

to principle. CHUCK ROBB served his country courageously in Vietnam, and he served the Commonwealth of Virginia just as courageously in the U.S. Senate. Time and again, he voted his conscience, despite pressures to the contrary. Senator ROBB let principle, not politics, be his guide during his service in the body. His conduct should give every American faith that legislators can conduct themselves in a way that does honor to our democracy.

Senator ROBB opposed the flag desecration constitutional amendment, opposed the Defense of Marriage Act, and supported spending cuts while opposing the politically popular tax cuts. He did what he thought was in the best interest of Virginians and the nation, and I thank him for that. The Senate is a better place for Senator ROBB's service, and I join my colleagues in wishing him and his family all the best as he moves on to new endeavors.●

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I would like to recognize the leadership and accomplishments of a respected colleague who will be departing at the end of this term. Senator CHUCK ROBB has served in the Senate as a representative of Virginia for more than a decade. During his tenure, he has been a strong advocate for a wide range of important legislative reform activities.

During his time in the Senate, Senator ROBB has fought to strengthen national security, maintain fiscal responsibility, and protect the environment. He has also been widely recognized for his longstanding commitment to improving education.

As a former Governor of Virginia, Senator ROBB was instrumental in increasing resources for schools. Building on these efforts, he spearheaded efforts to help states and localities build and renovate schools, promoted legislation to put 100,000 new teachers in the classroom, fought for school safety initiatives, and championed measures to wire schools to the Internet. These are important efforts that have benefited children and teachers across the nation.

As colleagues on the Finance Committee, we have fought to address the challenges facing Social Security and Medicare. Just this year, we worked closely to develop a proposal to provide prescription drug coverage for all Medicare beneficiaries. I am proud to say that this proposal would provide much needed drug coverage to millions of seniors citizens and disabled individuals.

I would also like to note that I am proud to have worked with a colleague with such a distinguished military background. Senator ROBB served our nation for more than 34 years, during which time he received national honors for his leadership and commitment to serving our nation.

For these and many other reasons, I have been honored to serve with CHUCK

ROBB. I would like to join my colleagues in wishing him and his family all the best in the future.

#### RETIREMENT OF SENATOR JOHN ASHCROFT

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, as we conclude the 107th Congress, we will be saying goodbye to our colleague and friend, Senator JOHN ASHCROFT of Missouri.

A former two-term Governor, JOHN ASHCROFT has earned a reputation in the Senate for his principled pursuit of conservative issues. He is also recognized as a strong proponent of the wide use of the internet by federal agencies as a way to make the government more responsive and accountable. As a leader in the term-limits movement, he carried out the innovative online petition drive.

Senator ASHCROFT served on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, as well as the Commerce and Judiciary Committees. He established himself as a leader among Republicans on a range of issues from term limits to tax reform and welfare reform. While in many instances I have found myself on the opposite side of issues from John, I have always respected his intellect, his integrity, his principled positions and his ability to disagree without being disagreeable.

Since 1995, JOHN ASHCROFT and I have co-chaired the Senate Auto Caucus. In this capacity, we have worked together to provide Senators with up to date information on issues affecting the automotive industry and its employees. Through the Auto Caucus we organized informational briefings to give Senators and their staff and opportunity to better understand the auto industry's remarkable progress as well as the challenges it faces. The Caucus provides a forum for Senators to exchange ideas on issues affecting the industry such as transportation, environment, trade, technology and health care.

Working together with Senator ASHCROFT's, we were able to increase membership in the Auto Caucus from six Senators to twenty-eight. The Auto Caucus played a leadership role in pressing the Administration to negotiate market opening trade agreements with Japan and Korea in the automotive sector and continues to weigh in on and monitor those agreements. In addition, the Caucus hosts meetings between Senators and Automotive CEOs, provides timely briefings on US-Japan and US-Korea automotive trade negotiations, and encourages the Administration to fight to open markets to U.S. vehicles and auto parts.

Last year, Senator ASHCROFT and I worked together to urge the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to use an unbelted 25 mph barrier test instead of a 30 mph test to design air bags that will help better protect chil-

dren, teenagers and small adults. Our work on this very complicated and controversial issue brought the Administration and Auto industry together to reach a result that will increase automobile safety.

