

was first elected to it in 1975. Richard's leadership has helped to shape the vigorous South Dakota livestock industry. His accomplishments are many, too many to list here. But for those of us who know him, it is agreed that his boots will be hard to fill.

Richard Ekstrum has provided me with invaluable advice and counsel throughout my years in the House and Senate. He has been a tireless defender and promoter of South Dakota and American agriculture. After each meeting with him I know exactly what needs to be done. All meetings with him are productive. I will miss his regular advice and leadership, but I am heartened to know he is still just a phone call away.

Richard recently was quoted as saying, "I will always be part of Farm Bureau and Farm Bureau will always be a part of me." Similarly, I would like the RECORD to reflect that Richard Ekstrum will always be a part of South Dakota agriculture, and vice versa.

Richard owns and operates a 3,500 acre general livestock and grain farm near Kimball, SD. He and his two brothers operate this farm, which has a commercial farrow-to-finish hog operation and produces purebred Simmental cattle.

Richard first joined Farm Bureau in 1967 and rose through the ranks of the Brule County Farm Bureau organization to become President of the South Dakota Farm Bureau in 1975. He was elected in 1980 to the Board of Directors of the American Farm Bureau Federation, a position he held for a decade. He has travelled the globe—28 countries in total—to promote and advance American agriculture. He recognizes that the continued strength of American agriculture rests with its ability to compete in the world market place. That is part of the reason why Richard Ekstrum is a recognized and respected national leader in agriculture.

The strength of the Farm Bureau organization is rooted on the farm. The history of the South Dakota Farm Bureau is impressive. As early as 1913, several county Farm Bureaus were organized and operating in South Dakota. In 1917, the operating county Farm Bureaus formed the South Dakota Farm Bureau Federation. Today the South Dakota Farm Bureau is my State's leading agricultural organization and a highly regarded voice for South Dakota farmers and ranchers.

Much of the success of the South Dakota Farm Bureau can be attributed to Richard Ekstrum. Under his leadership the organization witnessed its largest membership growth. Throughout the 1950's and 1960's, membership averaged 3,100 farm families. During the 1970's, its programs were expanded and since 1977 family membership in the South Dakota Farm Bureau has grown each and every year to the point where it represents more than 10,000 South Dakota farm and ranch families.

One of the many programs sponsored by the farm bureau and strongly promoted by Richard is the South Dakota Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee. This group provides opportunities for greater participation by young, active farmers and ranchers. It helps young farm bureau members analyze their particular agricultural problems and collectively find solutions that best meet their needs. I am very pleased with the success of this program. I have said on many occasions that we need to do more to promote the promise of farming for younger generations. These young people represent the future of South Dakota agriculture.

Richard Ekstrum and the South Dakota Farm Bureau are committed to the goal of improving net farm income and strengthening the quality of rural life. I commend Richard for his loyalty to and hard work for the South Dakota Farm Bureau. He has left his mark on the landscape of South Dakota agriculture and his community. His wife Agnes and his two daughters can be truly proud. I know Richard will continue to be active in his church, in civic and private organizations, the South Dakota Farm Bureau and in South Dakota agriculture.

Richard is known for saying, "Of all the hats that I wear, I like the one of being a farmer the best." Today, on behalf of all South Dakotans, I take my hat off to Richard Ekstrum.

As I stated before, the wonders of American agriculture tell a story that is not told often enough. It is a story of proud Americans, like Richard Ekstrum, who do their part in the world's most proficient industry, day after day. I enjoyed and will continue to tell the many stories of South Dakota men and women who contribute to the greatest story ever told—American agriculture.

TRIBUTE TO THE CHATTANOOGA RONALD McDONALD HOUSE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize and commend the Chattanooga Ronald McDonald House, which will celebrate its fifth anniversary in a "Blaze of Glory" this weekend.

The Ronald McDonald Houses provide a loving atmosphere for seriously ill children to be close to their families while they are cared for in a nearby hospital. Often, these houses are considered to be the families' home away from home during these hardships. The "House That Love Built," which is the name of the Chattanooga Ronald McDonald House, has assisted almost 1,800 families from 32 States and 2 foreign countries, and is 1 of 162 Ronald McDonald Houses in the United States.

This weekend will mark the fifth anniversary for the Chattanooga Ronald McDonald House. They will celebrate the anniversary by burning the recently resolved mortgage on the house in a "Blaze of Glory." Mr. President, I

would like to thank the staff, the more than 300 volunteers and the donors that have made the "House That Love Built" a safe and useful tool in treatment of our catastrophically ill children. Their combined efforts will not go unnoticed, and I wish them well in their celebration this weekend.

OWENSBORO LEGENDS OF RACING HOMECOMING

Mr. FORD. Mr. President, anytime someone from our hometown gains national recognition for their talents, we all feel a sense of pride and ownership—that somehow we've contributed to that success.

I know all those from the city of Owensboro and from Daviess County will be doing their share of boasting during the Owensboro Legends of Racing Homecoming.

It provides us with a chance to show off some of our homegrown talent, and to thank these racers and crew members for representing our community so well in competitions across the country.

I know all Kentuckians are just as proud as I am of Darrell and Michael Waltrip, Jeremy Mayfield, and the Green boys—David, Jeff, and Mark. Any weekend we turn on the television and watch the NASCAR races, we enjoy it that much more knowing that they're successes reflect so well on Owensboro, and our entire State.

Working closely with the NASCAR drivers are nine pit crew members from Owensboro and Daviess County who have achieved the highest level of success in their field. I want to congratulate Jeff Chandler, Kenneth Davis, Kerry Everly, Terry Mayfield, Stephen McCain, Donnie Richeson, Barry Swift, Bobby Waltrip, and Todd Wilkerson for their hard work and excellent performances.

They're part of one of the fastest growing sports today. It's estimated that attendance records will double, with 6 million fans expected to go to the races this year.

These are all men of excellent character, who've demonstrated what can be accomplished with hard work and dedication. I join all Kentuckians in congratulating not only them, but their families, who have stood by and supported these racers and pit crew members over the years. I couldn't be more proud of their achievements, and I wish them continued success in the future.

THE BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, as of the close of business yesterday, November 15, the Federal debt stood at \$4,988,340,050,374.57. We are still about \$12 billion away from the \$5 trillion mark. Unfortunately, we anticipate hitting this mark sometime later this year or early next year.

On a per capita basis, every man, woman and child in America owes \$18,935.82 as his or her share of that debt.