STEM skills. These include jobs in some of the fields that are most critical to the future of our country—health care, energy, climate change, and national security. Yet too few kids are graduating from high school with the interest or the preparation to successfully pursue STEM degrees in college. Well over half of college students in China and Japan major in STEM fields, compared with only one-third of U.S. students.

International standardized tests show that we rank only average or below average in students' math and science performance. The 2009 Program for International Student Assessment placed American 15-year-olds 25th in math and 17th in science out of 34 OECD countries—the developed countries. What is worse is, we are spending more on education per student than any other OECD country in the world, except for Luxembourg.

As Congress works to reform No Child Left Behind this year—and the Presiding Officer is working with me on that on the HELP Committee—I urge my colleagues to consider strongly the importance of STEM education and how to spend our limited resources most effectively. President Obama has proposed recruiting and training 100,000 new STEM teachers in the next decade and has requested $100 million to advance this worthy goal.

However, many STEM teachers leave the profession within their first few years of teaching, often drawn by far more lucrative salaries elsewhere in science and technology fields. Those talents are valued in the market. So if we are going to invest in recruiting and training new teachers, we also need to invest in retaining and best utilizing those individuals.

The STEM Master Teacher Corps Act is based on a proposal brought forth by President Obama's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology. It will provide the top K–12 STEM teachers in a participating area with additional professional development, so they can become leaders in their schools and in their communities.

Master teachers will mentor their younger or less-effective peers, giving them guidance and inspiring them to stay in teaching. Master teachers will also network with one another, sharing best practices and resources. Together, these measures will improve the quality and the ability of all teachers to impart strong STEM skills and an eagerness to learn and pass it on to their students.

Providing career advancement opportunities to effective STEM teachers and support to beginning teachers will help increase retention, so our investments in recruitment and training will have an even greater payoff.

In recognition of their excellent work and new leadership responsibilities, it is only fair that these master teachers should be compensated, so my legislation also gives them a salary bump. Our teachers work just as hard as other STEM professionals, and it is time we recognize that and pay them accordingly. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers, the median salary offered to recent college graduates in certain STEM-related fields, including physics, computer science, accounting, and engineering, is $24,000 higher than that offered to a new secondary school teacher and $30,000 higher than that offered to a new elementary school teacher.

This legislation has been endorsed by more than 60 national and regional groups, ranging from educational organizations such as the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, the College Board, and Education Minnesota, to business groups such as LifeScience Alley, the BioBusiness Alliance of Minnesota, and the Minnesota High Tech Association. The bill is also supported by rural groups, such as the National Rural Education Association and the Rural School and Community Trust and numerous science and math societies.

I am particularly pleased to have the endorsement of two leading national businesses that also happened to be headquartered in my State, Medtronic and 3M. Both of these companies recognize and support the importance of acting now to ensure a well-trained workforce for the future, and they have already shown a proactive interest in supporting and engaging students in STEM activities.

I was recently at a first robotics event at the University of Minnesota that was astounding. They had two huge auditoriums of these over-130 teams competing in Minnesota in this robotics competition. So I am very grateful for the support of 3M and of Medtronic.

Mr. President, I have a very impressive list of the number of endorsers to the bill, and I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the full list of endorsers.

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

ORGANIZATIONS ENDORSING SENATOR FRANKEN'S STEM MASTER TEACHER CORPS ACT OF 2011

3M; Alliance for Excellent Education; American Association for the Advancement of Science; American Association of Physicists in Medicine; American Association of Physics Teachers; American Federation of Teachers (AFT); American Institute of Physics; American Mathematical Society; American Physical Society; American Society for Engineering Education; American Society of Civil Engineers; America's Promise Alliance; Arlington, MA STEM Coalition; ASME Center for Public Awareness; Association of Science Materials Centers; Biobusiness Alliance of Minnesota; Campaign for Environmental Literacy; Central Jersey Modeling Institute; College Board; College of Education at Purdue University; Council of State Science Supervisors.

ECOCAD DESIGN GROUP, LLC; Education Development Center; Education Minnesota; Engaged Education Now; For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (FIRST); HMC Architects; IEEE–USA; International Renewable Energy Technology Institute; Iowa Mathematics and Science Education Partnership; LearnOnLine, Inc.; LifeScience Alley; Materials Research Society; Math for America; Medtronic; Minnesota Center for Engineering and Manufacturing Excellence; Minnesota Council of Teachers of Mathematics; Minnesota High Tech Association; Minnesota Intermediate District 287.

