

and third grade teacher. Since first graduating from Georgia Southern University with her bachelor's degree in early childhood education, Ms. Carter has dedicated her life to teaching and sharing her passion for reading with her students.

Earlier this year, my team visited Waynesboro Primary School and met Ms. Carter, whose positive attitude, passion for teaching, and motivation to help young people thrive were clear.

As Georgia's U.S. Senator, it is my honor to recognize Mandy Carter for her unwavering commitment to Georgia's children and her two decades of teaching. •

#### TRIBUTE TO DR. DANIEL SIMMONS

• Mr. OSSOFF. Madam President, I rise to honor and commend a pastor and a public servant who is a pillar of the Albany, GA, community. Dr. Daniel Simmons accepted the call to serve as pastor of Mount Zion Baptist Church in Albany, GA, in 1991. Under his and First Lady Diane's leadership, Mount Zion has seen significant growth and has contributed to the community's success.

Pastor Simmons has championed efforts to give back to the community, hosting food drives for the hungry, donating supplies to special needs classrooms and senior homes, paying off mortgages, and more. Pastor Simmons is no stranger to Albany, earning his bachelor's degree from Albany State University before earning his master's from the University of Georgia and his doctorate of ministry from Bethany Theological Seminary in Dothan, AL.

As Georgia's U.S. Senator, it is my honor to commend Pastor Dr. Daniel Simmons for his lifetime of service and more than 30 years leading Mount Zion Baptist Church. •

#### RECOGNIZING COTTINGHAM HARDWARE

• Mr. PAUL. Madam President, as ranking member of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, each week I recognize an outstanding Kentucky small business that exemplifies the American entrepreneurial spirit. This week, it is my privilege to recognize Cottingham Hardware of Alexandria, KY, as the Senate Small Business of the Week.

All across the Nation are American small towns whose Main Street businesses bring color and vibrancy to their community. These businesses might be stores that occupy a specific niche or may be the product of one entrepreneur's dreams turned reality. Many of these businesses however, are simply shops that the community has come to rely on, with a top-quality product or service that keeps their customers coming back. Such is the case for Alexandria's Cottingham Hardware, also referred to as Cottingham Ace, that was founded in 1957. This hardware store has been faithfully serving its

customers for 65 years, easily cementing the business as community institution.

Sixty-five years ago, Tom and Betty Cottingham opened Cottingham Hardware, a hardware store right in the heart of the little town of Alexandria, KY. Since its' inception over six decades ago, the store has been dutifully serving its customers, offering them whatever hardware goods they might need, including but not limited to, specialty chrome, electrical lighting, as well as lawn and garden tools. The store also carries a large selection of firearms and ammunition, making the shop especially popular during northern Kentucky's busy hunting season. In addition to the wide array of products available for purchase at Cottingham, the store has two mechanics who are always available to meet the needs of customers, with both mechanics having received the proper training and certification to handle practically any job. They boast a selection that is appropriate for all types of customers, whether they be a first-time homeowner or the owner of multi-acre properties; they have the products and services to help with any project.

Started by a married couple, Cottingham Hardware continues to be a family business. Tom and Betty's three sons practically grew up in the store, so it would only make sense that the three men choose to perpetuate their parents' dream and run the store with the same dedication and customer-friendly atmosphere that Tom and Betty created. The three sons, Tom, Mike, and Joe, took over the business in the mid 90s, roughly a decade after Cottingham Hardware moved from their original location right in Alexandria out to U.S. Highway 27. The three brothers led the business through a vast array of modernizations, opting for computerized systems in place of the original manual inventory and registry systems. Today, Cottingham Hardware can easily locate a necessary piece of machinery as it travels along the supply chain before arriving at their store. The Cottingham men understood that to lead their parents' business into the modern era requires these types of technological advancements, and they make sure Cottingham Hardware stays on the cutting edge of modern computer equipment.

