

conference participation and related expenses, which increased from \$10.781 million in fiscal year 2000 to \$17.296 million in fiscal year 2006.

Conference attendance for Federal employees in many, if not most, cases is discretionary, meaning that it is up to Federal agencies to determine to what conferences agency employees should go and how many employees should go. Some conferences provide valuable educational or agency-related information in a format unavailable in a normal office setting. Many conferences, by the sponsors' design, are held in locations chosen to attract attendees.

That being said, it is the responsibility of the U.S. Congress and the managers within Federal agencies to exercise due diligence in performing oversight over an area of Federal spending that has cost taxpayers over \$2 billion on conferences from 2000–2006. This spending has increased over 95 percent, from over \$200 million a year in fiscal year 2000 to almost \$400 million a year in fiscal year 2006. In addition to the financial cost of these trips, oversight hearings I held as the chair of the Federal Financial Management Subcommittee highlighted the lost productivity of government employees when they are out of the office on non-essential travel.

The EPA is just one among many Federal agencies that I believe has overspent on nonessential conferences and travel. In my research I found numerous instances where EPA showed questionable judgment in this regard.

In September 2006, EPA sent 23 employees to Paris, France, for the International Society of Exposure Analysis Meeting, at a cost of \$56,000. This conference featured a gala dinner cruise on the River Seine and a cast of presenters that consisted primarily of Americans.

The agency's employees attended an annual National Beaches Conference in Niagara Falls, NY. The 2006 conference was attended by at least seven EPA employees, at a cost to taxpayers of \$52,500.

One EPA employee attended a December 2006 GSA Small Business Conference in Palm Springs, CA, at a cost of \$4,100, with his or her travel costs alone listed at \$1,800.

A Cancun, Mexico, meeting attended by two EPA employees cost \$4,200, with travel costs listed at \$2,900.

A March 2007 Waste-to-Energy Conference in San Juan, Puerto Rico cost taxpayers \$48,000 for nine EPA employees and two taxpayer-funded non-employees to attend.

A 2006 "Beyond Translation Forum" sponsored by the EPA in Texas to "engage the Hispanic community in becoming environmental stewards" costs \$52,100 for the attendance of 20 EPA employees and 85 taxpayer-funded non-employees.

Over 2 years, EPA also spent \$2.6 million in grants and contracts and over \$300,000 in travel and related expenses

for brownfields conferences in Oregon and Missouri.

EPA spent \$235,000 in grants and \$25,000 in travel costs for the National Tank Conference in Memphis. Costs included events at BB King's and seeing the Memphis Grizzlies basketball team play.

EPA spent \$355,000 in grants and contracts and \$167,000 in travel costs for the Community Involvement Conference in Milwaukee.

In February of 2007, EPA spent \$150,000 to sponsor the "Measuring Program Results" Conference, to which it sent one EPA employee and paid for the attendance of four nonemployees.

Instead of specifically capping the amount EPA could spend on conference travel, Senator CARPER has graciously modified his amendment to transfer \$2 million from the EPA's Environmental Programs and Management account to fund this study of black carbon emissions. This EPA account "provides personnel compensation, benefits, and travel and other administrative expenses for all agency programs."

It is my hope that this transfer in funds will help EPA better manage the funds it is entrusted with by Congress and limit questionable expenditures and unnecessary conference travel and related expenses.

I am pleased that the Senate has agreed to this offset and hope that Congress can begin to prioritize funds for its priorities with real offsets.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

REMEMBERING JOSEPHINE PEREZ

• Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, on August 28, 2009, Colorado and the Nation lost a champion for justice and equality, Josephine Marie Varela-Perez. Josie, as she was known by all, surmounted the daunting challenges life brought her to become an exemplary voice for minority students in Denver. Her courage and conviction created a better future not only for Denver students but for countless kids across the country.

Josie's humble beginnings never held her back from achieving her dreams. When faced with adversity, she overcame.

School year after school year, Josie would show up on the first day to be counted among her classmates and then return to working in the beet fields, never attending class past the fourth grade. But Josie—a strong believer that education was the key to success and should be available to all children no matter their race or creed—taught herself English and Spanish and earned her GED.

Josie's commitment to education and minority rights thrust her into the center of the civil rights movement as a party to the landmark desegregation case, *Keyes, et al v. School District No. 1, Denver, Colorado*. She also marched with Cesar Chavez and the United

Farm Workers and was a voice for the less fortunate. Her strength and courage in standing up for the rights of minority students and the less fortunate is an inspiration to all.

Josie's strong spirit extended far beyond her activism. Josie worked tirelessly to support her six kids—Ricardo, Patricia, Lou, Carlos, Terry, and Sheila so that they could have the future they deserved.

I join Coloradans and Americans across the country in grieving the loss of this civil rights champion. Josie's legacy will continue to inspire Americans for generations to come.

My thoughts and prayers are with her family.●

RECOGNIZING FIFTY YEARS OF ICBMS

• Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I wish today as cochair of the Senate ICBM coalition along with my friend from Wyoming to recognize and pay tribute to 20th Air Force as the Air Force celebrates the 50th anniversary of the first nuclear-tipped ICBM on alert, and to honor the heritage and accomplishments of the ICBM mission and people—past and present—who acquire, develop, operate, maintain, and secure this combat capability for our Nation.

In July 1954, the Air Force established the Western Development Division in response to the growing Soviet missile threat. It developed the first-generation ICBMs—the Titan that is housed in underground silos as well as the above-ground Atlas.

In October 1959, the first alert of a nuclear warhead-equipped Atlas D occurred at Vandenberg Air Force Base, CA. Immediately thereafter, the Air Force started working on a solid-fueled, second-generation ICBM called the Minuteman. Ten Minuteman I ICBMs were already on alert at Malmstrom Air Force Base, MT, by the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962. Just three years later, the first-generation ICBMs were replaced with the larger and more accurate Minuteman II.

By January 1970, the Air Force had deployed the Minuteman III. Throughout the 1970s, in response to the Soviet Union's buildup of multiwarhead ICBMs, the Air Force started work on the Peacekeeper. In 1987, 50 Peacekeepers were deployed in existing Minuteman III silos at F.E. Warren Air Force Base, WY. At the height of the Cold War, the Air Force maintained an ICBM fleet of more than 1,200 missiles on alert as a counterforce to the approximately 1,400 Soviet ICBMs poised against the United States.

Currently, the Air Force maintains a fleet of 450 on-alert Minuteman III ICBMs, spanning the missile fields in Colorado, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, and Wyoming. In August 2009, the Air Force activated a new major command—Air Force Global Strike Command—committed solely to the nuclear deterrence mission. This December, 20th Air Force and the ICBM

mission will transfer from Air Force Space Command to Air Force Global Strike Command. The pride shared today in the heritage and rich history of the ICBM mission will always be a part of Air Force Space Command's contribution to our national security.

Mr. President, the American people are fortunate to have the dedicated Airmen of 20th Air Force operate, maintain, and secure America's only land-based strategic deterrent 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. I know my colleagues will join me in congratulating the Air Force on 50 years of the highest commitment in carrying out the ICBM mission.●

ABERDEEN MONUMENT TO FIREFIGHTERS

● Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I rise today to honor a special unveiling of the Aberdeen Monument to Firefighters on October 15, 2009. The handsome bronze, carefully crafted by Aberdeen sculptor Benjamin Victor, is a tribute to the firefighters who put their lives on the line and heroically serve with courage, pride and honor. Fully aware that firefighting is inherently dangerous work, these men and women work day and night to save lives, save property and protect the environment.

Benjamin Victor has crafted a spectacular sculpture to commemorate these heroes. It portrays his passion for expression and detail and his natural ability to create unique and inspiring works of art. Ben, at 26 years old, is the youngest artist ever to have a sculpture in the National Statuary Hall in the U.S. Capitol. Art critics and organizations throughout the country recognize the aesthetic and conceptual integrity of Ben's work. Early on, Aberdeen saw his talent and its citizens are very grateful that he continues to share his talents with their community.

I also want to commend the Aberdeen community for their efforts to make this unveiling possible. Using no tax dollars, the entire funding for this project came from businesses, service clubs, schools, fraternal organizations and individuals in the community who saw the significance of this monument. This contribution by the Aberdeen community and Benjamin Victor will commemorate the important role of our firefighters for generations to come.●

TRIBUTE TO FATHER ROBERTO BALDUCELLI

● Mr. KAUFMAN. Mr. President, today I recognize the extraordinary contributions of a patriarch of the Italian-American community in my home State of Delaware, Father Roberto Balducci. On Columbus Day, Father Balducci will be honored by the Columbus Communion Breakfast Committee with its Outstanding Achievement Award.

