

satellite bill. That provision was dropped.

While it was unfortunate that this provision was removed from the final bill, I am pleased that it is here today, albeit in another form.

It is my hope the Senate will move quickly to adopt this measure and will resist accepting amendments that would threaten its ultimate enactment.

I thank the Chair and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SENATOR TED STEVENS— ALASKAN OF THE CENTURY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I wish to say a couple of words about one of my oldest and best friends in the Senate, the senior Senator from Alaska, Mr. STEVENS.

Last week, Senator STEVENS was named "Alaskan of the Century." Most of us feel pretty fortunate if we get named for the day, or possibly for the week, and sometimes even the month in our States. He was named "Alaskan of the Century."

Well, my good friend, TED STEVENS, deserves that. He has a way about him, as we all know. He keeps me humble. I might talk about the hardships of a cold winter day in Vermont. But then I see his eyebrows go up when he explains to me that 40 degrees below zero is just beginning to get nippy—it gets to 75 below in Fairbanks. At that point, I know I am beat.

TED STEVENS is a tireless legislator, a respected leader. He helped create the State of Alaska. How many of us could actually say something like that? He actually helped create a State with his tireless work and brought it into the Union. He did this having already served his country in so many ways. He was in the Air Force in World War II, served as a U.S. attorney in Fairbanks, and was also an Alaskan State representative. And this was on top of so many other things he has done. Today, of course, he serves with great distinction as one of the three most senior Members of the Senate and chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Senator STEVENS has consistently been a leader for our Nation's defense issues and has chaired the Senate Rules Committee, Governmental Affairs Committee, and Ethics Committee among others.

Senator STEVENS and I have served together for a long time. As members of the Appropriations Committee, both of us have worked to find economic op-

portunities for the rural communities that so many states, including our own, share. TED and I have also worked together through some of this Nation's most challenging times. During the divisive days of the impeachment trial, Senator STEVENS and I were chosen to fly to Jordan together as representatives of one, united Senate mourning the death of King Hussein.

Senator STEVENS is also a strong proponent of Title 9 and women's equality in sports. In fact, just this year he sponsored the Women in Sports Awards luncheon where Monica Seles was honored for her excellence on tennis courts throughout the world. I am sure that TED, an avid tennis player, tried to set up a game with her himself.

While he is unquestionably a great legislator, Senator STEVENS is also a proud father of six children and has a beautiful wife, Catherine. Senator STEVENS is an accomplished man with whom I am proud to serve in this United States Congress. Alaska, land of the aurora borealis and the Midnight Sun, has every reason to be proud of its senior Senator and this award shows Alaskans' gratitude and respect for his tireless work.

TED, congratulations on your well-deserved recognition as Alaskan of the Century.

TED and his wife, Catherine, have long been friends of myself and my wife, Marcelle. I consider him very much a member of the old school—when he gives his word, that is it; go to the bank with it.

I have seen several pieces of complex and important legislation go through this body because TED STEVENS gave his word they would go through—a word that he never broke with either Republican or Democrat. That is why TED STEVENS has gained so much respect.

LAUNCHING OUR COMMUNITIES' ACCESS TO LOCAL TELEVISION ACT OF 2000—Continued

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I was a conferee last year on the satellite television bill. I worked very hard, along with a number of my colleagues, to put in a provision that would have ensured the benefits of this bill would be shared by rural America through a loan guarantee program.

I appreciate the work of the Banking Committee under the leadership of Senator GRAMM and Senator SARBANES to report out a bill which provides a strong framework in which to move forward with this program.

I appreciate the majority leader, Senator LOTT, and the Democratic leader, Senator DASCHLE, who worked out an agreement with the committee leadership that put the bill before the Senate today.

Senator MAX BAUCUS of Montana introduced legislation with me last year. He has now joined with me on some very constructive amendments which I hope can be accepted.

I am here today to stand with rural America. I am proud to be a son of rural America. I know that oftentimes

the needs of this special part of our Nation must be heard on the Senate floor.

I am not trying to change the main thrust or the intent of this committee-reported bill. My amendments don't alter the structure of the bill. My amendments simply say that I want the board, which will have the job of approving these loan guarantees for local-into-local television, to look at one thing. If we are going to have loan guarantees for local-into-local television, we should give additional consideration to the projects that can provide high-speed Internet access and emergency Weather Service reports to rural America.

If rural America is going to have high-speed Internet access, it is going to have to rely on satellite service; cable companies are not going to put wire out for it. For most of those parts of the country, they are not going to have the kind of fiber optics that might do it. But they can do it with satellite service.

I hope we will not allow a digital divide between urban America and rural America. Give us the special access through the satellite system.

For example, say the board that is going to do the loan guarantees has two equally balanced satellite systems that might give the same level of service, and at about the same cost, but one would offer high-speed Internet access to rural families; I say give that one the loan guarantee.

In America, there is a growing disparity between the digital haves and have-nots as portions of our society get left behind at the same lightning pace at which Internet develops. Our amendment closes this digital divide.

Having broadband, especially in rural areas, can provide opportunities to the handicapped, to the elderly, to education, and everyone, along with business opportunities and entertainment. Whether you are sitting on the dirt road at my home in Middlesex, VT, whether you are out in rural Utah, or whether you are in rural California, it means you can have the same kind of Internet business, the same kind of access to information, and the same kind of access to educational opportunities.

My amendment would ensure that as long as the loan guarantee is to be made, the high-speed Internet access ought to be financed under the loan guarantee program, if there is excess capacity.

All we say is, before the board gives a satellite company a loan guarantee to provide rural satellite service, ask, first and foremost, Will you provide high-speed Internet access for the people in rural America? If you do, you have a better chance of being supported.

I want to provide a little history on this matter. A provision which we offered to conferees last year would have provided up to \$1.25 billion in loan