

where he got his start, where my family came to truly appreciate how much the automobile industry means, not just to families such as ours but to our State, and especially how much the Oldsmobile meant to Michigan—Lansing, in particular.

I am sad, therefore, to see the Oldsmobile go, as we have known it, but I am confident General Motors will continue to make quality, safe automobiles for generations to come. As we bring down the curtain on the Oldsmobile, I rise today to offer my praise to that company, to those who started it, and their families and descendants who still remain in the Lansing area and in Michigan; also, to all those workers who, as my father, worked over the years for that Oldsmobile division of General Motors. I think each and every one of them took to their jobs a great satisfaction, a commitment to hard work, and a tremendous pride in the craftsmanship that went into making the automobile for many generations one of this country's favorite lines of vehicles.

I yield the floor and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I inquire of the Chair, are we still in morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair informs the Senator from Michigan we are in a period of morning business until the hour of 2:30.

PROUD ARAB AMERICAN HERITAGE

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I will comment briefly on a matter of relevance both personally to me and to my State. Since the election, as a consequence of my defeat, I have heard from a number of people from the Arab American community, both in Michigan and across the United States. As a Lebanese American myself, I have been very proud to be, at least for the last several years, the only Arab American Member of this Chamber.

A number of folks from that community expressed their disappointment in the results of the campaign. I take the floor today to thank so many people who have been in touch, but also to make several points that I hope will be heard by members of the community, to be taken into account as they consider the results of this election, as well as the future.

First, I note that in recent years I believe the Arab American community has become a key part of the American political process. The participation of the community has continued to increase both in my State of Michigan as

well as across the country. Not only are people voting in greater numbers as a percentage of the community, and for many taking the first step of participating in the elections, but their activism in Michigan and other States has grown considerably. I take great pride in seeing that happen.

In addition, we have seen a number of Arab Americans rise to leadership positions at the local level of government all the way up to statewide offices. In the Congress itself we have several Members of Arab heritage on the House side who were elected in the most recent campaigns.

Much of this progress, I think, has translated into progress on issues of importance to the Arab American community in the last 6 years. I have been proud during my term in the Senate to have worked on behalf of a number of important issues relevant to the community. One has been to see the travel ban to Lebanon lifted in 1997, which has opened more opportunities for better relations between the United States and Lebanon, and also for more commercial activity between the two countries.

This Chamber passed a resolution decrying intolerance toward people of Islamic faith in this country, a much needed statement, I think, for the Congress to make so we can be on record consistently as opposing intolerance toward people of any religious faith. We have supported important programs that have affected the Middle East. One that we have worked on in our office with Senator FEINSTEIN and others is the Seeds of Peace Program, which I believe will have a long-term and positive impact on the relationships between countries in the Middle East, including Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Egypt, Yemen, as well as the Palestinians.

I think the potential for the future is even greater. I think it is very likely in the area of public policy that the people from the Arab American community will rise and play an ever active role and a greater role, as they have done in other fields of endeavor. In America's business community, we have many Arab American leaders today who are heading up important companies from one end of the country to the other. In sports and entertainment and the arts, we likewise have seen Arab Americans excel. In education, the same is true. Indeed, the level of educational attainment by young people of Arab American background continues to be one of the most important components of the Arab American ethnic communities' contribution to the United States.

I am very proud of my heritage. I have talked to many other Members of this Chamber about my background over the years. I am glad to have helped in a small way—to have played a role in moving forward some of the policy objectives I mentioned a few minutes ago. I hope, to some extent, that has helped encourage others in their own communities, States, or even

perhaps at the Federal level to do so, as well.

Recently in Dearborn, MI, home to the largest concentration of Arab Americans in the United States, I was approached by a woman who had a young son in the seventh grade, saying how happy he was to know a Senator shared his Arab American heritage. I hope that in my brief career in the Senate maybe there are others who have similarly sparked an interest in government because they happen to be part of that same community to which I belong.

My message is to praise the community, especially, but also to say to any who have harbored a sense of disappointment with the results of the election, I hope that disappointment will not be long standing. It certainly isn't the case for myself. I encourage people in the community to continue to play an active role in politics. Obviously, our political process inevitably produces success and failure from election to election.

For people new to the process, sometimes they misunderstand and treat a setback as something that should discourage future involvement. I hope that across the Arab American community, and especially for those who first got active in the political process with this election, that they will continue to play an active role, even increase their involvement, and hopefully encourage others to do likewise. That would be invaluable to the community, and certainly from my point of view, it would be the preferable outcome.

My grandparents came a century ago from Lebanon, where they left behind everything to risk their fortunes on America. As is the case with people not just from the Arab American community but so many other immigrant communities, they came here with very little in the way of material possessions, but they came with a great deal of desire and energy and the hope that by working hard and playing by the rules they could make a contribution.

As I have said to the others on this floor in the past, they did not necessarily come here assuming they would have a grandson who would be in the Senate, but they wanted to live in a country where that was possible. Indeed, that is what our country always will be. And I think it always will. I am proud to have had the opportunity to fulfill, probably in the utmost way, the hopes that were brought here by my grandparents when they arrived.

I think, as I look back on my service in the Senate, perhaps more than anything else, will be the source of pride that I take with me as I leave the Chamber today.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

SENATOR ABRAHAM

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I did want to take a moment, as someone

who has been involved in immigration issues over some 38 years in the Senate, and someone who has worked with colleagues in a bipartisan way. I wanted to let my friend from Michigan know something which I hope he already does know. I wanted to share the great respect I have for him and his leadership on immigration issues, as the chairman of the Subcommittee on Immigration.

