

benefits paid during the year. Imagine further that the Social Security Administration spends about a half a percentage point of those trillion dollars to administer all of those benefits. Our dedicated Federal civil servants are the best in the world, but individual Americans still at times fall through the cracks due to their unique circumstances and are unable to get what they need. Frustration and disillusionment can follow, and this is corrosive to faith in government and ultimately to democracy itself.

Combating these feelings of disempowerment was the challenge and mission of the casework staff in my Vermont offices. They were not able to solve every problem put in front of them, but they always did their best. For 48 years, they talked with any constituent who called my office with an issue regarding a Federal agency, regardless of wealth, power, or political affiliation. They helped Vermonters resolve immigration issues, get their passports, process their Social Security Disability Insurance applications, get needed care from the Veteran's Administration. When they spotted systemic failures, they worked with my staff in Washington to write legislation in order to make things work better in the future.

My staff and I helped constituents with issues writ large and small because what seems trivial to one person can be incredibly important to another. Hearing from Vermonters every day helped me do a better job in Washington. Just as importantly, my staff always let Vermonters know that they mattered.

#### COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, throughout my time in the Senate, I have been proud to champion policies and programs that encourage community and economic development. The two go hand-in-hand. Vibrant communities attract investment and economic success supports community life.

Our sense of community and our pride in our communities defines Vermont. As a Vermonter, I have supported programs that invest in the physical infrastructure our communities need to thrive—from water and wastewater systems, roads, bridges and sidewalks, to the clean-up of brownfields.

Burlington's Church Street Marketplace is a model nationwide for how to build a lively, attractive downtown that will attract visitors while also serving local residents. I was proud to secure funding for its creation.

But the ties and connections which create community do not come just from buildings and sidewalks. They come from a shared history and the knowledge that we have a shared future. That is one of the things I learned from my dear friend, the late Paul Bruhn, for whom the Paul Bruhn His-

toric Revitalization Program is named. The program is used across the country to not simply preserve historic buildings, but to give them new life as housing, business incubators, or community centers which preserve our history as we build our future.

Community development block grants and the HOME program are also used throughout the country to build needed housing, which we know touches on nearly every challenge we face from workforce development to substance use. That is why when the previous administration wanted to cut funding for these programs, I fought to retain that funding.

Roughly half of all Americans work for a small business, which is why I had also strongly advocated for the Small Business Administration and defended it whenever an administration decided, wrongly, that it should be cut. It is also why I pushed for funding for the Small Business Development Centers to provide free technical assistance to small businesses and help them attract capital.

In Vermont, I secured funding for the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund and the Vermont Center for Emerging Technologies to provide needed capital for new businesses. I also supported innovative job training centers such as the Advanced Manufacturing Center at Vermont Technical College and the Burlington's Aviation Technical Center to be sure these new businesses have the skilled workers they need to succeed.

I have always been a proud champion and advocate for Vermont's State-run and privately run airport. For decades, the Burlington International Airport has served as Vermont's window to the world and an essential economic engine that the broader economic development community across the State depends on.

I also brought Federal funds to build and strengthen the infrastructure that connects Vermont's businesses and communities to the rest of the world such as airports, rail lines, and the ports of entry along the border we share with Quebec.

One of the reasons people come to Vermont to visit or to live is the State's physical beauty. Whether you prefer to walk through a historic village green or to ski down a mountain, Vermont offers the chance to get outside and enjoy beautiful weather.

I used Vermont's town forests as a model for the Community Forest and Open Space Program, which protects open spaces while creating places across the country for people to walk, hunt, and cycle right in their community. I sought to protect and expand Vermont's fisheries, trails, and forests because public spaces are integral to our individual and collective well-being while also supporting economic development.

When it comes to building strong communities and strong economies, there isn't a silver bullet. Instead,

there are a great many pieces, each of which varies slightly from place to place. I am proud to have helped towns and cities in Vermont and across the country and the businesses located there get what they needed from their government to improve the lives of their residents.

#### LAKE CHAMPLAIN

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, thank you for the opportunity to say a few words about why protecting and restoring Lake Champlain has been so important to me throughout my years in the U.S. Senate.

