

say that Wally helped create the Alaska that future generations will happily inherit. He was the driving force for many Alaskan traditions and we owe him immense gratitude. May he rest in peace.●

#### VERMONT ESSAYS

● Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, today I wish to share the powerful words of 12 Vermont students. As I toured the schools of Vermont, I encouraged students to write me focusing on issues of concern to young people and to recommend short- and long-term priorities for the President. I received more than 225 State of the Union essays about the declining middle class, climate change, and health care reform. These students truly answered, what is the state of our Union?

It is important to remember that part of our jobs is to represent the young people of our States and not just their parents. We all know that what happens in Washington, DC, impacts every American and all of us, including young people, should be thinking about these issues. Although Vermont is doing a better job than most States, there is certainly a legitimate concern that young people are not learning enough about civics. I think these essays demonstrate that students do understand the role they can play in American democracy.

As President Barack Obama presents his State of the Union Address to a joint session of Congress tonight, I think it is appropriate that the top dozen essays are printed in the RECORD, so that the entire country can see the excellent work that Vermont students are doing. I also want to thank the teachers—Jennie Gartner from Rutland High School; Elizabeth Lebrun, of Poultney High School; Joe Maley of South Burlington High School; and Terri Vest of Twinfield Union High School in Plainfield—who helped me select these essays.

Keenan Villani-Holland from Vermont Commons School was the teachers' top choice. In addition to Keenan, the other finalists, in alphabetical order, are: Iain Axworthy, Essex High School; Emily Berk, South Royalton School; Molly Burke, Champlain Valley Union High School; Jonah Cantor, Champlain Valley Union High School; Molly Cantore, St. Johnsbury Academy; Kristen Donaldson, Champlain Valley Union High School; Susannah Johnson, Vermont Commons School; Ingrid Klinkenberg, Edmunds Middle School; Ezra Mount-Finette, Champlain Valley Union High School; Lisa Ogorzalek of Rutland High School; and Bryn Philibert, Champlain Valley Union High School.

I am pleased the students of Vermont are thinking about these complex issues, which are of critical importance to not only our State but indeed the Nation. The decisions that we make on the Senate floor today will impact generations of Americans to come. That is

why I would like to share with you what these students' wrote. I ask that they be printed in the RECORD.

The material follows.

KEENAN VILLANI-HOLLAND, VERMONT COMMONS SCHOOL

The world is changing, and the United States has the opportunity to lead that change. Oil is running out, global warming is reaching or has already passed a significant tipping point and tensions with North Korea and Iran are escalating. On the home front, the middle class is rapidly disappearing due to an economic crisis that has been festering for years, we are losing out in education to China and our people have completely lost touch with the government and vice versa.

In older times, nations would go through major catastrophes often: devastating wars, plagues, bloody revolutions, etc. often enough to keep them new. In this day and age, these enormous crises are largely averted in the western world. Make no mistake, this is a great thing. However, it means we need to take it upon ourselves to renew our Nation, rather than waiting for a catastrophe that won't come.

We need to change quickly on three main fronts: The environment, the economy, and education. It is time to realize that fighting to save the environment is not in the least altruistic. The planet doesn't care about global warming or melting ice caps. We, on the other hand, should. Our current economic model is failing all but the richest of our Nation, as it slowly squeezes the middle class dry to supply the rich. Finally, our educational system clearly isn't working when China is easily surpassing us in education and our students feel more overworked and overstressed every day.

Let me first talk about the environmental front. Once we realize that it is no longer a fight to save polar bears, and that it is a fight to save ourselves, it will be easy. However, that realization will not come quickly. We need a huge-scale public awareness campaign to bring that point home to American people. After that, we need to start with large scale energy reform, focusing on renewables and following a European model.

On the economy, we need to throw away our preconceptions about the free market and start over. Heavy regulation to ensure the economic safety of the American people, and measures to start moving wealth back down the ladder to the middle and lower classes are essential.

Finally, our educational system needs deep reforms to focus on actually teaching children, rather than preparing them to do well on tests. Children want to learn. That's what they are supposed to be doing at that point in their life. It's just a matter of taking the time for each individual and giving them the attention they need and actually being invested in them learning new material.

All of these ideas are fluid and adaptable, as any part of government should be. We should never be afraid to change the course we are taking in favor one that may be more beneficial. The past decade was one about "Staying the course." This next one will be known as the one when we "Changed the course."

