

the Red Cross, the other organizations, the Salvation Army. We had a woman from California who came to town and gave \$2,000 to every family that had been affected, a gift of tens of millions of dollars.

We remember very well the Federal Government's rapid response, the agencies of the Federal Government that moved to assist the people who were affected. FEMA did an absolutely superb job under the leadership of James Lee Witt. We will never forget it. The Department of Housing and Urban Development, under the leadership of Secretary Cuomo, did a superb job, and we will never forget their help. The SBA was quick to move in to help businesses. We know all of those agencies will be ready to respond in Oklahoma and Kansas as well.

I hope that we see the Congress respond. I believe the people in Oklahoma and Kansas deserve the same kind of rapid and full response that we received in North Dakota. Frankly, I hope they don't face some of the delays we faced in trying to get a congressional response, because when people are devastated, they should not have to wait for help. This Government is big enough and strong enough and this country is generous enough to move to help immediately.

Mr. President, again, our hearts go out to the people in Oklahoma and Kansas who have lived through this trauma; and to those who have lost relatives and loved ones, we share their deep sorrow.

#### TEACHER APPRECIATION WEEK

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, this week is Teacher Appreciation Week. Yesterday was National Teacher Day.

For a number of our colleagues, education is such a core subject—both of the 105th Congress and now in the 106th Congress—Members want to express themselves on this subject.

I am joined today by the distinguished Senator from Mississippi with some opening remarks about Teacher Appreciation Week.

I yield up to 4 minutes to the Senator from Mississippi.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, let me congratulate my friend, the distinguished Senator from Georgia, for organizing this special order and allowing this opportunity to speak on the subject of Teacher Appreciation Week.

#### TRIBUTE TO TINA SCHOLTES, MISSISSIPPI'S TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I am proud to cosponsor the Senate Resolution proclaiming this week Teacher Appreciation Week.

This week, in every state, students and parents are taking time to thank the school teachers, and we should too. They are the true heroes in our na-

tion's effort to enrich the lives of all our citizens through education.

I want to pay tribute today to a special Mississippi teacher. She is Mississippi Teacher of the Year, Mrs. Tina Fisher Scholtes, of Sudduth Elementary School in Starkville, Mississippi. Tina has been an elementary school teacher for sixteen years. She has spent the past fourteen years teaching first grade in Starkville.

First grade lays the foundation for formal education. Every parent hopes their child will begin school with an excellent teacher. Tina Scholtes is without a doubt an excellent teacher. Being an excellent teacher requires hard work, along with respect for children and an understanding of the learning process. Tina has those attributes and more. She also cares about outcomes. She wants all her students to succeed.

Beyond the Masters Degree she earned at Mississippi State University, Tina has completed professional development for teaching reading and mathematics; the special needs of teaching deaf students; National Board Certification; and training other teachers. Her resume is evidence of her capacity for gaining knowledge and sharing it with others. While continuing her first grade teaching, she has returned to Mississippi State University where as a clinical instructor she directs the activities of student teachers.

Tina has brought new teaching techniques into the schools where she has taught. She serves as a mentor to new teachers and has developed school wide curriculum reforms. She also has used local television programs to provide early childhood education lessons to parents.

Another indication that she is a dedicated teacher is her participation in the Parent Teacher Association where she served as President while teaching at Emerson Elementary School. Tina recognizes the importance of teachers participating in the community and is active in her church, and in other community activities.

I was very pleased that Tina Scholtes took time to visit my office when she was in Washington recently for the National Teacher of the Year recognition events.

I congratulate her on all her successes. The first graders in Starkville, Mississippi are lucky, indeed, to begin their lives as students with Tina Scholtes, and we are all grateful to her for being such a good example for other teachers to follow.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I yield up to 4 minutes to the distinguished chairman of the Labor-Education Committee, Senator JEFFORDS.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Senator JEFFORDS is recognized.

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, it is a pleasure to participate in honoring our teachers in National Teacher Appreciation Week.

I think we all remember those early years of our lives when we started school. I still remember the first day of first grade. I remember going to school in my father's hand and fearing what was going to happen to me. I remember Mrs. Anderson who greeted us all individually at the door and how immediately I warmed up to her. It was then I realized this really wasn't going to be as bad as I thought. I can even remember where my seat was that year.

