

TRIBUTE TO FORMER SENATOR
WILLIAM PROXMIRE

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to our late colleague, Senator William Proxmire—beloved father, husband, veteran, and former member of this body. With over 32 years of service in this institution, Senator Proxmire constantly challenged us to remain fiscally responsible. As chairman of the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs for four Congresses, he was constantly working to protect the taxpayers.

Most Members of this esteemed body recall the steady reminder by Senator Proxmire that “Uncle Sam is the last of the big spenders.” His firm advocacy for good sense and forethought on spending led to the creation of the “Golden Fleece” awards. Senator Proxmire would hand these awards out, to friend and foe, to highlight government waste, abuse and scandal. His “maverick” attitude toward our responsibilities with the taxpayers’ dollars should be remembered, honored, and, as I am sure he would agree, employed more today. We miss Senator Proxmire and his “Golden Fleece” awards.

Our country lost Senator Proxmire this past December as he succumbed to the devastating affects of Alzheimer’s—a disease he battled daily since 1994. He spent his last years at the Copper Ridge Institute in Eldersburg, MD. Copper Ridge is a fantastic facility dedicated to the study of caring for those suffering from dementia. The goals of the Copper Ridge Institute are to share the knowledge it has acquired in the field of dementia care. For the last 10 years, staff from Copper Ridge, the Copper Ridge Institute and the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine have worked together to develop a model of care that respects the dignity of the people battling this disease and that provides a better quality of life to them.

I had the pleasure of meeting and talking with Senator Proxmire’s wife, Ellen, in September 2004. Mrs. Proxmire sponsors an annual award in the name of her husband for those who support this dedicated Alzheimer’s research. Mrs. Proxmire has truly become the voice for those who cannot speak. She has worked diligently to see more national attention given to Alzheimer’s disease and the important role specific care models like that at Copper Ridge play in preserving the dignity and quality of life of those with the disease. As Mrs. Proxmire likes to point out, “Until there is a cure for the disease, learning to care for those with Alzheimer’s is paramount.”

Mr. President, we have a responsibility, as nearly 4.5 million Americans find themselves faced with this terrible disease, to work with those involved with research and medicine in this field. Our country is stronger today because the name “William Proxmire” is found on the rolls of the Senate. As we pause to remember this great man,

true patriot, and fellow Senator, this institution should take heed and continue our support in the fight for an Alzheimer’s cure.

PALESTINIAN LEGISLATIVE
COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, while we are still awaiting final certification of the election results, it is apparent that the Islamic Resistance Movement, or Hamas, has obtained a significant number of seats in the new Palestinian legislative council. Despite its electoral success, Hamas remains a terrorist organization that has refused to renounce its fundamental commitment to the destruction of Israel and to the use of violence to achieve its goals.

Electoral results do not change the fact that a lasting, viable peace can only be obtained through a two-state solution. Hamas must use its electoral success as an opportunity to renounce its violent platform and to join in a coalition dedicated to achieving peace in the region. Renouncing terrorism and violence and accepting the right of Israel to exist are essential steps toward fulfilling the desire of the Palestinian people for a peaceful representative democracy.

NATIONAL MENTORING MONTH

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I am pleased to join my colleagues Senator MCCAIN and Senator KENNEDY in sponsoring a resolution designating the month of January as “National Mentoring Month.” Adult-to-youth mentoring has long shown positive impacts on our Nation’s young people in becoming responsible, productive adults.

This January will mark the fourth anniversary of the National Mentoring Month campaign to focus national attention on the need for mentors, as well as how each of us within the public and private sector can work together to increase the number of mentors and assure brighter futures for our youth.

Currently, it is estimated that 15 million children need or want a mentor. That is 15 million young people who need the guidance to improve life-essential skills, make healthy choices, and increase their own self worth. I hope the rest of the Senate will join in supporting this resolution and supporting this very important campaign.

ABRAMOFF SCANDAL

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, as both vice chairman of the Senate Ethics Committee and a member of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, I have been absolutely appalled at the scope and the depth of the villainy associated with the Abramoff lobbying scandal.

