

world for us all. His many accomplishments will live on as a testament to his profound commitment to our nation and to a life of public service. But for me, I will simply miss him as a friend.

THANKING STAFF

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I rise today to say thank you to the wonderful staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Earlier this week I had the privilege of chairing my final hearing in that committee, and I want to take a moment to extend my thanks and gratitude to those who have made this committee run so smoothly and professionally over the years.

Bertie Bowman's tenure here dates back to Senator Fulbright, and his extraordinary career, as the longest serving African American on Capitol Hill, speaks volumes about his character and commitment. It has been a true pleasure seeing Bertie at every hearing and it is largely thanks to his efforts, that our hearings run so smoothly.

Meg Murphy, the committee's protocol and foreign travel coordinator, has done a truly wonderful job ensuring that our travel, business meetings, and committee coffees always went off without a hitch. Her phenomenal attention to detail and thoroughness, in addition to her dedication and good humor has made her an invaluable asset to the committee.

I would also like to recognize Samantha Hamilton, Susan Oursler, as well as Gail Coppage for their hard work and dedication.

Last, I would like to thank Frank Lowenstein, staff director of the committee, whom I have gotten to know over the years, including during a trip we took together to the Middle East. I had the privilege of knowing Frank's father, Al Lowenstein, and I can say without a doubt how proud he would be of his son Frank.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

MILWAUKEE BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION TRADES COUNCIL

• Mr. KOHL. Mr. President, today I recognize and congratulate the Milwaukee Building and Construction Trades Council, MBCTC, on the occasion of their 100th anniversary.

For the past 100 years the MBCTC has literally built Milwaukee. Many of today's notable Milwaukee landmarks and buildings like the Petit National Ice Center, the Performing Arts Center, the Bradley Center, County Stadium, then Miller Park, Potawatomi Bingo and Casino, the Port Washington and Elm Road Generating Stations and most recently the Marquette Interchange are owed to the tireless work of members of the MBCTC.

Not only has the MBCTC truly had a hand in shaping the Milwaukee we know and love today but it has done so while tending to its membership, the

men and women of the building trades who make it all possible. The MBCTC remains true to its founding principles to represent its members in the building and construction trades for justice on the job, better wages and never sacrificing quality for its customers. For a century, their true commitment to members and their families as well as to our Milwaukee community has stood on solid foundation.

On behalf of our State and Nation, I join this centennial celebration in recognition of the Milwaukee Building and Construction Trades Council. Let us honor their hard work and long history of building up Milwaukee into a great place to visit, work, live and raise a family.●

ADDRESSING THE NATIONAL DEBT

• Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, today I wish to introduce to you one of my constituents, Lawrence "Rip" Kirby of Rutland, VT, who has written to me outlining his ideas on how Congress can and should address our \$13.8 trillion national debt in a fair and sensible way. I am pleased the citizens of Vermont are engaged on this issue, which is of critical importance to not only our State, but indeed the Nation. The decisions that we make on the Senate floor today will impact generations of Americans to come. That is why I would like to share with you what Mr. Kirby wrote:

To reduce the deficit and accumulated debt we must understand their root causes and history:

Short-term problem: The near-collapse of the economy was arrested by means of deficit spending, including corporate bailouts, extended unemployment benefits, and stimulus initiatives. While arguably necessary to stave off an even worse catastrophe, these measures have added to the deficit and the debt.

Solution(s): Our emphasis should not be on recovery of sunk costs but on prevention of future disasters. Break up "too large to fail" businesses through anti-trust laws. Regulate imprudent, secretive, or unfathomable financial arrangements like derivatives. Increase regulated safety margins like reserve requirements for banks and loan limits based on borrower credit ratings. Eliminate conflicts of interest like permitting bond rating agencies to have a financial stake in the companies they rate.

Medium-term problem: Our wars overseas have been funded by massive deficits with no real strategy for repayment. The unexpected length and intractability of these conflicts exacerbates the problem.

Solution(s): Stop the financial bleeding and provide a financial transfusion. To stop the bleeding we must get out of these conflicts within a short time (two years at most). Continue intelligence-gathering and maintain air power, but get the boots off the ground. To provide a transfusion, enact a temporary and progressive "war surtax" with a sunset provision.

Long-term problem: Entitlement spending (Medicare, Social Security, etc.) has exceeded its funding as America's longevity has climbed faster than its typical retirement age without tax increases to keep up. The mass retirement of the baby boomers will aggravate this problem as they become greater

consumers of entitlements and a lesser source of taxes.

Solution(s): Recognize that longevity is really an advantage, and make better use of people's lengthening ability to work and to contribute. In short, this means gradually raising the age of entitlement eligibility. We must also end the regressive and irrational Social Security tax exemption for earnings above \$108,000.

Long term problem: Our K-12 school system has deteriorated while foreign students have surged ahead in critical subjects like math, science, and language skills. The underlying cause is debated endlessly, but I believe we have replaced the hard work of learning with trendy feel-good initiatives that represent the path of least resistance for both educators and students. We also underfund education, thereby encouraging the employment of second-rate teachers, curricula, and facilities. This exacerbates the deficit by degrading our tax base as emerging generations of Americans are prepared for only menial jobs paying low wages.

Solution(s): Stop experimenting and do what works—get back to basics and pay for excellence. Reward teachers who cultivate competence. Emphasize math, science, and language skills, as well as less tangible, but important skills like inquiry and logic. Recognize sports programs as a way to teach critical social skills, not as a career path. Treat standardized testing as a means to excellence, not as an end in itself. And finally, forget self esteem—it will come on its own when it is earned."

Lawrence "Rip" Kirby
Rutland, Vt.

Thank you, Mr. President, for allowing me to share with you these words of wisdom from an average Vermonter. I hope my colleagues in the Senate take note of Mr. Kirby's sage advice.●

RECOGNIZING HARBOR FARM

• Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, every holiday season, Americans head to stores in droves to buy the perfect gift for their loved ones or friends during the holiday season. Many will visit small businesses, such as gift shops and local retailers, which offer a variety of products. There is one such store in my home State of Maine, Harbor Farm, that helps keep the Christmas spirit alive year round through a variety of products that celebrate the season.

Harbor Farm is located on Little Deer Isle, a tiny island located off Maine's coast in Penobscot Bay. The island is both a picturesque summer vacationland as well as the year-round home to 300 residents. And Harbor Farm caters to locals and tourists alike with a variety of regional and international gifts, from candles to apparel and most everything in between. The store also carries gifts made by another local small business, the Deer Isle Granite Company, including beautiful clocks in the shape of the State of Maine as well as cutting boards and coasters.

Additionally, Harbor Farm has a unique "Christmas Room," with a plethora of thoughtful and creative goods and wares. More than simply holiday-themed gifts, the Christmas Room features exceptional items inspired by Maine, including blueberry jewelry