

out my responsibilities to the citizens of my State—cannot go without being responded to.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HEITKAMP). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. I now yield back all time on the Patterson nomination.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, I was unable to attend the rollcall vote on the nomination of Heather Anne Higginbottom to be Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources and the rollcall vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the nomination of Anne W. Patterson to be an Assistant Secretary of State. Had I been present for these two votes, I would have voted "aye."

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent 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.

TRIBUTE TO GREG JONES

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I come to the floor today to recognize the retirement of an upstanding citizen from the Commonwealth of Kentucky, and to pay tribute to his career of service to my home State. This month, Greg Jones concludes over 21 years as executive director of the non-profit Southeast Kentucky Economic Development Corporation, SKED. His daily presence at the helm of the organization will be sorely missed, but his legacy will endure in the thousands of jobs he helped create and the increased economic vigor he helped bring to the region.

When he first took the job at the behest of Congressman HAL ROGERS in 1992, Greg oversaw a two-person staff and commanded a \$75,000 budget. Under his leadership the organization has grown to its current staff of 10 professionals and a budget of nearly \$2 million. Throughout his tenure as executive director, Greg marshaled SKED's resources to help start and expand businesses, provide training for entrepreneurs, and attract new industries to the corporation's 45-county service area. Under Greg's watch, SKED has unquestionably lived up to its stated mission—"to foster economic growth and vitality in the region."

I ask my Senate colleagues to join me in recognizing Greg's exemplary career as well as wishing him a happy re-

tirement with his wife Belinda and son Christopher.

An article about Greg Jones's retirement from SKED recently appeared in an area newspaper, the Commonwealth Journal. I ask unanimous consent that the full article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objections, the article was ordered to be printed as follows:

SKED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREG JONES
RETIRING IN DECEMBER

[From the Commonwealth Journal,
Oct. 13, 2013]

SOMERSET, KY.—Greg Jones, executive director of Southeast Kentucky Economic Development Corporation (SKED), will retire in December after more than 21 years of service to the nonprofit organization and to Southeast Kentucky.

The longest serving executive director in the organization's 27-year history, Jones is credited with strengthening SKED's mission of job creation and making it the premier economic development agency in the region. Beginning with a \$75,000 budget and two-person staff in 1992, Jones and his current staff of 10 professionals now operate with an annual budget of nearly \$2 million.

"I've had the privilege to lead SKED and our amazing team of professionals for over two decades, and I am extremely proud of our successes," Jones said. "I shall forever be grateful to Congressman Hal Rogers and the incredibly supportive and talented individuals on the SKED Board of Directors for giving me the opportunity to be a part of this remarkable organization. And, finally, I wish to thank the dedicated staff of SKED for their loyalty and friendship over these many years."

It was Congressman Rogers who asked Jones to head up the grassroots effort he began, in 1986, back in 1992. At the time, Jones was working as executive director of the Somerset-Pulaski County Chamber of Commerce.

"Over the last two decades, Greg Jones has worked tirelessly to recruit thousands of jobs and expand the industrial portfolio of southern and eastern Kentucky," said Rogers. "Greg's foresight to address vital infrastructure upgrades, recruit high-tech companies and support entrepreneurial growth will continue to benefit economic development in our region for years to come. While he is moving on from daily operations at SKED, I have asked Greg to remain in close contact to offer guidance for the organization that he has helped mold for success. My wife Cynthia and I wish Greg and his family many blessings in his years of retirement."

As SKED executive director, Jones has been responsible for the marketing and industrial recruitment activities for the 45-county SKED service area, managing a \$10-million loan portfolio and providing economic and community development assistance to local communities in Southeast Kentucky.

Under his leadership, SKED has successfully assisted more than 100 businesses and industries in starting or expanding their operations in the region. These companies now employ more than 7,700 workers and have invested an estimated \$500 million in Southeast Kentucky. He has successfully prepared loan and grant applications totaling more than \$26 million to support the organization's job creation activities.

Building partnerships has been Jones's mantra for the past 21 years. Whether it was with local community leaders or state and national funding agencies, Jones worked tirelessly to form strong alliances across the

region, state and nation. One of those key partnerships is with the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC).

Earl Gohl, ARC federal co-chair, has worked with Jones on several key projects in recent years.

"Greg's leadership has made SKED what it is today," Gohl said. "What he has accomplished with the SKED entrepreneurship program and the Valley Oak Technology Complex has laid the groundwork for what Eastern Kentucky can be tomorrow."