Ms. Maughn, in second grade, was another wonderful person. The teacher I remember more was Viola Burns, my third grade teacher. That was the beginning of World War II. She realized I needed a little further work so she had me read Time magazine and come back to her to talk about it. I also had her in the sixth grade. She was an incredible individual who helped shape my life.

Then fourth grade was "teacher unappreciation year"—I don't want to remember that. We rebelled. We ran through five teachers before we settled down. I wiped that from my memory. I feel sorry for those five teachers.

I think everyone has memories and understands what an incredible help a teacher can be in our lives.

My mother was a music and art teacher; my sister, a third grade teacher; my niece is a teacher; the man across the street was the principal of our high school.

Those schools are gone. My former elementary school is now a private school, a Christian church school; middle school is the fire station; my high school is now the middle school.

I still remember the teachers. It is not brick and mortar but the teachers that make a difference. Dindo Rivera goes around the country talking about the changes in education and how important it is. If an office worker had fallen asleep 20 years ago, woke up and walked through a modern office, they would be in incredible despair. They wouldn't know what to do. They wouldn't know how to answer the phone.

But he goes on to say that if a teacher had the same experience of falling asleep and waking up now, that teacher would walk into the classroom and find that not much had changed. But the world has changed and our teachers cannot be made the scapegoats. We should not indicate that it is their problem. We, as a nation, have to recognize the teachers need help and we have to give it to them. That means we have to develop professional training. We have to be sure our colleges are producing teachers who are well qualified. At the same time, we have to recognize that our Nation will not prosper if we do not realize it is the teachers who make the difference. We are increasing standards and doing all these things to envelop them with modern technology which is difficult to understand, especially if you don't have more than 10

minutes in a day to even think about those things.

I think it is incredibly important we all remember the teachers, especially this year, since the Elementary and Secondary Education Act is up for reauthorization. This is our moment, at a critical time in our history, when we must take a look at the problems and the demands and the difficulties that are presented to our teachers and devise the means to help them help us become the Nation we all want to be.

Let's think about our teachers today, remember what they did for us, and think about what we can do for them.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the distinguished Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I want to personally thank you for arranging for us to take this time out of our busy schedules to recognize teachers during Teacher Appreciation Week.

Providing the brightest future for our nation's children is one of the most important things we will do here on the floor of the Senate. After parents and families, America's teachers play the leading role in helping our children reach their potential. Therefore, it gives me great pleasure to join in tribute to our nation's outstanding educators and recognize a few of the top teachers in my home state of Idaho.

We all know the impact of teachers. Five days a week, for 9 months of every year, nearly 3 million teachers in this country help mold our children's future. I believe in the quality education our teachers, administrators, and others provide in Idaho. That is why my children continue to reside in the great State of Idaho. My wife Susan and I made the decision nearly 7 years ago when I was first elected to Congress that she and our children would remain in Idaho. We wanted our children to continue to receive the quality education they now experience in Idaho's public school system.

That quality education takes many faces. I want to show you one of them this morning. Judy Bieze lives in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho and teaches first grade at Hayden Meadows Elementary in nearby Hayden Lake.

Mrs. Bieze was honored this year by the State of Idaho as Teacher of the Year. But she is more than that; she is also a local softball coach and a Sunday school teacher, so I guess that makes her a teacher 7 days a week.

During each school year Mrs. Bieze gives individual attention to her students by profiling each one as the "Special and Unique" person of the week. She also encourages parents to volunteer in the classroom and to take an active role in their child's learning.

It is the ability to give of herself that makes Mrs. Bieze special. Her superintendent says she "exemplifies the initiative and dedication we seek in

our educators." Mrs. Bieze characteristically deflects that praise and credits her students. She says she—in her words—is "truly blessed" as "the recipient of their unrestrained love, curiosity and enthusiasm for six hours each day." If only we could be holding more speeches on the floor of this Senate that deal with issues like love, curiosity and enthusiasm. Mrs. Bieze, we salute you.

I would be remiss in not mentioning some of Idaho's other outstanding teachers. Just last week, Idaho's PTA honored Jeff Durner, a fifth-grade teacher at Jefferson Elementary in Boise. The PTA credits Mr. Durner for helping children "become the best they can be."

