

Nobel Peace Prize recipient, Time magazine's Man of the Year, and in many ways, the emancipator of all Americans.

Dr. King's adherence to nonviolence in the pursuit of social justice left an indelible mark on our nation's history and conscience. Clearly, much progress has been made in the struggle for civil rights, equality and social justice. We rightly pay tribute to the civil rights accomplishments to date, and we rightly attribute much of that progress to Dr. King.

But there is still much to do. And sadly, the current administration has had a disappointing record on civil rights and has shown little interest in shouldering leadership responsibility on these important issues.

Two years ago, on the week before we celebrated the birthday of Dr. King, Jr., President Bush intervened in a case before the United States Supreme Court in an effort to destroy affirmative action, which is effectively "equal education rights" for African Americans and other minority groups.

The case involved the University of Michigan program which used race as one factor among many when selecting incoming students. I joined other United States Senators in an amicus brief in support of the University of Michigan affirmative action program. Thankfully, in its first ruling on affirmative action in higher education admissions in 25 years, the nation's highest court ruled on June 23, 2003, that race can be used in university admission decisions. Justice Sandra Day O'Connor was the eventual deciding vote in the case, saying that affirmative action is still needed in America—but hoped that its days are numbered.

Last year, on Dr. King's 75th birthday, President Bush went to Atlanta and laid a wreath at Dr. King's grave. The very next day, despite protest from the civil rights community and against the expressed will of the Senate, President Bush recess appointed Judge Charles Pickering to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals.

President Bush cast aside several significant concerns of the African American and civil rights community. Some of these concerns included: Judge Pickering's support as a State Senator in the 1960s for the Mississippi Sovereignty Commission, which was established to prevent the implementation of *Brown v. Board of Education*; Judge Pickering's opposition as a legislator and Federal judge to voting rights for African Americans; and Judge Pickering's disturbing positions as a Federal judge on two of the key protections of equal voting rights for all Americans—the one person-one vote Constitutional doctrine and the Voting Rights Act.

These are just two examples of a broader indifference President Bush has shown to the social, economic, and

legal obstacles African-Americans are forced to overcome in their ongoing effort to achieve real equality.

Affirmative action has proven beneficial in combating past discrimination and it remains necessary today. Judge Pickering is just one of a host of judicial nominees opposing civil rights President Bush has put forth as part of a larger effort to pack the Federal courts with ultra-conservative ideologues.

Each of us must do our part to advance the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and to promote civil rights equality. I will continue to provide leadership in the 109th Congress to help minority businesses, increase access to education and health care, improve job growth, and fight racial profiling.

I hope that President Bush and the entire Congress will do the same.

TRIBUTE TO STEVE BEASLEY

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President. I rise today to say a few words of thanks to Steve Beasley, an outstanding agriculture economist at USDA who recently completed a year-long fellowship on the Senate Finance Committee. Steve's service to the committee, and by extension to the State of Montana, will be remembered fondly and with great appreciation.

A year ago I was able to snag Steve away from his job at the Foreign Agriculture Service at the Department of Agriculture. He brought to us years of experience in foreign market development and capacity-building. During his time with the committee, his expertise proved invaluable as he worked on calculating the effects of the North American Free Trade Agreement on Montana agricultural products, analyzing the effect of agricultural trade liberalization on crop prices over the past few years, as well as helping prepare me for trade missions to Australia, New Zealand, China, Japan, and Thailand.

Half of my State's economy is based on agriculture, and the work Steve did for us will serve us for the next several years as we examine the effects of trade on our economy's largest sector. I am sad to see him go, but I know the USDA is eager to get him back. I thank him for his hard work over this past year, and I wish him all the luck in the future.

TRIBUTE TO MR. PAUL KASTEN

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, Senator BAUCUS and I are honored today to pay tribute to Paul Kasten and thank him for the exceptional service and commitment he has given to the people of Montana. Mr. Kasten served faithfully with the U.S. Postal Service, particularly to Montanans along the Brockway, Paris, Watkins, and Flowing Wells rural mail route loop. As he celebrates a well-deserved retirement,

let it be known that he leaves behind a memorable and strong legacy, spanning 57 years of dedicated service to the U.S. Postal Service, his eastern Montana mail route loop, and the people of the State of Montana. We know Congressman REHBERG sends his support and congratulations as well for Paul's significant achievement.

Beginning with a team of horses, Mr. Kasten delivered the mail faithfully to this frontier mail route for 57 noteworthy years, honorably upholding the U.S. Postal Service's code of conduct. In fact, he has gone above and beyond the call of duty on many occasions, delivering groceries and other necessary items to many people along this remote mail route during his tenure. It is clear that Mr. Paul Kasten has ceaselessly served the U.S. Postal Service and the State of Montana for nearly six decades, and is justly deserving of the honor due to him today. It is with great pride that Senator BAUCUS and I bring to the attention of this great body the hard work that Mr. Kasten has completed, both to the State of Montana and to Montana's people. Thank you for all your commendable service, Paul, and we wish you and your family all the best in your future endeavors.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

HONORING DENNIS WIESE

• Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I rise today to publicly commend the work of Mr. Dennis Wiese, President of South Dakota Farmers Union, SDFU, for his 12 years of dedicated service to South Dakota's farmers, ranchers and rural people. After six and a half terms as President of SDFU, Dennis has decided not to seek reelection and will begin his own consulting business in his hometown of Flandreau, SD.

Over the years, Dennis has been extraordinarily committed to South Dakota agriculture and is a real ambassador for farming and ranching in the state. As chair of the National Farmers Union subcommittee that worked on the farm bill rural development section, Dennis' insight was invaluable, during negotiations on the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002.

Since its establishment in 1914, South Dakota Farmers Union has consistently been a voice for family farmers and ranchers, always striving to improve the business climate for agriculture and the quality of life for all South Dakotans. Now, 91 years later, SDFU is regarded as the leader on issues concerning concentration in the agri-business sector. I have always been able to rely on Dennis and the SDFU for the backing needed to stand up for the family agricultural producers and the special position they hold America's business and cultural