Father Balducci's 96 years on this Earth, while a true gift to all he has served, reads like a novel. As a 9-year-old boy in the small town of Castelluccio, Italy, he decided that he wanted to pursue an ecclesiastical education in Rome. In 1929, at the age of 16, he joined the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales. After studying in France and Switzerland, he returned to Italy from September 1939 to March 1946.

During World War II, Father Balducci helped save Italian Jews from persecution. The young priest recovered the bodies of civilians killed in bombing raids, was injured in one of these attacks, and sheltered refugees from Nazi persecution.

After receiving a passport to come to the United States, Father Balducci crossed the Atlantic Ocean over the course of 29 days and arrived in New York on April 10, 1946. The young oblate arrived at St. Anthony's of Padua Church in Wilmington soon after and became the church's first Italian priest. In 1959, he became pastor of St. Anthony's.

As a first-rate mason and a licensed contractor in the State of Delaware, Father Balducci oversaw and helped undertake the renovation of an old public school to meet young Catholic students' educational needs, and he helped establish a new school, called Padua Academy, for girls, as well.

His love of welding helped to build St. Anthony in the Hills in the 1960s, a popular summer retreat and sanctuary for children and their families near Hockessin, DE. On his watch, the parish opened a senior and day care center and expanded the regionally prominent Italian Festival in Delaware. He retired as the church's pastor in 1988.

I am privileged to have known Father Balducci for many years. I look forward to breaking bread with him at the Columbus Communion Breakfast in Wilmington's Little Italy on the day of his special recognition.

I hope my colleagues will join me in celebrating Father Balducci's significant accomplishments, which he achieved over the course of a lifetime dedicated to our community. Wilmington and our Italian-American community could not have woven such a fabric of family and strength if it were not for the commitment and foresight of Father Roberto Balducci.●

NATIONAL HUNTING AND FISHING DAY

● Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I am here today in recognition of National Hunting and Fishing Day, which was recognized on September 26. Hunters and anglers contribute significantly to our Nation's economy. More than 1 million hunters and anglers add over \$3 billion each year into Michigan's economy alone.

From the very beginning, hunting and fishing have been at the center of Michigan's history and culture. Our two great peninsulas, surrounded by

the magnificent Great Lakes, are home to over 8 million acres of public hunting land, tens of thousands of rivers and streams, and some of the best hunting and fishing in the United States. Whether meandering along Hemingway's Fox or Two Hearted Rivers for brook trout and ruffed grouse, or making the annual trip to deer camp with friends and family, Michigan's proud heritage comes with a sense of profound responsibility to protect that legacy for future generations.

We have made some important progress. I have been pleased to spearhead a number of efforts including Federal funding to stop the invasive cormorant from destroying our fisheries. This project has already shown conclusive results in bringing back once-decimated fishing areas. Through my work on the Senate Agriculture Committee, we have invested over \$4 billion in new conservation efforts that will protect wildlife habitats and increase access for hunters and anglers across the country. Most recently, the Senate passed \$400 million in funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to clean up the Great Lakes.

While we have made progress, there is more work to be done. I will continue to work for passage of the National Fish Habitat Conservation Act and the Clean Water Restoration Act, which will help preserve Michigan's 36,000 miles of rivers and streams, including over 1,000 miles of blue-ribbon trout streams. I will also continue to work to ensure access to public lands and waterways.

Working together, we can preserve our natural resources so others can enjoy our rich hunting and fishing heritage for generations to come.●

TRIBUTE TO DR. CAROLYN PORCO

● Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. President, today I praise Dr. Carolyn Porco, a professor at the University of Colorado, senior researcher at the Space Science Institute in Boulder, CO, and leader of the imaging team for the Cassini mission. In this last role, she has a front row seat on some of the most exciting scientific discoveries of today coming from the Cassini spacecraft, which for 5 years has been orbiting and studying Saturn and its Moons. I have submitted for the RECORD an article about Dr. Porco from the September 21, 2009, edition of the New York Times.

In Colorado, we are extremely proud of our science and technology enterprise. We have 16 Federal laboratories, top-flight research universities and a vibrant private sector pushing the limits on everything from biomedical research to space exploration. But even in this crowded field, Dr. Porco stands out as an exemplary Colorado scientist. She has repeatedly been recognized as one of the top scientific leaders to watch this century both for her scientific accomplishments and her leadership within the scientific community. As the Times article shows, she