IAIN AXWORTHY, ESSEX HIGH SCHOOL

Our Nation faces many challenges entering into the new year. A recession has about 9.4 percent of our population out of work, we have a government deficit that must be paid off, and a tarnished image of America abroad must be mended. Though these challenges are great they present us with what I see as an opportunity unparalleled in recent history. Our role as a world leader has come into question as of late and good times pro-

vide little opportunity to change that view. When times are hard real leaders take it upon themselves to set the tone of the moment and show others how to react. It is time for America to lead once again.

Our troubles at home and our troubles abroad are tremendous. Our economy is in a weak phase of recovery, our federal deficit is larger than it ever has been, and our armed forces are engaged in a costly war. Relations have become strained between the United States and much of the world. The policies we enact in the coming months and years, both domestically and overseas, must be exemplary. The US has been the center of world commerce and culture for so long that we almost seem to fear up-and-comers. Instead viewing the coming shift of power as a loss we must view it as a win. In the wake of World War II the US helped set up a system of commerce that allowed many countries to develop into world powers. The fact that countries other than ours are realizing their potential should be seen as a great victory.

As we watch new world powers emerge we must see too that they will look to us as a role model. It is our duty and our privilege to set the right example in all areas, both in and out of the government. The private sector must become more responsible for its actions and create shared value within its partner communities. Our consumers must spend and save responsibly. Finally the people who represent us in Congress and our state legislatures must depolarize and find the mutual respect that has lately been non-existent. Once the correct tone is set and our leaders act as they would have us act, then we can look forward to a better tomorrow.

While our Nation sets an example on the world stage, Vermont has the ability to set an example on a national level. Vermont has powered through this recession with some of the lowest unemployment figures in the Union, and though we face our own issues we must acknowledge that we are much better off than many other states. As such, we ought to make concessions in Congress to aid those states hit hardest by the recession. Though Vermonters may be few in number we can show the rest of the country how citizens ought to act and put the good of the nation before our own comfort.

EMILY BERK, SOUTH ROYALTON SCHOOL

Growing up in rural, Middle Class America in the 21st century hasn't impacted my life or my immediate family's life. The current state of the union is coming out of a recession. Personally, I've been very lucky. Both of my parents are educated professionals that have stable jobs, which they were able to keep through this economic downfall. But it didn't mean that we weren't using more of our disposable income to afford our basic needs, such as food, health insurance, medications, fuel, oil, and utilities. Meaning, we weren't able to go on as many vacations, but we weren't losing our house. But I have family and friends that have been affected by the economic downfall. With the relations that I have with the people whom I know that are being affected by this, I believe that the Presidents ultimate goal should be to stabilize the economy, and support our own.

I believe that in order for the economy to become stabilized, a short-term goal should be that more jobs become available. Jobs will stimulate the economy and let people who are on unemployment to go back to work and earn more money. And to allow people under employed to have better employment for their education and ability. I believe by creating more jobs, people will make more money, and more money will then be spent, going to the government to start getting us more and more out the recession. "Creating jobs in the United States

and ensuring a return to sustainable economic growth is the top priority for my Administration," Barack Obama said in an Executive Order last March on his National Export Initiative. With little short-term goals such as more jobs, it will help start to stabilize the economy.

Another priority that I believe that should be on the Presidents list is to support military families. Families with family members in the military struggle with every day life. I personally have a family being affected by it. My cousin's father is in the war. He is on his second tour. He has missed his children grow up, with a daughter who is now 15 and a 10 year old son. His wife is forced to be a single parent. With support through programs, financial support and counseling we could help the families being affected by war. With programs set up for single parents with their partner in the war nobody can understand better than another parent with their partner in war. They would be able to share stories and understand how one and another copes with them gone. And more appreciation for those serving our country. They're fighting for their lives, causing their families live's to become difficult and change the way they live. Another priority should be Student Loan Reforms.

Student Loan Reforms are important because the change will eliminate private banks, the "middlemen" in the loan process and will save the US government about \$68 billion dollars over a span of 11 years, according to the White House. Because fewer fees will be paid to the local banks and more money will be available to lend to students because the money's coming directly from the government. The banks also charge the government money for each loan because they're not going to give students money for free. But for students, the loans will look relatively the same—same terms, same fees, same interest rates. The loans will most likely become more accessible to students as well.

