

We have thousands of teachers in my State, just as you do in yours, who do such great work, day in and day out, to make sure that our next generation is not only educated on the facts and things like math and history but that they also understand, in the words of the great leader Nelson Mandela, that “education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” That is true, and that is why our teachers in Alaska and in America are so important.

Danielle Riha is teaching our youth so that they can go out and change the world. She and all the teachers in Alaska and in America have one of the most important jobs for our Nation and one of the most difficult jobs for our Nation. We certainly salute and honor them all, particularly this week, as so many of the top teachers in the country have been in town.

Why is Danielle good at what she does? Why did she get this award? Why is she viewed as one of the top four teachers in America? Why has she touched so many students in Alaska? How did she make her way into this profession?

Let’s talk about that. Let me start with the last question first.

She came to Alaska in 1995 when she was a college student at North Texas University. She came to a part of Alaska called Unalaska—which is way out in the Aleutian Island chain—to fish and to help pay to finish college, where she had plans to become a physical therapist. That is a great profession as well. Like a lot of people, she came up to Alaska maybe for a little adventure, and maybe she was only planning on staying 6 months. Then, one day, the principal of the school in Unalaska approached her when she was playing basketball and said: Have you ever thought about being a teacher? How about a substitute teacher?

Well, that was the beginning of the love affair she had with teaching, with the classroom, and with her ability to really connect with kids, particularly kids with difficult emotional challenges.

She finished her education degree at the University of Alaska in Anchorage. Then, she taught for 7 years in two small villages in Southwest Alaska. While there, she helped to develop the curriculum that was culturally appropriate for her students, most of whom were Alaska Natives. She was then recruited to teach at the school where she now teaches, the Alaska Native Cultural Charter School, and she was one of the original teachers to start up this great new teaching and education venture in 2008.

Let me read from her Teacher of the Year application form:

Imagine you are a 7th grade student living in a rural, Yup’ik speaking, Alaskan community.

By the way, we have many communities in our State where English is not the first language and where the Alaska Native languages are the first languages.

Back to the application:

The only way to get to your village is by small plane or boat in the summer and snowmachine in the winter. You have never been to a city or had life experiences that include seeing an elevator, stores, restaurants, or roads [even outside your community].

Your family survives by subsistence hunting and gathering from the land of their ancestors.

By the way, that is how thousands of Alaskans survive to this day.

Now imagine yourself in math class considering a word problem that takes place in California and involves distance, rollerblades, a convenience store, and a curb.

That is in the application. What this is getting at is that there are things so many Americans think are common for education that in certain communities in Alaska, and I am sure in other places, aren’t common. It is difficult to teach when everything is assumed to be the same when it is not. You can imagine how confusing that might be. These are the kinds of educational challenges that Alaskan students, particularly in our most rural communities, face every single day.

What did Miss Riha do to help with the confusion? Working with Alaskan Native elders, she helped to create what she calls the Kayak Module, which uses culturally relevant material to teach math, science, social studies, and language arts.

Let me give you an example of how she uses the module to teach math and science. The students are given blocks of clay and put into groups. Each group then designs a kayak of different shapes and different weights. They are tested for speed, water disbursements, and capacity. Data is collected. Hypotheses and mathematical calculations are made, and the students learn from using these examples that are actually examples from their own lives, and they love doing so.

This can work across cultures. Think about it. Alaska Native students who are on rivers or who are on the ocean, or Samoan students, many of whom live like in the example—all of these kinds of students have boats in their culture. They understand that.

“As an educator,” Danielle said, “nothing feels better than allowing students the opportunities to bridge what they already know culturally to new content, and to teach them to have a voice for themselves.” This helps them learn. Isn’t that a simple, but insightful approach to teaching?

I think you are all getting the picture of why she was considered one of the top four teachers in America. She and the whole school are also devoted to ensuring that the students go to school in a very safe place and where the students feel welcome. For example, one student who wrote a letter in support of her for her Teacher of the Year nomination talked about how she was worried about being bullied because she came from a different culture. She was Muslim. Because of that, she started to feel that she was falling behind in reading and math. This student wrote:

[Miss Riha] helped me be bold enough to teach others about my culture in a way that made me feel proud of who I am. Needless to say, I caught up in my math and reading within one year because of her leadership, and now I love learning.

