

completion of the McCook Reservoir in the Chicago region. McCook is a 10-billion-gallon reservoir designed to redirect flood and wastewater from the Chicago region. When completed, the project will benefit Chicago and 36 surrounding suburbs, including 1.5 million structures and over 5 million people. Also included is language that will help pay for work on the Lockport Prairie Nature Preserve and the Prairie Bluff Preserve in Will County. These are important projects for Illinois that will help prevent flooding in our communities and restore our region's ecosystems.

In Illinois, we treasure Lake Michigan, from the drinking water it provides to millions of people, to the commerce and tourism it brings to the Chicago area. That is why protecting and restoring our Great Lakes is so important to Illinois. This bill authorizes \$300 million per year to help protect our Great Lakes through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, or GLRI, which provides Illinois with millions in Federal funding to combat invasive species like Asian carp; reduce and remove pollution, waste runoff, and toxic chemicals; and restore wetlands and other lakefront assets. GLRI funds have been used for restoration projects like the removal of toxic chemicals from Waukegan Harbor, green infrastructure like the Millennium Reserve near the Calumet River, and the restoration of 40 acres of land at North-erly Island.

Finally, this bill takes important steps to address the water contamination issues that have been plaguing communities across the country. Lead water contamination is not a new problem. In Illinois, we have been battling this issue for years. The contaminated water crisis in Flint, MI, was a wakeup call to all of us that we must have strong drinking water protections in place and invest the necessary resources to keep our water safe for our children. This bill provides \$220 million in direct emergency assistance to Flint and other communities facing similar drinking water emergencies. It provides \$1.4 billion over 5 years to help small and disadvantaged communities comply with the Safe Drinking Water Act. The bill modernizes our State Revolving Loan Fund program and provides \$300 million in grants for communities to replace lead service lines. And because we are also seeing high levels of lead in our schools' water, the bill authorizes \$100 million for additional lead testing in schools. This bill also addresses many of the issues that I raised in the Lead-Safe Housing for Kids Act that I introduced with Senator MENENDEZ and the CLEAR Act that I introduced with Senator CARDIN, two bills that would ensure our children are protected from the dangerous effects of lead in our water and our housing.

Congress has a responsibility to protect the safety of our drinking water, defend our communities from flooding,

improve our waterways, and fix the Nation's crumbling water infrastructure. I want to congratulate Chairman INHOFE and Ranking Member BOXER for their hard work and dedication to improving our water infrastructure and for getting this bill passed by the Senate. I am proud to support the important investments that this bipartisan bill makes to improve water infrastructure in Illinois and around the country.

U.S. PARTNERSHIP WITH GEORGIA

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, Georgia is a trusted friend and steadfast partner of the United States. I firmly support Georgia's sovereignty, security, and prosperity, and I wish to congratulate Georgians on the remarkable democratic and economic progress they have achieved in 25 years of independence since the fall of the Soviet Union.

I would particularly like to call attention to our unwavering security partnership with Georgia, whose Armed Forces participate in international missions worldwide, including the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, where Georgia is contributing more personnel than any other non-NATO member. I know the United States deeply appreciates Georgia's contributions to these missions and honors its sacrifices.

Our important security relationship with Georgia continues to grow. Through ongoing regional efforts like the European Readiness Initiative and expanded bilateral cooperation, as laid out in the new defense agreement signed in July, the United States and Georgia are working ever more closely to boost our mutual security, build Georgia's resilience and self-defense capabilities, and create a safer region and world. In this context, I remain deeply concerned about Russia's continued occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and believe Russia must fulfill its obligations under the 2008 ceasefire agreement. The United States is steadfast in our support for Georgia's sovereignty and remains committed to helping Georgia achieve its goal of NATO and European Union membership and full integration into European institutions.

Georgia is preparing for parliamentary elections in October, an important test of the country's civic institutions and democratic practices. Georgia's continued democratic maturation depends on free and fair elections contested in a pluralistic media environment. I also believe it is critical for Georgia to sustain progress in enacting its reform agenda, particularly in the justice sector, which will both further strengthen our bilateral partnership and prove to Georgians that their government is working for them. Progress has not come without difficulty, but the commitment of the Georgian people has made Georgia a true standout in a difficult region and an important partner of the United States.

Again, I would like to congratulate Georgia on reaching this significant milestone and recognize the importance of our continued close partnership.

GROWTH AWARENESS

Mr. KIRK. Mr. President, today, on behalf of every child who suffers from growth disorders, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing this week, September 19 through 23, as Growth Awareness Week.

Tracking a child's growth is critical as it is a major sign of his or her overall health. When their growth is delayed, it is an indicator of potential underlying medical disorders. In fact, more than 600 serious diseases and health conditions, ranging from nutritional disturbances and hormone imbalances to unidentified kidney problems and brain tumors, can cause growth failure. Unfortunately, the two most common causes of growth failures frequently go undiagnosed, even in children who are evaluated.

By failing to diagnose the cause of growth failure, the potential for damage and high costs of care increases. By contrast, early detection and diagnosis can ensure a healthy future for children with growth failures. That is why raising public awareness and education about growth failure is so important.

I commend the MAGIC Foundation for their great work and look forward to working with my colleagues to improve the lives and health of children in Illinois and across the country.

NATIONAL TRUCK DRIVER APPRECIATION WEEK

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize America's professional truck drivers who serve our Nation by safely delivering such vital goods as the clothes we wear, the food we eat, and the medicine we rely on.

This week, September 11 through 17, is designated as National Truck Driver Appreciation Week to honor the 3.5 million professional truck drivers in the United States. According to the American Trucking Associations, the trucking industry employs more than 7 million people, making it not only essential to our economy, but also one of our country's largest employers.

In Nebraska, the trucking industry employs nearly 63,000 men and women who safely deliver essential goods from Scottsbluff to Lincoln and everywhere in between.

Trucking is a major driver of our economy, responsible for nearly 70 percent of the total U.S. freight tonnage. More than 80 percent of communities rely solely on the trucking industry for their goods and commodities.

America's truck drivers are dedicated to keeping our highways safe. They follow stringent safety regulations, attend frequent training programs, and educate the motoring public to help them drive safely around tractor-trailers.