In addition to their eye for key modernizations to the hardware store, the Cottingham brothers understand that their parents' success was due in large part to their dedication to family values. Tom, Mike, and Joe maintain a strict policy that at least one of the Cottingham brothers is in store at any given time during business hours, all 7 days a week. Friends and neighbors are constantly coming through their doors to purchase tools or equipment and to visit with the familiar faces of the Cottingham store. These days, even the brothers' children occasionally work with them in store, entering in to a new generation of Cottingham family

leadership. Moreover, Cottingham Hardware maintains their dedication to the Alexandria community, as they often participate in donations for local schools and churches. Additionally, Joe Cottingham is a member of the Northern Kentucky Area Development District—NKADD—representing Campbell County. NKADD strives to achieve sustainable economic growth and improve the overall quality of life for the citizens of Kentucky. Clearly the Cottingham family is dedicated not only to running a successful family business, but to championing and supporting small businesses around the State as well. For that reason, it gives me great pleasure to honor this multi-generation family business as the Senate Small Business of the Week.

Congratulations to the Cottingham brothers and the entire team at Cottingham Hardware. I look forward to seeing your continued growth and success in Kentucky. •

#### TRIBUTE TO JIM CONDOS

• Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, I rise today to honor Jim Condos of South Burlington and Montpelier, VT. Jim is retiring as Vermont Secretary of State after more than 35 years in public service.

A lifelong Vermonter, Jim has served his community at multiple levels of government. After 18 years as a South Burlington city councilor, he went on to represent Chittenden County in the Vermont State Senate. In 2010, Jim was elected secretary of state, a position that he has held for the past 12 years. During his tenure, Jim has been recognized as an expert on election administration and has served in such roles as president of the National Association of Secretaries of State, a member of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission Board of Advisors, an executive board member for the Council of State Government, and the national cochair of the Overseas Voting Initiative for Military Personnel and Overseas Citizens. Jim has also been called upon by Congress to share his expertise, specifically on voting and election cybersecurity.

Thanks in large part to Jim's leadership, Vermont is widely considered a leader in voter access. At a time when the right to vote is being curtailed in many States, Jim and his team have expanded Vermonters' access to democracy through same-day registration, automatic voter registration, online voter registration, ADA-accessible voting, universal vote-by-mail, and ballot dropboxes. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Jim's office implemented safe voting options so that Vermonters did not need to choose between their health and their right to vote. His pro-voter policies also led to record-shattering voter turnout, for both early and total voting, in the 2022 midterm and 2020 Presidential elections. This work has all been done while ensuring the integrity of elections through election

cybersecurity measures and ballot curing, discrediting arguments that expanding access to the vote enables election fraud. In fact, Vermont has been on the forefront of election security, identifying threats that have ultimately led to the strengthening of systems nationwide.

In addition to defending democracy through sound election administration, Jim has prioritized good government while secretary of state. For example, he and his team oversaw the transition from a paper system to an electronic system, posting more records and information online. While this received fewer headlines than the office's election work, it has been critical to ensuring transparency and public access. Similarly, Jim's work to reduce red tape in the office of professional regulation means that Vermont businesses and professionals are better served, while still protecting the public.

At a time when democracy is under threat and distrust in government is pervasive, Jim has given Vermonters faith and hope for the future. He has shown what accessible elections and good government can and should look like, and for that, he has my sincere gratitude. Vermont is indeed a better place and Vermonters are better off thanks to Secretary of State Jim Condos. I wish Jim and Annie all the best for his well-deserved retirement. •

#### TRIBUTE TO BETH PEARCE

• Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, I rise today to honor Beth Pearce of Barre, VT. Beth is retiring as Vermont State Treasurer after more than 45 years in public service, including nearly two decades serving Vermonters.

Beth was born in West Springfield, MA, and grew up in a civically and politically engaged household. After serving in a variety of government positions throughout the Northeast, Beth became Vermont's deputy State treasurer in 2003. In 2011, she was appointed Vermont State Treasurer and, despite being new to electoral politics, she was elected in her own right in 2012, and was re-elected to four additional terms.

Despite her electoral success, Beth has long considered herself more of a policy person than a politician, something that is evident in her approach in the State treasurer's office. She has taken her role as a public servant seriously and has been a careful steward of public funds. Though this has sometimes put her at the center of challenging issues, Beth's integrity has earned her widespread respect.

As Beth herself has described, her office's work "is not just numbers on spreadsheets, but a reflection of [their] commitment of service to, and respect for, everyone in Vermont." This approach is just one of the things that sets Beth apart. While she has relished the day-to-day work and embraced being described as "breathtakingly boring," Beth has never lost sight of the immense responsibility of the

State treasurer's office to positively impact the lives of everyday Vermonters. Whether by making sure that individuals and towns received the aid they were entitled to following the devastation caused by Tropical Storm Irene, that people with disabilities could save and invest through the VermontABLE program, or that State employees could retire with dignity, Beth has never forgotten that it is people—not numbers—at the center of her work.

