

protections VHCB has been able to offer Vermont's farmers have resulted in hundreds of farms remaining active and contributing members of their communities, allowing them to remain Vermont's ultimate environmental stewards. VHCB's expertise also allowed me to work with them to implement a farm preservation pilot program in Vermont that has since become known as the Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program, a national farmland protection program. Today, this program has protected nearly a half million acres of farmland in 42 States nationwide.

For centuries, the very same farmers who have lived off the land have become well known for their love of fishing, hunting, hiking and snowmobiling across Vermont's forests and open spaces. With encroaching urban sprawl and changing demographics, these lands, too, have been dwindling. VHCB has made it a priority to preserve these natural lands and access to these lands, conserving a quarter of a million acres of these green spaces.

As a dual mission organization, VHCB has also led the country in developing and administering steady private, State and Federal funding sources for the preservation, development and rehabilitation of quality affordable housing in all corners of Vermont. These homes, like the great pieces of granite my grandfather once cut out of the mountainsides of Vermont, are the foundations for the future of Vermont. Additionally, many of these homes are designated perpetually affordable, ensuring that generations of Vermonters will have places to call home. Recently the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development named Vermont's federally funded HOME program, administered by VHCB, as the most effective program among 51 participating jurisdictions in the country for the fourth quarter in a row.

Like so many Vermonters, I live in a rather old house in the Green Mountains. At least half of Vermont's housing stock is estimated to be more than 50 years old, and many are more than a century old. With this Yankee character comes a great danger that VHCB has identified and tackled with great skill: lead poisoning. The most common cause of lead poisoning is exposure to dust from deteriorated lead-based paint in a child's home or daycare. The Vermont Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction Program, administered by VHCB, has provided technical and financial assistance to eligible landlords and homeowners to reduce the risk of lead poisoning in Vermont's buildings and homes.

Since the very beginning, my good friend Gus Seelig has steered this organization through both calm and stormy weather. Like any good leader, I am certain that Gus would say this organization owes a great deal of its success to its many past and present board members and staff. On behalf of the

people of Vermont, I thank and applaud everyone who has worked to make the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board a success. Congratulations on 20 great years preserving the character and affordability of Vermont.

RECOMMISSION OF THE USS "MICHIGAN"

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I would like to take this opportunity to commemorate the recommission of the USS *Michigan*, SSGN-727. A formal return to service ceremony will be held on Tuesday, June 12 at 1 p.m. to honor the USS *Michigan* and her officers and crew, which includes captain of the boat CDR Terry Takats and chief of the boat CMDM Wayne Lassiter.

The USS *Michigan* will return to active duty as the second *Ohio*-class nuclear-powered Trident missile submarine in the U.S. Navy to be refitted from a ballistic missile submarine, SSBN, into a guided missile submarine, SSGN. This conversion has enhanced and transformed the capabilities of the USS *Michigan*, making it a more valuable asset and serving as an example of the Navy's ongoing transformation to face current and future threats around the world.

The USS *Michigan* has had a proud tradition of service, and SSGN-727 will be the third naval vessel to bear the name of our great State. The first ship to carry this name was launched by the Navy in 1843 as its first iron-hulled warship. She operated throughout the Great Lakes for her entire period of service, gaining notoriety when she helped to successfully end the Fenian invasion of Canada by intercepting supplies between Buffalo and Fort Erie, Ontario along the Niagara River.

U.S. Naval vessels bearing the Michigan name have courageously seen action against Mexico, served as convoy escorts during WWI, and most recently completed more than 33 strategic deterrent patrols throughout the world. The newly converted USS *Michigan* SSGN-727 will return to service with a new mission and enhanced capabilities.

The new guided missile submarine conversion program was developed by the Navy to create a more efficient and effective dual-use submarine force. The USS *Michigan*'s successful transformation has maintained all the benefits of its predecessor, while creating a ship that will act as a force multiplier for the Navy. It has an increased payload capacity of 154 cruise missiles and the capability to more effectively house, sustain, and deploy a variety of special operations forces, allowing for a support role, as well as stealth insertion and extraction of operatives. The flexibility of this new submarine will allow it to efficiently function in a variety of multimission scenarios.

The USS *Michigan* is a shining example of the U.S. Navy's transformation, and I know my colleagues will join me in commemorating its return to active service.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

MONTANA HISTORY

• Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, the history of Butte, Anaconda, and Walkerville is as bright and intricate as the people who live there. Stories of greed, danger, and power intermingle with values like hard work and loyalty, to weave a tapestry as rich as any city in America. As the Montana Historical Society has so richly shown, the history of Butte is the history of our country.

As America began to slowly mature from a budding nation to an international superpower, the growing pains became evident. Settlers, packing what little belongings they could fit into the legendary prairie schooners, began to gaze at the horizon and seek fame and fortune on the Western frontier. As the trails became longer, and the distance grew greater, the limits of one nation were pressed. Yet the powers of American ingenuity and our Nation's legendary can-do spirit kicked in. Samuel Morse learned how to communicate through code, and Alexander Graham Bell discovered how to talk through wires.

While these men showed great genius, without the sweat of working men and women these inventions would be nothing more than a footnote in history. But as miners extracted mountains of copper from the Earth's belly, telegraph and telephone wires began to crisscross our country. Suddenly, a letter that used to take days would now take minutes. Citizens on the eastern seaboard would know what was happening on the plains, and at last we truly were one Nation.

And at the heart of this was Butte, Anaconda, and Walkerville. Here, the gallows frames and the towering Anaconda Company smokestacks pierce the skyline as a monument to the men and women whose toil became the bedrock of our great Nation. Though faced with danger, and even death, these workers strapped on their boots every morning and from daybreak till night provided the fuel for a growing nation.

Faced with dire circumstance and physical harm, these workers developed a bond that none outside the mines could understand. They stood together through thick and thin, and truly were a family.

This bond took form in two of the Nation's most radical unions, the Western Federation of Miners, and the Industrial Workers of the World. Located in "the Gibraltar of Unionism", Butte and Walkerville, these unions waged a class warfare the likes of which is still the fodder for legends. The class war soon came to a raging boil after the Butte Granite/Speculator Mine fire, the worst hard-rock mining disaster in the Nation's history. Unions were busted, agitators dealt with, and the crushing hand of the "company" dealt a crippling blow to the workers.