

Lovely, lovely spring. It takes a cold heart indeed not to love the springtime.

Spring is the morning of the year,
And summer is the noontime bright;
The autumn is the evening clear,
That comes before the winter's night.

The Golden Rod, by Frank Dempster Sherman.

Though most of the United States has enjoyed an unseasonable winter with mild temperatures and even thunderstorms in February, it is comforting to see the plants and animals around us heeding the celestial timetable even if the mercury in the thermometer is not. Right on schedule, this year as last year and in all the years before, the crocus and the daffodil burst through the leaf mold and lawn thatch, staining the subdued winter landscape with vibrant color, like Easter eggs hidden in the grass. In time for Saint Patrick's day, the grass put on a deep cloak of Irish green.

Day by day, the skeletal tree limbs and branches are swelling and budding with soft, new leaves whose iconic color can only be named "spring green."

Next week, the Nation's Capital will be celebrating the Cherry Blossom Festival. These lovely trees, a gift from the Government of Japan, delight jaded commuters as well as visitors with the ethereal beauty of their graceful blooms reflected against the dark water of the Potomac River or framing the elegant marble columns of the Jefferson Memorial.

Oh, fair to see
Bloom-laden cherry tree,
Arrayed in sunny white:
An April day's delight,
Oh, fair to see!

Oh, Fair to See by Christina Rossetti.

Deep within the earth, the soil warms, ready for priming for the germination of crop and flower seeds. The ageless cycles of agriculture and horticulture are rumbling into action across West Virginia and the Nation.

The Bible says, "The hay appeareth, and the tender grass sheweth itself, And herbs of the mountains are gathered." I know that I am not alone in appreciating the rhythmic patterns of a freshly plowed field while anticipating the mouthwatering goodness of the crops to come. For 2,000 years and more, mankind has rejoiced in the promise of spring. Even now, home gardeners are sowing early spring crops of peas and starting more tender shoots under lights. Fertilizer and weed killer are in short supply at garden stores, while bedding plants are starting to arrive.

And it is not just the farmers and gardeners among us who revel in the signs of emerging springtime. All of God's creatures feel the pull of the warming sun, the warming of the waters, the melting of the snow and ice. The penciled Vees of Canada geese hew to the seasonal timetable as their formations power their way northward, honking to announce their passing as

they drive to their northern nesting grounds. The dainty goldfinches that mob our winter feeders are changing, too, shedding their drab winter garb for brilliant springtime yellow as they chatter and flit about. As the longer, warmer days advance, more and more birds appear, and the sky fills with their vernal songfest. The poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley, famously captured the beauty of birdsong in his poem, "To a Skylark:"

Hail to thee, blithe spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire;
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

In the golden lightning
Of the setting sun
O'er which clouds are brightening,
Thou dost float and run
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

Deer, once a common sight along the roadsides and fields in the later afternoon dusk, are retreating into the woods, nibbling new shoots as they seek out hidden coverts in which to secrete their wobbly-legged fawns. The deer's place along the road seems, alas, to have been taken over by amorous skunks seeking their springtime love.

In cities as well as rural areas, the spring shows itself. In the stone flower beds around the Capitol, the tulip bulbs are sending green spears up through the soil as the squirrels race about in an exuberant display of spring energy. The spring sunshine and warmth energize us all. Parks and playgrounds are welcoming young shoots of humankind to play among the swings and slides while contented parents keep watch. Even our dogs affect a more jaunty air as they soak up the fresh scents and nibble on the green shoots of new grass. Later, as the summer heat saps our energy and lawn chores become more tiresome, as the children get sweaty and the dogs pant in the shade, we may long for the dark cold days of winter. But now, in the gentle warmth of spring sunshine, it seems as if our prayers are answered with the blooming of the flowers. Winter is passing, and spring is here. Welcome, welcome spring.

Mr. President, I close with another poem about spring. This one from Robert Frost, one of the 20th century's leading American poets. His poem, "A Prayer in Spring," beautifully captures the ephemeral pleasure of an early spring day with a word of thanks to the Creator of it all.

A PRAYER IN SPRING

Oh, give us pleasure in the flowers today;
And give us not to think so far away
As the uncertain harvest; keep us here
All simply in the springing of the year.