The Idaho Education Association credits a sixth-grade teacher from my hometown of Idaho Falls as being worthy of special recognition. Zoe Ann Jorgenson has helped develop a special program in her district that groups children based on their needs, not on their age. She says many parents have chosen to keep their children in public schools, rather than move them to private classrooms, based on this innovative and unique program.

Mrs. Jorgenson believes the system should be made to fit the children, not that children be forced to fit the system. She says that parents are looking for choices within the structure of the public school system, and she wants to offer them those choices.

Finally, Idaho Parents Unlimited says a special education teacher formerly from Blackfoot, and now from Meridian, ID deserves credit for trailblazing programs for students that are sometimes forgotten in our school systems.

Barbara Jones earned the title of Special Education Consulting Teacher. One parent in Blackfoot described her as "a true gift to my son as well as myself." Ms. Jones is now helping both fellow teachers and students learn how special needs can offer special rewards.

We all have a stake in this process, because our children's success in education depends on the support they receive at home, and the future of our nation depends on the leaders we are raising today.

Some define leadership as what we do with our opportunities. I am proud to praise these fine Idaho educators who have moved the bar higher—for our children.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize teachers across America for the vital work they do. I come from a family of educators, so I have seen firsthand the grueling work teachers go through every day—not for their own gain, but because they care about each and every one of our children. Teachers are not the highest paid people, they are not in the most glamorous profession—but they are, and should be, among the most respected

people in our country. That is why it was so important that we declared this week as the 14th Annual Teacher Appreciation Week and that we recognized May 4, 1999, as National Teacher Day.

Mr. President, the resolution that we passed yesterday states that education is key to the very foundation of American freedom and democracy we all enjoy, that teachers have a profound impact on the development of our children, and that much of the success we enjoy here in the United States can be attributed to our teachers. The resolution also states that while "many people spend their lives building careers, teachers spend their careers building lives."

Mr. President, I want to take a couple of minutes to recognize a teacher from my home state of Idaho who has truly spent her career building lives. Judy Bieze teaches first grade in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Judy got her start with a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Illinois State University, began teaching elementary students in 1971, and hasn't stopped since. For the past 14 years, she has blessed the children of Idaho.

She is an active member of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the International Reading Association, the Panhandle Reading Council, and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. She is a lead teacher in her school and has received numerous grants to do everything from providing books for parents and children to check out and read to underwriting a district-wide inservice training in spelling.

Somewhere amongst all of this, Judy finds time to teach some of Idaho's children. In fact, Judy humbly reflects that her greatest accomplishments come in 6- and 7-year-old bodies.

It is no wonder. Judy practices some techniques in her classes which some may call innovative, while others call them back to the basics. For instance, during the course of the year she takes time to recognize each child in her class as the "Special and Unique" person and works each day to recognize each child's accomplishments. Furthermore, she believes that parents must be actively involved in their child's education. From encouraging parents to be involved in classroom activities to weekly letters home to detail what their child has been doing in school, Judy recognizes that parents are first and foremost in a child's education.

Judy has stated that each day she is "rewarded by the large and small accomplishments of the children entrusted to my care." Last year, Judy's peers recognized these accomplishments and her commitment to the education of our children by choosing Judy Bieze as the Idaho State Teacher of the year for 1998-1999.

Judy believes that each child is a unique, unrepeatable miracle. On behalf of the great state of Idaho, I am glad that Judy chose to come to Idaho and work her miracles with our children. I am proud of the work she does, and am pleased that I have the opportunity to recognize her accomplishments today. It is my hope that other teachers will see what she has done, see how she cares for our children, and strive to follow her lead. With teachers like Judy leading the pack, I have great confidence in the future of our country.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAPO). The Chair recognizes the Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for 6 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. CONRAD. Reserving the right to object, and I will not object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent we get 4 additional minutes on this side as well.

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

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, it is expected the Senate will soon consider a resolution that highlights the week of May 2 to 8 as National Teacher Appreciation Week. We have had a wonderful 2 weeks in this Nation's Capital. Last week the President signed the Ed-Flex bill which returned much of the control—local accountability, local flexibility—to local schools and school districts. This week we honor our teachers.