That is from one of her students. That student is now studying to become a dental hygienist at the University of Anchorage. She and Miss Riha still stay in touch. As you know, we all have that teacher—maybe one, maybe two, maybe several, but that one teacher—who made a difference in our lives, who encouraged us, who believed in us when maybe no one else did and who helped us through hard times by passing on the joy of learning, by passing on the passion of learning.

Danielle and thousands of other teachers across my State, and millions across our great Nation, wake up every day to do that as their mission, to take on one of the most important things any of us can do, and that is educating our youth.

Danielle, congratulations for being Alaska’s Teacher of the Year, for being one of the top four teachers in the United States of America, and, importantly, thank you and congratulations on being our Alaskan of the Week.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I will be brief. I see my colleague from Tennessee is here.

Earlier this afternoon, the President’s designee, Stephen Moore—not quite yet his nominee, but the President put his name out there to be a Governor of the Federal Reserve—withdrew his name from consideration, in large part because so many Republicans in this body were unhappy with his selection.

This is the second Trump failure for the Federal Reserve just in the last month. He was about to nominate Herman Cain. There was a lot of outcry about his lack of qualifications. I am not sure why the President came up with him. Then he withdrew, and Stephen Moore’s name had been put out there, too, and there were the same kinds of complaints about Moore—not just about what he wrote and said over the years, but really about his reputation as a thinker, as an economist, and as a strategist on economic issues.

The President has tried twice. I don’t know when we have ever seen this before, where the President hasn’t been able to find somebody who understands the independence of the Fed and is qualified to take on that awesome responsibility to be on the Federal Reserve. It is as influential as any economic position in this government, I think.

Now the President has two new chances again. I am hopeful that he will think about not appointing somebody whose whole mantra is trickle-down economics—to give tax cuts to the richest people in the country and

hope it trickles down and we get a better economy. That never works.

I am hopeful that the President better understands that you focus on the middle—my earned income tax credit bill, for instance—and you focus on tax breaks for the people making \$20,000, \$30,000, \$50,000, and up to \$100,000 a year. They will spend those dollars they get in tax breaks and build the economy, whether in Terre Haute, in Nashville, or in Cleveland. We know how important that is.

I hope the President will look at the next Governor of the Federal Reserve—these two appointments—and think about the dignity of work and think about someone who respects and honors work.

You may remember that Stephen Moore made some really caustic and nasty comments about two great cities in my State—Cleveland and Cincinnati. As much as that was offensive, what is really offensive is how he just doesn't seem to respect the dignity of work and respect these workers. Whether they are physical therapists at hospitals, whether they clean bathrooms at hotels, whether they are construction workers, whether they are mid-level managers, or whether they are salespeople on the road, it is important that we honor and respect work and understand the dignity of work. I am hopeful the President will see that the next two nominees for the Federal Reserve will think about the American workforce.

One of my most fun moments and most productive moments and days in my time in the Senate was when I asked Janet Yellen, the Chair of the Federal Reserve, to come out and visit a major aluminum stamping plant for helicopter blades in Cleveland, which is not far from where I live. It gave her a perspective of seeing what Americans do for a living sometimes in manufacturing, sometimes in sales, sometimes in service—whatever it is.

I am hopeful that this is who the President will look at—somebody who will respect the dignity of work, someone who will want to go out, as Abraham Lincoln said, and get “my public opinion baths” and get outside the hallowed halls of the Federal Reserve, see America, and translate that into a policy that really does help working families.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I just have to say a couple of words about the economy. Since my colleague from Ohio was speaking of the economy, I will say this: Showing respect for workers and for work means that you show respect by realizing that the best way to stimulate the economy is with a job. That is something we have seen this administration and, I will say, a Republican-led Senate, and, previously, a Republican-led House do—generate tax reform, which is giving us economic growth that we have

not seen in years. Economic growth of 3.2 percent is what our GDP numbers were last Friday—3.2 percent. We haven't had that in a decade.