Jones led SKED to receive designation as a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) in 1999. As a result, the organization received funding to implement several innovative regional projects including the Valley Oak Technology Complex, the Somerset Rail Park, the Southern Kentucky Information Technology Center and the Enterprise Center.

SKED received the National Association of Development Organization's (NADO) 2002 Innovation Award in recognition of its technology initiatives.

In 2009, SKED became a Certified Development Corporation (CDC) by the U.S. Small Business Administration. This designation authorized SKED to process SBA 504 loans throughout the state of Kentucky. The 504 Loan Program is the SBA's economic development tool to provide small-business financing and create jobs all across America.

To date, some 250 people have received entrepreneurial training from SKED thanks to a grant from the ARC in 2011. SKED established the Entrepreneurial SMARTs program designed to offer nationally acclaimed entrepreneurship classes at a reduced rate. A CDFI grant provided the funding to hire a professional to teach the classes.

SKED is governed by a 12-member, volunteer board of directors. Over the past 21 years, Jones has worked with a number of successful men and women on the board, each with different areas of expertise and from a variety of career fields, but all leaders in their own communities. As board members, they share SKED's mission of job creation in Southeast Kentucky.

SKED President Tim Barnes is one of those community leaders. President and CEO of Hometown Bank, he's led the SKED Board of Directors for the past three years.

"Greg has been the face of SKED for so long, it's hard to imagine ever being able to replace him," Barnes said. "Let's just say there will be no replacing Greg. He's one of a kind. His legacy of caring professionalism will live on through the lending programs and other initiatives he's worked so tirelessly to develop over the past two decades. We wish him all the best in his future endeavors, and speaking on behalf of all board members past and present, I say a hearty thank you."

The SKED Board of Directors plans a national search for Jones's successor.

A native of Laurel County, Jones has served on numerous boards and commissions both locally and nationally. These positions include being past president of the Appalachia Development Alliance. He is currently on the board of directors for both TOURSEKY and the National Institute for Hometown Security. He was named East Kentucky Power Community/Economic Development Professional of the Year in 2007.

He earned his B.S. in industrial technology at Morehead State University in Morehead, Ky. He also holds a master of public administration degree from Southern Illinois University—Edwardsville. He also attended the Institute for Organization Management and Economic Development Institute.

In 1995, he received the Certified Economic Developer designation from the American Economic Development Council.

He is married to Belinda Taylor Jones and they have a son, Christopher.

REMEMBERING THE NEWTOWN TRAGEDY

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, this Saturday will mark 1 year since one of the most horrific tragedies in our nation's history: the murder of 26 innocents at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT on December 14, 2012. All of us remember the shock we felt when we heard the news reports. Twenty first graders—only 6 or 7 years old—were gunned down in their classrooms, and six educators were killed while trying to protect their students from harm.

The events of that day were heart-breaking. As we come upon the grim 1-year anniversary of that event, our thoughts and our prayers are with the families and friends of the victims. Many of them stood in a nearby firehouse on that day waiting for first responders to bring them any word about their loved ones in the school. One by one, the first responders brought down children and teachers to the firehouse to reunite them with their families—until the families of the victims were the only ones left. Then it became clear that no more would be coming.

These families have suffered immensely. But in the face of their grief and loss, they have shown incredible strength and courage. They have supported one another with a strong sense of community and faith, and they have dedicated themselves to the cause of sparing other families what they have gone through.

I have met with many of these families over the past year. They have come to meet with Members of Congress, and with lawmakers in many States, to share their ideas for how to reduce the devastating toll of gun violence. I salute them for their courage, and I thank them for standing up on behalf of so many families across America who have lost a loved one to gunfire.

Over 11,000 Americans are murdered with guns each year. If we count suicides and accidental shootings, the death toll from guns rises to more than 31,000 Americans each year. This epidemic of gun violence is unacceptable. We cannot simply shrug our shoulders and write off these shootings as the cost of living in America.

In my home State of Illinois, I have met too many grieving mothers who have lost their children to senseless gun violence—mothers such as: Annette Nance-Holt, who lost her son Blair in the crossfire of a gang shooting; Mary Kay Mace, whose daughter Ryanne was killed in her classroom at Northern Illinois University; Pam Bosley, whose son Terrell was shot and killed outside of church; and Cleo Pendleton, whose daughter Hadiya was gunned down at a bus stop where she was seeking shelter from the rain.