I rise today to honor the many outstanding teachers across the Nation and especially in my home State of Tennessee. In particular, I would like to highlight the achievements of Ms. Delise Teague, the 1999 Tennessee Teacher of the Year, whom I had the honor to meet, as you can see in this photo, just several weeks ago. This is Delise in the picture.

First, I would like to cite some of the research which paints a clear picture about the quality of a teacher being so critical to the future of our children and their education. Tennessee is one of the few States with data systems in place which make it possible to link teacher performance to student achievement. Researchers have the capability of examining the impact teachers have in terms of their effectiveness, how well they are teaching, and what students actually learn. Data from these studies show the least effective teachers produce gains of approximately 14 percentile points for low-achieving students. However, the most effective teachers produce gains that average 53 percentile points.

The data also reveal that these effects are cumulative over time. In fact,

students with three quality teachers in a row, scored over twice as high on math tests as those students with teachers who are less qualified. Thus, we have anecdotal evidence and scientific evidence that a quality teacher has a tremendous impact on students.

One such outstanding teacher is Delise Teague, shown here in this portrait, who teaches English at McNairy Central High School in Selmer, TN. She knows firsthand the impact a quality teacher can have on a student. Using her words, she notes, "I cannot take personal credit for my success as a classroom teacher. Great teachers shared the light with me. I am simply passing it on."

She adds it was her first Sunday School teacher whose influence "served to fan the flame of learning that had been sparked at home by loving parents and an abundance of books." She will further tell you that she had several teachers in the public school system who played a key role in her own education and in her decision to pursue a career in teaching. The teachers who motivated Delise in her education were the ones who saw her untapped potential and challenged her. This is a lesson that Delise applies in her own classroom. She challenges her students and believes in their potential to succeed.

In fact, Courtney Carroll, a student at McNairy Central High School, wrote, "Miss Teague is loved and respected by her students because she truly wants each person who enters her classroom to be successful."

Delise coaches the varsity softball team and freshman basketball team. She has served on the Technology Literacy Grant Committee, the National Honor Society Selection Committee, and as a student teacher supervisor/mentor. She is active in her community and takes on projects such as distributing fruit baskets for the elderly and providing gifts through the project Angel Tree for underprivileged children and contributing to Saint Jude's Children's Hospital through fundraising efforts.

She is just one wonderful example of the many dedicated teachers in our Nation's schools. In my own past I think of June Bowen, who taught me seventh grade English, and Mary Helen Lowry, who passed away this year, who taught me English through high school. I am so pleased to be able to participate in this effort to honor our Nation's teachers by promoting National Teacher Appreciation Week.

As parents and community members, we should all take a few minutes to celebrate this great cause for our children's future. I yield the floor.

Mr. COVERDELL addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I thank all my colleagues honoring Na-

tional Teacher Day and Teacher Appreciation Week. I appreciate very much the work Senator FRIST has done on behalf of reform in education.

Mr. President, I am pleased to join my colleagues today to recognize May 2-8, 1999, as the 14th Annual Teacher Appreciation Week, and to commend thousands of dedicated teachers across the nation for their determined efforts to shape the intellect of our children.

The foundation of American freedom and democracy is a strong, effective system of education where every child has the opportunity to learn in a safe and nurturing environment.

America's first rate education system depends on a partnership between parents, principals, teachers and children. The success of our nation for much of the 20th century—is the result of the hard work and dedication of teachers across the land.

While many people spend their lives building careers, teachers spend their careers building lives. Our nation's teachers serve our children beyond the call of duty as coaches, mentors, and advisors without regard to fame or fortune. Across the land nearly 3 million men and women experience the joys of teaching young minds the virtues of reading, writing and arithmetic.

As part of the 14th Annual Teacher Appreciation Week, I'd like to pay special tribute to Andrew Baumgartner of Augusta, Georgia—who was recently named the 1999 National Teacher of the Year.

Mr. Baumgartner, who teaches kindergarten at A. Brian Merry Elementary School in Augusta, has been a teacher for 23 years. His motivation and source of inspiration comes in part from the belief that it was his duty to give something back to society, and he has done so through his teaching.