How do you respect people? You create opportunity. How do you show respect for workers? You open doors. That is what you realize. It is not the government that creates jobs. It is the men and women who build businesses, who grow businesses—the men and women who say: I have an American dream, and I want the opportunity to make that dream come true.

That is an element of respect, and this President and Republican leadership have delivered on that with every single opportunity we have had.

I disagree with the philosophical approach that my colleague from Ohio has expressed, and I would encourage all Senators to look at what is happening in their communities and look at the jobs growth. Tennesseans are so excited that there is a growing economy and that they have more money in their paychecks at the end of the month.

TRIBUTE TO MELISSA MILLER

Mr. President, Senator SULLIVAN was mentioning his Teacher of the Year from Alaska. As I begin my remarks about some wonderful things that have happened with women and for women and by women in this country, I want to mention that I just left a visit with our Tennessee Teacher of the Year—Melissa Miller from Columbia—who teaches in nearby Franklin at the elementary school. We are thrilled for her and are honored to have her here in DC. I join in praising her for the great work that she does for children by encouraging them to learn how they best learn so that they can live their versions of the American dream.

SUFFRAGE COIN

Mr. President, I rise in support of S. 1235, the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commemorative Coin Act. It was introduced by Senator GILLIBRAND and me.

It was 150 years ago this month that the National Woman Suffrage Association was founded by Susan B. Anthony and a group of very brave suffrage activists who fought for all American women to have the right to vote. This bipartisan measure honors the centennial and the legacy of the suffrage activists with a commemorative coin to be minted by the U.S. Treasury.

As we approach the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment next year—also called the “Susan B. Anthony Amendment”—Americans are rediscovering the history of women's suffrage and the movement and the stories of the women who led it to victory. These stories are a vast part of our Nation's history, but they are not often discussed, which is something that we are seeking to change. It would be a tragedy if the stories of these trailblazers were forgotten by future generations. It is our hope that by passing this important measure—and it is bipartisan—we will help to keep their memories alive.

We often take women's right to vote for granted, as if it were something that was an inevitable outcome in our history. In truth, winning the vote for women was anything but inevitable. It required 72 years—think about that, 72 years—of ceaseless agitation by generations of dedicated, fearless suffragists who fought against centuries of law and millennia of tradition.

I quote Susan B. Anthony: “I declare to you that woman must not depend upon the protection of man, but must be taught to protect herself, and there I take my stand.”

The women's suffrage movement began in July of 1848 with the first women's rights convention that was held in Seneca Falls, NY, which is Senator GILLIBRAND's home State. That fight concluded in August of 1920 in Nashville, TN, which is my home State.

Tennessee was the 36th and final State needed to ratify the 19th Amendment. So we did. In true Tennessee style on that hot August day in downtown Nashville, a 24-year-old freshman State representative named Harry Burn, from McMinn County, TN, changed his vote from no to yes, ensuring the amendment's adoption. Why did he change that vote, you may ask. Because his mother—Miss Febb, as she was known—wrote him a letter that reminded him to be a good boy and to vote for the amendment.

As we get ready to celebrate Mother's Day this month, the story of Harry Burn and Miss Febb is a great reminder of how important it is for each and every one of us to heed our mothers' advice. Mothers are always right.

Consider how remarkable it is that the 19th Amendment was not ratified until 132 years after the ratification of the U.S. Constitution in 1788—132 years. The 19th Amendment marked the single largest extension of voting rights in American history. Many of the women who led the movement did not live to see their mission accomplished, and many of the women who cast their first votes were not born when that movement began. As the first female Senator from Tennessee, I feel it is my duty to honor the life and the legacy of those brave suffragists.

I am so pleased to have worked with Senator GILLIBRAND on this truly bipartisan celebration of a milestone in our Nation's history. It is cause for further celebration that we are able to introduce this legislation in a Chamber where, for the first time in U.S. history, one-fourth of its Members are female. I am also delighted to report that our legislation has the support of all 25 female Senators.

As we approach the centennial, it is our hope that this commemoration will increase public awareness and appreciation for the history of the women's suffrage movement. Honoring women who exemplify patriotism is an excellent example of what Washington can achieve when both sides come together and remember the maxim that there is more that unites us than divides us.