These are some of the short-term goals I believe should be considered to help our country. I believe that this economic downfall, can, with work, be fixed. If we really want something we can achieve it. If people in our Nation come together and act as one, we can do it. I hope that I was able to give you good ideas about what goals I believe can help our nation. Even though I am just a 15 year-old girl living in a small town in Vermont, I still have a voice, and it will be up to my generation to keep us out of another depression.

MOLLY BURKE, CHAMPLAIN VALLEY UNION HIGH SCHOOL

Fellow Americans,

I'm writing to inform you of the current state of the Nation and concerns I feel must be addressed in 2011.

The overuse of fossil fuels and its impact on the environment is an issue I feel should be more extensively addressed. The United States of America needs to end its dependency on foreign oil and begin looking into alternative energy sources. Wind energy, and solar energy are infinite commodities that will steer the nation towards self-dependency, sustainability and a cleaner environmental future. The development of alternative energy sources may also create jobs.

Since June 2009, the United States has been slowly recovering from a severe economic recession. With an unemployment rate greater than 9 percent, it is clear we must focus our energies on job creation. Generating jobs in the environmental field and re-building our nations infrastructure including roads, bridges, and rail networks, which are deteriorating, will provide job opportunities. In order to meet many of these

objectives, we need to take a look at our current educational system to ensure we are providing the necessary tools and training for the youth of this country and accurately preparing them for the work force. In particular, we must stress the importance of math and science to remain at the forefront of innovation and technology.

The United States has a \$1.4 trillion deficit. This issue relates directly to the amount of overspending in this country. The proposal by the Republican Party, requesting to keep the Bush-era tax rates to aid job creation instead of placing higher taxes on affluent citizens is not enough to reduce the national debt. Raising taxes on the wealthiest people in this country will help decrease the national deficit without severely impacting their financial situation. We need to make hard choices, we need to cut spending and raise taxes in order to reduce the deficit.

Healthcare is a benefit that should be given to each citizen of the United States. In the Declaration of independence, each person was guaranteed the unalienable right to "Life." This right should be protected by universal healthcare, which provides citizens with the medical care and treatment necessary for their survival and well-being. Universal healthcare is a basic right for each citizen.

The United States needs to continue to be a world leader, however it no longer has the resources to be the "worlds policeman." The United States needs to work more effectively with other emerging superpowers like China, and Russia to solve large global issues. Collectively, we have a responsibility and duty to solve global problems.

To accomplish these goals and create a more effective government, there needs to be a more civil discourse between the Democratic and Republican Parties. As the leader of this Nation, I strive to make positive progress towards these goals however this can only be achieved if both parties are willing to make compromises. Working together as one Nation will strengthen the union. Thank you. God bless you. And God bless the United States of America.

JONAH CANTOR, CHAMPLAIN VALLEY UNION HIGH SCHOOL

My fellow Americans, today I will address issues you and I are facing as a country. Our country's trade deficit with foreign nations, the flaws of our education system, and the need for healthcare reform are the problems I will present and propose solutions for. It is important to attend to these issues so we can resolve them efficiently as a country.

There is an obvious issue with how disproportionate the amount our country imports compared to exports. It is time for America to not only supply itself with a sufficient amount of goods, but also foreign countries. Of course, this increase in exports will require more factories to operate. This increase in factories will affect the economy in positive ways, mainly through the creation of jobs. More jobs leads to less poverty and more money flowing throughout the country. A healthy economy needs money and power distributed among its citizens.

A successful democracy is dependent on a well-informed and educated public. The education system in this country has been slipping in recent years, letting down the citizens. It is time to give children and young adults opportunities to experience an excellent education program. More money will be invested in the educational system, the overall quality of the education being received will be higher, the equipment in the classrooms will be up-to-date, and lastly, public colleges and universities will become affordable. An educated public leads to more politically-active citizens and a healthier soci-

ety. It is critical to give every citizen an education that will help lead him or her and our country to success.

There are millions of Americans who currently don't have healthcare and millions more who are under insured. In the long run, this fact costs everyone money. These people with inadequate or no healthcare do not tend to take care of themselves. Going to see a doctor costs money that they don't have, so many simply don't go at all. But when one of these people needs care because of an emergency, everyone pays for it.

