

Chairman of the Education Committee for the Indianola Chamber of Commerce.

Although Jack Harper is retiring from official public office, I know that he will continue to serve his community and the State of Mississippi in the same devoted manner that he has for his entire life. I am envious of the time that he will now have to spend with his family, particularly his grandchildren. Once again, I congratulate and thank Mr. Harper for his service to Sunflower County and Mississippi.

#### GUN ENFORCEMENT

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, earlier this week, President Clinton sent to Congress his budget proposal for the 2001 fiscal year.

Among his initiatives is a proposal to improve the enforcement of federal firearm laws. Specifically, the President requests more than \$280 million to provide law enforcement agencies with tools they need to reduce gun crime. The proposal includes funds to: improve the speed and accuracy of Brady background checks by upgrading State and local criminal history records; hire 500 new Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) agents and inspectors; provide grants to hire 1,000 new federal, state and local gun prosecutors; implement a comprehensive crime gun tracing program; and support local anti-gun violence media campaigns.

I believe this is an important initiative in the fight against gun violence, and I applaud the President's commitment to this issue. I hope that during this Session, Congress will support full funding for this aggressive gun enforcement initiative, and will act to close loopholes in our federal firearm laws that give young people and felons easy access to guns.

#### BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. SARBANES. Mr. President, I am most pleased to join millions of Americans in commemorating African-American History Month and particularly this year's theme "Heritage and Horizons: The African Legacy and the Challenges of the 21st Century." This theme as announced by the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History (ASALH) is most appropriate and timely as we enter a new millennium and hopefully a new and even brighter era of African-American progress.

Since 1926, Americans have observed a time during the month of February to recognize the vast history and legacy that African-Americans have contributed to the founding and building of this great Nation. It was the vision of the noted author and scholar, Dr. Carter G. Woodson, that led to this celebration. As we review the last 100 years, it is important to remember

that there have been many challenges and changes in the 1900's for African-Americans.

During the early 1900's, discrimination against African-Americans was very wide spread. By 1907, every Southern state required racial segregation on trains and in churches, schools, hotels, restaurants, theaters, and in other public places. New leaders for the African-American race emerged such as W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington, whose intellectual thoughts on the progress and direction of African-Americans are still very much discussed in the community.

There was also the Northern migration of hundreds of thousands of Southern African-Americans during World War I to seek jobs in defense plants and other factories. Many African-Americans served our country admirably during this war and in World War II. Like World War I, this war led to the expansion of defense-related industries and opportunities in the North for employment. During the 1940's, about a million Southern African-Americans moved North. Discrimination played a large role in the labor industry which led A. Philip Randolph of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters to threaten a march on Washington, D.C. President Roosevelt then issued an executive order forbidding racial discrimination in defense industries.

Following World War II, three major factors encouraged the beginning of a new movement for civil rights. First, many African-Americans served with honor in the war, as they had in many of the wars since the American Revolution. However, in this instance, African-American leaders pointed to the records of these veterans to show the injustice of racial discrimination against patriots. Second, more and more African-Americans in the North had made economic gains, increased their education, and registered to vote. Third, the NAACP had attracted many new members and received increased financial support from blacks and whites. Additionally, a young group of energetic lawyers, including Thurgood Marshall, of Baltimore, Maryland, used the legal system to bring about important changes in the lives of African-Americans, while Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. appealed to the conscience of all Americans.

Congress had an important role in passing the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. I am pleased to note that Clarence Mitchell, Jr. of Maryland played a critical part in steering this legislation through Congress. African-Americans also began to assume more influential roles in the national government, a development which has benefitted the entire Nation.

Gains in education for the African-American community have been significant. From 1970 to 1980, college en-

rollment among African-Americans rose from about 600,000 to about 1.3 million. This gain resulted in part from affirmative action programs by predominantly white colleges and universities. By the early 1990's about 11 percent of all African-Americans 25 years of age or older had completed college. About two-thirds of that group had finished high school. There have also been many more advances and accomplishments during that time, but this is just a brief overview of what has been a tremendous and rich history and heritage for African-American people in our Nation for the last 100 years.

As we look forward to a new century, we anticipate that African-Americans will continue to prosper in American society and throughout the world. Their success is our success. As we look toward the horizon, we see record breaking events for African-Americans.

The unemployment rate for African-Americans has fallen from 14.2 percent in 1992 to 8.3 percent in 1999—the lowest annual level on record. The median household income of African-Americans is up 15.1 percent since 1993, from \$22,034 in 1993 to \$25,351 in 1998. The real wages of African-Americans have risen rapidly in the past two years, up about 5.8 percent for African-American men and 6.2 percent for African-American women since 1996.

The African-American poverty rate has dropped from 33.1 percent in 1993 to 26.1 percent in 1998—the lowest level ever recorded and the largest five-year drop in more than twenty-five years. Since 1993, the child poverty rate among African-Americans has dropped from 46.1 percent to 36.7 percent in 1998—the biggest five-year drop on record. While the African-American child poverty rate is still too high, it is the lowest level on record. As the African-American population continues to expand, we continue to strive to make laws that improve the lives of all Americans so that many more record breaking accomplishments occur.

As we begin the first Census count of the 21st century, we are working to ensure that Census 2000 is the most accurate census possible using the best, most up-to-date methods to make sure every person is counted. According to the Census Bureau, the 1990 Census missed 8.4 million people and double-counted 4.4 million others. Nationally, 4.4 percent of African-Americans were not counted in the 1990 census. While missing or miscounting so many people is a problem, the fact that certain groups—such as children, the poor, people of color, and city dwellers—were missed more often than others made the undercount even more inaccurate. A fair and accurate Census is a fundamental part of a representative democracy and is the basis for providing equality under the law. Therefore, I encourage everyone to make sure your neighbor is counted.