

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.

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.

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.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF BIOMEDICAL IMAGING AND ENGINEERING ESTABLISHMENT ACT

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