

the Nutrient Reduction Strategy and early adopter of cover crops to improve water quality, Bill was known to tell farmers, whose livelihoods depend on environmental stewardship, that such programs are voluntary, but “not optional.”

Named an Iowa Master Farmer in 2016, the Iowa farm community has lost a giant. Barbara and I have lost a dear friend. His leadership and friendship will be missed. Iowa farmers will benefit from his work to promote conservation and their work to feed and fuel the world for generations to come. To his beloved wife Cindy, three daughters, grandchildren, extended family, and loved ones, Barbara and I send our prayers and condolences. May Bill's memory heal your hearts and evoke smiles and laughter around the dinner table in the days and years to come.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, last week marked the beginning of Black History Month. And so I come to the floor today to celebrate the important roles Black Americans have played both in my home State of Maryland and in U.S. foreign policy.

Paying homage to our country's rich Black heritage—including learning about the challenges Black Americans have overcome—makes our Nation stronger, both at home and abroad. But in recent years, this history has become increasingly polarized and politicized.

The rise of the “war on woke” has led to a growing hostility toward diversity and inclusivity. It has led to the rewriting and even omitting, of brutal, but significant parts of our Nation's story.

We cannot allow this to overshadow our celebration. We must not shy away from studying our Nation's history with thoughtful critique. We should not settle for sanitized lessons of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Thurgood Marshall, Rosa Parks, and others in America's classrooms—because Black History Month, like many of our cultural heritage months, should be a time to illuminate stories that may otherwise get lost. Overlooking such stories, especially in a State like Maryland, a place rich with Black history, would be a travesty—Maryland, the site of Kunta Kinte's arrival at the docks in Annapolis, as told in Alex Haley's “Roots”; Maryland, home to greats like Harriet Tubman and Thurgood Marshall; Maryland, where Black watermen have lived on the Eastern Shore for generations.

This week, I had the privilege of meeting with Black watermen and their families, families who were some of the original stewards of the Chesapeake Bay. They were boat captains and admirals, fishermen and entrepreneurs, oyster shuckers and crab pickers. They laid the foundation for the aquaculture and maritime industry that is so heavily stitched in the fabric

of Maryland's culture. They were descendants of William Samuel Turner whose family owned and operated seafood processing enterprises that anchored Bellevue, a historic African-American neighborhood on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

Frederick Jewett, one of the first in the Chesapeake Bay to sell crabs and crabmeat and developed the crabmeat grading system that we still use today; Capt. Eldridge Meredith, Sr., a waterman and entrepreneur who was honored as the 101st Admiral of the Chesapeake Bay, and Downes Curtis, one of the country's few Black sailmakers who was renowned for his skillful craftsmanship.

They were descendants of the often-overlooked Black women, like Hazel Cropper, also known as “Hurricane Hazel,” who worked in the packing houses picking crabs, women who became the backbone of Maryland's crab meat industry.

These Black Marylanders left a legacy of progress and success, but their stories also echo a system of inequality that exists today. Many of Maryland's Black watermen were redlined. They couldn't get loans. They weren't paid fairly. And they lacked access to capital to keep their businesses afloat when they suffered economic hardship.

Maryland's congressional delegation has made Federal investments in historic preservation to ensure that Maryland's Black history is told because it has laid the foundation for Wes Moore, Maryland's first Black Governor; Adrienne Jones, Maryland's first Black speaker of the house of delegates; Anthony Brown, Maryland's first Black attorney general; Dereck Davis, Maryland's first Black State treasurer; and Brandon Scott, Baltimore's youngest Black mayor.

Of course, Black leaders have not only contributed to Maryland, but to our Nation, like Vice President KAMALA HARRIS, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Marcia Fudge, EPA Administrator Michael Regan, and OMB Director Shalanda Young. And now, we are proud to have our first Black woman on the Supreme Court, Justice Kentaji Brown Jackson and Black leaders have contributed around the world. And so, as chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I also want to take a moment to highlight the incredible contributions of Black Americans in U.S. foreign policy.