To achieve his goal of getting kids to learn, Mr. Baumgartner creates a sense of adventure in his classroom. He has used his creativity and imagination to bring the magic of reading and learning to the minds of his kids.

The award, sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers and Scholastic, Inc., will send Mr. Baumgartner on a promotional tour as 1999 National Teacher of the Year, where he will share his innovative ideas with other teachers around the nation. I wish Mr. Baumgartner the best of luck during this tour and am confident that he will inspire other teachers with his creativity and willingness to do whatever it takes to get kids to learn.

In closing Mr. President, I call on all my colleagues—on both sides of the aisle—to take a moment this week to give a special thanks to the nearly 3 million important American men and women—like Andy—who have contributed to the emotional and intellectual development of children across the land.

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise in recognition of Teacher Appreciation Week. During this week we have a special opportunity to thank the dedicated professionals who open our children's eyes to the world of discovery and learning, the world that will open the door to a brighter future for them and for all of Michigan.

Five days a week, for nine months out of every year, America's 2.7 million teachers help to mold our children's future, the future of Michigan, and the future of America. Across Michigan and across the United States, tomorrow's business leaders, inventors, doctors, and even teachers are building the foundation of learning and experience that will shape their lives and careers.

This week, Mr. President, Michiganders like all Americans are taking time to pay tribute to our teachers, some of the most important people in our children's lives. After parents and families, teachers pay the most important role in helping our children reach their potential. No teacher can take the place of loving and attentive families, but the school experience plays a crucial role in shaping our children's character.

After the tragic events in Colorado, I hope all of us will take the time to think about the difficult job our teachers have, in these troubled times, giving children the structure and habits as well as the knowledge they need to become good citizens and productive adults.

I have always supported calls for better computer technology in our classrooms. And it is true that our children need to learn to use tools that will expand their access to information. But a qualified, highly trained teacher remains the most important education tool in any classroom. Today's technological innovations can help teachers capture our children's attention and bring the world to their eyes and fingertips. But no machine can take the place of a dedicated teacher who genuinely cares about a child's future. With the rapid advance of education technology, we must ensure that our teachers are trained in the most effective educational use of this technology, and that none of us are distracted from the basics of a good education by glittering machines.

Unfortunately, Mr. President, there are disturbing statistics about how well our teachers are prepared to enter the classroom. More than 25 percent of new teachers nationwide enter school without adequate teaching skills or without training in their subject according to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. One in seven teachers has not fully met State standards.

We must do more to ensure that our teachers are fully prepared to meet the increasing challenges of their profession. We must take advantage of every

opportunity to provide today's teachers with access to proven training programs while simultaneously recruiting and training qualified and dedicated young people to become tomorrow's great educators.

Most importantly, Mr. President, we must applaud and show our appreciation to the teachers who go that extra mile for our kids, capturing their attention, helping them gain the knowledge and skills they need, and providing examples of dedication and skill that should inspire us all.

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I rise today to salute one of our nation's most precious resources, our teachers and in particular New Mexico's teacher of the year, Stan Johnston of Los Alamos High School.

I would submit, teachers are the key to America's future. Christa McAuliffe, the teacher and astronaut put it in perfect perspective. She said, "I touch the future, I teach."

Building upon her statement I would say: it is a simple fact that the future is prejudiced in favor of those who can read, write, and do math. A good education is a ticket to the secure economic future of the middle class. As the earning gap between brains and brawn grows ever larger almost no one doubts the link between education and an individual's prospects.

And today the Senate is acknowledging those on the front lines with our students, the unsung heroes, their teachers. Somewhere in this great country of ours a teacher has a future leader of the United States in his classroom. Who knows; it could be one of the students in Stan Johnston's English and Study Skills class at Los Alamos High School in New Mexico.

My point is simple, after parents and families, teachers play an important role in helping our children reach their potential. After our children leave home each morning, it becomes the responsibility of America's almost 3 million teachers to ensure our children are prepared for the future because in our nation's classrooms resides the future.

