

two of them in Delaware—Rehoboth and Dewey Beach. We have the best Air Force base, we think, in the world. We were first in Ph.Ds per capita. We have, I think, the finest Judiciary—acknowledged year after year after year as the finest judicial system in the States. We have the best financial controls and cash management system. We have had triple A credit rating since—what was that guy's name as Governor, Carper or something? We continue to have that kind of credit rating. So we are proud of being first.

What is our State motto? "It is good to be first." And we attempt to be first in a whole lot of ways. Some things you don't want to be first in, and we want to be last in those. But we are proud of what we are first in—first in civility.

As Senator COONS said, this all goes back to Return Day. When you announce your candidacy for election, whether it is for the U.S. Senate or as sheriff, you know at the end of the campaign—2 days after the campaign—you are going to be in Georgetown, DE, in a horse-drawn carriage or maybe an antique car with the man or woman you were running against, their family, your family, and surrounded by friends and supporters and thousands of other people. And I think it has a very tempering effect on the nature of our campaigns, a wonderful effect.

That is one of much that we are proud of in our State. We are lucky to be Senators from this State, but this is a State that works and focuses on results. This is a State where we govern from the middle, whether the Governor is DuPont or Castle or CARPER or Markell. And whether the Senator is CARPER or COONS or Biden or Kaufman, we govern from the middle. We are a State where Democrats and Republicans actually like each other. We just want to get things done and do what is right for our State.

With that in mind, we hope some of our friends and neighbors can join us later today in the Russell Building up on the third floor. We will make a toast to Delaware and enjoy some sarsaparilla and some other goodies as well.

It is a great joy to serve with my friend.

Mr. COONS. I thank my colleague.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. BENNET. Let me be the first to congratulate my two colleagues from Delaware on Delaware Day. Have a happy Delaware Day.

We have a lot of great things in Colorado, but I am not going to try to outcompete you on beaches this afternoon. We don't have a lot of those. I do think it puts me in mind of something, and that is our constitution. Delaware, as Senator COONS mentioned, was the first State to ratify the Constitution of this great country. My State didn't become a State until nearly a century later. We are the Centennial State as a result of that.

That constitution that enabled generation upon generation of Americans had a preamble which said: to secure the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity. It is important in these days of these budget discussions to remind ourselves they didn't stop with themselves. The document doesn't stop with ourselves. It is about ourselves and our posterity. That is what we are talking about here when we are involved in this budget discussion. These aren't decisions that are about ourselves, these are decisions that are about the next generation of Americans and the generation after that. And it is time for us to do our job. It is time for us to walk back from this fiscal cliff and come up with a comprehensive plan. We know what the outlines of that are today, and we need to stop playing political games in this holiday season and get this work done, not for ourselves but for our posterity.

TROOPS TO TEACHERS

Mr. BENNET. Madam President, as you know, I have been to the floor many times in the last several years to talk about the dysfunction that reigns in this place too often. But today I am here on a happier occasion because I want to celebrate an accomplishment, a bipartisan accomplishment that I think is very important. We were able to work together earlier this week to improve and expand something called Troops to Teachers. Nothing makes a greater difference to student learning than great teaching. Our teachers are critical to our kids' success and, to a greater extent, our country's competitiveness in the economy.

America's future depends on our ability to recruit and retain great teachers. And by the way, we are falling down on the job. Fifty percent of the people who go into teaching leave the profession in the first 5 years, which means we don't have the benefit of the experience they have gained over that period of time. And I will save for another day what we need to do about this, but for today's purposes let me observe we have done almost nothing—virtually nothing—as a country to change the way we think about recruiting teachers, retaining teachers, inspiring teachers in this country since we had a labor market that discriminated against women and gave them two professional choices, one being a teacher, or a nurse.

Thank goodness, those days are long gone. But we have not modernized our system to make it as attractive to people as it needs to be if we are serious about educating the next generation of Americans. I believe it is our duty in that context to ensure we support new and existing pathways to the teaching profession. We should be making it easier, not harder, for those who want to serve our country in America's classrooms. Troops to Teachers is one of those undertakings. It has been recruiting and placing veterans and serv-

ice men and women in classrooms around the country since 1994. It brings veterans and servicemembers into some of the hardest-to-serve areas in our country.

But in Colorado and across the United States we have school districts near military installations that have not been eligible to participate in Troops to Teachers. These barriers send exactly the wrong message. If veterans want to make a difference in a student's life, they should be able to teach where they are needed most. That is why in 2009 I worked with Senator MCCAIN and his staff to introduce legislation to make it easier for veterans to participate and continue their service in our classrooms.

These changes to the program will increase the number of schools eligible to participate by 49 percent. In Colorado alone, that means it will open over 1,000 of our schools to veterans and servicemembers who want to participate. As someone who has spent a lot of time in the classrooms as a former superintendent of the Denver Public Schools, the benefits of Troops to Teachers for our students are crystal clear to me.

When he talks about this program, Senator MCCAIN often mentions his English teacher—Mr. William B. Ravenel—an Army veteran who served with General Patton in World War II. Because there is no way I could say it better, I wish to quote my friend from Arizona.

Every child should be blessed with a teacher like I had, and to learn at institutions with high academic standards and codes of conduct that reinforce the values their parents try to impart to them. Many students do have that opportunity. But too many do not. And government should be concerned with their fate.

I could not agree more with Senator JOHN MCCAIN. Our military is the strongest in the world not because of our weapons or our tanks but because of the men and women who choose to serve. Troops to Teachers enlists their talents, their drive, their commitment to help make America's system of public education once again the driver of the American dream.

I am glad to have done this bipartisan work with Senator MCCAIN to pass this amendment, and I wish to thank Senator MCCAIN and his staff who worked so hard to get this over the finish line.

Finally, I would like to thank Senator WEBB for his leadership on this initiative, as well as Chairman LEVIN and the staff of the Armed Services Committee.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BLUMENTHAL). The Senator from New Mexico.

CUBA TRADE EMBARGO

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, earlier today, the Senate voted to grant permanent normal trade relations to Russia by a vote of 92 to 4, and I strongly supported that bill.