

TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM BAKER  
WOOLF

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, today I recognize the accomplishments and efforts of Bill Woolf, a longtime Senate staffer and tireless advocate for Alaska's interests. Bill will retire at the conclusion of this Congress and move to his family home on Marrowstone Island in Washington State.

For nearly 30 years, Bill has been an advocate for and friend to Alaska's fishermen. A former resident of Juneau, he began work in 1977 at the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. In 1983, Bill moved on to the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute, where he became familiar with our State's fishing industry. Bill quickly established a far-reaching bond with those affected by and working in this important industry.

For the past 20 years, Bill has worked in the U.S. Senate as a legislative aide—serving on the staffs of both Frank Murkowski and Senator LISA MURKOWSKI. Staff members like Bill are the backbone of this institution. They meet and work with the administration, State officials, and constituents, and they help those elected to Congress pursue initiatives which will serve their State and our Nation well.

During the two decades that he has worked in the Senate, Bill has been a vigorous advocate for the people and communities of Alaska. Those who have worked with him have the deepest respect for his commitment and contributions.

On behalf of our Alaska congressional delegation and all Alaskans, I extend our appreciation to Bill for his service. We wish him the best in his future endeavors.

NATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS  
INVESTMENT ACT

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I come to the floor to join more than 35 of our colleagues in support of the National Competitiveness Investment Act.

Our country's success is the direct result of our advancements in science and technology. Throughout our history, our scientists and engineers have created new industries—and their efforts have ensured our country's competitiveness in the global economy. Two key reports now raise serious concerns about our ability to continue this tradition.

The "Innovate America" report by the Council on Competitiveness and the National Academies' "Rising Above the Gathering Storm" report, also known as the "Augustine Report," both conclude advancements in science and technology are our country's best hope for the future. They identify serious problems with our efforts in these areas. Sadly, this week the World Economic Forum announced our country has dropped from first to sixth place in its "global competitiveness index."

Our comprehensive legislation addresses several of these issues, and all

of us owe a great debt to Senator ENSIGN, who has shown tremendous leadership in the drafting of this bill. As the new chairman of the Commerce Committee, I asked Senator ENSIGN to chair our Subcommittee on Technology, Innovation, and Competitiveness. Over the past 2 years, he has held a series of hearings on this issue. He also introduced S. 2802, the American Innovation and Competitiveness Act, which the Commerce Committee passed without opposition in May. Senator ENSIGN has worked on a bipartisan basis with our colleagues on the HELP and Energy Committees.

This act is the culmination of these efforts. It will help our country remain competitive by increasing Federal investment in basic research and improving student opportunities in science, technology, engineering, and math. This bill also develops the infrastructure we need to foster innovation in the 21st century.

While this bill alone will not solve all of our challenges, it is an important first step.

I urge each of our colleagues to co-sponsor this legislation and vote in favor of its passage.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, the Child Custody Protection Act prohibits taking a minor child across State lines for an abortion in circumvention of a State law requiring parental notification or consent in that child's abortion. And it gives the victims of our imperfect legal system a means of restitution.

This legislation also protects the integrity of State parental notification laws, and helps ensure that they are honored. Without it, State laws regarding parental notification and consent for a minor's abortion can be flouted with impunity.

Right now, some abortion clinics even advertise to minors living in neighboring States with parental notice and consent laws.

Right now, we are increasing our pregnant minors' vulnerability to health complications. Patients receiving abortions at out-of-state clinics are less likely to return for followup care. And a teenager who has an out-of-state abortion without her parents' knowledge or consent is even more unlikely to tell them she is having complications.

At its core, this bill is about protecting a minor's health and protecting her from exploitation. It is about respecting and honoring State laws. And it is about ensuring parental involvement in the life-or-death decision of their child.

Forty-four States have already seen the grim irony in the fact that teenage students can't go on a field trip or receive aspirin from the school nurse without parental consent, but a young girl can flout State laws and have an abortion—a major surgical procedure—without informing her parents.

This bill helps parental notification and consent laws remain enforceable

and meaningful, and it keeps in place all judicial bypass options and waiver provisions that States have enacted to accommodate young girls who come from troubled or abusive homes.

This simple, straightforward legislation was already passed by the Senate in July by a vote of 65 to 34. It received overwhelming bipartisan support. I am pleased that 14 of my Democratic colleagues, including the Senate minority leader, chose to join me and its sponsor, Senator ENSIGN, in support of this important bill. And I believe this legislation was further improved by the adoption of the Boxer-Ensign amendment, which strengthened provisions pertaining to minors who are caught in abusive home situations.

