

Sheppards of Eastern Kentucky, a family renowned in basketball and across the Commonwealth. This month, Laurel County will gather to honor the Sheppards and their impact on the community and dedicate a new monument to celebrate Laurel County's highest achieving basketball players. I would like to join my home State in recognizing Jeff, Stacey, Madison, and Reed Sheppard for their many accomplishments and contributions to Kentucky.

For decades, the Sheppard name has been a staple of Kentucky basketball. These days, most are familiar with the youngest, Reed—a No. 3 NBA draft pick and one of the Nation's top collegiate players while at the University of Kentucky—but his mom and dad, Stacey and Jeff, are both UK greats in their own right. Jeff played on two championship-winning seasons with the Cats and, in 1998, helped lead UK to one of its most unexpected victories in overtime against Stanford, securing the seventh NCAA title for the Big Blue Nation. Here on Kentucky's campus, Jeff met Stacey Reed, a fierce competitor on the women's basketball team and one of the university's best point guards.

Stacey and Jeff bonded over their faith and love of basketball and their shared experience as successful collegiate athletes. They soon married and moved their family back to Laurel County to raise their kids in Stacey's lifelong hometown. Madison and Reed eventually made their own names in basketball playing on their high school teams.

Like so many young athletes across the Commonwealth, Reed dreamed of one day wearing UK's blue and white uniform. His start on the team was met with unmatched enthusiasm in the Bluegrass, as one of the few native Kentuckians to suit up under Coach John Calipari. He quickly captured the attention of basketball fans across the Nation, named the Southeastern Conference Freshman of the Year and the National Freshman of the Year, the first player in Kentucky basketball history to earn this honor.

While basketball certainly runs in their blood, serving Kentucky is just as much a part of the Sheppard DNA. As young parents, Jeff and Stacey established the Backpack Program, an organization that prepares bagged lunches for hungry children across Laurel County. The Sheppard's charitable work for their church and their hometown and Stacey's perseverance in battling breast cancer set an enduring example of giving and helping others, of the power of community in times of need. When catastrophic floods swept through Eastern Kentucky in 2022, killing 45 people, Reed and his family joined together to help flood victims and raise money for relief efforts across the region. Today, the entire family continues to give back to Eastern Kentucky, whether volunteering their time, raising funds for those in

need, or mentoring the next generation of young ball players.

The Commonwealth has long been home to the biggest and best in basketball. But it is players like Jeff, Stacey, Madison, and Reed who bring passion and purpose to the sport that set our teams and our State apart. I am proud to join Kentuckians in congratulating the Sheppard family for receiving this well-deserved honor and in thanking them for all their contributions to the Commonwealth on and off the court.

#### TRIBUTE TO ASHLI WATTS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize Ashli Watts, president and CEO of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce and a leading voice in my home State's business community.

From an early age, Ashli had an affinity for public policy. Like me, she got her start in politics through a congressional internship on Capitol Hill. This early experience in our Nation's Capital cemented Ashli's interest in policy and public advocacy even further. Upon graduating from Campbellsville University, where she remains an active and involved alumna, Ashli went on to pursue her graduate degree in political science/public policy and administration at my alma mater, the University of Louisville.

Ashli put her public policy experience and education to good use on behalf of Kentucky's workers and job creators when she joined the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce in 2012, our State's largest business association. Her hard work and yearslong dedication eventually earned her the top post at the chamber in 2019.

Not long after taking the helm, the coronavirus pandemic turned daily life in America upside down and our Nation's business community flat on its back. The health and economic crisis that unfolded wrought widespread destruction on Main Street America, shuttering businesses and forcing millions out of work. During this time of upheaval, Kentucky's job creators fortunately had a strong advocate in Ashli. As chamber president and CEO, she worked to ensure employers in my home State were informed and that their priorities were always heard in Frankfort and Washington.

Ashli has certainly wasted no time working hard to improve Kentucky's business landscape and has never shied away from an opportunity to help her home State. Her leadership on issues ranging from tax reform to supporting our workforce to navigating the regulatory environment has laid a solid foundation for the future success of Kentucky's many businesses. Just recently, I was pleased to see her appointment to chair the U.S. Chamber's Committee of 100, which represents the top 100 chamber leaders in the Nation.

As the chamber's first female president, Ashli has also used her platform to highlight other female leaders in the

Commonwealth. She helped establish the chamber's first annual women's summit in 2020 to celebrate Kentuckians who are making a big impact at the local, State, and national levels. This yearly event has gained widespread recognition for its work to amplify the remarkable careers and accomplishments of Kentucky's women.

Mr. President, Spectrum News recently published an article highlighting Ashli's impact on my home State. I ask unanimous consent that a copy of the article be printed in the RECORD.

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

FRANKFORT, KY.—Being a chamber president has always felt like an accidental career for Ashli Watts. It's not that Watts, the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce's first-ever female president and CEO, was unintentional in her professional ascension or that she fell into the role; in fact, her incredible journey to the top of the state's largest business association has always been guided by thoughtful intentionality.

An Elizabethtown native and lifelong Kentuckian, Watts always had an interest in politics and public policy. Following in the footsteps of her grandmother and mother, Watts attended Campbellsville University after high school, where she majored in political science and history. She learned her way around the Capitol during an internship at the legislature, a role that only strengthened her passion for politics.

"I always knew my career would probably be centered around politics or public policy but I didn't really know that there was a career that was available where you could influence policy, you could convene stakeholders, and you could make a difference and not have to put your name on a ballot," Watts said, recounting her path to the Chamber. "I think that's what I found with the chamber world."

Watts has been with the Chamber for almost 12 years now, starting out as a lobbyist. She successfully led the organization's efforts to pass major legislation for tax reform, workers compensation reform and right-to-work legislation. Her work gave her a front-row seat to the real-life effects of public policy. She helped to get felony expungement legislation passed in 2016, a bill that will always hold a special place in her heart.

Watts says, through their research, the Chamber learned past convictions were potentially preventing thousands of Kentuckians from getting their lives back on track. The organization identified felony expungement as a workforce issue, which proved to be transformative in getting the legislation passed.

"We realized that almost 80,000 Kentuckians had one single, non-violent Class D felony on their records that were really holding them back from the workforce. We were able to get it across the finish line, get it signed into law—and this is after other groups had been trying to do this for about 20 years," Watts said.

The personal stories Watts has heard since the bill's passage stick with her the most.

"[They've] been able to get better jobs and they've been able to gain better employment. They've been able to take their kids on field trips, where before they were not able to do that," Watts said. "Sometimes policy seems really wonky and in the weeds, but then you see really what impact you have. It really does make a big difference."

As the leader of one of Frankfort's most powerful lobbying groups, making a big difference is certainly something Watts knows a thing or two about. She was just 37-years-old in 2019 when she was named the Kentucky Chamber's president and CEO. Recently, she was appointed as the first female chair of the U.S. Chamber's "Committee of 100", which is the top 100 chamber leaders throughout the United States.

One of the first things Watts did as the Chamber's leader was to form the annual Women's Summit, an event celebrating Kentucky women who have found success on the state and national stage. Former Kentucky Gov. Martha Layne Collins, former U.N. Ambassador Kelly Craft, former Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao, and Lt. Gov. Jacqueline Coleman are among the women who have been honored at the summit.

"We really want to just give voice to these women that are doing really remarkable things and making Kentucky shine," said Watts.

Watts also wants her eight-year-old son and 11-year-old daughter to see women can do remarkable things. After applying for the job during her maternity leave, Watts started working at the Chamber of Commerce when her daughter was just six weeks old. Instead of finding a work-life balance, she likes to think of it as "work-life integration."

"I do think it's really important, especially for my daughter, who's almost 12-years-old, to see that her mom can do really kind of big and really important things and still be a mom, and still host the sleepovers, and still take her to the carpool, and fix her hair for school dances—and then the next day I can be in Washington D.C. testifying," said Watts. "I think seeing that nice balance is really important for young women. So I'm hoping that I am a role model for my daughter."

Watts, who serves on the board of directors for Campbellsville University and as chair of the academic committee for her alma mater, believes it's especially important for leaders to give back to their communities and to their state, adding that it's what makes someone a well-rounded professional.

"I give [Campbellsville] a lot of credit for really making me who I am today. Giving me the kind of the strength that I needed and the education I needed to tackle this career," said Watts. "It's a really important way for me to give back to a university that has given back so much to me."

Watts also serves on boards for Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky, University of Kentucky College of Public Health, University of Louisville President's Advisory Council, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, National Association of State Chambers, and the American Chamber of Commerce Executives, where she was also named a 40 under 40 in 2020.

Watts attributes her own success to being present, intentional. She encourages young professionals to be cautious of the complacency that can come with virtual or hybrid work settings where they may not see their colleagues face-to-face.

"I do think it's really important for young people in particular to be present, be seen, be visible because sometimes if you're out of sight, you're a little bit out of mind and for me I really do think one of the keys to my success was that I was always here. I was always around if someone needed something or if I needed to go to a meeting." Watts said. "When you look around and see some offices that are empty or people working from home, sometimes that camaraderie and that relationship is not going to get built, so you really have to be intentional."

As a trailblazing leader and a major power broker for Kentucky businesses, Watts has created a career built on relationships and

trust—her presence and thoughtful intentionality guiding her to the top.

#### KIDS ONLINE SAFETY ACT

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, after months of negotiations, the Kids Online Safety Act, KOSA, has been improved, thanks to hard work by Commerce Chair CANTWELL and Leader SCHUMER. The changes that I, LGBTQ+ advocates, parents, student activists, civil rights groups and others have fought for over the last 2 years have made it less likely that the bill can be used as a tool for MAGA extremists to wage war on legal and essential information to teens. I want to take a moment to thank all of the advocates, parents, young people, and concerned citizens that have raised their views about KOSA with me, both in support of the bill and with concern about its implications.

Let me be clear, I strongly support elements of this bill, especially Senator MARKEY's Children and Teens' Online Privacy Protection Act, which will safeguard the personal information of young people online. Provisions regulating addictive design elements used by platforms to keep young people hooked are valuable safeguards that will make tech products safer. Unfortunately, KOSA's improvements, while constructive, remain insufficient. I fear this bill could be used to sue services that offer privacy-enhancing technologies like encryption or anonymity features that are essential to young people's ability to communicate securely and privately without being spied on by predators online. I also take seriously concerns voiced by the American Civil Liberties Union, Fight for the Future, and LGBTQ+ teens and advocates that a future MAGA administration could still use this bill to pressure companies to censor gay, trans, and reproductive health information.

For these reasons, I cannot vote for this legislation. However, if this bill is signed into law by the President, I look forward to working with my colleagues to conduct rigorous oversight of the FTC to ensure that my worst fears about this bill do not come true and that kids benefit from a safer internet.

Whatever happens to this bill, I look forward to working with my colleagues on other initiatives, including regulating harmful and manipulative platform designs, to tackle the vital topic of kids' safety online. I also remain convinced that this effort must go hand-in-hand with passing a strong baseline privacy law for all Americans.

#### TRIBUTE TO ALAN BAKER

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, August 7 marks the 95th birthday of Maine's Alan Baker, a truly remarkable journalist, community leader, and public servant. It will be a pleasure to join Alan's friends and family in celebrating a remarkable life of adven-

tures, accomplishments, and lasting contributions.

Alan's commitment to service began when he was growing up in Orrington, ME, during World War II. Spending more than 250 4-hour shifts in a tower above the town office to spot enemy aircraft targeting the vital Dow Army Airfield in nearby Bangor taught him the importance of individuals stepping forward in times of need.

After graduating from Bowdoin College in 1951, Alan launched a long and successful international career in publishing. He brought his work ethic, vision, and experience back to Maine in 1986 and joined the staff of the legendary Ellsworth American, one of the oldest newspapers in Maine. He purchased that newspaper 2 years later and later founded the Mount Desert Islander. Under his leadership, those two publications demonstrated the value of community newspapers by keeping readers informed and helping them to become involved citizens.

Alan was recognized with many industry awards over the course of his career, including the National Newspaper Association's James O. Amos Award for outstanding achievements in community journalism. In addition to being named Maine Journalist of the Year, he is a member of the Maine Press Association Hall of Fame.

Throughout his life, Alan led by example to encourage civic engagement. Following in his mother's footsteps, who served seven terms in the Maine State House, Alan ran for and won a seat as a citizen lawmaker in order to do his part and to better understand the legislative process. Despite his busy professional life, he has served his hometown on many community boards, from historic preservation to cemetery upkeep, and was named Orrington's Citizen of Year in 2017.

The remote island communities of Downeast Maine are beautiful yet challenging places to live. One of Alan's most significant contributions has been his strong and generous support for the work of the Maine Seacoast Mission. Founded in 1905, the non-denominational, nonprofit organization began delivering a minister to isolated communities where there were no churches and books where there were no libraries via a sloop called *Hope*. Today, the Mission's motor vessel *Sunbeam V* carries on that work and also serves as a mobile health clinic, bringing medical services to four islands. In 2017, the Mission presented Alan with its Sunbeam Award for his steadfast commitment to the island and coastal communities of rural Maine.

Alan Baker is an extraordinary journalist, a treasured friend, and a true asset to the State of Maine. May his birthday and the days to come be filled with joy.

#### TRIBUTE TO DR. TIMOTHY DONOHUE

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate Dr. Timothy