These are all large problems, but they are not surmountable. We will need to be determined to put in hard work to accomplish these goals, but the rewards we will have earned will be great. I hope we can work as a country to achieve our goals to make a more perfect society.

MOLLY CANTORE, ST. JOHNSBURY ACADEMY

Each year, the president of the United States addresses issues the people want to be addressed. While the president tackles many topics in the State of the Union Address, an important question arises about one topic in particular within the economy. Should reducing unemployment become a short-term goal as the national deficit grows, to be dealt with on a long-term basis, or vice versa? Another important topic of discussion and worthy of being addressed is the encouragement of civic responsibility.

The economy encompasses two closely related topics of much debate: unemployment and the national deficit. Two points are more than clear, however. People remain unemployed and the Nation remains in trillions of dollars in debt. Which concern takes priority? While creating jobs is excellent for the economy, it is also hurtful. In order to fight unemployment, we are dragged further into debt, as the government provides stimulus money to create more jobs. As the national debt continues to grow, its triple-A credit rating is at risk of dropping, which could hinder the U.S.'s ability to borrow money to finance the deficit. However, if the government focuses on lessening the deficit, unemployment will increase. While climbing out of debt pleases the government, the shrinking job pool displeases the people. The president, elected by the people, does everything in his power to please the people, in order to get reelected. Creating more jobs may put the U.S. in jeopardy of losing its ability to borrow money in order to finance its deficit, and focusing on lessening the deficit cuts jobs which displeases the people, who play a very important role in the democratic government. Thus, this growing debate should be focused on in the State of the Union Address.

The people are pertinent to a democratic government. They have responsibilities as citizens to play that role, called civic responsibility. In order to participate in and take action in the government, a citizen must first be informed of the issues, problems, and challenges that face the country. A very important part of civic responsibility is voting. People have a right to vote, and voters, especially young and new voters, are responsible for being informed of the candidate's stances and goals. An informed voter will elect the candidate best fit for guiding the United States to recovery and prosperity. As the article, "Mr Obama's unpromising year" in *The Economist* states, young and first time voters, "who in 2008 were electrified by his person rather than his policies" should have instead been informed and should have voted for President Obama because of his stances and policies. Therefore, encouragement of civic responsibility, especially being an informed voter, is a very important issue that should be addressed in the State of the Union Address.

The State of the Union Address is an important opportunity in which the voices of the people can be heard. Two important topics that should be addressed include the encouragement of civic responsibility and the ever-growing debate of unemployment versus the deficit.

KRISTEN DONALDSON, CHAMPLAIN VALLEY  
UNION HIGH SCHOOL

My fellow Americans, our history as a country has had its ups and downs. We've seen hardships like most nations have never seen before, but also we've seen prosperity that most nations do not even deem possible. At this point, our Nation is struggling in one of these "lows". However, because of our proud "high" moments that we have in this country, I know that change is possible with just a few alterations.

Although the unemployment rate has dropped from 10.6 percent to 9.3 percent, that still means 21,830,360 Americans are unemployed. No way to pay their rent that is riding over their heads, not sure if they will make it through the winter, and still have a house to their name. That is the reality for almost 1 in 10 Americans. We need to create more jobs, so we can continue to see that percentage decrease. One way is to create new jobs by initiating a clean energy start. Hundreds of thousands of jobs lie on the creation and innovation of clean energy. Why not reduce our unemployment rate, while leading the world on a new, greener path.

Outsourcing is the second main reason for unemployment rates. As a country, we need to put our priorities first, and make sure that we hold onto our jobs. We need to step back up to the plate again, and continue our stronghold on the title of the world's powerhouse.

Now, along with instability in jobs, comes the concern of our overriding deficit. This deficit is like the elephant in the room. Everyone knows it's there, but no one is doing anything about it. Our country is in over 14 trillion dollars of debt. The only viable fix is to cut all of the programs that simply aren't working. We need to re-think our approaches, and decide what is needed and what isn't.

Finally, the issue of the rising education costs is plaguing our Nation, holding children back from their full potential. If students are able to go to school, ⅓ of them will be stuck under student loans once they graduate. Colleges and universities need to cut their costs, because if they do so, more students will have a chance at education. More of these educated citizens will be able to contribute to our nation.