Hopefully, the future doctors who will find the cure for cancer, mental illness, and heart disease are right now in our classrooms. But, most importantly we have the next generation of our country now attending classes throughout our schools.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you and a job well done to all of our teachers and in particular, Stan Johnston of Los Alamos High School. Again, thank you and please continue the superb work you are doing on behalf of our country.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, of all the occupations in America, teachers may deserve their own "appreciation day" the most. And, perhaps no occupation influences the future of our country more. I am delighted to join my colleagues today in paying tribute to

those teachers all over America who have made a real difference.

One special teacher who made a real difference in my life was Mr. McElroy.

When I was a young boy, I played my violin in the school orchestra. On the day of one of our most important performances, the student who was supposed to play a solo on the bass got sick and was unable to perform. My music director, Mr. McElroy came to me and convinced me that, even though I had never played the bass, I could perform the solo.

I had terrible doubts about my ability to step in and do the job. But Mr. McElroy had confidence in me, even if I didn't. And he worked with me and encouraged me and coached me for most of that afternoon. That night I was able to play the solo without making a mistake.

As I think back on it, this was one experience that taught me that if I applied myself I could meet a challenge. When, in 1976, everyone believed I was a long-shot to win the nomination and, indeed, the election to become Utah's senator, I should have told them about Mr. McElroy.

I know that right now, in a classroom in Utah—maybe in the room of Diane Crim, who teaches math at Salt Lake's Clayton Intermediate School and is Utah's 1998 Teacher of the Year—another young student is learning these important lessons thanks to a dedicated and caring teacher.

Teaching is not just a job, it's a calling. It is a calling to impart knowledge, to mete out discipline, to inspire, to motivate.

Last week, our entire nation mourned the loss of a devoted teacher, Dave Sanders. The testimony of his students to his caring, whether in the classroom or on the basketball court, is a tribute better than any we here in the Senate could pay. I hope that the students he taught at Columbine High School will go on to practice the lessons he taught and be the kind of citizens in the community that he hoped they would be.

Mr. President, Mr. McElroy, Diane Crim, and Dave Sanders all represent the best of the teaching profession. There are thousands of others we could mention here today who have helped our children learn the keys for living such as reading, math, science, and history. But, more than that, they have helped reinforce essential values like hard work, perseverance, team work, and integrity. I am pleased to join in honoring these teachers today.

I yield the floor.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I also want to comment on the National Teacher Appreciation Week, because I think all of us can look back in our own backgrounds and remember what a difference teachers made in our lives.

I can remember very well the teachers who made a contribution to my life,

to my growing up: Mrs. Goplin, who taught American history and who really shared a great love for understanding the Constitution of the United States, always told us that this is one of the greatest documents in human history. I will never forget those words of Mrs. Goplin.

She was exactly right. Our Constitution is one of the greatest documents in human history, and how lucky we are to live in a country that has constitutional guarantees of freedom for the American people and says to each and every American, you have certain rights, rights that protect you from the overreach of government, because our forefathers had known in Europe that government can become oppressive and that government can make demands on its citizenry that are not fair, that are not reasonable. We are so lucky to have these protections.

I remember other teachers: My third grade teacher, Mrs. Offerdahl, who is still alive in a nursing home in North Dakota, what a great woman. She came every morning to that class with a sparkle in her eye and a love for learning and a love for teaching. She made a difference not only in my life but in the lives of hundreds and hundreds of students whom she taught over a very long career in the Bismarck, ND, school system—Mrs. Offerdahl.

And Mrs. Senzek, who was my fifth grade teacher, a highly intelligent woman, somebody who was absolutely committed to improving the educational standards of the kids in Bismarck, ND. My sixth grade teacher, Miss Barbie, who was a very sophisticated woman, somebody who loved reading and imparted that love to students.

I think back to how fortunate we were to have people of that quality and that caring who provided education to us and at great sacrifice to themselves. I can say every one of these women whom I have mentioned could have made much more money doing something else, but they were dedicated to teaching young people, and they made enormous financial sacrifices to do it.

There are so many other teachers along the way whom I remember. Mrs. Hook was my second grade teacher. She was a woman of real majesty, really almost a regal person, very tall, very erect, very dignified, somebody who commanded respect.

These are people who made an impression that has lasted a lifetime, lasted a lifetime for me, but I know lasted a lifetime for other students in the Bismarck public school system as well.