We also worked together to continue the moratorium on unfair and ineffective increases in Corporate Average Fuel Economy standards and worked toward a compromise in the Senate to ensure that a National Academy of Sciences study of the effectiveness and impacts of CAFE standards will include the effect of those standards on motor vehicle safety as well as discriminatory impacts of those standards on the U.S. auto industry.

Also, we have worked together in the past to ensure that environmental regulations recognize and reinforce the voluntary environmental improvements and technological achievements of the automobile industry.

Not only will JOHN's contribution be missed in debate on the Senate floor, but his voice will be sorely missed, I suspect, by the "Singing Senators", the wonderful quartet in which he has joined with Senators LOTT, CRAIG and JEFFORDS. My wife and family, join me in wishing the best in the years ahead for JOHN, his loving wife (and co-author), Janet, and their family.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Senator JOHN ASHCROFT as he prepares to leave the Senate.

For the past six years, Senator ASHCROFT has done important work as a member of the Commerce, Judiciary, and Foreign Relations Committees in the United States Senate. For example, Senator ASHCROFT has focused on reforming our nation's use of agricultural sanctions during foreign trade disputes. We share a common vision that we must not use food as a weapon in our disputes with other nations, and Senator ASHCROFT has made a high priority of changing this policy. His work is important both domestically and internationally, and he can be proud of his contributions.

I also appreciate Senator ASHCROFT's recent work with Senator DORGAN, Senator BOND, and me on the Dakota Water Resources Act. This legislation is critical for the economic future of North Dakota, and I greatly appreciate the constructive role Senator ASHCROFT played in representing the interests of his state. During discussions on this bill he was a tenacious advocate for his state's interests. His diligence in representing his state's interests, coupled with his willingness to gain an understanding of the water needs of my state, ultimately helped us reach a compromise acceptable to both states. The people of Missouri can be proud of his work fighting for their interests.

More generally, Senator ASHCROFT has been a man of his word who served

his state and his country with distinction. I join my colleagues on both sides of the aisle in wishing him well in his future endeavors.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I rise to pay tribute to a colleague and friend who will be greatly missed by the United States Senate—Senator JOHN ASHCROFT.

Senator ASHCROFT, served Missouri and the nation with distinction.

In the Senate, he was a leader in passage of landmark welfare reform legislation, authoring the Charitable Choice provision. He fought for lower taxes, a strong national defense, greater local control of education, and enhanced law enforcement.

A popular, former two term governor of his home state, JOHN brought a real “can-do” sense of purpose to his work in the Senate. I have always felt that those who come to the Senate with experience as governor, have especially valuable experience that the entire nation benefits from.

There is a term used throughout the 211 year history of the Senate called “Senatorial courtesy.” JOHN won the admiration of his colleagues in many ways, especially his caring tradition of writing wonderful personal notes—not by computer—but always taking time to write them by hand.

We wish you, your wife and family well as you take on your new challenges.

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#### RETIREMENT OF SENATOR ROD GRAMS

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, as this session of Congress comes to an end, I want to speak about my friend and colleague from the State of Minnesota, Senator ROD GRAMS.

A former television news personality, ROD GRAMS, in his term in the House of Representatives and in the Senate, quickly established himself as a proponent of assistance to farmers and as an advocate for the establishment of a national nuclear waste repository.

As a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he has been an opponent of international agricultural sanctions and a strong supporter of vigorous foreign trade. He supported IMF funding, trade with China and review of the U.S.-Cuba relationship.

He joined the bipartisan effort to enact strong brownfields cleanup legislation. ROD GRAMS earned a reputation as a strong supporter of tax relief, favoring elimination of the marriage penalty and other tax cut proposals.

While ROD GRAMS and I have disagreed on a number of issues, I respect the commitment which he has brought to policy debate. Where we disagreed, I found ROD GRAMS to be a straight-talking and agreeable adversary. I wish him and his family well in the future.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, for the past six years, I have had the privilege

of serving in the Senate with ROD GRAMS, a colleague who has distinguished himself on a number of important issues including budget, tax policy, and agriculture. He has served Minnesota with distinction as a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, the Senate Budget committee, and the Joint Economic Committee.