National Association of Secondary School Principals; National Association of State Boards of Education; National Board for Professional Teaching Standards; National Council of Teachers of Mathematics; National Education Association (NEA); National Institute of Building Sciences; National Institute for Excellence in Teaching; National Rural Education Association; National Science Center; National Science Teachers Association; New Teacher Center; Ohio Technology and Engineering Educators Association; Ohio Technology Education Advisory Council; The Optical Society; NV STEM Education Coalition; Project Lead The Way; Rural School and Community Trust; School Science and Mathematics Association (SSMA); South Carolina's Coalition for Mathematics and Science; SPIE, the International Society for Optics and Photonics; STARBASE Minnesota; STEM Education Coalition; TIAX LLC; Triangle Coalition for Science and Technology Education.

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, the Master Teacher Corps Program addresses the recommendations presented in the President's Council of Advisers on Science and Technology's 2010 K–12 STEM education report and tracks the priorities laid out more than 10 years ago in the Glenn Commission report.

Specifically, it would establish an ongoing system to improve the quality of mathematics and science teaching in grades K–12, and it would improve the working environment and make the teaching profession more attractive for K–12 mathematics and science teachers.

With the planned reform and reauthorization of No Child Left Behind this year, we have a rare and, indeed, ideal opportunity to implement real change in K–12 STEM education in this country. So let's act now, before it is too late, before the storm has fully gathered, and before that rapidly approaching category 5 hurricane destroys the competitive technological edge and the prosperity our country has worked so hard to build and maintain.

I urge my colleagues to join Senators LIEBERMAN, SHAHEEN, and me in supporting a sustained investment in K–12 STEM teacher quality and in raising the standards of the teaching profession through the STEM Master Teacher Corps Act.

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA-DULUTH'S MEN'S HOCKEY TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, I would also like to take a moment to congratulate the University of Minnesota-Duluth's men's hockey team for capturing their first ever NCAA Division I Championship. The UMD Bulldogs faced off against the Michigan

Wolverines in St. Paul this past Saturday and, wow, it was an amazing game.

Over 19,000 fans packed the Xcel Energy Center to watch a nail-biter, really, is what it was. Goaltenders Shawn Hunwick of Michigan and UMD's Kenny Reiter kept the game close, neither allowing a goal in the third period and sending the game into overtime.

Stuck at 2–2 Bulldog Travis Oleksuk gathered the puck behind the Michigan goal just 3 minutes into the extra period. With the puck on his backhand, Oleksuk slid a pass in front of the net to hard-charging teammate Kyle Schmidt, Hermantown, MN.

Kyle, only 10 days removed from hand surgery, buried the puck from just outside the crease. In a moment of pure exuberance, he skated to the halfline and dove onto his back, performing what I believe was a snow angel, as he slid on the ice. It was something to see. It was one of the most thrilling finishes in college hockey history.

After 50 long years, Kyle's overtime goal gave the Minnesota-Duluth Bulldogs their first ever men's hockey NCAA Championship. In his tenth year at the helm, Coach Scott Sandelin led a tenacious and skilled Bulldog team that dominated on the power play and got timely goaltending throughout the tournament.

I would be remiss if I didn't commend the Michigan Wolverines, who played fiercely and deserve congratulations for an excellent final game. I know everyone at the University of Minnesota-Duluth must still have smiles on their face after their victory, and I congratulate the players and coaches and the fans on a triumphant season.

I would also be remiss if I didn't say that last year the women's hockey team, the Bulldogs also, won the women's NCAA Division I hockey tournament. So kudos to the University of Minnesota-Duluth and the Bulldogs.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Arkansas is recognized.

Mr. PRYOR. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. PRYOR pertaining to the introduction of S. 792 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. PRYOR. I thank the Chair.

TAX FREEDOM DAY

Mr. KIRK. Mr. President, last week in Chicago, we announced tax freedom day—the day that marks the time when Illinois residents have paid their Federal and State tax burdens. The Tax Foundation, a nonpartisan organization that determines tax freedom day, found that this year Americans will pay more on their tax burden than they do on food, shelter, and clothing combined. Tax freedom day falls on April 15 in Illinois and on April 12 nationwide.