Ladies and gentlemen, America's history has been a rollercoaster of ups and downs. We've seen it all, and we know how to recover from it. By addressing the most prevalent problems, America will have the opportunity to possibly not see a "down" for a long time.

SUSANNAH JOHNSON, VERMONT COMMONS  
SCHOOL

We Will Not be Perfect, But We Will Be Better

I try to use the word "perfect" seldom. In my short life I've worked with lots of different people in many different places. And I have come to the sad conclusion that the world will never be perfect.

The United States, like every country, has problems deeply concerning to young people. Yet our voices are rarely heard. Here's my voice.

In my opinion the priority issues are those that involve the overall wellbeing of people: the economy, renewable energy, and health care.

The Economy—Since the Recession began in 2008 the economy has splintered. Thou-

sands of people lost their jobs, lost their homes, and found themselves struggling to pay for things like housing, college tuitions, even food on their tables. In response to the recession, President Obama created the Recovery Act which helped create three million jobs. The law helped avoid another Great Depression. But it is important for the President to face all aspects of the economic crisis and create a new plan for a "new era of responsibility" (his words). The plan needs to include the creation of more jobs, a strategy to keep families in their homes, and finally a plan to get credit flowing again so that small businesses can reform and hire workers so families are able to pay for their children to go to college.

Energy—Renewable energy is another long-term goal President Obama needs to focus on. So far the President's programs have helped provide short-term relief to families who struggle to pay for gas at the pump, produce one million Plug-In Hybrid cars which get up to 150 miles per gallon, and has told America that by 2012 10 percent of our electricity must come from renewable sources. These actions have helped lead the country in the right direction. But more steps need to be taken. It is important for us to reduce our dependence on foreign oil. The U.S. should also become the world leader on climate change. The more people that are aware of the issue and its effects, the more ideas people will have about how to resolve it. Creating jobs that are "green" is also a strategy that would be beneficial.

Health Care—More and more Americans have lost their health insurance over time. They just can't afford good medical care. There should be no debate whether health care reform is necessary—it is. Period. Nearly 46 million Americans have no insurance, and this needs to change. It would be beneficial to create a health insurance program that would be an option for all Americans. It's very unfair that there are people who don't qualify for health insurance because of "pre-existing" health conditions. A program needs to be created in which nobody is discriminated against, regardless of their health history. To create a program that does these things will be expensive, so the President needs to be creative and figure out where this money will come from. He's smart, he can do it.

INGRID KLINKENBERG, EDMUNDS MIDDLE  
SCHOOL

The state of our Union can be addressed in many topics; the economy, education, achievements, failures, and so much more. There are many things that have happened in the past year, we have achieved some of our goals, but we have fallen short on some of our goals as well. A couple of years ago, our country was in a severe economic decline. Since then our economy has been improving and looking promising. This is a step in the right direction. In the other direction, this year our poverty rates went up by 10.3 percent. If we can do something to lower the poverty rate in coming years that would be beneficial. The state of our Union is stronger today than it was last year, and it can be stronger next year if we stay focused.

Poverty in the United States is a big problem. Right now about 13 percent, or nearly 40 million people, are living in poverty. Many of these people live without a roof over their head, food on the table, and many work multiple jobs just to survive.

It would be beneficial to make the opportunity of education more accessible, education provides opportunities. When more people have the opportunity of education, more people are able to have better paying jobs, which will allow them to better support themselves. Even though education would

offer a brighter future for many, there still will be poverty. It is an unsolved problem the whole world is faced with. It has existed in the past, it exists now, and it will exist in the future. What we can do to make a difference is to decrease poverty in the future. Better education and more opportunities will be one of the keys.

In the past few years the U.S. has been recovering from a devastating economic crisis, which impacted the whole country and most of the world. Financial institutions collapsed, the stock markets fell, people's retirement savings were reduced, and people became more conservative in their spending. Many jobs were lost, resulting in people not being able to pay for their homes and the real estate market weakened. The future for many Americans continues to be uncertain. This past year our economy has been getting more healthy and promising. The credit markets have begun to unfreeze allowing companies to borrow the money they need to expand. Company profits have improved, which has allowed the stock markets to go up, benefiting investors. 2010 has been a year that we have been able to make our economy stronger and healthier.