To my mind, Beth represents the best of public service. She will long be remembered by all who worked with her for her competence, empathy, humor, and, of course, her unwavering love of the Boston Red Sox. And to all those Vermonters who would not otherwise know the role of the treasurer's office, she will be remembered for her tireless work toward a Vermont where everyone has the opportunity for a lifetime of financial stability and well-being. Vermont is indeed a better place, and Vermonters are better off, thanks to Beth Pearce. I join Beth's friends, family, and fellow Vermonters in wishing her all the best in her well-deserved retirement. •

#### REMEMBERING WILL RAAP

• Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, I rise today to honor the Will Raap, one of Vermont's most visionary leaders, who passed away on December 12.

Will was born in Fremont, CA, and spent time in Findhorn, Scotland, where he met his future wife Lynette. Will and Lynette married in 1977 and, in 1981, moved to Vermont so Will could continue his work with the Garden Way Company and Gardens for All. Two years later, Will cofounded Gardener's Supply Company to enable everyone to experience the benefits that come from gardens and gardening, including people with disabilities, seniors, and beginning gardeners.

From the earliest days of the company, Will's business model was built around the "triple bottom line" of people, planet, and profits. A clear example of his commitment to the people that made up Gardener's Supply happened in these early years, when Will gave himself a pay cut in order to give a valued data entry employee a raise. It was also in these early years of Gardener's Supply that Will began transitioning the company into an employee-ownership structure. This move was rooted in his belief that everyone doing the work should share in the benefit, not just those at the top. Will's investments in his employees, both on the individual level and on the whole, have proven powerful and successful. In 2009, Gardener's Supply reached 100-percent employee ownership, and that young data entry employee, Cindy Turcot, is now president and CEO of Gardener's Supply and has become a national leader of employee ownership.

Never short of energy, ideas, or vision, in 1987 Will brought his passion

for improving community, agriculture, and the environment to an aging dairy farm and an unofficial landfill in the heart of Vermont's largest city of Burlington. As mayor of Burlington at this time, I was glad to work with Will on this important effort. During this time, Will came to us in city government to request a \$7,000 loan to buy a tractor and start a municipal yard and food waste composting project managed by Gardener's Supply employees. To get this much-needed project off the ground, Will and volunteers cleaned up the neglected piece of land and turned it into what is now known as the Intervale Center. Today, the Intervale is national model for urban agriculture, food access, and local food system development and successful partnerships between for-profit and non-profit organizations. It is also a great recreational resource for the Old North End and the entire greater Burlington area. It is home to Vermont's largest community supported agriculture—CSA—farm, a tree nursery, a food hub and distribution center, community gardens, hiking trails, event spaces, and a number of established farm enterprises.

Will was also a driving force behind Vermont's innovative Farm-to Plate initiative, as well as the Vermont Dairy/Water Quality Collaborative. Most recently, Will worked to turn an iconic failed dairy farm in Charlotte, VT, into an entirely new way to think about agriculture in our State. Using the farm's land and facilities, Will created Earthkeep Farmcommon and the Earthkeep Farmers Collective. Today, the former dairy farm is being used by young entrepreneurs to grow and malt grains, raise shrimp, grow berries, make carbonated beverages, and produce baked goods, to name just a few of the businesses in operation there.

Will's lifetime of accomplishments reflected his style of thinking big and his ability to surround himself with teams that were eager to make those big ideas a reality. Will Raap represents the best of Vermont's entrepreneurial spirit. There is no doubt that Will will be remembered as a force for good and a leader whose lasting mark on Vermont will be not about himself, but about all those whose lives have been made better for his vision.

All Vermonters can honor Will's memory by asking his three favorite questions: "What's next?" "How can we make a difference?" and, "Are we doing enough?" Vermont is a better place and Vermonters are better off thanks to Will Raap's many contributions. •

#### TRIBUTE TO JAMES W. RANE

• Mr. SHELBY. Madam President, I am pleased to speak today about the profound impact of Mr. James W. Rane, a fellow Alabamian with many contributions to our great country and my home State of Alabama.

Jimmy has had an impressive career as a renowned businessman. Jimmy is