Ebenezer Bassett, the first Black diplomat who served as Ambassador to Haiti from 1869 to 1877; Nobel Laureate Dr. Ralph Bunche, who mediated the 1949 Egyptian-Israeli Armistice Agreement and fought for African independence; Ambassador Edward Perkins and Dr. Richard Hope, founders of the Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellowship; Valerie Dickson-Horton, one of the first Black women to serve as a USAID Mission Director and Assistant Administrator; Peace Corps Di-

rector Aaron Williams; and Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the U.S. Ambassador to the UN. These are pioneers and visionaries who have advanced our national security.

The truth is that America's diverse talent pool is one of the most valuable assets we have on the global stage. And yet, in the last 20 years, the number of Black employees at the State Department has decreased. It is why the Department, USAID, DFC, Peace Corps, and all of our international affairs Agencies must expand their diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. And, following the tremendous efforts of Ambassador Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley, I am awaiting the announcement of the State Department's new chief diversity officer.

Hard-won progress made thanks to the Rangel, Pickering, and Payne programs alongside paid internship programs must continue. Exchange programs and research partnerships with historically Black colleges and universities must grow. With four HBCUs in my State, I can personally attest to the brilliance and talent these institutions contribute to our Nation's global food, health, climate, economic, and other efforts which bolster national security.

With the appointment of Desiree Cormier Smith as our Nation's first Special Representative for Racial Equity and Justice, our Nation has also increased its efforts abroad. From the North American Partnership for Equity and Racial Justice Declaration to the UN International Decade for People of African Descent, our country is playing an important role in protecting the rights and recognizing the contributions of African descendants across the globe.

At the Foreign Relations Committee, we now have our first director of diversity, equity, and inclusion—Dr. Mischa Thompson—to help advance these efforts in the Senate, our international Agencies, and across the globe. But we must all join this effort.

And so, as we celebrate Black History Month, let us all recommit to fighting to overcome prejudice and oppression. Let us never give up hope that with determination and commitment, we can build the world Dr. King dreamed of—a fair world, a just world, a better world. We can do it as long as we remember what Ralph Bunche's said, that “anything less than full equality is not enough.”

TRIBUTE TO CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE JOANNE S. BASS

Mr. BOOZMAN. Madam President, I rise to recognize and congratulate Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force JoAnne S. Bass on her upcoming retirement from the U.S. Air Force after 31 years of distinguished military service to our great Nation.

As the 19th Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, Chief Bass's unflagging

leadership, relentless initiative, and trailblazing achievements as the highest ranking enlisted member of the U.S. Air Force from August 2020 to March 2024 were vital in leading and developing 689,000 airmen. She used her unique perspective as an enlisted leader to guide and shape the Air Force during the unprecedented coronavirus pandemic, the end of combat operations in Afghanistan, and through one of the most evolving and challenging strategic environments in modern history.

As the senior enlisted adviser to the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Chief Bass provided sound advice, perspective, and assistance on matters pertaining to enterprise management, enlisted heritage, force development, servicemember pay and compensation, and future force design. Through her expertise and collaborative efforts with her sister-service senior enlisted advisers, she ensured our Nation's land, sea, air, and space forces will continue to provide unmatched military capability to deter, dissuade, and defeat our enemies.

Additionally, she directly influenced joint, interagency, and coalition teams to redesign and modernize air, space, and cyberspace organizations, resources, and training efforts with a renewed emphasis on enlisted empowerment.

Chief Bass focused airmen on competition and innovation, accelerating the service's necessary transition into the Air Force of tomorrow. Through her reimagining of Air Force foundational documents, creation of the enlisted force development blueprint, and delivery of the first-ever service manual of the joint team called "The Purple Book," she revolutionized the recruiting, development and retention of the greatest talent our Nation has to offer: our people. Her legacy will be forever etched into the history of the Air Force as a changemaker during an incredibly consequential time for our country.

I spent time with Chief Bass during our visit to Little Rock Air Force Base in Arkansas and at several Capitol Hill engagements as she encouraged congressional support to strengthen military readiness and achieve Air Force priorities. Airmen can be proud of her leadership and advocacy to ensure the United States maintains air superiority in this era of great power competition.