Mr. President, I add our words of praise to all the teachers across this country who make a difference in the lives of kids. Other than family members, other than parents, perhaps there is no more important relationship than

what teachers do in terms of training our kids. So, today, we say thank you, thank you for everything you have done. You have made a difference.

#### CRISIS IN AMERICAN AGRICULTURE

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I want to talk about another crisis that is occurring in this country. It is not receiving the attention as are the storms in Oklahoma, the tornadoes, and the tremendous damage that has been wreaked in those States by this set of storms, but it is a crisis nonetheless. It is almost a stealth crisis. It is a crisis in American agriculture, and I can tell you, it is causing trauma, too.

In my State, we have just seen a series of headlines in the major newspapers that tell the story. I thought I would bring them to the attention of my colleagues today so hopefully we can reflect not only on the tragedy in Oklahoma and Kansas, but we can reflect on the tragedy that is happening in central America, and I mean the central America of North Dakota and South Dakota, Montana, Nebraska, and Kansas—States that have been hard hit by a virtual depression in agriculture.

It is causing real trauma, Mr. President. These headlines tell the story. This headline sums it up: "The rural depression." There is a real depression in the heartland of America. Prices, the lowest we have seen in 50 years, are causing literally thousands of farmers to exit agriculture.

Here is another headline which recently ran in papers back home: "Farm prices, farm numbers both fall."

And this headline that says: "Another farm dies; does Washington really care?" That is the question we are going to be asking today and we are going to continue to ask as we see this crisis grow and develop affecting more and more farm families and starting to affect the small towns of our State as well. In fact, this headline says it well: "AG Crisis Is Bigger Than N.D." This is an editorial from the largest paper in our State pointing out that not only is North Dakota affected but other farm States as well.

This is a headline which ran recently: "State Loses Farmers." And one headline which ran, again, in the biggest paper in our State: "Crop Prices Are the Problem." And indeed they are. "Crop Prices Are the Problem." This article says, "Crop prices, that's the big thing wrong with the region's farm picture this year." And they are exactly right.

When I mentioned the crisis has moved from the farmstead to the streets of North Dakota, this headline tells that story: "Farm Downturn Leaves Main Street Reeling. Three family-run businesses in Michigan, North Dakota closed, with little hope of reopening."

There is the crisis that is receiving enormous attention in Oklahoma and Kansas—and it should have enormous attention. Those people deserve for others to understand what is happening and the suffering they are experiencing.

There is another crisis as well, and that is the crisis in farm country. Those people are suffering. And they deserve attention as well.

Let me just show another chart which goes right to the heart of the problem we are facing. This shows what has happened to farm prices from 1946 to 1998 for wheat and barley. You can see from the prices—this is 1998—it has even gotten worse. We go out to 1999, and these prices continue to decline in real terms. We have the lowest prices now for these commodities in 52 years. This is a crisis by any definition.

I just want to conclude by going back to what one of the articles said in the papers back home. This says: "Banks' Survey Shows Farm Income Dwindling." In this article they say, "The vice is tightening on farm borrowers in the Upper Great Plains. The outlook for farm income is grim unless commodity prices increase."

Mr. President, that is exactly the case. We face a tightening noose around the necks of literally thousands of farm families, and it is time for a response from the Federal Government. We need to pass the disaster supplemental. We need to make the last disaster program we passed whole, because we now know it will cost \$1.5 billion more to keep the promise which was made in that disaster program. We need to once again shore up the transition payments that are promised farmers under the new farm bill at this time of price collapse.

Those are steps we can take, we need to take, we must take. In addition, we should reform crop insurance, because we know that program does not work when you have multiple years of disaster.

I just close by saying once again, I hope America is listening and understands that there are tragedies occurring across the United States. We have a tragedy in Oklahoma, a tragedy in Kansas, and we ought to respond.

There are also tragedies that are occurring below the radar screen. They are not getting the attention of the national press. They are a crisis nonetheless, and we ought to respond to them as well.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

Mr. President, I know my colleague from Montana is waiting to speak.

I inquire of the Parliamentarian, how much time do we have remaining on our side?

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Five minutes 15 seconds are remaining.

Mr. CONRAD. I just ask my colleague from the State of Montana if he would like that additional 5 minutes. I