So it was a disappointment when this legislation was blocked from going to conference by a parliamentary maneuver by my colleagues from across the aisle. On multiple occasions, we sought to go to conference with the House on this legislation, only to have this routine procedural move obstructed.

I would like to commend the work of the bill's sponsor, my colleague JOHN ENSIGN. I am glad that the House chose to pick up this legislation and pass it with instructions.

I believe it is important to pass this legislation, which has the approval of around 80 percent of the American public and is supported on both sides of the aisle. It protects underage minors. It respects and protects parental involvement in the life-or-death decisions of their child. And it prevents the violation of State laws. It should not be allowed to be blocked. I hope my colleagues will join me in voting for S. 403, the Child Custody Protection Act, and passing this long-obstructed, overwhelmingly supported, commonsense legislation.

NATO FREEDOM CONSOLIDATION  
ACT OF 2006

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, for more than 50 years, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization has served as a force for stability, security, and peace in Europe. It remains the foundation of security on the Continent and the cornerstone of U.S. engagement in Europe. Today it is the key institution helping to secure a Europe that is whole, free, and at peace.

Not only is it the most successful alliance in history, but NATO has also contributed to the democratic transition of our former adversaries in Central and Eastern Europe by fostering the development of new, strong, and democratic allies capable of contributing to our common security goals. NATO's enlargement over the past decade has strengthened the strongest alliance in history and helped spread democracy and liberty. For this reason, it is essential that we keep the door to NATO accession open for others.

Today, I am proud to introduce the NATO Freedom Consolidation Act of 2006, along with Senators LUGAR,

BIDEN, SMITH, and MCCAIN. This legislation expresses the Senate's support for the accession of Albania, Croatia, Georgia, and Macedonia to NATO.

I welcome the progress made by these countries in implementing the political, economic, and military reforms needed to qualify for NATO membership. Each of these countries has made substantive contributions to peace and stability in the region and has expressed a desire for closer affiliation with this institution.

Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia have already made tremendous strides in implementing their National Programs under NATO's Membership Action Plan. The MAP remains the key vehicle for NATO to review and assess the readiness of each aspirant for full membership. I am confident that these three countries will continue to progress toward the goals pursued through the MAP, and I look forward to future reports of each country's progress.

Georgia is also coordinating its reform efforts with NATO members to meet the criteria for eventual membership in the Alliance. NATO recently announced the launching of an intensified dialogue with the Georgian Government. The United States stands ready to assist the Georgian people as they continue their reform efforts.

In addition to expressing the Congress's support for their eventual NATO membership, this legislation also designates Albania, Croatia, Georgia, and Macedonia as eligible to receive assistance under the NATO Participation Act of 1994. To underscore this commitment, it authorizes security assistance in the amount of \$3.2 million for Albania, \$3 million for Croatia, \$10 million for Georgia, and \$3.6 million for Macedonia.

Previous rounds of NATO enlargement have shown that the expansion of this great alliance benefits not only the new members but the alliance itself. Albania, Croatia, Georgia, and Macedonia stand to gain as much from NATO membership as the current Allies do from their accession.

The United States cannot build a safer and better world alone. The support of our NATO allies and the strengthening of the alliance are essential in the global war on terrorism. The alliance will be critical in successfully dealing with the mutual challenges we will face in the years ahead.

The United States will continue to work with these countries to institute the reforms necessary for NATO membership. I urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan legislation. And I look forward to the day when Albania, Croatia, Georgia, and Macedonia become America's NATO allies and the most successful alliance in history becomes even stronger.

#### TRIBUTE TO MR. THOMAS KUSTER

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to a dedicated

first responder, Mr. Thomas Kuster. A former Louisville fire chief, Mr. Kuster made Kentucky his home after being stationed with the Army at Fort Knox. He began his service to the Commonwealth of Kentucky by joining the Louisville Fire Department in 1957; he quickly rose through its ranks and was appointed fire chief in 1976.

While serving as Jefferson County judge-executive, I was pleased to name Mr. Kuster to head the county's fire protection in 1980. Years later, he would finish his long career of public service as Louisville's public safety director, supervising the city's fire and police departments, EMS, and health programs.