On behalf of the U.S. Senate, the Senate Air Force Caucus, and a grateful nation, I extend my deepest appreciation to Chief Bass and her family for their many years of exemplary military service and sacrifice. I wish her nothing but the very best as she begins a new chapter.

TRIBUTE TO JOE ARNOLD

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I rise today in celebration of Joe Arnold, head custodian at Hot Springs County

School District No. 1 in Thermopolis, WY.

Joe's career as a custodian in Wyoming schools spans 60 years. To honor this outstanding achievement, students, teachers, and administrators will gather on February 21, 2024, to celebrate the renaming of the central administration building to the Joe Arnold Central Administration Building.

Joe was 21 years old in 1964 when he began as a custodian for Carbon County School District No. 1 in Rawlins, WY. After 22 years in Rawlins, Joe moved to Thermopolis, where he worked at Hamilton Dome Elementary School. When the elementary school closed, he transferred to the building that now bears his name. Joe's commitment to the school district and its students is unmatched. And his commitment to his community is unmistakable. It is not uncommon to see Joe shoveling snow before sunrise or escorting senior folks to the auditorium for events after school hours.

Joe often invests the money he earns as a custodian back into his community. He pays for countless lunches and school field trips for students who cannot afford them. He has even helped with expenses for higher education. Joe's selflessness and generosity are unrivaled. He is the first to place a bid on auction items at fundraising events, then generously donates them back to be auctioned off again. Joe's true passion lies in helping students. As a mentor, he is always there to listen to their problems and offer advice whenever they need it. Graduation announcements and school photos from former students cover the walls of his office. After six decades of maintaining clean and healthy schools, Joe Arnold has no intention of retiring. However, as he arrives at work each day, Joe now sees his name on the building he works tirelessly to maintain.

It is with great honor that I recognize the exemplary dedication of Joe Arnold. Hard work is the Wyoming way, and few work harder than Joe. My sincere congratulations to Joe Arnold as the Hot Springs County School District No. 1 Central Administration Building is renamed in his honor.

TRIBUTE TO GRETA BROWN

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I rise today to express my sincere appreciation for the exceptional service rendered by Ms. Greta Brown during her four-decade tenure at the U.S. Senate Federal Credit Union, USSFCU. Greta has not only been a dedicated employee but has become an integral part of the fabric that binds our Senate community together.

Since 1981, Greta has been a constant presence within the Senate office buildings, witnessing the growth of the USSFCU from a small institution to a vital financial resource for Senators, dignitaries, and congressional staff. Her ability to connect with members, provide insightful financial advice, and

create meaningful relationships has shaped the perception of the credit union within the walls of our office buildings.

Greta's journey is a testament to her commitment, professionalism, and the positive impact she has had on our community. She is a source of inspiration, always demonstrating dedication, poise, and flexibility in her tasks. Ambassador Alfonso E. Lenhardt rightly acknowledges her as one of the finest individuals, embodying the values that define our Senate community.

Many who know Greta echo this sentiment, expressing gratitude for her astute financial advice. Greta's influence extends beyond her role, with many young staffers seeking her guidance as they navigate their financial journeys.

In the spirit of "people helping people," Greta has consistently served members with excellence and compassion. Her impact is evident in the numerous letters of appreciation she has received over the years. Greta is more than a colleague; she is a mentor, adviser, and friend to those fortunate enough to work alongside her.

As the credit union approaches its 90th anniversary, Greta stands as a symbol of continuity, dedication, and the values that define our Senate and Capitol Hill community.

In conclusion, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Greta Brown for her outstanding contributions to USSFCU and the broader Senate community. Her legacy will undoubtedly continue to resonate, inspiring us all to strive for excellence and service in our shared mission.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Ms. Kelly, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations and two withdrawals which were referred to the Committee on the Judiciary.

(The messages received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGES

REPORT OF THE CONTINUATION OF THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY THAT WAS ORIGINALLY DECLARED IN EXECUTIVE ORDER 14064 OF FEBRUARY 11, 2022, WITH RESPECT TO THE WIDESPREAD HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN AFGHANISTAN—PM 37

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message