On a national level, Senator GRAMS is perhaps best known for his “Families First” plan, first discussed as part of the 1994 Republican budget alternative. This plan included a \$500 per-child tax credit, a recommendation that eventually became part of the 1997 Balanced Budget Act.

On a more parochial level, I have worked closely with Senator GRAMS on issues affecting our farm communities, and in 1997 to help our states recover from the disastrous floods along the Red River Valley. Communities along the Red River were devastated by this 500 year flood which disrupted business and forced thousands of families from their homes.

Senator GRAMS worked closely with delegations from North Dakota and South Dakota to make certain that the urgent needs of so many families and communities were met. He played an important role in ensuring bipartisan support and passage of the disaster relief legislation that was so critical for our states at that time. I know that many North Dakota families and businesses are very grateful for his support.

I extend my best wishes to Senator GRAMS, and his family, and my appreciation for his support on critical agricultural, budget, and disaster issues that we have worked together on in committee and on the Senator floor together.

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#### TRIBUTE TO SENATOR SPENCER ABRAHAM

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute and recognize the accomplishments of a colleague, Senator SPENCER ABRAHAM of Michigan. Since joining the Senate in 1995, he has served with honesty, dedication, and integrity.

As members of the Budget Committee, I had the opportunity to work with Senator ABRAHAM on a number of important issues. A fiscal conservative, Senator ABRAHAM work to balance the federal budget and cut government waste. He has also been a champion of keeping our Social Security dollars locked away. This is an interest in which Senator ABRAHAM and I share a keen interest.

Most recently, Senator ABRAHAM was the lead sponsor of the American Competitiveness in the 21st Century Act, legislation that will help ensure our nation’s continued growth and leadership in information technology (IT).

The bill authorized visas for 195,000 high-tech professionals to work in the U.S. to meet the growing demand for skilled IT workers throughout our economy. During consideration of the bill, I was pleased to work with Senator ABRAHAM and his staff to include in the legislation long-term initiatives to ensure that Americans of all ages are trained to fill critical IT positions in our Information Age economy.

During his time in the Senate, Senator ABRAHAM also worked to curb unfunded mandates, stiffen sentences for cocaine dealers, and advocated stronger privacy protections for consumers on the Internet. His work has been thoughtful and our nation is a better place because of his efforts.

Mr. President, it has been a pleasure to serve in the Senate with SPENCE. I have the utmost respect for my friend and colleague from Michigan, and appreciate all of his contributions to the United States Senate and our nation. I would like to join with my colleagues in wishing the Senator and his family the best in the future.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the accomplishments of my colleague and friend, Senator SPENCER ABRAHAM from Michigan.

Senator ABRAHAM began his service in government in Washington, DC in 1990, when he had the honor of serving in President Bush’s Administration as Deputy Chief to Vice President Dan Quayle. In 1993, SPENCER ABRAHAM returned to Michigan to run for the United States Senate seat vacated by Senator Don Riegle who was retiring. Senator ABRAHAM won that Senate seat in 1994 and became the first Michigan Republican elected to the United States Senate in 22 years.

I have had the pleasure of working with Senator ABRAHAM on a number of issues including high technology and immigration over the last six years. Not only is Senator ABRAHAM a colleague of mine, SPENCE and his family are friends as well.

SPENCE ABRAHAM is a dedicated public servant, and he has represented the state of Michigan well in the United States Senate. During the past six years, Senator ABRAHAM took the lead in the Senate on high tech issues and immigration. He has been a strong supporter of tax cuts. Senator ABRAHAM has also played a prominent role in trying to protect our Social Security Trust Fund—having fought hard for a Social Security Lock Box.

The Senate is going to miss SPENCER ABRAHAM’s leadership. And, those of us who know him well are going to miss his friendship in the Senate.

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#### NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF BIOMEDICAL IMAGING AND ENGINEERING ESTABLISHMENT ACT

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed