

will be deeply missed by all who knew them. I extend my deepest sympathies to both men's families, colleagues, and friends.

WESTON PLAYHOUSE THEATRE  
COMPANY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, it is a delight to call the Senate's attention to the record of 75 years of quality productions achieved by the Weston Playhouse Theatre Company as they celebrate this major milestone with their community and friends. Among its many accolades—including the Moss Hart Award for Best Production in New England for "Floyd Collins"—Weston's Playhouse has earned a national reputation as a professional theatre. As Vermont's oldest theater, and one of the 15 oldest theatre companies across the United States, the Weston Playhouse has entertained families and visitors from New England and beyond since its founding in 1935. Its first professional season in 1937 included the opening of Noel Coward's "Hay Fever," featuring young actor Lloyd Bridges. Since then the Weston Playhouse has grown to include musicals and late-night entertainment, cradled in Weston's small village of 640 people.

Consistent with Vermonters' willful determination and hard work, Weston's Playhouse Theatre Company endured a 1962 fire that destroyed the original playhouse building. Despite this hardship, the community pulled their resources together and continued to provide Vermonters and New England with quality theatre and musical experiences. Today the company serves 25,000 Vermonters and Vermont visitors each year with its devoted staff, talented artists, and dedicated board. The Weston Playhouse Theatre Company has routinely met their goals of making live theatre accessible and meaningful to a broad population of Vermonters. Resource support through the National Endowment for the Arts has allowed the playhouse to expand its offerings of cultural experiences to thousands of elementary, middle and high school aged children every year. Their outreach programs have promoted educational productions and have toured often throughout Vermont and New England while continuing to produce prestigious regional and world premieres.

Marcelle and I have always enjoyed attending theatre productions in Vermont, and we have wonderful memories of the time we have spent with the Weston Playhouse Theatre Company, as well as of the wonderful people we have met at the theatre. It is important to our State that we continue to host diverse actors and actresses on Vermont's stages, enriching the lives of Vermonters across the State. Anyone who has contemplated a painting in a museum, examined an original manuscript or composition, or disappeared into a performance as the lights dimmed—and has gained a greater understanding of both the artist and

the subject as a result—knows the power and importance of these works in our lives. I am proud to join in honoring the Weston Playhouse Theatre Company for 75 wonderful years of achievements that have enriched our heritage and the quality of life in the marvelous Green Mountain State.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

REMEMBERING BEN  
GRUSSENDORF

• Mr. BEGICH. Mr. President, today I wish to memorialize a great Alaskan, Mr. Ben Grussendorf. A public servant, master teacher, community activist, legislator, outdoorsman, and all-around gentleman, Ben Grussendorf died June 17, 2011. He is survived by his wife of 48 years, Karen, son Tim, daughter Karla, and four grandchildren.

Born February 23, 1942, in Grand Rapids, MN, Ben attended the University of Minnesota, where he earned a B.A. in political science and an M.A. in political science education.

In 1967, eager to fish, hunt, and hike, Ben and Karen moved to Sitka, AK, to teach. Ben taught government and social sciences at Sitka High School and Sitka Community College, but his attraction to politics and government soon drew him to help shape a strong future for his adopted community. Ben was elected to the Charter Commission, and became its chair, leading the effort to write unification documents which continue to govern the city and borough of Sitka. He was subsequently elected for two terms to serve as mayor of this unified government. In 1980, Sitka voters sent him to the State House of Representatives where he served 10 terms, a full 20 years.

In the legislature, Ben earned a reputation as a diplomat. He was a man who focused on problems and solutions rather than party and politics. The respect he showed by listening to differing viewpoints opened the door for people of all backgrounds and political persuasions to create a climate of compromise. Ben knew true leadership was born, not in brazen ideas or self-promotion, but in the ability to win allies and build coalitions. Because of his ability to nurture friendships on both sides of the aisle, he was elected as Speaker of the House for an unprecedented three terms.

As speaker, Ben brokered compromises which put the public first. Fair to everyone, his calm composure and down-home sense of humor defused tension and brought people together; his vision and diplomacy kept them focused on the greater good.

Throughout his tenure in the House, Ben was renowned for his patience, discretion, and expertise. He knew the nooks and crannies both of the legislative process and the issues. Colleagues relied on him for inside knowledge of Alaskan politics to affect change and

make a difference. They remember him as an important teacher and mentor, one who led by example.

When Ben announced his retirement from the Legislature in 2000, he cited his original Alaska draw—time to hunt, fish, and walk his dogs. Because of his passion for wildlife and capitalizing on his legislative expertise, Governor Tony Knowles convinced him to accept appointment to the Alaska Board of Game in 2001. There, he put his listening and diplomatic skills to further use, tackling important challenges such as caribou herd management and subsistence policy. His effectiveness and diplomacy earned him successive reappointments by Governors Murkowski, Palin, and Parnell.

Whether hunting, fishing, hiking, gardening, or just observing, Ben was an outdoorsman at heart. He was also a writer who kept a journal, wrote short stories and drafted manuscripts about subjects he well understood—politics and nature.

Ben Grussendorf's devotion to Sitka and to Alaska, whether as a teacher, a legislator, a member of the Board of Game, or a member of community service organizations, was inspirational. He made a difference with every commitment, and his years of working on issues important to people throughout the State will be part of his legacy as an Alaska statesman. He will be deeply missed by his family and his many friends.●

DEVILS POSTPILE NATIONAL  
MONUMENT

• Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating the centennial of Devils Postpile National Monument in the Eastern Sierra of California.

When Devils Postpile was first surveyed in the early 20th century, it became apparent to geologists that its distinctive formation and features of the surrounding landscape provided a special window into the volcanic and glacial processes that shaped the Sierra Nevada as a whole.

The cliff of columnar basalt that constitutes the Devils Postpile, so named because it looks like tall posts piled together, is one of the wonders of the geological world. The columns can reach heights towering more than 60 feet. Those on the west front are high, straight and clean-cut; those at its southern end stand out for their curvature.

Shortly after the initial survey, U.S. Forest Service Engineer Walter Huber learned of a plan to blast portions of the Devils Postpile to create a dam that would flood the middle fork of the San Joaquin River and provide power to nearby mining operations. Mr. Huber considered the idea as a "wanton destruction of scenery" and began the effort to establish a monument to protect Devils Postpile along with the nearby Rainbow Falls, a spectacular

101-foot waterfall named for the rain-bow that often forms in its mist.

Support for monument designation was substantial, including a letter of support from the Sierra Club signed by the renowned preservationist John Muir. On July 6, 1911, using the authority under the Antiquities Act of 1906, President William Howard Taft signed the proclamation creating Devils Postpile National Monument.

With the growth of the interstate highway system in the 1950s, a proposal for an eight-lane trans-Sierra highway connecting Fresno to Mammoth Lakes came forward that would have resulted in destruction to the landscape and the character of the monument. The effort to stop the highway was long and at times difficult. But, with strong opposition from a group of committed local residents, businessowners and packers, the proposal to build the trans-Sierra highway was abandoned in 1972.

The expansion of existing wilderness areas and the designation of the Ansel Adams Wilderness in 1984 brought further protection of Devils Postpile and the surrounding peaks and valley that constitute the breathtaking landscape of the Middle Fork of the San Joaquin Valley. I am pleased that in 2009 President Obama signed legislation I authored providing additional wilderness protection to public lands in the immediate area.

Today, Devils Postpile National Monument represents the special qualities highlighted in the Presidential Proclamation that led to its creation a century ago as a place of "scientific interest" and "public enjoyment." Every year, tens of thousands of visitors from all over the world travel to the Eastern Sierra to marvel at its natural beauty and rich history.

The story of the Devils Postpile National Monument's first 100 years is a testament to the value of preservation, scientific research, and recreation. I applaud the partnership between the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service which has resulted in high quality visitor services and the preservation of the beauty of the Middle Fork of the San Joaquin River.

As the friends and staff of the Devils Postpile National Monument gather to celebrate this auspicious occasion, I congratulate them on their centennial anniversary and wish everyone a memorable experience.●

#### TRIBUTE TO JUSTICE JUDITH MEIERHENRY

● Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota. Mr. President, today I recognize the service of Judith K. Meierhenry to the Unified Judicial System of South Dakota. In June of this year, Justice Meierhenry will retire after nearly 9 years as associate justice on the South Dakota Supreme Court.

Justice Judith Meierhenry was educated at the University of South Dakota where she received her bachelor's, master's, and juris doctorate degrees.

Upon completion of her education, Justice Meierhenry practiced law in Vermillion in 1977 and 1978. She began her service to the State of South Dakota in 1979 when Governor Janklow appointed her to the State Economic Opportunity Office. This was just the beginning of her commitment to South Dakota; she was appointed as Secretary of Labor beginning in 1980 and Secretary of Education and Cultural Affairs in 1983.