Lake Champlain, shared by Vermont, New York, and Quebec is a gem. It is one of the largest and cleanest lakes in the United States, ringed by the Adirondack Mountains on the west and the Green Mountains on the east. Marcelle and I visited Lake Champlain together before we were married and have returned there often to walk her shores, swim, and scuba dive. The lake is at the center of the culture and economy for much of Vermont.

I took office just 2 years after the 1972 passage of the Clean Water Act, and Lake Champlain was in decline. Sea lamprey were devastating the fishery of the lake, municipal waste water was barely treated before discharge, and we were just beginning to understand the problems caused by stormwater runoff. I immediately began working on funding for Lake Champlain cleanup and am proud that at least \$360 million has been directed through annual appropriations to protect the lake as the result of my efforts. My leadership of the Senate Appropriations Committee has helped in this work, with about \$50 million in FY2022 funding going for Lake Champlain.

I leave office secure in the knowledge that although I will no longer be directing Federal funds, I have been able to authorize several programs that are now well established and will continue the work to protect the waters and wildlife of Lake Champlain and support the communities which line its shores for years to come. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Lake Champlain Sea Grant Program became possible when I arranged for Champlain to be declared a Great Lake. While the declaration was brief, the Sea Grant Program is now well established, funded at more than \$1 million each year and has made a tremendous difference for a multitude of Lake Champlain programs.

I led legislation in 1991 and reauthorizing bills in 2002 and 2022 to establish and grow the EPA Lake Champlain Basin Program. The LCBP brings together Vermont, New York, Quebec, and all relevant Federal Agencies, with a budget in FY23 of \$33 million to lead the protection and restoration of Lake Champlain. And I am so proud that the FY23 omnibus includes the \$35 million reauthorization of the LCBP for the next 5 years.

I was able to help address the sea lamprey problem in Lake Champlain by bringing NOAA and Great Lakes Fishery Commission funding to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to implement sea lamprey control. The program is an unmitigated success, with sea lamprey control goals being met and more importantly, with a spectacular rebound in the number, size, and health of salmon, lake trout, and other large fish species. Over the past decade, I have brought the funds needed to build the GLFC Lake Champlain program to \$10 million each year, supporting research, education, and implementation work in New York and Vermont.

The U.S. Army Corps Lake Champlain Ecosystem Restoration Program, more commonly known as the 542 program, was put in place at my request in legislation in 2000. That program has been reauthorized with expanded funding authorization this year and should continue to benefit the lake for many years to come.

My exploration of Lake Champlain shipwrecks as a diver sparked an interest in the history and heritage of the Champlain basin that led to my co-sponsoring the bill that created the Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership in 2006. That program continues to provide funding and technical support through the National Park Service around cultural heritage in Vermont and New York.

I also supported the construction of the new UVM research vessel which I was proud to see named for Marcelle. The boat will begin service in 2023 and is sure to carry generations of students and lake researchers across the water for years to come. The Patrick and Marcelle Leahy Center for Lake Champlain is also in an excellent position to educate students of all ages, from 2 to 92 years old, about science and Lake Champlain.

In conclusion, I am pleased to have been able to bring Federal support to the restoration and protection of Lake Champlain throughout my career and even more proud that measures I have helped put in place should keep multiple Lake Champlain programs operating for many years after I return to Vermont to live near the shore of this Great Lake.

#### RECOGNIZING THE EAST ST. LOUIS FLYERS' 2022 FOOTBALL TEAM

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, on November 26, the East St. Louis Flyers—Illinois' winningest high school football program—defeated the Prairie Ridge Wolves 57–7. By handing Prairie Ridge their first loss of the season, the East St. Louis Flyers took home the Illinois High School Association's Class 6A Championship, the school's 10th State football title.

As an Assumption High School Pioneer and native son of East St. Louis, I went to school just a few minutes down the road from East St. Louis Sen-

ior High School—or East Side as we called it. Even back then, East Side was a dominant force in high school athletics. So much so that in 1960, when the Assumption Pioneers managed to pull off an upset win against the East Side Flyers at Parsons Field, our entire school was given the day off to celebrate. While Assumption High School closed in 1989, East St. Louis Senior High has fought on and is now the last remaining high school in my hometown, serving about 1,500 students. Over the years, they have continued to excel in athletics, enjoying success thanks to coaching legend Bob Shannon, who led the Flyers to six Illinois State championships and two national championships during his time as head coach.

