

TRIBUTE TO DICK SEARS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, it is my honor to recognize a true friend of Vermont, State Senator Dick Sears of Bennington, who has been named by FiscalNote as the sixth most productive State senator in the United States.

Senator Sears, who was first elected in 1992, and as cited by FiscalNote, has sponsored 314 bills and has a 60 percent bill passage success rate. This recognition of Senator Sears' effectiveness comes as no surprise in Vermont, where he is respected and is a fixture on the nightly news during the legislative session.

In the Vermont Senate Judiciary Committee, where Senator Sears serves as chair, he has acted courageously on issues including civil rights, marriage equality, human trafficking, and adoption. He himself highlights his work on corrections and criminal justice reform, as well as his successful involvement in the 2010 rewrite of sex offender laws, as major accomplishments; yet he also attributes his success in these important issue areas to teamwork.

In addition to chairing the judiciary committee, Senator Sears also serves on the appropriations committee, the joint fiscal committee, is vice chair of the joint legislative child protection oversight committee, is vice chair of the joint legislative justice committee, and is a member of the legislative committee on judicial rules and the legislative council committee.

Clearly, Senator Sears is a legislator who deserves recognition, yet doesn't seek recognition. In honor of Senator Sears' outstanding accomplishments, I ask that the article by Christie Wisniewski from the July 31 edition of the Bennington Banner, "Sears ranked 6th in productivity for U.S. state senators," be printed into the RECORD.

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

BENNINGTON BANNER, JULY 31, 2018

SEARS RANKED 6TH IN PRODUCTIVITY FOR U.S. STATE SENATORS

This story by Christie Wisniewski was published by the Bennington Banner on July 31. BENNINGTON.—State Sen. Dick Sears of Bennington is the sixth most productive state senator in the United States, according to an analysis released Monday by a Washington, D.C.-based software startup. Each year, FiscalNote creates a list of the top 10 state senators using "unique data analytics software," the company said in a press release. The list ranks all senators and representatives in accordance with their legislative productivity, which is defined as how successful the legislator is at sponsoring and steering bills through each stage of the legislative process.

This research also ranks the quality, endurance and substantiveness of the bills each legislator sponsored and introduced. For example, legislators score higher if they sponsor a higher number of bills and if their bills make it further in the legislative process. A bill that is enacted is weighted more than a bill that does not make it past the Senate floor. Finally, legislators score higher if their bills are substantive a bill that at-

tempts meaningful change rather than a memorial or commendation.

Sears, a Democrat, was first elected in 1992. Since then, he has sponsored 314 bills and has a 60-percent bill passage success rate.

"I'm just flabbergasted," Sears said of the report. "[I'm] really humbled and pleased, quite frankly."

Sears was the only state senator from New England to make the top 10.

State Sen. Brian Campion, who is running for re-election alongside his district mate Sears as a team, lauded Sears for his dedication to the county.

"Bennington County was once the forgotten kingdom of Vermont, but Dick has helped us rid ourselves of that title," Campion said. "He's incredibly hard working, and I'm lucky to have him as a mentor and district mate."

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures website, there are 7,383 legislators across the United States.

"To be ranked in the top 10 of state senators is an amazing thing," Sears said. "... I've worked well with various administrations over the years and sponsored some really tough bills."

Sears has worked successfully with four different Vermont governors and sponsored bills dealing with civil rights, marriage equality, human trafficking, adoption, and other issues. He views his work with reforming state corrections and criminal justice laws—especially with juvenile justice—as a "major accomplishment" and also sees his involvement with the 2010 "complete rewrite" of sex offender laws as a success.

However, Sears doesn't want to take all the credit for the bills that have passed under his watch.

"Like anything else, you never do it alone," he said.

Rep. Timothy R. Corcoran II of Bennington also believes Sears' recognition is well-deserved.

"Dick has always lived by his convictions and never backed down when he faced opposition to issues that weren't universally accepted," Corcoran said. "Bennington County has been extremely lucky to have him represent us up in Montpelier."

Corcoran commended Sears' willingness to fight for Bennington County, "whether it's been PFOA, helping to secure Amtrak bus service funding, fighting for the Vermont Veterans Home, or just securing funds for Bennington County in general."

"Dick has always stepped up to the plate and delivered," Corcoran added. "Congratulations Dick; job well done."