Inasmuch as Washington recently has become consumed and distracted by the utterly shameful actions of dis-

graced lobbyist Jack Abramoff, I believe that it is essential to understand just how far removed from this scandal Indian tribes are. While a small handful of tribes were represented by Mr. Abramoff and were victimized by his incredibly shady and cynical manipulation of their funds, the vast majority of our Nation’s 560 tribes and Alaskan Native villages had nothing to do with him or his practices. Less than half of those tribes operate casinos, and only a tiny proportion of those generate the kind of money that would attract the likes of Mr. Abramoff.

Most of the tribes that operate casinos are far from wealthy. The myth that all or most gaming Indian tribes are rolling in dough is wildly incorrect. The tribes in South Dakota and many around the country have large land bases and extensive enrolled memberships. Their casinos are often located in remote, rural areas far away from large numbers of affluent customers and set amidst dire levels of poverty and unemployment. The truth is that most of these casinos provide some badly needed jobs and only a modest amount of revenue. The income that remains after payroll expenses are largely then immediately consumed by a huge backlog of financial needs for education, housing, health and economic development within their reservations.

While a few Indian tribes were associated with Mr. Abramoff, the fees they paid were far beyond what most tribes could possibly afford—and in the end, their hired lobbyist abused both their money and their trust. Clearly, this scandal was a lobbying scandal, not a tribal scandal. The reality in too much of Indian Country is the consequence of chronic poverty: shocking levels of disease, inadequate housing, crime, drug and alcohol abuse, low school graduation rates, hunger, and stressed families. These tribes aren’t paying Washington lobbyists millions of dollars, but instead are struggling every day to make ends meet and to help restore the dignity of their members.

While I did not receive any money from Jack Abramoff, I did receive legal contributions from tribes he represented. I am proud of the support Indian tribes and individual Native Americans have extended to me over the years. We must help restore the American public’s faith in good, responsible government and preserve participation by sovereign Indian tribes in our democracy.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

CONGRATULATING EAGLE SCOUTS

● Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today I rise to congratulate Seth Honerman, Robert Viste, Kevin and Kyle Roades, Dennis VerHey, Donald Nordlie, Adam English, Michael King, Jordan Richter, Bayard Carlson, Ryan King, Thomas Hieber, Jeffrey Wilkes, and Travis

Maholovich who have recently obtained the rank of Eagle Scout. The rank of Eagle Scout is the highest rank given to lifetime members of the Boy Scouts. This honor is not given lightly, and it represents their great drive and dedication to excellence.

These young men should be proud of their accomplishment. The rank of Eagle is given to only 2 percent of all Boy Scouts, and these young men find themselves among other great Americans including Neil Armstrong and Gerald Ford. I look forward to these Scouts going on to do great things as well.

I am proud to join the friends and family of these proud Scouts in congratulating them on their many and most recent accomplishments.●

AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

● Mr. DAYTON. Mr. President, I rise today to honor Bamber Valley Elementary School, in Rochester, MN, which recently earned an Award for Excellence in Education for its exceptional and innovative achievements in educating children.

Bamber Valley Elementary School is truly a model of educational success. The school is Rochester's largest elementary school, serving 885 students in kindergarten through fifth grade. The successful partnership created between families and the community has made possible a school that exemplifies teamwork, pride, and excellence.

Bamber Valley is making full use of test score data to improve teaching techniques and to address the specific reading and math challenges facing individual students. The administration's quick dissemination of test data to the classroom teachers has allowed the teachers to adjust their teaching strategies, addressing the skills that students found to be the most difficult on the standardized tests.

Bamber Valley is home to the district's programs serving the elementary deaf and hard-of-hearing children. The program's resource teachers work with families encountering crisis situations, and a gifted and talented specialist is assigned to the school to help challenge students who excel.

For students in the first through fifth grades, the school has an after-school academy program, where laughter and high energy combine to create a learning environment that is safe, welcoming, and fun.

Much of the credit for Bamber Valley Elementary School's success belongs to its principal, Ms. Becky Gerdes, and her dedicated teachers. The students and staff at Bamber Valley Elementary School understand that, in order to be successful, a school must go beyond achieving academic success; it must also offer a nurturing environment where students develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes for a lifetime of success. All of the faculty, staff, and students at Bamber Valley Elementary

School should be very proud of their accomplishments.