In 1985, Justice Meierhenry left the public sector and worked as a senior manager and assistant general counsel for Citibank in Sioux Falls, SD. Justice Meierhenry was appointed by Governor Mickelson in 1988 as a Second Circuit Court judge serving Lincoln and Minnehaha Counties. She became presiding judge of the Second Judicial Circuit in 1997.

Governor Janklow appointed Justice Meierhenry to the South Dakota Supreme Court in 2002. This historic appointment made her the first woman to serve on South Dakota's highest court. Though no female had preceded her in this post, Justice Meierhenry succeeded in this demanding position and now leaves her position having set a standard of excellence for her successors, regardless of gender, to follow. Through her service, female judges and attorneys in South Dakota's legal system now have available to them an exemplary female role model and owe a debt of gratitude to Justice Meierhenry. The citizens of the State of South Dakota are better for the public service of Judith Meierhenry.

According to Chief Justice David Gilbertson, during her time on the South Dakota Supreme Court:

Justice Judith Meierhenry has contributed to the legal scholarship of that body in resolving the disputes that come before it. Whether it be a traffic ticket or a death penalty conviction, Justice Meierhenry has approached each case with the application of the highest of legal scholarship. The South Dakota Supreme Court, the legal profession of South Dakota and all of the citizens of South Dakota are all better off for the public service of Justice Judith Meierhenry.

South Dakota Second Judicial Circuit court judge Patricia Riepel also notes that Justice Meierhenry "was always well-prepared and decisive, she required decorum in her courtroom as well as civility and cordiality to all of the participants, and she has worked tirelessly for the advancement of women within the legal profession, and especially within the judiciary."

I wish Justice Meierhenry a happy and healthy retirement. In her own words, "life and time are our only real possessions," and it is time that she reclaim those possessions for herself and her family. I thank Justice Meierhenry for her commitment to the rule of law and her long and distinguished career serving the State of South Dakota.●

#### TRIBUTE TO COLONEL ANTHONY WRIGHT

● Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, it is with great privilege that I congratu-

late COL Anthony Wright, Seattle district engineer for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, on his well-deserved retirement after 30 years with the Army Corps. Colonel Wright has been stationed with the Seattle District for 3 years and my staff and I have had the pleasure of working extensively with him during that time.

Western Washington State has suffered several severe storms in the last few years, resulting in devastating floods, major losses of infrastructure, and millions of dollars of damage to homes and businesses. Under Colonel Wright's leadership, the Army Corps responded quickly and efficiently to minimize the threats of rising floodwaters, and for this we are very grateful. His professionalism and expertise helped our region through disasters and undoubtedly lessened the destruction and prevented the loss of life.

An example of Colonel Wright's leadership ability was his response to a storm that caused serious damage to the Howard Hanson Dam in King County, raising the flood threat for hundreds of thousands of residents in the Green River Valley, which is home to one of the largest manufacturing and distribution bases on the West Coast. Colonel Wright and the Army Corps reacted quickly and decisively to counter this vulnerability, working with local governments and the public to ensure that the region was prepared until the dam could be repaired.

On behalf of all Washingtonians, I thank Colonel Wright for his dedication to the safety and well-being of the people of western Washington. His knowledge, experience, and tireless effort will be sorely missed. I congratulate Colonel Wright and wish he and his family the best of luck in their future endeavors.●

#### A TRIBUTE TO BOBBY ALLISON

● Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, it is with great pride that I recognize racing legend Robert "Bobby" Arthur Allison upon his induction into the second class of the NASCAR Hall of Fame. Bobby is a founding member of the "Alabama Gang" and one of the greatest drivers of NASCAR's modern era.

NASCAR is the most popular and competitive racing organization in the United States, and its premier league, the Sprint Cup Series, draws thousands of fans to each of its 36 races. Last year, NASCAR opened the NASCAR Hall of Fame to honor the sport's greatest contributors, inducting Richard Petty, Dale Earnhardt, Junior Johnson, Bill France, Sr., and Bill France, Jr. In the second class of inductees, Bobby, along with racing greats Ned Jarrett, David Pearson, and Lee Petty, and team owner Bud Moore, joined these elite racers in receiving one of the sport's highest honors.

Bobby Allison entered his first race while he was still a high school student in southern Florida, needing written permission from his mother to compete. Seizing the opportunity to race