

Real Estate Roundtable. It has the support from efficiency advocates and the environmental community, like the Alliance to Save Energy, the ACEEE, NRDC, and the BlueGreen Alliance.

There is not a lot in Washington, DC, these days that has that broad group of stakeholders—strange bedfellows, you might say—but this bill does because what we do here makes sense. It doesn't take a heavy-handed government approach, but it takes an incentive-based approach, not mandated but providing the information so States, localities, and communities can make their own decision and can help to ensure that the best practices out there in energy efficiency are known, and where people want to use it, they can use it.

If my colleagues are serious about both protecting the environment and growing the economy and increasing jobs, I believe this is the right legislation for them and that the voluntary business code language in the energy bill has to be included.

So I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to help us with regard to an amendment we plan to offer later in this process to ensure that we do have the ability to both create jobs, improve the economy, and improve the environment.

I yield the floor.

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. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in 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 MAJOR GENERAL WILSON A. SHOFFNER

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I rise today to honor MG Wilson A. Shoffner, commanding general of the U.S. Army Fires Center of Excellence and Fort Sill, OK. Major General Shoffner is one of our Nation's finest military officers. Major General Shoffner will relinquish command and conduct his retirement ceremony on 6 March 2020, bringing to a close 32 years of distinguished service to our great Nation.

In 1988, Major General Shoffner commissioned as a second lieutenant of field artillery upon graduation from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. He commanded units at every echelon, from platoon to the Fires Center of Excellence, with duty in Saudi Arabia, Germany, Iraq, Afghanistan,

and the United States. As a young officer, Major General Shoffner deployed with the 1st Cavalry Division in support of OPERATION DESERT STORM. Major General Shoffner commanded 2nd Battalion, 319th Field Artillery Regiment of the 82nd Airborne Division during OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM. Later, he served as deputy chief of staff, communications, Resolute Support Mission, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, during OPERATION FREEDOM'S SENTINEL in Afghanistan.

As a general officer, Major General Shoffner served as the deputy chief of staff, G-3/5/7, for the Army's Training and Doctrine Command. He served as the director of the Army's Talent Management Task Force under the Army G1 and then as the director of operations for Rapid Equipment Fielding under the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army, Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology. Major General Shoffner's career culminated as the commanding general of the United States Army's Fires Center of Excellence and Fort Sill, where he helped forge the future of the Army's Field Artillery and Air Defense Artillery branches.

Major General Shoffner is an exceptional leader, an American patriot committed to our Armed Forces, our National Security, and our Nation, but most importantly, Major General Shoffner is a great man of character. It is for MG Al Shoffner, a soldier, leader, and selfless servant, whom we, with profound admiration and deep respect, pay tribute to for all he has done for the defense of our Nation for over three decades.

We thank Major General Shoffner, his wife Carron, and their daughter, Kristin, for their dedication and sacrifice, and we wish them well in the years to come.

REFORMING EDUCATION THE AMERICAN WAY: STATE BY STATE, COMMUNITY BY COMMUNITY

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, last week Templeton Press published an important new book, "How to Educate an American: The Conservative Vision for Tomorrow's Schools," edited by the Fordham Institute's Michael J. Petrilli and Chester E. Finn, Jr., and published by Templeton Press. I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the preface I wrote for the book.

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

REFORMING EDUCATION THE AMERICAN WAY: STATE BY STATE, COMMUNITY BY COMMUNITY

I was participating in a humdrum educators' roundtable in Buffalo, New York, in 1988 when "Monk" Malloy, president of the University of Notre Dame, asked this question: "What is the purpose of a public school?"

There was a long silence until finally Albert Shanker, president of the American

Federation of Teachers, proposed this answer: "The public school was created for the purpose of teaching immigrant children reading, writing, and arithmetic and what it means to be an American with the hope that they would then go home and teach their parents." The reason to read this book is to judge for yourself whether the twenty-two conservative luminaries who wrote its chapters have produced a better answer today to Malloy's question than Albert Shanker did thirty years ago.

Shanker was a patriot—an old-fashioned, anticommunist, Hubert Humphrey—liberal Democrat union organizer whose parents had immigrated from Poland. So he and this book's conservative writers agreed on one thing: In coeditor Chester Finn's words, "Schools should inculcate a solid understanding of and appreciation for why America exists and what it stands for, to transmit history and civics and, yes, a positive attitude toward its strengths as well as a reasoned commitment to addressing its weakness." Or, in Shanker's words, "Public schools played a big role in holding our nation together. They brought together children of different races, languages, religions, and cultures and gave them a common language and a sense of common purpose. We have not outgrown our need for this; far from it."

