

Science, and Related Agencies, I rise today to notify the Senate that I sponsored an amendment to H.R. 3093, the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act that provided \$3 million in funding for Teach for America, headquartered in New York, NY, to improve science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education.

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD an excerpt from the remarks by President George W. Bush at the Presidential Medal of Freedom presentation at the White House on November 5, 2007, honoring Harper Lee of Monroeville, AL.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.

Good morning. Laura and I are thrilled to welcome you to the White House. We welcome the members of Congress, the members of the Cabinet, and other distinguished guests. It's an honor to be with the Medal of Freedom recipients, as well as their family members and friends. We're sure glad you're here.

The Medal of Freedom is the highest civil honor that a President can bestow. By an executive order of John F. Kennedy, the medal is designed to recognize great contributions to national security, the cause of peace and freedom, science, the arts, literature, and many other fields. The eight men and women came to this distinction by very different paths. Each of them, by effort and by character, has earned the respect of the American people, and holds a unique place in the story of our time.

The story of an old order, and the glimmers of humanity that would one day overtake it, was unforgettably told in a book by Miss Harper Lee. Soon after its publication a reviewer said this: "A hundred pounds of sermons on tolerance, or an equal measure of invective deploring the lack of it, will weigh far less in the scale of enlightenment than a mere 18 ounces of a new fiction bearing the title *To Kill a Mockingbird*."

Given her legendary stature as a novelist, you may be surprised to learn that Harper Lee, early in her career, was an airline reservation clerk. Fortunately for all of us, she didn't stick to writing itineraries. Her beautiful book, with its grateful prose and memorable characters, became one of the biggest-selling novels of the 20th century.

Forty-six years after winning the Pulitzer Prize, *To Kill a Mockingbird* still touches and inspires every reader. We're moved by the story of a man falsely accused—with old prejudice massed against him, and an old sense of honor that rises to his defense. We learn that courage can be a solitary business. As the lawyer Atticus Finch tells his daughter, "before I can live

with other folks I've got to live with myself. The one thing that doesn't abide by majority rule is a person's conscience."

Years after *To Kill a Mockingbird* was put to film, the character of Atticus Finch was voted the greatest movie hero of all time. It won Gregory Peck the Oscar. He was said to believe the role "brought him closest to being the kind of man he aspired to be." The great actor counted Harper Lee among his good friends, and we're so pleased that Gregory Peck's wife, Veronique, is with us today. Thank you for coming.

One reason *To Kill a Mockingbird* succeeded is the wise and kind heart of the author, which comes through on every page. This daughter of Monroeville, Alabama had something to say about honor, and tolerance, and, most of all, love—and it still resonates. Last year Harper Lee received an honorary doctorate at Notre Dame. As the degree was presented, the graduating class rose as one, held up copies of her book, and cheered for the author they love.

To Kill a Mockingbird has influenced the character of our country for the better. It's been a gift to the entire world. As a model of good writing and humane sensibility, this book will be read and studied forever. And so all of us are filled with admiration for a great American and a lovely lady named Harper Lee.

Thank you all for coming. I hope you've enjoyed this ceremony as much as I have. May God bless you all. Thank you.

PLAIN LANGUAGE IN GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATIONS ACT

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the need to write government documents in plain language.

This past Sunday, November 4, 2007, the Washington Post ran an article entitled "Parsing the Fine Print in Federal Ads." This article illustrates exactly why the Federal Government must begin writing in language that the American people can understand.

The Federal Government has a pressing need to recruit skilled employees. Many agencies are understaffed, and more than 50 percent of the Federal workforce will be eligible to retire in the next 5 years. Yet advertisements for Federal jobs are described as "incomprehensible," "opaque," "dense," and "convoluted." The article quotes two different people who have written entire books about applying for Federal jobs, one of whom states that understanding a Federal job announcement can take hours and likens the process to explicating a poem in English class.

It is well known that the Federal hiring process is lengthy and complex. Agencies need to look for ways to streamline and improve the hiring process, especially now that the Federal government is facing a large num-

ber of retirements. One easy step that agencies can take is to write announcements in plain language.

Writing Federal job announcements in plain language would save applicants considerable time and energy spent attempting to figure out what a job advertisement means. Plain, clear, accessible ads are much more likely to attract candidates' attention than opaque and incomprehensible ones. By writing job ads in plain language, agencies likely would attract more candidates with strong qualifications, which would go a long way toward addressing the Federal Government's human capital challenges.