East St. Louis is a city that has fallen on hard times, a story all too common in this Nation. What used to be an economic powerhouse on the Mighty Mississippi with flourishing meatpacking, rail, and manufacturing industries, the City of Champions now struggles with frequent flooding, limited economic opportunity, a shrinking tax base, and bouts of high crime. Yet despite these challenges, the Flyers of East St. Louis Senior High were able to persevere and fly on to win their 10th State football championship.

After falling to the Cary-Grove Trojans by one point in the 2021 Class 6A Championship game, there was no guarantee that the Flyers would make it back to the State championship. The Flyers had a rough start to the 2022 season, losing two of their first three games after dropping contests to St. Frances Academy from Baltimore, MD, and a road game against the Creekside Seminoles of Fairburn, GA. A testament to the team's resilience, the Flyers would go on an 11-win tear, which included 6 shutouts thanks to the Flyers' stout defense. In the 4th game of that 11-game winning streak—an 80–0 win over the Alton Redbirds—Flyers' Head Coach Darren Sunkett notched his 200th career win. This milestone caught the attention of a coaching legend, none other than the University of Alabama's Nick Saban, who reached out to congratulate Coach Sunkett. After such a dominant victory, you might expect the team would celebrate and rest on their laurels. Instead, after one of the week's grueling 3-hour practices, Coach Sunkett made his team run sprints due to poor coverage on one of the kick-offs. It was back to hard work.

Despite his demand for excellence and attention to detail, Coach Sunkett knows that success on the field is not all that matters. He wants his players to be well-rounded and has designed a program to help his players succeed on and off the field. Having grown up with little chance to explore outside his hometown of Camden, NJ, Coach Sunkett makes every effort that his players experience life outside of the 89 blocks of East St. Louis, often taking his team on the road to test themselves against the Nation's best teams.

Football is much more than touchdowns or tackles, first downs or sacks, or even wins and losses. It is about collective effort, a group of people coming together to achieve something more than what they could achieve on their own. For many of the young men of the East St. Louis Flyers football team, football represents opportunity. An opportunity to make a better life for themselves and their families, get a quality education from one of the Nation's leading universities, and get a degree that will open up many more opportunities. What these young men have been able to do this season, despite the odds being stacked against them, is nothing short of remarkable.

To the players: whether you suit up and play at a top-tier collegiate program next fall or you never play another down of football, remember: You will always be champions. Congratulations on bringing the 2022 Illinois High School Association's Class 6A Championship home to East St. Louis.

#### TRIBUTE TO JAMES M. INHOFE

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I rise to pay tribute to our colleague and friend, Senator JAMES INHOFE. There are few Senators more conservative than Senator INHOFE. And yet he is always working across the aisle, collegially, on issues where he can find bipartisan agreement. I have enjoyed working with him on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. We disagree on most of the "Environment" portion of the committee's jurisdiction, but we certainly agree on the "Public Works" portion. Because of his leadership, EPW is "the committee that gets things done," as he likes to put it.

Senator INHOFE served in the U.S. Army from 1957 to 1958. He served in the Oklahoma State Legislature for 10 years, including 4 as senate minority leader. He was elected mayor of Tulsa three times. He won election to the U.S. House of Representatives four times. And he won election to the Senate six times. He has served as chair and ranking member of the Environment and Public Works Committee and the Armed Services Committee.

Senator INHOFE has had a long career in public service, but he also worked in the insurance industry, real estate development, and one of his greatest passions, aviation. Senator INHOFE is a pilot, with over 11,000 flight hours. I believe he is the only Member of Congress to pilot his own plane—a twin-engine Cessna—around the world, something he did in 16 days in 1991, recreating Wiley Post's historic 1931 journey. He is one of general aviation's most dedicated advocates and a member of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association, AOPA.

If you want an example of grace under pressure, in 1999, Senator INHOFE lost the propeller off his Grumman Tiger May 8 but made a successful emergency landing at Claremore, OK.