TRIBUTE TO ENID WONNACOTT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, on behalf of all Vermonters, I would like to honor Enid Wonnacott of Huntington, VT, who this month will be inducted into the Vermont Agricultural Hall of Fame in recognition of her more than 30 years of agricultural leadership in Vermont and the Nation. Enid became the executive director of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont, NOFA-VT, in 1987, the same year that I became chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry. Enid has been a national leader in advancing the importance of organic agriculture. She provided important technical and advocacy support as I worked on the National Organic Standards Act as part of the 1990 farm bill—which has in turn

resulted in making organic agriculture a \$60 billion annual industry—with Vermont as a leader. Thirty years later, Enid continues to provide advice on organic agriculture and nutrition issues.

Enid Wonnacott's many accomplishments are presented in detail in her much deserved nomination to the Vermont Agricultural Hall of Fame.

I ask unanimous consent to have the nomination printed in the RECORD.

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

VERMONT AGRICULTURAL HALL OF FAME 2018

INDUCTEE ENID WONNACOTT

Enid has served as the Executive Director of The Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT) since 1987. Over the course of her tenure, thanks to her leadership, Vermont's organic industry has grown immensely, from just 57 certified farms in 1990, to more than 700, today. Enid has worked tirelessly to help ensure all Vermonters have access to local, organic foods, and began a pioneering farm share program more than 20 years ago to provide subsidized farm shares for low-income Vermonters. As the National Organic Program was developed, Enid worked to implement a national certification program that kept the needs of Vermont's family farms at the forefront. Over the past three decades, she has nurtured and guided more than 70 staff and 20 interns, secured consistent grant and donor funding, and led NOFA-VT to become a national leader in organic advocacy, food access, and farm to school education. She has made an indelible mark on both the local, and national, organic movement. Enid grew up in Weybridge, and has lived on a small farmstead in Huntington with her husband, Harry, and children, Lila and Eli, for the past thirty years.

NOMINATION OF LYNN JOHNSON

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, these are incredibly harmful and traumatic times for immigrants and refugees in America. Perhaps there is not greater example of the damaging immigration policies of this administration than the so called zero-tolerance policy that led to the cruel and needless separation of thousands of children from their parents.

Separating a child from his or her parents has lasting, harmful, and traumatizing impacts. These separations have been shown to increase anxiety and depression among children that have already experienced significant trauma in their home countries and along their journey to the United States. Best practices in child welfare promote keeping children and their parents safely together, unless removal is in the child's best interest.

While the Department of Justice ended the family separation policy after an incredible outcry from the public and experts in children's health and well-being, the damage is far from over. The administration is now undergoing a court-supervised process to reunify separated children and families. Significant and self-inflicted obstacles remain in this reunification process, and I and my Senate colleagues will

continue to doggedly press the Departments of Justice, Homeland Security, and Health and Human Services until every child is safely in the custody of a parent, relative, or other guardian and to ensure nothing like this happens again.

Hundreds of children still remain in government custody, scared and unsure if they will ever see their parents again. Children who were separated from their parents or arrive on their own are placed in the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, which falls under the Administration for Children and Families, ACF, within the Department of Health and Human Services. The President has nominated Lynn Johnson of Colorado to fill the role of head of ACF. If confirmed by the Senate, Ms. Johnson has one of the most important jobs in public service, and that is ensuring the safety and well-being of these vulnerable children and working toward their reunification.

I voted against Ms. Johnson's nomination when it came before the Senate Finance Committee due to the sheer volume of unanswered questions and false or misleading answers from this administration regarding its family separation policies. Tonight, I had the opportunity to discuss my concerns with Ms. Johnson and secure her commitment to changing the way things are done in the Administration for Children and Families.

Ms. Johnson committed to enacting and enforcing policies that prevent Office of Refugee Resettlement grantees and facilities from engaging in activities that are not consistent with best practices for children including prohibiting solitary confinement for punitive purposes or behavioral modification; prohibiting the distribution of psychotropic medications or sedatives absent the informed, written consent of a parent or guardian, except in the case of well-documented emergencies; prohibiting arbitrary restraint policies; prohibiting any security measures that are not necessary for the protection of minors or others, such as denying them access to drinking water or preventing them from making private phone calls; and guaranteeing the maintenance of confidentiality of information disclosed by children to therapists and counselors in the context of a therapeutic/treatment relationship.