One sentence to describe this past year, and the change in the U.S., I would say, "We are headed in the right direction, we just need to make a little more change happen." Overall our economy has improved, and if we keep it at a steady rate like it is now, we will be in a better position in a couple of years. The poverty rates went up which told us that we need to work harder on that aspect of our Union. That is what better and more affordable education will do in the United States. There were defiantly positives and negatives about the state of our Union this past year, and I think it was a good step in the right direction for a better future in our Union.

EZRA MOUNT-FINETTE, CHAMPLAIN VALLEY  
UNION HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. Speaker, Vice president BIDEN, Members of the Congress, distinguished guests and fellow American citizens.

I am here before you today, to full fill one of my constitutional responsibilities to address congress on the current state of union. My speech tonight is not meant just for the hundred and twelfth congress but also to the citizens concerned in the condition of our country.

Half way through my presidential term, we have brought our country out of a recession, passed a health care bill that delivered healthcare to every single United State citizen, constructed loan programs helping students pay for college, and cut taxes for everyone. Yet we still have a growing 14.5 trillion dollar debt, 9.4 percent of the country is out of work and we have troops stationed in Afghanistan and Iraq.

We have work to do, and I am first going to address the subject of partisanship, not just in Congress but also throughout the country. We might be Muslim, Jewish, Christian, old, young, African-American, Mexican-American, Caucasian, democrat or republican but there is one thing we all are; citizen of this great country. I want to remind Congress that their duty is to represent the United States and what is in the country's best interest. That there are no two sides of an issue just two opinions; both with there own reasoning behind them. Your job as Congressmen is to create the optimal legislation that benefits the citizens of the country, not legislation that is beneficial to a party, a company or yourself, but to the three hundred million other people that live in the United States of America. Take those two ideas and work together to compromise. Look past the D or R that is by your name

and look at your passport, your license and tax forms and stare at the word "America" that is printed on them.

Our economy is not on the brink of collapse, but on the brink of success. As I stood here last year, banks were in trouble and weren't loaning out money. The stock market was plummeting and everyone was panicking. People were wondering how they would make it through the next year. Now the banks are stabilized and have started to give out more loans, the stock market is gaining point and people are feeling more comfortable about their future. With Unemployment still at one of its highest levels in the past century I am looking forward to working with my fellow colleagues in drafting legislation that will bring jobs back into the economy. We have almost recovered from this current recession. By the time my term in office is complete I promise that I will bring our economy out of the trouble that the previous administration created for us.

I look forward to working and helping with the new Senate and House of representatives in restoring this country to the greatness it deserves.

Thank you, God bless you and God Bless the United States of America. Thank you

ILISA OGORZALEK OF RUTLAND HIGH SCHOOL

Dear Mr. Speaker, Vice President BIDEN, Members of Congress, distinguished guests, and fellow Americans:

During the terms you all have been in office, the United States has gone through many changes. Many changes have been for the benefit of our economy, and many have created problems for the people of America. This country has many issues that need to be resolved if we want to make this generation stronger than the ones that came before it. By having a specific short-term goal, such as having healthcare for all, and having a specific long-term goal, such as reducing the national deficit, I think the young people of this Nation will have the opportunity to thrive.

First, a short-term goal that I think would benefit America right now is having healthcare for all. Many young people's families in this country cannot afford healthcare, and their wellness is suffering with each day. To make healthcare available to all, I propose to have health insurance companies share a percent of their revenue with the government, based on their yearly income. With this money, the government can then fund designated hospitals to provide healthcare for the people who cannot afford it. This way, the people who receive healthcare through their jobs can keep it, and young people who are not fortunate enough to have it can get it through government aid.

Next, a longer-term goal that would benefit America's youth would be to decrease the national deficit. Our Nation's budget is complex and divided into many parts, and as a result of these components, we are in trillions of dollars of debt. Although it would be difficult to significantly reduce our debt in the next few years, there are some arrangements that would help lower the amount of debt we hold. For example, we could raise taxes for people who make at least half a million dollars a year. This would create an increase in tax revenue. If we could keep this increase steady and not spend more than the rate of inflation, or Nation's debt would be significantly reduced. As a result, we would be less dependent on foreign countries, such as China. Since they hold 11 percent of our debt, we could reduce this number to let our nation's money go to other important matters, such as poverty and research for illness.

Overall, this Nation has gone through many changes in the past few decades. If we

could make healthcare available to all, especially young people, and reduce the national deficit, then this generation has the opportunity to really succeed. These changes would also help improve our economy, global position, and overall wellness of the young people in America.