Today, there is elite disdain for such Americanism. But this is not a popular attitude. Most audiences applaud and some come to their feet when I say, "We should teach more United States history in our schools so our children can grow up knowing what it means to be an American." There is bipartisan support for this sentiment. After September 11, 2001, George W. Bush and Al Gore both reminded the nation that principles create the American character—not considerations of race, religion, or national origin. In my first address to the US Senate, I introduced a bill to create summer academies for outstanding students and teachers of U.S. history. Within a day, Senator Ted Kennedy had rounded up nearly twenty Democratic cosponsors without my asking. Especially in today's internet democracy, an era Peggy Noonan calls "The Great Estrangement," Americans are hungry for institutions that unite. I suspect that most would agree that it would be a good idea to begin each school day with a student leading the Pledge of Allegiance and then giving his or her version of what it means to be an American.

According to education historian Patricia Graham, "Schools in America have danced to different drummers through their long history"—and schools have a very long history. Hunter-gatherer "play schools" helped children learn to survive. Sumerian schools taught scribes to help a culture survive. During the Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions, schools taught youngsters to work and got them out from under their parents' feet. Sociologist James Coleman said that in early America, schools helped parents do what parents could not do as well. That was especially true for teaching literacy. Graham says, "Now the drumbeat demands that all children achieve academically at a high level and the measure of that achievement is tests."

This book's conservative writers would temper that drumbeat with a second great conservative goal—in the coeditors' words, "to restore character, virtue, and morality to the head of the education table where they belong." This is no new thought. Plato said schools should create good men who act nobly. Thomas Jefferson believed that a democracy granting broad liberties needed institutions instilling moral restraint. But Yuval Levin's essay suggests why character education does not rise so easily on a liberal

list of priorities: progressive education wants to liberate the student to be himself or herself, Levin writes, while conservative education wants to form the student to be better suited to the responsibilities of citizenship.

After embracing citizenship and character, the book's authors diverge in their emphases. Several show a healthy respect for school choice but also for its limits. There is a shout-out for career and technical education. To me, Bill Bennett's chapter is the most persuasive. He argues that content must be at the center of any conservative consensus on education. He reminds us that in the 1980s and 1990s, conservatives were leading a content crusade with E.D. Hirsch and Governors John Engler, Tommy Thompson, and Jeb Bush as well as Bennett himself as chief architects. This movement was called (shall we whisper it?) "Common Core." This state-by-state reformation of school standards and curricula was well underway when the Obama administration tried to push it faster by making Common Core a quasi-federal mandate. Republicans imagined black helicopters flying. What conservatives had invented, many Republican legislators had voted into state law, and hundreds of thousands of classroom teachers in forty-five states expected they'd be teaching was suddenly condemned and abandoned . . . by conservatives.

This abandonment was less complete than it would appear. Last year, our daughter's family lived with us in Tennessee while her home was being remodeled. She placed two sons in a nearby mountain elementary school. When the boys returned home to their Westchester County, New York, public school, I asked, "Did they have trouble adjusting?" "Nope," she said. "Common Core here. Common Core there." Many states simply renamed Common Core to avoid political flak and charged ahead. One advocate told me, "We won. But we're not allowed to say so." The backlash to Common Core brings me to the most obvious mission missing from this volume's conservative agenda: local control of schools. America was created community by community. The initiative for American public schools was entirely at the local level, Marc Tucker has written. He termed this an "accident of localism."

I have spent much of my public life trying to preserve this localism. To begin with, federalism—the dispersal of central authority—is a crucial tenet of American liberty. Our revolution, after all was mostly about distaste for a king. As a practical matter, my experience is that those governing education from a distance have good intentions but limited capacity and that schools can be only as good as parents, teachers, and citizens in a community want them to be. The saga of Common Core is the greatest proof of this pudding. Here was a conservative crusade—new rigor in what students needed to know—blown up by conservatives' fear that Washington D.C., was forcing them to do it. The Common Core federal directive was piled on top of other dictates from Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama on how to define standards, teaching, tests, curricula, and remedies for low-performing schools. Almost everyone in public schools became sick of Washington telling them what to do. So, in 2015, teacher unions and governors united to help Congress enact the "Every Student Succeeds Act," which the Wall Street Journal said was "the largest devolution of federal control to the states in a quarter century."