Oh, give us pleasure in the orchard white,
Like nothing else by day, like ghosts by night;

And make us happy in the happy bees,
The swarm dilating round the perfect trees.
And make us happy in the darting bird
That suddenly above the bees is heard,
The meteor that thrusts with needle bill,
And off a blossom in mid-air stands still.
For this is love and nothing else is love,
The which it is reserved for God above
To sanctify to what far ends He will,
But which it only needs that we fulfill.

TRIBUTE TO WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY ON ITS CENTENNIAL YEAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to an outstanding institution of higher learning in my home State, Western Kentucky University. Next Tuesday, March 21, 2006, marks Western's 100th year of fulfilling its mission to "prepare students to be productive citizens of a global society" and to "provide service and lifelong learning opportunities for its constituents."

Located in Bowling Green, KY, Western Kentucky University has not always been known by its current name. On March 21, 1906, the Kentucky General Assembly approved legislation establishing two teacher-training institutions. Bowling Green was selected as one of the sites, and the Western Kentucky State Normal School was established. With a mission to train teachers, the newly created institution selected Henry Hardin Cherry as its first president.

Five years after its founding, the school moved to its current site on "the Hill," a scenic location overlooking the city of Bowling Green. This move would later lend itself to an appropriate school motto that is proudly used today, describing Western Kentucky University as "the home of the Hilltoppers." In 1922, the school was renamed and became known as Western Kentucky State Normal School and Teachers College; at this time, it was also authorized to grant 4-year degrees. In 1924, the first such degrees were earned and awarded.

In the years that followed, Western continued to expand its curriculum and shorten its name. While many "Hilltoppers" have followed the school's early roots and pursued degrees in education, the institution now offers a broader set of degree programs. On June 16, 1966, Western underwent its final name change and became known simply as Western Kentucky University. The university now has an enrollment of over 18,000 students and offers 88 academic majors and 57 academic minors. It also offers 18 associate degrees and graduate studies.

I always enjoy visiting Western and spending time with its students, faculty, and staff. I am proud to have partnered with the university to secure over \$48 million in Federal funding for worthwhile projects such as the Western Mobile Health Unit and the ARS Federal research lab. University president Gary Ransdell, the institution's

ninth president, is a great leader, and we work well together. He has been successful in advancing the university and winning accolades from students, faculty, and educators nationwide.

Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Western Kentucky University on its centennial year.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am encouraged by reports regarding progress the Judiciary Committee made on the immigration bill today. I understand that the committee has scheduled a meeting for Monday, March 27 when we return from our break to try to conclude work on the bill.

It is very important that we allow this process to continue. The committee should be given the opportunity to report out a consensus bill on a bipartisan basis. I want to commend Senators SPECTER, LEAHY, and KENNEDY, among others, for their efforts to draft a comprehensive immigration bill and I hope that the Leader will give them the time they need to complete their work.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD letters that were sent to Senator FRIST today from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Restaurant Association and the National Roofing Contractors Association that express a similar desire.

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

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
Washington, DC, March 16, 2006,

Hon. BILL FRIST,
Senate Majority Leader, U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR FRIST: On behalf of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the world's largest business federation representing more than three million businesses and organizations of every size, sector, and region, I am writing to request that you allow the Senate Judiciary Committee additional time to develop and report out an immigration reform measure for consideration by the full Senate.

While we fully appreciate that the Senate floor schedule is very crowded, and that you must adhere to a schedule to move important legislation through the process, it is apparent that more time is needed by the Committee to adequately consider the many complex issues surrounding immigration. Hundreds of amendments have been introduced by Senators sitting on the Committee, and it would seem that those actually offered should be given due consideration.

Unfortunately, it has now become clear that this will be impossible under a deadline of March 27, with the result that the Committee will not be able to report out a bill by that deadline. The Committee has an obvious expertise to bring to bear on the many difficult, and frankly, controversial issues involved and it should be given an adequate opportunity to shape legislation before consideration by the full Senate.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

R. BRUCE JOSTEN.

MARCH 16, 2006.

