

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 nonprofit 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

nicknamed “Spiderbot,” which competed against other robots, doing tasks like maneuvering under bridges and stacking blocks on a plate.

This progressive small town of less than 500 residents is preparing its students for 21st century careers by offering robotics as a career and technical education course for credit at the school. The success of this program is due in large part to the support and encouragement from many, including school administrators, teachers, volunteers, and parents.

To the students on the Alexander Robotics Team, their adviser Cathy White, and all who support them, I send my congratulations on becoming State champions. They are an inspiration to so many with their knowledge and passion. North Dakota will be watching as they compete in the world championships in Detroit in late April. I have a feeling we will be hearing much more from all of them in future careers as successful engineers and entrepreneurs.●

#### RECOGNIZING THE GATHERING PLACE

● Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, as a member and former chairman of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, each month I recognize and celebrate the American entrepreneurial spirit by highlighting the success of a small business in my home State of Idaho. Today I am pleased to honor The Gathering Place located in Bonners Ferry as the Idaho Small Business of the Month for March 2020.

In 2006, Norv and Sharon Skrivseth founded Sharon’s Country Store as a side business in the basement of their home. The store was an immediate success, and it soon burgeoned into a thriving storefront providing local jobs and opportunities to the Bonners Ferry community. Eventually, Sharon’s Country Store expanded to include the Bread Basket Bakery in 2014 and the 3-Mile Produce Stand in 2016. As the business grew, friends and customers started referring to the stores as “The Gathering Place,” and the Skrivseths happily embraced the new title.

Today, The Gathering Place continues to be run Norv, Sharon, and their six children. With the motto “Come, Sit, and Stay Awhile,” the businesses continues to attract locals and travelers alike with its wide array of homemade products, fresh food, and produce. The Skrivseths’ warm hospitality and a commitment to service translates not only into a superior experience for their customers, but also into strong community engagement. Norv and Sharon are considered pillars in the Bonners Ferry community, often donating to various charitable causes and school events throughout the area. Success stories like that of The Gathering Place demonstrate why Idaho is consistently ranked one of the best places in the country to do business.

Congratulations to Norv, Sharon, and all of the employees of The Gathering

Place on being selected as the Idaho Small Business of the Month for March 2020. You make our great State proud, and I look forward to your continued growth and success.●

#### MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Ms. Roberts, one of his secretaries.

#### EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations and a withdrawal which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The messages received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

#### MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 3:04 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 2339. An act to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act with respect to the sale and marketing of tobacco products, and for other purposes.

H.R. 2819. An act to extend the authority for the establishment of a commemorative work in honor of Gold Star Mothers Families, and for other purposes.

#### MEASURES REFERRED

The following bills were read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 2339. An act to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act with respect to the sale and marketing of tobacco products, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

H.R. 2819. An act to extend the authority for the establishment of a commemorative work in honor of Gold Star Mothers Families, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

#### EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-4097. A communication from the Farm Production and Conservation Business Center Analyst, Commodity Credit Corporation, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Interim Rule” ((7 CFR Part 1464) (RIN0578-AA70)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 25, 2020; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-4098. A communication from the Secretary of Defense, transmitting a report on the approved retirement of Lieutenant General Paul A. Ostrowski, United States Army,

and his advancement to the grade of lieutenant general on the retired list; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-4099. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Export Administration, Bureau of Industry and Security, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Temporary General License: Extension of Validity” (RIN0694-AH97) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 21, 2020; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-4100. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Export Administration, Bureau of Industry and Security, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Amendments to Country Groups for Russia and Yemen under the Export Administration Regulations” (RIN0694-AH93) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 25, 2020; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-4101. A communication from the Director of Legislative Affairs, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Regulatory Capital Rule: Revisions to the Supplementary Leverage Ratio To Exclude Certain Central Bank Deposits of Banking Organizations Predominantly Engaged in Custody, Safekeeping, and Asset Servicing Activities” (RIN3064-AE81) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 25, 2020; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-4102. A communication from the Executive Director, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Annual Update of Filing Fees” ((RIN1902-AF68) (Docket No. RM20-3-000)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 25, 2020; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-4103. A communication from the Chief of Policy, Regulation and Analysis, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “2020 Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustments for Oil, Gas, and Sulfur Operations in the Outer Continental Shelf” (RIN1010-AD99) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 21, 2020; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-4104. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “District of Columbia: Negative Declaration for the Oil and Gas Industry 2015 Control Technique Guideline” (FRL No. 10005-75-Region 3) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 24, 2020; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-4105. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Procedures for Review of CBI Claims for the Identity of Chemicals on the TSCA Inventory” (FRL No. 10005-48-OCSP) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 24, 2020; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-4106. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Revenue Procedure for farmers changing election out of 263A from 263A(d) (3) to 263A(i)” (Rev. Proc. 2020-13) received in the Office of the President of