Now, after the rise and fall of a national school board, our one hundred thousand public schools have about the same balance between federal leadership and state and local autonomy that existed during the George H.

W. Bush administration. Once again, we have it about right. Thirty years ago, President Bush and the governors set the nation's first national education goals and then launched an "America 2000" initiative to help states meet those goals by creating voluntary standards, voluntary tests, and start-from-scratch schools. This was done the hard way, state by state and community by community—not by federal mandates. Today's environment is ripe for a revival of a content-based conservative consensus, or in Bill Bennett's words "a great relearning," as the best way for our public schools to help our country get where we want it to go. But this time, let's avoid the lure of federal mandates and do the job the American Way: state by state, community by community.

TRIBUTE TO ROBERT S. FRASER

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I rise to celebrate Robert S. Fraser's retirement from the Federal Government after 50 years of faithful service to our country.

Mr. Fraser traveled for over 40 years with the U.S. Air Force, both as a dependent and serving on active duty. He attended the U.S. Air Force Academy, where he graduated in 1973 and received the Outstanding Cadet in Engineering Sciences. In 1993, he retired as a major in the U.S. Air Force and began a distinguished career at the National Security Agency, where he received multiple achievements and awards. Throughout his career, Mr. Fraser has had a selfless dedication to duty and professionalism.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

REMEMBERING DR.

PARTHASARATHY VASUDEVAN

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of Dr. Parthasarathy Vasudevan, who passed away on December 31, 2019. Dr. Vasu's 40 years of civic and medical leadership in Phillips County were incredibly transformative for the Arkansas Delta, and his efforts reveal a relentless quest to improve the quality of life for those around him.

Dr. Vasu was a physician specializing in Urology in Helena, AR, with demand for his services extending beyond Phillips County. His career reflected 62 years of diverse experience spanning India, Boston, and the Natural State. Dr. Vasu grew up in India where he received his medical degree in 1958 and met his wife, Kanaka Rajgopal. She accompanied him to the United States in 1973 for Dr. Vasu's residency at the New England Medical Center in Boston, and upon his completion in 1978, the two embarked on their final move, to Arkansas.

Dr. Vasu's medical impact was widespread and included philanthropic leadership in addition to his urology practice. He served as executive director of the Helena Health Foundation, a nonprofit organization with a mission to improve the quality of life and healthcare offered in Phillips County through grant funding. During his time

in this role, Dr. Vasu was instrumental in developing the Delta Area Health Education Center in Helena, which became the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences East Regional Campus in 2013. The foundation honored Dr. Vasu's sponsorship with a \$4 million Wellness Center in his name.

Dr. Vasu's extensive knowledge, dedicated service, and passionate nature were qualities not only recognized by his patients, but also by the civic institutions in which he participated. Organizations he was active in were the Helena Rotary Club, as well as the Phillips County Chamber of Commerce, among others. In recognition of his philanthropic involvement, Dr. Vasu was awarded the Paul Harris Fellowship recognition by the Rotary Foundation and the Channel 4 Community Service Award. Phillips County also designated August 25, 2004, as "Dr. P. Vasudevan Day."

Dr. Vasu was a tremendous asset to the Phillips County region, as well as the State of Arkansas. He was not just a doctor, but he was a mentor and a friend who loved politics and the Arkansas Razorbacks. His devoted heart and helping hand touched the lives of many, and his deeply respected legacy will transcend time. I extend my heartfelt condolences to Dr. Vasu's loved ones, his patients, and Phillips County citizens. We pray his remarkable example inspires many future Arkansas leaders.●

RECOGNIZING THE ALEXANDER ROBOTICS TEAM

• Mr. CRAMER. Mr. President, the students on the robotics team in the small northwestern North Dakota town of Alexander set a goal at the beginning of this school year to win their State competition. Their determination and hard work paid off in February, and now the Alexander High School FIRST Tech Challenge Team #9963 team is preparing to represent North Dakota in the world championship competition.

FIRST is the acronym for the For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology organization, which plans the annual competitions between schools. There, the students build and program robots to perform challenging tasks and then compete with other teams.

Robotics competition is growing in popularity in schools because it provides an ideal opportunity for young people to apply their knowledge of STEM subjects. It also teaches valuable life skills like communication, creativity, and collaboration and opens up countless doors of opportunity for the future.

While new to some schools, the Alexander students have participated in the North Dakota championship competition for the past 5 years. Each year, they have brought home a trophy from one of the categories. For this year's competition, these future engineers built and programmed a robot they