I urge my colleagues to support the Plain Language in Government Communications Act of 2007, S. 2291, and I ask unanimous consent that the article from the Washington Post be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the Washington Post, Nov. 4, 2007]

PARSING THE FINE PRINT ON FEDERAL ADS

(By Mary Ellen Slayter)

Uncle Sam really does want you, even though at times it can be hard to figure out what exactly he wants you to do.

Federal job ads can seem particularly opaque to people looking to make the switch from the private sector. Or as one wannabe fed put it in my online chat recently: "What gives with USAJobs.com? The job descriptions on that site are incomprehensible to a person (like me) who hasn't worked for a government agency before. Seriously, they don't make any sense."

"The federal application process is complex to say the least," said Dennis Damp, author of *The Book of U.S. Government Jobs* and a retired senior manager for the Federal Aviation Administration. Part of that is for good reason, he said; the process is designed to be fair, judging applicants on the basis of their qualifications, without discrimination or nepotism.

Even when you agree that those are commendable goals, the process can be exasperating. But those frustrations can be overcome with a little patience—and by making that seemingly dense job ad work for you.

Damp's book devotes a chapter to analyzing the job announcement, breaking it down piece by piece and showing applicants how to craft an effective résumé based on the information given. He said a common mistake people make is not reading the whole announcement before throwing their hands up in bewilderment—though he certainly sympathizes with them. "It's a ton of data that can be very confusing initially. You can't stop at the first paragraph, because if you do, you're probably bypassing positions that you're qualified for."

He also includes several cross-referenced indexes, which can be particularly helpful to the truly lost hunter who isn't sure if he's even looking at the right types of jobs to match his private-sector skill set.

"The announcement gives you so much content to use, if we slow down and appreciate what's in there," said Kathryn Kraemer Troutman, author of the *Federal Resume Guidebook* and president of the Resume Place, a consulting firm that specializes in helping applicants for federal jobs.

She offers a simple strategy for making sense of announcements: Start with the "duties" section. Count the sentences in the

paragraph, and separate each one into a numbered line. Then read each sentence again slowly. Within each sentence, underline the key words.

"Then you will understand the position," she said. (This works, but "simple" does not mean "quick." It can easily take hours. If you ever had to explicate poems in English class, you get the idea.) Do the same thing with the "qualifications" section, which will probably cover five or six things. "Those key words must be in your résumé," Troutman said. "Don't be creative."

Something else to keep in mind: If the qualifications don't make sense to you after careful study, perhaps you're just not qualified. "Private industry people many times do not have the qualifications for federal jobs," Troutman said.

If that's the case, your work still wasn't a waste. If you dream of a fed job, make acquiring those qualifications your goals, she said. "Make this list your list, taking classes, volunteering."

But lack of qualifications isn't always the problem. Sometimes it's just a language barrier—or a cultural one. "People from the private sector can't understand this language," Troutman said. "They just can't believe it." Others just "don't know how to play this paper game."

Max Stier, president of the nonprofit Partnership for Public Service, said that job seekers need to remember that all federal agencies are all different—right down to their job ads.

"A lot of agencies still provide descriptions of job openings that are convoluted," he said, but not all. "Some agencies get it. Some understand."

But if you don't understand, he said, pick up the phone and call the agency. Announcements on USAJobs, the government's primary avenue for advertising new jobs, include contact information for the appropriate human resources officer.

"Even in the age of the Web, finding someone to speak with can help," Stier said.

And be patient. "There are more and more good tools out there," he said, "but obviously it's still not a hiring nirvana."

GLOBAL CHANGE RESEARCH IMPROVEMENT ACT

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, I am pleased to join with Senator KERRY in introducing the Global Change Research Improvement Act of 2007, that amends and strengthens the existing U.S. climate change research and assessment program that will ultimately benefit all of the citizens of our Nation. Our intent is to improve upon the basic research and products that the Federal Government develops on climate change and its inherent impacts. We believe our legislation would refocus the emphasis of the nations' climate change program and fulfill the need for relevant information for States, and local and nongovernmental decision-makers.