I congratulate Bamber Valley Elementary School in Rochester, MN, for winning the Award for Excellence in Education and for its exceptional contributions to education in Minnesota.●

AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

● Mr. DAYTON. Mr. President, I rise today to honor Mayo High School, in Rochester, MN, which recently earned an Award for Excellence in Education for its exceptional and innovative achievements in educating children.

Mayo High School is truly a model of educational success. Several years ago, the school established three major goals and developed an action plan to achieve them: No. 1, to improve the graduation rate; No. 2, to address a disproportionate number of suspensions of racial minority students; and No. 3, to improve poor math and reading test scores.

Several key school leaders are largely responsible for the school's attaining these goals.

Ms. Joan Bachman, who chaired the diversity committee, initiated a multiyear plan, working with the community, staff, and students to make Mayo High School a more welcoming place for all students. Through her leadership, the school has won the District's Diversity Award for each of the last 4 years. She also won the Rochester Diversity Council's Educators Award last year.

Ms. Jeri Brown oversees the school's conflict mediation program and trains students in conflict mediation skills. The students who receive conflict mediation training perform nearly 400 mediations per year, achieving a 93-percent success rate.

Mr. Ron Randall, chair of the math department, and Barb Milburn, chair of the English department, have done a superior job in improving the academic performance of all students. Last year, Mayo received the State's Five Star rating in math.

Recognizing that many of the students receiving suspensions for behavioral reasons were the same students who least could afford time away from school, Mayo modified its policies. By focusing on addressing causes of students' poor behavior, Mayo has avoided loss of valuable class time. Consequently, suspension rates have improved, and graduation rates have dramatically risen. Last year, the school boasted a 95-percent graduation rate.

Much of the credit for Mayo High School's success belongs to its principal, Dr. John Frederikson, and his dedicated teachers. The students and staff at Mayo High School understand that, in order to be successful, a school must go beyond achieving academic success; it must also provide a nurturing environment where students develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes for a lifetime of success. All of

the faculty, staff, and students at Mayo High School should be very proud of their accomplishments.

I congratulate Mayo High School in Rochester, MN, for winning the Award for Excellence in Education and for its exceptional contributions to education in Minnesota.●

AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

● Mr. DAYTON. Mr. President, I rise today to honor Eagle Lake Elementary School, in Eagle Lake, MN, which recently earned an Award for Excellence in Education for its exceptional and innovative achievements in educating children.

Eagle Lake Elementary School is truly a model of educational success, having earned a Five Star rating from the Minnesota Department of Education. The school, which is part of the Mankato Area School District, serves 290 students from the communities of Eagle Lake and Madison Lake. Although relatively small, Eagle Lake Elementary offers an impressive variety of educational opportunities, including all-day kindergarten, special education services, assurance of mastery program for at-risk students, a school psychologist and social worker, a structured study center, afterschool academic assistance, speech and language assistance, an artist-in-residence program, mentoring program, lyceum programs, and challenging opportunities for highly capable students.

Eagle Lake Elementary's "400 Club," a school-wide home reading program, encourages students to spend at least 100 minutes per week reading. At the end of each month, a school-wide celebration honors those who have read over 400 minutes for the month. The "Reading Buddies" program pairs early elementary students with fourth and fifth grade students to explore reading through weekly themed projects and activities. The older buddy learns role model and leadership skills while the younger buddy is encouraged to develop lifelong reading habits. The school also boasts an orchestra program, a science fair, a Quiz Bowl, Peace Makers, which teaches peer mediation and conflict resolution, novel study, word masters, art masterpiece, geography and spelling bees, Jump Rope for Heart, and a variety of after-school activities.

Parents' involvement in the education of their children is also very high at Eagle Lake Elementary. This fall, 99 percent of all parents participated in parent-teacher conferences.

Much of the credit for Eagle Lake Elementary School's success belongs to principal, Jason Scherber, and his dedicated teachers. The students and staff at Eagle Lake Elementary School understand that, in order to be successful, a school must go beyond achieving academic success; it must also provide a nurturing environment where students develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes for a lifetime of success. All of