I do not want to go to another funeral for a police officer like Chicago

Police Officer Thomas Wortham IV, who was killed by gang members with a straw-purchased gun. I do not want to hear about any more killers who couldn't pass a background check but still were able to buy guns through a private sale—such as the man who murdered Ricky Byrdson, the former Northwestern University basketball coach, in Skokie, IL.

We need to take proactive steps, consistent with the Constitution and the Second Amendment, to stop these situations from happening. We need to reduce this high number of violent shootings. We can do this by working for better gun safety laws that will spare other families what these families have gone through. No matter how long it may take, no matter how challenging the road may seem, this is a goal worth fighting for.

We have seen some positive steps forward when it comes to gun safety in the past year. For the first time ever, the Senate confirmed a director to head the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. We have seen an end to the federal funding restrictions on research into the causes of gun violence. We have seen significant growth in crime gun tracing, especially with the eTrace program that has helped catch criminals and gun traffickers in Illinois and nationwide, and important new gun safety laws have passed in States such as California, Colorado, Connecticut, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, and my home State of Illinois, where universal background checks and mandatory reporting of lost and stolen guns are now the law.

We know that more needs to be done. Earlier this year, we failed to get the 60 Senate votes we need to ensure that a criminal background check is conducted on every gun sale. The Senate also fell a few votes short when it comes to toughening our laws against straw purchasing and illegal gun trafficking. Of course, the House of Representatives has not even tried to pass legislation to reduce gun violence.

I know it is frustrating to many Americans when Congress fails to act on commonsense steps such as these. It is frustrating for me too, but I am not giving up. The goal of reducing gun deaths in America is worth fighting for. We may not have the votes we need in Congress today, but if the American people speak out and work hard for commonsense reform, we will achieve it.

I salute my colleagues in both parties who have worked hard this past year to push for commonsense gun safety laws especially the Senators from Connecticut, Senators BLUMENTHAL and MURPHY, who have become such admirable leaders on this issue. I also commend Senators MANCHIN and TOOMEY, who have crafted a balanced background check bill to make sure that we aren't selling guns to criminals; and Senators LEAHY, KIRK, COLLINS and GILLIBRAND, who have worked with me on a bill to crack down on the straw

purchasers and gun traffickers who supply criminals with weapons.

The votes haven't been there yet, but we will keep at it. It may not happen right away, but we are in this for the long haul. The families from Newtown are going to keep working for these reforms, and so must we. I am confident that working together, we will pass commonsense reforms that save lives.

REMEMBERING MICHAEL JOSEPH O'SHEA

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, as I often point out, our country is a country of immigrants. And the City of Chicago, almost without rival, is a city of immigrants.

Earlier this week, Chicago lost a wonderful adopted son.

Michael Joseph O'Shea—"Joe," as his friends and family called him—was born in Ballynacally, County Clare, Ireland in 1937.

He came to America in 1959, when he was just 18 years old, and like so many sons and daughters of Ireland before him, he quickly made Chicago his home.

You knew Joe O'Shea was Irish before he ever opened his mouth. To borrow a phrase from Eugene O'Neill, he had the map of Ireland all over his face. And his face was rarely without a smile.

There's an old Irish saying: "Bricks and mortar make a house, but the laughter of children makes a home." Well, there was a lot of laughter in the home that Joe and his wife Mary made on the South Side of Chicago.

Joe and Mary were blessed with four children: Michael, Daniel, Colleen, and my friend Sean, through whom I got to know Joe.

In addition to the laughter of children—and later, grandchildren—the O'Shea home was filled with something else almost as beautiful: the sounds of Irish music.

Joe O'Shea was a past president of the Chicago Irish Music Association and he was one of the best Irish accordion players you have ever heard, or ever will hear.

In 2000, Joe was honored to play for President and Mrs. Clinton at their annual St. Patrick's Day celebration at the White House. In the audience were many of the leaders of his adopted land as well as the Prime Minister and other visiting dignitaries from Ireland. It was a proud moment that Joe treasured.

Joe's love of Irish music and dance and his masterful, joyful performances will help to keep that part of Chicago culture vibrant for many years to come.

Like many Chicago families, the O'Shea family has split loyalties when it came to baseball. But they are united in love and support for each other.

Loretta and I wish to express our deep condolences to Joe's wife, Mary, their children and their two beloved