In addition, the creation of a new National Climate Service within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, NOAA, will provide climate change forecasting on a regular basis to end-users, and create a permanent network for the delivery of such information so that decision makers in every city and town, county and State, and the Federal Government can make

timely planning decisions to deal with impacts and develop adaptation methodologies.

The legislation also calls for an Abrupt Climate Change Research Program within NOAA—a program I have been supporting for at least 5 years now—so that scientists can gather more knowledge about a change in the climate that occurs so rapidly or unexpectedly that human or natural systems have difficulty adapting to the change. I am proud to say that my alma mater, the University of Maine at Orono, has a world renowned abrupt climate change research program under the direction of Dr. Paul Mayewski. He and his colleague Dr. George Denton, UMaine Libra Professor of Geological Sciences have been major contributors to research on abrupt climate change. There is a need for a national research program to coordinate and further research on past climate shifts so that scientists can better predict what future climate change holds for our fragile planet.

The Global Change Research Program, GCRP, the country's climate research and assessment program, was established in law by the Global Change Research Act of 1990. Consider what has happened technologically since then, what was generally unheard of at that time. We now drive hybrid cars, we are tuned into iPods, we use hand held blackberries for instant communication, we have much more advanced and high speed computers for modeling and, most importantly for our legislation, more comprehensive knowledge and understanding of climate change through 17 more years of peer-reviewed scientific research, monitoring, and assessments. Our nation's climate change research program needs restructuring so that we can turn that knowledge into timely and useful information for decisionmakers. This is exactly what our bill does.

Unfortunately, the overall GCRP program's budget has been steadily declining since fiscal year 2004, which is alarming since, at the same time, we have a growing need, a truly urgent need, to better understand and predict climate change. Over the past several years, independent reports, including a review by the National Academy of Sciences, have documented weaknesses and gaps in the current implementation of the GCRP. In fact, a Federal district court found that the current administration had failed to comply with the statute's mandate to provide regular assessments of the impacts of climate change on critical resources; no such assessment has been published since October 31, 2000.

Our legislation makes important changes to address these weaknesses and gaps, making important changes to strengthen the mandate to provide assessments, enabling the GCRP to perform critical climate observations and research on climate systems; improve our ability to predict climate impacts at national, regional and local levels;

and, importantly, to communicate those impacts in a timely and useful fashion to State and local decision-makers, resource managers, and other stakeholders.

Back in the 14th century, a Franciscan friar William of Ockham came up with the principle that has, through the ages, been called Occam's razor. The Latin explanation "entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem," which paraphrased means, "All things being equal, the simplest solution tends to be the right one." This is what Senator KERRY and I are attempting to accomplish with this bill, to simply focus rather than to continue to multiply and to dilute how our climate change research programs are currently carried out with no real usable information for the decisionmakers who must deal with the problems of global warming. We hope our colleagues agree with these necessary improvements and will join us with their support.

TRIBUTE TO DON DIXON

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, it is with mixed emotions that I bid farewell to a longtime member of my staff but, more importantly, a trusted friend of many years. Don Dixon has served as my State director of agriculture for the past 12 years. His service has been exemplary; nothing less can be imagined from Don—he is a man of the highest character, a man whose honesty, trustworthiness, kindness, intelligence, dependability and wisdom are firmly rooted in a foundation of humility. He came to me with a well-established reputation for fairness and extensive knowledge of Idaho agriculture. Throughout more than a decade of public service, I can honestly say that I have learned more from him than he from me. I have the highest regard for Don; he is irreplaceable. Fortunately, it is just Senate employment that he is leaving, and I get to enjoy his friendship and insight for years to come.

As a farmer with firsthand knowledge of the challenges faced by producers, Don has been reliable counsel to the agriculture community, the Idaho delegation and others as he has worked for sound agriculture policy. Don has been recognized for his dedication to agriculture through awards, such as the Governor's Excellence in Agriculture Award and induction in the Eastern Idaho Agricultural Hall of Fame. It is also nearly impossible to find an aspect of Idaho agriculture that Don has not been involved with through membership of organizations and councils, service on boards, and continuous outreach.

In addition to his experience, Don brings contagious enthusiasm and energy to everything he undertakes, and serves as not only a strong advocate for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, but also provides exemplary counsel to fellow farmers and ranchers. Don's easy going personality is complemented by a sharp mind and quick