Earlier this month, Mr. Kuster passed away, and the Commonwealth of Kentucky lost a loyal public servant. The Louisville Courier-Journal published an article highlighting Mr. Kuster's career and dedication to the safety of his fellow man. I ask that the full article be printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD and that the entire Senate join me in paying respect to this honored Kentuckian.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Louisville Courier-Journal, Sept. 12, 2006]

THOMAS KUSTER, FORMER LOUISVILLE FIRE CHIEF, DIES

(By Paula Burba)

Retired Louisville Fire Chief Thomas Kuster, who also served as Louisville's public safety director and Jefferson County fire protection administrator, died Saturday at Baptist Hospital East: He was 69.

"Tom was a fireman's fireman, a true gentleman who cared about public safety. He dedicated his life to protecting the people of Louisville," Louisville Mayor Jerry Abramson said in a statement yesterday.

A native of Newark, Ohio, Kuster was stationed at Fort Knox for three years and decided to stay in Kentucky. He joined the Louisville Fire Department in 1957 shortly after leaving the Army. He was promoted to lieutenant in 1964, captain in 1966, district chief in 1970 and assistant chief five years later.

He was appointed fire chief in 1976 by Mayor Harvey Sloane and served in that position until 1979, years that included the last strike by the city's firefighters.

"He held things together," said Capt. Paul Routon, current president of the firefighters Local 345. "I think he was the right guy at the time for it. When we came back to work, his stance was 'Let's put this behind us and move forward.' I think he did it."

"Philosophically, I'm management," Kuster said in July 1978 when firefighters had finally voted to end the 95-hour strike—during which he had slept about six hours and responded to fire runs with other non-union supervisors and members of the National Guard. At the same time, Kuster said, "I understand, or feel like I understand their [striking firefighters'] position."

City officials praised his leadership, while firefighters on the picket lines shook his hand.

"He didn't demand respect. He knew how to get respect," Assistant Chief Randy Winstead said yesterday.

Winstead described Kuster as "real regimental, real serious" and credited Kuster's acceptance of "social change" as one way "he turned the fire department around."

"You look at (photos of) all the other chiefs," Winstead said, "they all look like your grandfather. Except there's Tom with sideburns and long hair."

He was also the first chief to allow firefighters to wear T-shirts instead of uniform shirts inside the firehouse, Winstead said.

Kuster resigned as fire chief in 1979 after successfully resisting several efforts, according to newspaper stories, by Mayor William Stansbury's administration to demote several assistant chiefs for what he saw as political reasons.

Kuster worked in administration at the Louisville Water Co. until then County Judge Mitch McConnell chose him to head the county's fire protection in 1980.

In 1983, Kuster accepted a job as fire chief in Raleigh, N.C., where he served until 1985.

He returned to Louisville as the first department head named by Mayor-elect Abramson in 1985. He was appointed Louisville's public safety director, overseeing the police and fire departments, EMS and health programs. He held that position until 1993.

"Louisville will always be grateful for Tom's public service," Abramson said.

#### TRIBUTE TO LAJUANA WILCHER

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to honor LaJuana Wilcher, a Kentuckian who nobly served the Bluegrass State as secretary for the State's Environmental and Public Protection Cabinet, EPPC.

Appointed by the Governor in 2003, Ms. Wilcher will step down as Kentucky's top environmental regulator at the end of this month. As secretary for the EPPC, Ms. Wilcher oversaw many of Kentucky's regulatory agencies, including those that regulate the environment, coal mining, horse racing, banking, insurance, occupational safety and health, workers' compensation, housing, alcoholic beverage control, charitable gaming, and professional boxing and wrestling.

Before serving in the Governor's cabinet, Ms. Wilcher had over three decades of experience in environmental and natural-resources issues. She served in President Ronald Reagan's administration as a biologist and environmental lawyer with the U.S. National Park Service. And under President George H.W. Bush, she served as the Environmental Protection Agency's Assistant Administrator of Water.

Known for being a straight shooter who got things done, Ms. Wilcher dealt with the worst mine disaster in Kentucky in the past 16 years and pushed for tougher mine-safety legislation that was passed by the Kentucky General Assembly. She also spearheaded changes to Kentucky's horse racing industry when she instituted drug testing for horses.

Mr. President, I wish Ms. Wilcher well as she returns to her law practice in Bowling Green, KY. I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking her for her dedicated service to the Commonwealth of Kentucky and her Nation. She is a true steward of our environment.