BRYN PHILIBERT, CHAMPLAIN VALLEY UNION  
HIGH SCHOOL

My fellow Americans,

This year our country has risen out of a recession that threatened the economic stability of many Americans. We have taken great strides to restore the hope and promise America has always stood for. In 2010 we have made great progress but there is still much more to do moving forward, which is why I am taking this opportunity to address you. I am addressing you all to call to all esteemed members of Congress to step up and help me once again put the United States back on top as a world leader in democracy and peace.

Two years after the recession devastated our people, we finished this past year with an unemployment rate of 9.4 percent, down 0.6 percent from the end of 2009. Consumer and business confidence is on the rise and we have finally come to a bipartisan agreement on new tax-cut legislation. We reached a compromise to improve economic growth, help the struggling middle-class families, and business development. We have also made historic steps towards the promise of equality for all with the repealing of the ban on open homosexual service men and women in our armed forces.

This year's Health Care Reform Bill set forth legislation to expand coverage to 32 million currently uninsured Americans. Along with this, the bill allowed health care to become less expensive for people to purchase and starting in 2014 insurance companies will no longer be able to deny coverage to anyone based on pre-existing conditions. This marks the turning point that great Americans, like the late Senator Ted Kennedy, worked their entire lives for.

By August of this past year we had shrunk the number of troops in Iraq to 50,000 down from 110,000 a year ago, and we have ended all U.S. combat missions in Iraq. By the end of 2011 all American troops will be withdrawn from Iraq. There is still much to be done around the world to ensure a terror free future, but we have made substantial steps towards that goal in the past year.

America has faced challenges this year such as the oil spill in the Gulf. We have learned from this environmental crisis and we are moving forward with new knowledge on how to respond to the economic impacts of a crisis like this.

It is a known fact of American politics that U.S. politicians rarely agree in issues across the board, but I know that all of us in this room can agree that we come here every day to ensure that all American people get the opportunity to live in our great country. Now more than ever bipartisanship is going to be imperative to the achievements of the upcoming year. I urge you all, Democrats and Republicans, to work together to live up to the promise of America as our forefathers have.

Thank you.●

TRIBUTE TO ANGELA  
GOSPODAREK AND STACEY  
PLUMMER

● Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, today I wish to congratulate two outstanding teachers from New Hampshire.

Stacey Plummer and Angela Gospodarek have been chosen for the

Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching, awards that honor teachers who have made outstanding contributions to the classroom and to the teaching profession. I applaud them for their remarkable accomplishments and dedication to New Hampshire's students.

Recent international test scores show that U.S. students lag behind students of other countries in math and science achievement. Our country's competitiveness in this global economy requires us to nurture skilled engineers and scientists. Teachers like Angela and Stacey are critical to this effort because they are able to engage students and help them to develop a love for these key subjects. That is why I am delighted to see them honored for their work.

Stacey has taught a variety of high school math classes for 16 years and currently teaches at Hollis Brookline High School in Hollis, NH. Her passion for mathematics combined with her talent for teaching allows her to convey to her students the beauty and precision of the subject. In addition to advising the State championship math team, she finds time to mentor student teachers.

To make science meaningful, Angela likes to provide hands-on classroom experiences that allow her students to discover the wonders of science. She began her career as a marine scientist but soon realized she had a talent for and enjoyed teaching others. The students at Iber Holmes Gove Middle School in Raymond, NH, are fortunate to have had her as a teacher for the last 7 years.

The Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching are the most prestigious honors given to math and science teachers in the country. As a former teacher, it is a privilege for me to be able to congratulate Angela Gospodarek and Stacey Plummer for their commitment to excellence in teaching. I am extremely proud of the part they play in educating and training future generations of Americans.●

#### REPORT ON THE STATE OF THE UNION DELIVERED TO A JOINT SESSION OF CONGRESS ON JANU- ARY 25, 2011—PM 2

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States, together with an accompanying report; which was which was ordered to lie on the table:

*To the Congress of the United States:*

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice President, Members of Congress, distinguished guests, and fellow Americans:

Tonight I want to begin by congratulating the men and women of the 112th Congress, as well as your new Speaker, JOHN BOEHNER. And as we mark this occasion, we are also mindful of the empty chair in this Chamber, and pray