In addition, Ms. Johnson committed to ensuring ORR and its supported grantees and facilities allow any separated child to call a parent or legal guardian as frequently as the child wishes—if there are documented safety concerns, calls may be monitored by staff with the child, but otherwise, children must be able to contact a parent or legal guardian as they wish. If the parent/legal guardian is in the custody of the Department of Homeland Security, the two agencies must establish a process to accept children's calls and connect them to their parents; and conducting a full review within 90 days

of the oversight, staffing, training, medication, and licensing policies for ORR-funded facilities and issue a report to Congress describing the oversight of these facilities and the actions ACF will take to address oversight and program shortcomings. The review must include the extent and adequacy of policies related to post-release services; legal services; and health, including reproductive health, to ensure that they are consistent with constitutional protections. In the event the full review cannot be completed within 90 days, ACF will provide the summary of their work at that point, with a timeline and guarantee that the full report will be soon available.

I am grateful for these commitments and will hold Ms. Johnson to them if she is ultimately confirmed by the full Senate.

REMEMBERING CHRISTOPHER COUSINS

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, in 2010, Bangor Daily News journalist Christopher Cousins wrote a touching essay on a fishing trip he had taken with his young son to the Maine lake where he and his father had fished throughout his childhood. It was his first trip back since his father's death 3 years earlier.

That remarkable essay exploring the special bond between father and child and the powerful link between fond memories of the past and hopes for the future took on added poignancy on August 15 when Chris passed away at age 42. At this difficult time, I offer my deepest condolences to his wife, Jen, and his sons, Caleb and Jacob.

As a husband and father, Chris was devoted to his family. As a consummate journalist who worked for several Maine newspapers, he was devoted to the best ideals of his profession. His work covered a wide range of subjects, but it consistently demonstrated a commitment to the truth and to providing his readers with the information that is the lifeblood of democracy.

Chris joined the Bangor Daily News in 2009, covering local news in southern Penobscot and Somerset Counties with a keen understanding of the issues that concern the people of Maine. In 2010, he covered the Maine gubernatorial race with extraordinary energy and insight.

In 2013, Chris became State house bureau chief for his newspaper. Always tenacious and unfailingly fair, he earned the respect of politicians on both sides of the aisle and throughout the halls of government. His work ethic, skill as a writer, and belief in accountability led to a better understanding of the complex and often contentious issues that confront our State.

Chris's passing is a great loss to the people of Maine, his many friends, and his colleagues at the Bangor Daily News. It is a heartbreaking loss to his wonderful family, and I hope they will find comfort in knowing that his contributions and accomplishments truly

made a difference to people throughout Maine.

Mr. KING. Mr. President, today we remember the life of Christopher "Chris" Cousins, who passed away suddenly last week at the age of 42. Chris was a political reporter for the Bangor Daily News and recently named by the Maine Center for Public Interest Reporting as one of the most respected journalists in Maine. Chris was well-liked by all who met him, and he leaves behind his wife, Jen; two sons, Caleb and Lucas; his mother; sister Jen Cousins; and many other family members and friends. He will be greatly missed by his colleagues, his readers, his friends, and all who knew him and his work.

Chris was a consummate professional who embodied the best ideals of journalism. He was devoted to the truth, tenaciously pursued the stories most important to the people of Maine, and had a passion for the communities he served. Chris's death leaves a hole in Maine journalism that will not be easily filled.

Chris began his journalism career at the Advertiser Democrat in Norway, ME, then joined the Times Record in the early 2000s as a reporter and city editor. He left the Times Record to join the State House News Service before moving to the Bangor Daily News in 2009, where he began covering southern Penobscot and Somerset Counties. Chris quickly moved on to politics, covering the 2010 Maine Governor race, and by 2013, he was appointed State house bureau chief.

Those who worked with Chris remember him for his storytelling abilities, his laugh, and exceptional abilities as a journalist. Chris had a huge heart and also fought for the truth from government leaders at the State house, holding them accountable without being caustic. Maine is a better place because of Chris and his relentless pursuit of the truth on behalf of Maine people.

For me, Chris's political coverage shined when he covered people. Chris was an incredible storyteller, and he was such a great journalist because he got to know the people involved. No assignment was ever too much for him, and his standard response was, "I am not afraid." That fearlessness resulted in clear stories that his editors loved, heartfelt narratives that his readers could relate to, and more passionate articles from his coworkers.

Chris exemplified what so many aspire to be: respected by their peers, a loving husband and father, and a great friend. We have much to be thankful for in Maine because of Chris's dedication and service to the State and our Nation, and he will be deeply missed by so many.

TRIBUTE TO STEVEN HILDRETH

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I wish to speak in order to honor the achievements of Steven A. Hildreth, Specialist in Missile Defense, Congressional Research Service, CRS, on the