives. And as we go from here, I pray we would all pursue your peace, your love and your grace, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Senator PRYOR: We're done, thank you, God bless you.

#### EQUAL ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR A FEW

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I rise today to ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD an article written by Ken Hamilton, Executive Vice President of the Wyoming Farm Bureau that was Published in the April 2013 edition of Wyoming Agriculture. The article's title is "Equal Access to Justice for a few."

Mr. President, while we continue to fight for increased transparency with regards to the Equal Access to Justice Act, one thing is already clear—the Federal Government is picking winners and losers. Mr. Hamilton calls this a "cozy appearance between the groups who sue the Federal Government and the desire by the government to help pay their way." He points out in one recent case of several environmental groups suing the Fish and Wildlife

Service over wolf delisting efforts where the Federal Government quickly approved their November 2012 claim for \$380,000 in attorney fees. That is \$380,000 dollars of hard-earned American taxpayer dollars this administration's Justice Department was more than happy to hand over to their political allies.

Ken continues to illustrate the apparent political fingerprints and favoritism in the Justice Department by stating, "Meanwhile back at the ranch, the Wyoming Wolf Coalition through its attorney Harriet Hageman, has asked the Federal Government for their fees under EAJA. These fees, one-tenth of the environmental claim, have been argued over by the same Federal Government since April of 2011." Let me repeat that. Since 2011, the Justice Department has been actively arguing over an EAJA claim of approximately \$36,000 to a group that supported wolf delisting when the same Justice Department agreed to send \$380,000 to environmental groups opposed to the delisting of wolves.

Based on these facts I would have to agree with Ken's conclusion that, "the Equal Access to Justice Act is being applied less than equally by the Federal Government. It appears that if they agree with you they will send you a check, but if they do not they will send you an attorney's response denying you your money."

This administration should not be in the business of playing favorites by rewarding their political friends with taxpayer dollars. I commend Ken for highlighting the apparent inequality and abuse of the so-called Equal Access to Justice Act. This is one of the reasons I plan to continue fighting for real transparency regarding which groups are receiving EAJA payments, why they are receiving it, and how much money—taxpayer money—is being given away. It is time the Equal Access to Justice Act truly live up to its name.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation Opinion Editorial, Mar. 26, 2013]  
EQUAL ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR A FEW  
(By Ken Hamilton, Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation, Executive Vice President)

Many people are aware of the efforts to reform the Equal Access to Justice Act (EAJA) in order to bring more transparency to the process of the federal government paying attorney fees. Based on information researched and brought to light through the Budd-Falen law offices we found out that monies were being awarded without the slightest effort by the government to keep track of who received them and why. Thus, the need for some transparency and oversight. We have also seen some of the recipients fight efforts to bring transparency and why wouldn't they? After all, this is something that helps off-set their cost of suing the federal government.

The other aspect of this that some have wondered about is the sometimes cozy appearance between these groups who sue the

federal government and the desire by the government to help pay their way.

Recently, several environmental groups settled with the federal government over their attorney fees for suing the Fish and Wildlife Service on wolf delisting efforts in Montana and Idaho. The settlement agreed to by the federal government will pay the groups \$380,000 for their attorney fees. This request for money was filed with the courts in November of 2012 and the government didn't object to this filing.

Meanwhile back at the ranch, the Wyoming Wolf Coalition through its attorney Harriet Hageman, has asked the federal government for their fees under EAJA. These fees, a tenth of the environmental claim, have been argued over by the same federal government since April of 2011.

Given this interesting development it certainly appears the federal government, through the Justice Department, does not apply justice uniformly. Perhaps the Justice Department is concerned that these multi-million dollar environmental groups should be paid because they have resources far beyond the troublesome rancher, sportsmen, outfitters and local governments and they could use the money but those other entities should be denied because they are poor.

Perhaps they feel that almost \$400,000 is not a big deal, but \$36,000 is a huge deal worthy of Justice Department attorney time to file objections.

Who knows, but one thing is apparent and that is the Equal Access to Justice Act is being applied less than equally by the federal government. It appears that if they agree with you they will send you a check, but if they do not they will send you an attorney's response denying you your money.

#### GRASSBAUGH VETERANS PROJECT

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, today I wish to honor the commencement of the Captain Jonathan D. Grassbaugh Veterans Project. CPT Jonathan Grassbaugh and three other soldiers were killed in action in Iraq on April 7, 2007, when an insurgent detonated a 500-pound explosive beneath their truck. His wife, CPT Jenna C. Grassbaugh, has collaborated with the Ohio State University Moritz College of Law to create the Captain Jonathan D. Grassbaugh Veterans Project. The Jonathan D. Grassbaugh Veterans Project will provide veterans returning from deployment with legal assistance, with the help of law students aided by professional lawyers.

CPT Jenna Grassbaugh donated \$250,000 of her husband's life insurance policy to the Moritz College of Law in order to honor her husband's legacy and assist returning veterans. The Grassbaugh Veterans Project will open in April and will be operational by fall 2014.

I would also like to pay tribute to Jonathan D. Grassbaugh and the rich legacy he leaves. His commitment to service is an inspiration to all of us and he will not be forgotten. I would also like to recognize CPT Jenna Grassbaugh for honoring the legacy of her husband in such a meaningful way.

#### TRIBUTE TO LIEUTENANT COLONEL KENNETH W. McDONALD

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I wish to recognize the accomplishments of LTC