Yet tax freedom day underestimates how heavy the government's burden is by only reflecting the size of the bills we actually pay to the government, not the spending we are pushing off on future generations in the form of higher deficits and debt. If we paid all of our bills to the government, the way it spends money, tax freedom day would not come until May 23.

With a government that consumes so much, it is fair to ask: Is the government spending as efficiently as possible on programs it is funding? Sadly, it is very clear that waste, fraud, and duplication still exist widely in the Federal Government.

To call attention to these issues, I introduced the "silver fleece award" in homage of Senator William Proxmire's "golden fleece," but this one is made of silver, not gold, because we are headed for more austere times. In the month of February, this award was voted by Facebook users on "waste book" and was given to a program awarding $1 million to provide signs displaying poetry in zoos.

I rise today to announce the nominees for the month of March and to announce the winner. The second runner up was a grant related to the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act, or ISTEA, and Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act, or SAFETEA–LU, which was awarded $150,000 to create special tunnels for salamanders to pass under a Vermont road. The first runner up was a video game, funded by the Federal Government, called "WolfQuest," which was developed using a National Science Foundation grant of $609,160 to the Minnesota Zoo.

However, the March winner of the "silver fleece award," with a 63-percent vote, is a grant of $460,000 funding a study on why people lie on text messages, instant messaging services, social networking Web sites, and other modern communication systems. Yes, we spent over $460,000 of hard-earned taxpayer dollars to tell you why people lie when they are communicating electronically.

There are new nominees for the April "silver fleece award." This month's nominees were put forward by a leader on the issues of fighting pork and government waste in the House, Congressman JEFF FLAKE of Arizona. He nominated $450,000 in grants from the State Department for art shows in Venice, Italy, $130,276 in National Health Foundation funds to sponsor the creation and distribution of a cookbook, and $328,835 spent on an Air Force photo op in New York City.

We invite your votes and your feedback on "wastebook on Facebook" to decide what next month's "silver fleece award" winner will be.

The sad thing in all of this is that the only current loser is the American people.

TRIBUTE TO BILL SAMUELS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, when most people think about Kentucky, three things usually spring to mind immediately: horses, college basketball, and bourbon. What few people realize, however, is that it is only in the past few decades that premium bourbon has had much of a presence outside Kentucky at all. Just 30 years ago, bourbon was one of the fastest-declining spirits in America. And yet today, the industry supports 10,000 jobs in Kentucky; more than 1.5 million people have visited the Kentucky Bourbon Trail in the last 5 years; and every distiller in the State is adding capacity. So bourbon's come a long way, and if you ask folks in Kentucky, most of the credit goes to one man, whose 35-year run at the helm of the world's most famous bourbon distillery comes to an end this week.

I am referring, of course, to Mr. Bill Samuels, Jr., the longtime president of Makers Mark. Bill's dad may have come up with the formula for premium bourbon, but it is because of Bill's vision and tenacity that the rest of the world knows about it today.

The first thing you could say about Bill Samuels is that rarely in the history of American commerce has there been a better marriage between a man and a product than the one between him and Makers Mark. To many Kentuckians, he is an instantly recognizable figure. You could say that what Colonel Sanders was to chicken, Bill is to bourbon. And so it is appropriate that the first job he ever had, at the age of 16, was driving the colonel around. You couldn't ask for a better teacher than Harlan Sanders if you wanted to learn how to promote a product, and, if that product was bourbon, you couldn't ask for a better hometown than Bardstown, KY. Bill's godfather and next-door neighbor was Jim Beam, and Bill can trace his family's tradition of bourbon making in Bardstown back seven generations to 1844.

A dramatic change in the family business came in 1953, when Bill's father, Bill Samuels, Sr., decided to abandon the old family recipe, bought the smallest distillery in the State, just outside of Loretto, and got to work on a more premium product. Bill, Sr. never really thought of the family business as much more than a hobby, so Bill, Jr. went off to college where he studied engineering and earned a law degree. But the family business retained a certain attraction, and soon the younger of the two Bills had to make a choice: practice law, or accept his father's offer to work with him for half the money. The other terms of employment weren't much better. Bill's dad told him that they did three things and three things only at the family's distillery: "We make whiskey, we