

Party outstanding service where he has devoted countless hours and tireless efforts with the Republican National Committee. I am here today to say a heartfelt "Thank You Jim," on behalf of all Coloradans.

He rose through the ranks of the Republican National Committee over the years. Based on his record of ability and accomplishments, he was elected Chairman where he served with honor and distinction.

Jim Nicholson has definitely demonstrated his commitment to ideals and an organization that has changed so dramatically over the years. His dedication and experience in business and politics will be sorely missed, but I know he will not be far away.

Also, Jim's quiet demeanor belies his gung-ho nature. As a ranger in Vietnam, he proved his dedication to a cause. And, Jim brought that same gung-ho quality to Washington where his efforts in the Republican National Committee gave us all a stronger voice and better means of resolving the hardships that all Americans face everyday. I would also like to mention his major role in helping win a trifecta in the last election, where Republicans won the White House, a majority in the House and retention of the Senate for the first time in many years.

When I first heard that Jim's tenure was coming to an end I was pleased for him and his wonderful family, but I also realized that the Republican Party, the State of Colorado and the entire Nation will be losing a devoted advocate.

I remember conversations with individuals telling me about his commitment and his passion for duty and honor. Well, I think Jim epitomizes duty and honor. Through boom and bust he has always been on the right side and I admire his steadfast devotion.

Jim and I have shared numerous experiences in our different roles. We have attended dinners and speeches together, and we have fought side by side in Colorado and in Washington. I know that he will still be involved in our lives, and I hope that our paths soon cross again. He has been a great professional associate and a greater friend. I wish Jim only the best in his next career move.●

RUTLAND HIGH SCHOOL BAND

● Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to commend Vermont's Rutland High School Band that performed Saturday, January 20, 2001, at the Inauguration of our Nation's 43rd President. The Rutland High Band represented our State with dignity and pride, celebrating one of our country's finest traditions, the peaceful transfer of power from one administration to the next. Their outstanding performance made me proud to be a Vermonter.

Hours of practice and preparation shone through during their two hour

and fifteen minute performance. Ninety-two talented students made up this extraordinary band.

Students woke up on Inauguration Day at 4 a.m. in order to arrive at the Pentagon for an early morning security check, then played on a stage at the corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and Sixth Street, both before and after the President's swearing-in ceremony. Their dedication to excellence set an example for all of us.

The band was directed by Marc Whitman, who is a motivated and worthy leader of his students. Under his supervision, the Rutland High School Band was a true asset to the Inauguration festivities. I congratulate each and every band member and their musical directors on a superb job on January 20. All Vermonters are proud of them.

Mr. President, I ask to have printed in the RECORD an excerpt from an article about the band that appeared in the Rutland Daily Herald on January 22.

The article follows:

[From the Rutland Herald, Jan. 22, 2001]

HAIL (AND RAIN) TO THE CHIEF

(By Kevin O'Connor)

Ask anyone in the Rutland High School band: Playing at George W. Bush's inaugural Saturday left its mark.

Make that watermark.

"To see the bands, the floats, the protestors and the signs was significant, and then to be a part of that experience was something in itself," saxophonist Charles Romeo said. "We made our place in history and being in the rain makes it better—it's a better story to tell."

The 18-year-old senior was one of 92 students who soaked up the chance to represent Vermont at inaugural ceremonies this past weekend in Washington, DC.

Rutland High first played for a president when John F. Kennedy took office in 1961—a moment frozen in time by a blizzard of snow and 22-degree winds.

Forty years later, the band again took the inaugural by storm.

How wet did it get?

"Very, very wet," French horn player Devon Balfour said in a phone interview after the band returned to its hotel late Saturday night. "We were all drenched, but I don't think it mattered to many of us, because it was so exciting."

Students were set to wake Saturday as early as 4 p.m. so they could reach a Pentagon security check by 6:30 a.m., and play on a stage at the corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and Sixth Street before and after the president's swearing-in.

But the weather almost washed out their plans. Inaugural organizers didn't commit to outdoor ceremonies until late Friday, leaving the band, its two music teachers and 10 parent chaperons wondering for hours.

"I didn't even consider it as an option," band director Marc Whitman said of cancellation, "but the kids would have gotten their chance to swim in the hotel pool all day."

Band members didn't march in the inaugural parade like their predecessors, but instead performed for some of the thousands of spectators around the U.S. Capitol from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. and 12:45 to 2 p.m.●

WILLIMANTIC LIONS CLUB

● Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the Willimantic

Lions Club of Willimantic, Connecticut. On February 24, they will be celebrating their 60th Year of Service to the Greater Windham/Willimantic Community.

Since the Willimantic Lions Club was established 60 years ago, they have reached out to assist many members of the community but especially the blind and visually impaired. Their members have worked to provide eye exams, eyeglasses, low vision devices and guide dogs for members of the community through a variety of local fundraisers. The Lions Club also has lent its support to such worthwhile local causes as soup kitchens, the Red Cross, Special Olympics, the Boy and Girl Scouts and academic scholarships for local students.

As the Willimantic Lions Club has grown over the years, it has attracted more than 700 men and women as members of their club. Their numerous good works have touched many lives and demonstrated the true value of volunteerism. The people of Connecticut thank the Willimantic Lions Club and all its members for their service, dedication, and contributions to our state.●

GUN SAFETY

● Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, on October 16, 2000, Mr. Charlton Heston, President of the National Rifle Association (NRA), gave a speech at a campaign rally in Grand Rapids, Michigan. On the campaign trail in Michigan, Mr. Heston asserted that Vice President Al Gore's position on guns had changed and suggested that "in any other time or place, you'd be looking for a lynching mob."

Such inflammatory and extremist remarks are an outrage. The NRA itself should condemn them. The fact that an average of ten children suffer gun-related deaths each day demands that we work together to end gun violence, yet Mr. Heston's comments serve only to further polarize the debate over guns and gun safety.

Although some in the crowd at the NRA rally in October may have been in support of Mr. Heston's rhetoric, the majority of people in Michigan reject the hate that was exuded by NRA's leader that October day in Michigan. In November, voters in Michigan also demonstrated that they oppose the tactics of the gun lobby and voters around the country voiced their support for gun safety measures, such as closing the gun show loophole that gives youth and criminals illegitimate access to firearms.

Mr. President, the American people have called on all of us to work toward decreasing the amount of gun violence in their schools and communities, and I am hopeful that the 107th Congress will be able to respond to their call by passing responsible gun safety legislation.●