Immigration issues bring out, really, the best and the worst in our colleagues. These are emotional issues for many of us. We have a Senate and House of Representatives that have strong views on these issues. His hand has been a steady, guiding one of leadership over this period of time, and one I thought showed enormous sensitivity in helping to guide immigration policy in a way that respects the strong tradition of people in this Nation to acknowledge and continually work to remedy the very significant inequities that are still a part of our policy.

I also point out what I think all of us in this body remember, his strong leadership in helping us work through the skill shortage in our high-tech industries. He led the Judiciary Committee and the Senate in the development of that program. What certainly impressed me during that period of time was his constant willingness to look at different ideas, different approaches, and differing views, and to always try to reach out to find some common understanding in these areas in order to move the process forward—a real legislator.

I know he is proud of many different aspects of his service in the Senate, but I wanted to express from this side of the aisle the affection and friendship of those of us who have worked with him in some very important areas of public policy, and the high regard and respect we have for him. We are hopeful that we'll have a chance to work with him on public policy in the future.

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, if I might, I thank the Senator from Massachusetts for his kind remarks. I had occasion a couple of days ago to speak to the Senate. At that time I expressed publicly my thanks to him. He was not in the Chamber at the time, so I reiterate it here. We worked, I think, in a very constructive way on a number of issues as members of the Subcommittee on Immigration and on a variety of other issues he has mentioned here as well. I thank him for his remarks today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

OMNIBUS APPROPRIATIONS BILL

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I expect to support the omnibus legislation that will implement the final appropriations agreement for this Congress because it makes the kinds of investments in education, health, and work opportunities that are needed by all American families. In the long run,

only through these basic investments can we preserve our capacity to keep our nation strong. I commend my colleagues for their diligence in crafting legislation that respects the highest priorities of the American people. Senator HARKIN and Senator SPECTER have shown the power of bipartisan cooperation throughout their work on this legislation. We have all benefitted from the example and leadership of Senator STEVENS and Senator BYRD as well.

While this legislation is not perfect and certainly is no substitute for the unfinished work of the 106th Congress, it is good for the American people, and it shows what is possible when we resolve to work together. In this sense, it offers considerable hope for the 107th Congress.

EDUCATION

In the critical area of education and the nation's schools, this appropriations agreement is a resounding victory for parents and communities across the country. Congress has lived up to its commitment to increase education funding. We are taking a giant step forward to ensure that children across the country receive the support they need to succeed in school and to make college more affordable for every qualified student. I'm proud to highlight a few of the key education accomplishments.

For the first time, communities across the country will qualify for over \$1.2 billion in federal aid to address their most urgent school building repair needs, such as fixing roofs, plumbing and electrical systems, and meeting fire and safety codes.

Schools across the country will receive \$1.623 billion, a 25 percent increase over last year, to continue hiring and training new teachers to reduce class sizes in the early grades. This year's funding increase will place 8,000 more teachers in classrooms, placing the goal of 100,000 new teachers well within reach.

Teacher quality will improve as well this year. Schools will receive \$485 million, a 45 percent increase over last year, to help teachers improve their skills through professional development activities, reducing the number of uncertified and out-of-field teachers.

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which helps disadvantaged students master the basics and achieve to high standards, is increased by \$506 million, for a total of \$8.4 billion.

We know that children are most likely to engage in risky behavior in the hours just after school. Congress has responded by increasing support for after-school programs by 87 percent this year, to \$851 million. This increase will help more children stay out of trouble after school and get extra help with their schoolwork.

The bill also provides an additional \$91 million, for a total of \$225 million, to support state and local efforts to turn around low-performing schools.

Vocational and technical education programs received \$1.240 billion, a \$48

million increase, to improve programs that give students skills they need in order to meet the demands of the new high tech workforce.

College students will also receive much needed support under this bill. The GEAR UP programs will receive \$295 million, an increase of \$95 million, and TRIO programs will receive \$730 million, a \$85 million increase, to help more low-income and minority middle and high school students prepare for college and succeed in college.

Of all high school students in Boston, 80 percent of them now are tied into colleges. We have 12 different colleges that are tied into the high schools, where they are not just taking the individuals who show promise, which the TRIO Program does and does with extraordinary success, but to try to take the whole class together and move the whole class up. It is a relatively new concept and one which has worked very successfully in the several pilot areas where it has been tried. We are finding extraordinary response, positive response from colleges that engage in this undertaking, and extraordinary response from the schools. I think it will be one of the more important programs to enhance academic achievement for high school students.

This legislation will also enable more undergraduate and graduate students to pay for college through part-time work assistance because the Federal Work Study program received a \$77 million increase.

This bill also strengthens Pell Grants, enabling many more students to take advantage of them. The maximum grant is increasing by \$450—from \$3,300 to \$3,750. Because there are so many young people who, even though they are eligible for the maximum Pell Grant, just couldn't make it with the lower maximum, this is perhaps the most important educational enhancement we have. It recognizes that many children are advantaged in their academic achievement and accomplishment but disadvantaged in the amount of resources they have.

EARLY LEARNING

As we strengthen our commitment to quality education at the elementary, secondary, and college levels, a strong body of research challenges us to broaden our commitment to education as well. Education is a continuum that begins at birth and continues long after graduation. On the birth-to-kindergarten side, we have much work to do. For the sake of each child, the nation, and our education system itself, all children must have access to the early learning opportunities that will enable them to enter school ready to learn.

Today, 12 million children under age five have mothers who work outside the home. Yet many of these children are assigned to waiting lists instead of quality early learning programs because federal funding isn't adequate to meet existing needs, and more and more parents are accepting the responsibility of work under welfare reform.