

during a time of turmoil, present-day West Virginia is an emblem of peace and tranquility. Ernest W. James captured it perfectly:

There autumn hillsides are bright with scarlet trees;  
And in the spring, the robins sing,  
While apple blossoms whisper in the breeze  
And where the sun draws rainbows in the mist  
of waterfalls and mountain rills,  
My heart will be always in the West Virginia hills.

So on this, West Virginia's 137th birthday, I am enormously proud to invite my colleagues to join me in recognizing and celebrating this West Virginia Day.●

#### ALASKA RECIPIENTS OF PRESIDENTIAL AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE TEACHING

● Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I have come to the Senate floor today to congratulate three exceptional teachers in Alaska—Douglas Heetderks of Anchorage, Lura Hegg of Palmer, and Gretchen Murphy of Fairbanks. President Clinton named these Alaskans as recipients of the 1999 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. This is our Nation's highest honor for mathematics and science teachers in grades K through 12.

Each year, a national panel of distinguished scientists, mathematicians and educators recommends one elementary and one secondary math teacher and one elementary and one secondary science teacher from each state or territory to receive a presidential award. The 1999 recipients were selected from among 650 finalists.

The Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching Program is administered by the National Science Foundation (NSF) on behalf of the White House. The program was established in 1983 and is designed to recognize and reward outstanding teachers. In addition to a presidential citation and a trip to Washington, DC, each recipient's school receives a NSF grant of \$7,500 to be used under the direction of the teacher, to supplement other resources for improving science or mathematics programs in their school system.

Douglas Heetderks, Lura Hegg and Gretchen Murphy are exceptional and highly dedicated teachers. Douglas Heetderks teaches Elementary Science at Susitna Elementary in Anchorage; Lura Hegg teaches Secondary Science at Colony Middle School in Palmer; and Gretchen Murphy teaches Elementary Math at University Park Elementary School in Fairbanks. In addition to having extensive knowledge of math and science, they have demonstrated an understanding of how students learn and have the ability to engage stu-

dents, foster curiosity and generate excitement. Mr. Heetderks, Ms. Hegg, and Ms. Murphy have displayed an experiential and innovative attitude in their approach to teaching and are highly respected for their leadership.

Mr. President, our nation's future depends on today's teachers. Currently, 40 percent of America's 4th graders read below the basic level on national reading tests. On international tests, the nation's 12th graders rank last in Advanced Physics compared with students in 18 other countries. And one-third of all incoming college freshmen must enroll in a remedial reading, writing, or mathematics class before taking regular courses.

If we are to turn these dismal statistics around we are going to need more and talented teachers like Mr. Heetderks, Ms. Hegg and Ms. Murphy. I applaud them for their hard work and dedication to our children. They are educating those who will lead this country in creating, developing, and putting to work new ideas and technology.●

#### LIEUTENANT GENERAL RONALD B. BLANCK

● Mr. INOUE. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to honor Lieutenant General Ronald B. Blanck as he retires from the United States Army after more than thirty-two years of active duty service. For the last four years, General Blanck has served as the United States Army Surgeon General and Commander, U.S. Army Medical Command General. During his tenure, he had significant oversight of eight Department of Defense activities as well as the management of the Army's \$6.6 billion, worldwide integrated health system.

Beginning his career as a general medical officer in Vietnam, General Blanck went on to hold a variety of executive positions that include: professor and teaching chief in graduate medical education at the Uniformed Services University; medical consultant to the Army Surgeon General; Commander of Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the North Atlantic Regional Medical Command; and finally as the U.S. Army's 39th Surgeon General. General Blanck has met every challenge with enthusiasm and zeal. His team-building, compassion, and vision have resulted in greater cooperation among the Federal Health Services and improved delivery of medical care to our nation's military, past and present.

General Blanck guided the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (AFIP) through a period of re-engineering and instituted collaborative missions with the Department of State, Department of Treasury, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Drug Enforcement Agency, National Aeronautic and Space Admin-

istration, National Transportation and Safety Board, and the Veterans Administration. These partnerships have fostered unparalleled advances in science and facilitated the reputation of AFIP as being known as the "People's Institute."

He re-energized the Army Medical Department and instituted best business practices to ensure the provision of comprehensive, quality healthcare to service members, retired and active, and their family members. Faced with a military medical end-strength reduction of 34%, a reduction in Army medical treatment facilities of 45%, and medical force structure requirements reduction of 77%, General Blanck met the challenge. His brilliant leadership, compassionate vision and unprecedented achievements will guide the Army Medical Department and the entire federal health care system into the new millennium.

General Blanck's contributions to Persian Gulf Illness and Anthrax programs, his interactions with Congress and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs), and his commitment to the delivery of world-class medical care in support of contingency operations, national emergencies, and potential weapons of mass destruction scenarios are unsurpassed. Mr. President, while General Blanck's many meritorious awards and decorations demonstrate his contributions in a tangible way, it is the legacy he leaves behind for the Army Medical Corps, the United States Army, and the Department of Defense for which we are most appreciative. It is with pride that I congratulate General Blanck on his outstanding career of exemplary service.●

#### PACENTRO, ITALY, REUNION 2000

● Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, on July 2, 2000, a very special event will take place in Sterling Heights, Michigan: the first reunion of United States citizens who trace their roots back to the town of Pacentro, Italy. Over 800 people will attend the event, some of them with ancestors who immigrated to the United States over 150 years ago. In addition, the Mayor of Pacentro himself, Mr. Fernando Caparso, will be attending the event. I rise today to welcome Mr. Caparso to the State of Michigan.

Pacentro is a small town located east of Rome. It sits in the Abruzzo region in the province of L'Aquila. Born in medieval times, the town is famous for its three castle towers, the oldest of which was built by Count Boarmondo and dates back to the thirteenth century. Another dates from the fifteenth century, and is recognized as the loveliest castle in the region. More recently, Pacentro has gained fame as the birthplace of the rock star Madonna's grandparents.