Hon. BILL FRIST,
Senate Majority Leader, U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR FRIST: On behalf of the National Roofing Contractors Association (NRCA), we write today to urge you to allow the Senate Judiciary Committee the time necessary to complete its work on an immigration reform measure for consideration by the full Senate. We fully appreciate the breadth of business placing demands on the Senate calendar, but given the paramount economic and national security concerns addressed in this legislation, it is imperative that the Committee have adequate time to consider the complexities of immigration reform in a full and reasoned fashion.

Established in 1886, NRCA is one of the nation's oldest trade associations and the voice of roofing contractors worldwide. It is an association of roofing and waterproofing contractors, material manufacturers, distributors, architects, consultants and engineers. NRCA has over 5,000 member companies from all 50 states and 54 countries and is affiliated with 105 local, state, regional and international roofing contractor associations.

As you are aware, hundreds of amendments have been submitted by Committee members. Unfortunately, it has become clear during the markup process that your March 27 deadline will not be met given the sheer volume of amendments to be considered.

We commend you for your commitment to bringing immigration reform before the full Senate. The topic is one of our most pressing public policy challenges and ripe for discussion. Toward that end, NRCA looks forward to a vigorous and comprehensive debate on the Senate floor that addresses America's national security needs, while ensuring the long-term health of our economy.

Respectfully submitted,

CRAIG S. BRIGHTUP,
Vice President, Government Relations.
R. CRAIG SILVERTOOTH,
Director of Federal Affairs.

NATIONAL RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION,
March 16, 2006.

Hon. BILL FRIST,
U.S. Senate, Senate Office Building,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR FRIST: On behalf of the National Restaurant Association, I am writing to ask that more time be allotted to allow the Judiciary Committee to complete its work on comprehensive immigration reform legislation presently before it.

We greatly appreciate your setting aside substantial time on the Senate calendar for consideration of this critically important bill, but think that time would be best spent if the Senate could have the benefit of full consideration of the proposal by the committee of jurisdiction.

Given the tremendous number of amendments offered thus far, and the conflicts with other committee and floor activities impeding the Judiciary Committee's ability to operate, it is clear that without an extension the Committee will be unable to complete its work by the deadline you had earlier set.

In the interest of producing the best possible policy, we respectfully urge you to extend the deadline to allow the Committee to complete its responsibilities,

Sincerely,

JOHN GAY,
Senior Vice President,
Government Affairs and Public Policy.

RECOGNITION OF THE RAPE,
ABUSE, AND INCEST NATIONAL
NETWORK

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to thank everyone involved with the Rape, Abuse, Incest, National Network, RAINN, for giving me the Congressional Crime Fighter Award. This is a great honor.

I have worked in public service, in one way or another, for about 40 years now. During my career, I have become aware of the horrible effects of sexual assault and child abuse—on the victims, but also on our community as a whole. It is a silent epidemic that is shattering lives across America.

We have made progress in helping abuse victims, and that is largely because of the hard work of your organization. Since 1994, more than 970,000 people have called your National Sexual Assault Hotline. More than 5,300 of them were Nevadans. Your work makes an incredible difference in people's lives.

But too many victims are still suffering in the shadows. We need to do more to strengthen laws to fight sexual assault, to provide law enforcement with the tools and funding they need, and to support victims.

I have always been a strong supporter of the Violence Against Women Act. As you probably know, VAWA was landmark legislation that expanded the Federal Government's commitment to eliminating violence against women. I was a cosponsor of the original act back in 1990, and I have voted for it every time it has come up for reauthorization.

As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I have worked to get funding for sexual assault prevention programs and victims aid programs in Nevada and around the country.

I was also happy to work with RAINN last year to get funding to help victims. I hope some of this money will be used specifically to help the victims of Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita. We set aside \$500,000 in last year's Federal budget. I think it should have been more the Senate approved more, but the House did not—but I am happy we were able to get the funding.

I know there is a lot more work to be done, and I look forward to working with all of you in the future. Thank you again for this honor.

SUPPORT HOMELAND SECURITY AND EDUCATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise today to urge my colleges to support the Homeland Security Education Act. This bill encourages initiatives to increase the number of Americans trained in science, technology, engineering, math, and foreign languages.

Our security and economic future depends on the next generation of workers and their ability not just to keep up, but to innovate. Science and technology are the engines of economic