

list of priorities: progressive education wants to liberate the student to be himself or herself, Levin writes, while conservative education wants to form the student to be better suited to the responsibilities of citizenship.

After embracing citizenship and character, the book's authors diverge in their emphases. Several show a healthy respect for school choice but also for its limits. There is a shout-out for career and technical education. To me, Bill Bennett's chapter is the most persuasive. He argues that content must be at the center of any conservative consensus on education. He reminds us that in the 1980s and 1990s, conservatives were leading a content crusade with E.D. Hirsch and Governors John Engler, Tommy Thompson, and Jeb Bush as well as Bennett himself as chief architects. This movement was called (shall we whisper it?) "Common Core." This state-by-state reformation of school standards and curricula was well underway when the Obama administration tried to push it faster by making Common Core a quasi-federal mandate. Republicans imagined black helicopters flying. What conservatives had invented, many Republican legislators had voted into state law, and hundreds of thousands of classroom teachers in forty-five states expected they'd be teaching was suddenly condemned and abandoned . . . by conservatives.

This abandonment was less complete than it would appear. Last year, our daughter's family lived with us in Tennessee while her home was being remodeled. She placed two sons in a nearby mountain elementary school. When the boys returned home to their Westchester County, New York, public school, I asked, "Did they have trouble adjusting?" "Nope," she said. "Common Core here. Common Core there." Many states simply renamed Common Core to avoid political flak and charged ahead. One advocate told me, "We won. But we're not allowed to say so." The backlash to Common Core brings me to the most obvious mission missing from this volume's conservative agenda: local control of schools. America was created community by community. The initiative for American public schools was entirely at the local level, Marc Tucker has written. He termed this an "accident of localism."

I have spent much of my public life trying to preserve this localism. To begin with, federalism—the dispersal of central authority—is a crucial tenet of American liberty. Our revolution, after all was mostly about distaste for a king. As a practical matter, my experience is that those governing education from a distance have good intentions but limited capacity and that schools can be only as good as parents, teachers, and citizens in a community want them to be. The saga of Common Core is the greatest proof of this pudding. Here was a conservative crusade—new rigor in what students needed to know—blown up by conservatives' fear that Washington D.C., was forcing them to do it. The Common Core federal directive was piled on top of other dictates from Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama on how to define standards, teaching, tests, curricula, and remedies for low-performing schools. Almost everyone in public schools became sick of Washington telling them what to do. So, in 2015, teacher unions and governors united to help Congress enact the "Every Student Succeeds Act," which the Wall Street Journal said was "the largest devolution of federal control to the states in a quarter century."

Now, after the rise and fall of a national school board, our one hundred thousand public schools have about the same balance between federal leadership and state and local autonomy that existed during the George H.

W. Bush administration. Once again, we have it about right. Thirty years ago, President Bush and the governors set the nation's first national education goals and then launched an "America 2000" initiative to help states meet those goals by creating voluntary standards, voluntary tests, and start-from-scratch schools. This was done the hard way, state by state and community by community—not by federal mandates. Today's environment is ripe for a revival of a content-based conservative consensus, or in Bill Bennett's words "a great relearning," as the best way for our public schools to help our country get where we want it to go. But this time, let's avoid the lure of federal mandates and do the job the American Way: state by state, community by community.

#### TRIBUTE TO ROBERT S. FRASER

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I rise to celebrate Robert S. Fraser's retirement from the Federal Government after 50 years of faithful service to our country.

Mr. Fraser traveled for over 40 years with the U.S. Air Force, both as a dependent and serving on active duty. He attended the U.S. Air Force Academy, where he graduated in 1973 and received the Outstanding Cadet in Engineering Sciences. In 1993, he retired as a major in the U.S. Air Force and began a distinguished career at the National Security Agency, where he received multiple achievements and awards. Throughout his career, Mr. Fraser has had a selfless dedication to duty and professionalism.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### REMEMBERING DR.

##### PARTHASARATHY VASUDEVAN

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of Dr. Parthasarathy Vasudevan, who passed away on December 31, 2019. Dr. Vasu's 40 years of civic and medical leadership in Phillips County were incredibly transformative for the Arkansas Delta, and his efforts reveal a relentless quest to improve the quality of life for those around him.

Dr. Vasu was a physician specializing in Urology in Helena, AR, with demand for his services extending beyond Phillips County. His career reflected 62 years of diverse experience spanning India, Boston, and the Natural State. Dr. Vasu grew up in India where he received his medical degree in 1958 and met his wife, Kanaka Rajgopal. She accompanied him to the United States in 1973 for Dr. Vasu's residency at the New England Medical Center in Boston, and upon his completion in 1978, the two embarked on their final move, to Arkansas.

Dr. Vasu's medical impact was widespread and included philanthropic leadership in addition to his urology practice. He served as executive director of the Helena Health Foundation, a non-profit organization with a mission to improve the quality of life and healthcare offered in Phillips County through grant funding. During his time

in this role, Dr. Vasu was instrumental in developing the Delta Area Health Education Center in Helena, which became the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences East Regional Campus in 2013. The foundation honored Dr. Vasu's sponsorship with a \$4 million Wellness Center in his name.

Dr. Vasu's extensive knowledge, dedicated service, and passionate nature were qualities not only recognized by his patients, but also by the civic institutions in which he participated. Organizations he was active in were the Helena Rotary Club, as well as the Phillips County Chamber of Commerce, among others. In recognition of his philanthropic involvement, Dr. Vasu was awarded the Paul Harris Fellowship recognition by the Rotary Foundation and the Channel 4 Community Service Award. Phillips County also designated August 25, 2004, as "Dr. P. Vasudevan Day."

Dr. Vasu was a tremendous asset to the Phillips County region, as well as the State of Arkansas. He was not just a doctor, but he was a mentor and a friend who loved politics and the Arkansas Razorbacks. His devoted heart and helping hand touched the lives of many, and his deeply respected legacy will transcend time. I extend my heartfelt condolences to Dr. Vasu's loved ones, his patients, and Phillips County citizens. We pray his remarkable example inspires many future Arkansas leaders.●

#### RECOGNIZING THE ALEXANDER ROBOTICS TEAM

• Mr. CRAMER. Mr. President, the students on the robotics team in the small northwestern North Dakota town of Alexander set a goal at the beginning of this school year to win their State competition. Their determination and hard work paid off in February, and now the Alexander High School FIRST Tech Challenge Team #9963 team is preparing to represent North Dakota in the world championship competition.

FIRST is the acronym for the For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology organization, which plans the annual competitions between schools. There, the students build and program robots to perform challenging tasks and then compete with other teams.

Robotics competition is growing in popularity in schools because it provides an ideal opportunity for young people to apply their knowledge of STEM subjects. It also teaches valuable life skills like communication, creativity, and collaboration and opens up countless doors of opportunity for the future.

While new to some schools, the Alexander students have participated in the North Dakota championship competition for the past 5 years. Each year, they have brought home a trophy from one of the categories. For this year's competition, these future engineers built and programmed a robot they