

students. These schools play an important role in their communities, teaching service and character to their students in the Catholic tradition.

This tradition is what encourages many parents to sacrifice to pay for a Catholic education. As many students, parents, and teachers will tell you, a Catholic education provides balance to students not only in their educational experience, but also in their spiritual life. The values taught in Catholic schools are important for developing engaged and informed members of the community.

Catholic education has played a needed role in our educational system for more than a century. I am confident that Nevada and our Nation will be well served by Catholic schools for many years to come.

ANNIVERSARY OF ALASKA STATEHOOD

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, January marked the 48th anniversary of the day Alaska achieved statehood. Earlier this week, Senator MURKOWSKI and I introduced S.J. Res. 49, a resolution commemorating our State's 50th anniversary. We will reach this milestone on January 3, 2009.

Alaska's path to statehood was a long one. In 1867, Secretary of the Treasury William Seward convinced President Andrew Johnson to purchase Alaska for \$7.2 million. At the time, this purchase was often derided as "Seward's Folly," and many wondered what the United States would do with what some called its new "Polar Bear Garden."

While history shortly proved the critics wrong, statehood for Alaska did not come easily. It took more than 90 years for Alaska to become a state. The first Alaska statehood bill was introduced by James Wickersham, our territorial delegate, in 1916. Over the years, seven Congresses considered legislation regarding Alaska's admission to our Union. Between 1946 and 1957 alone, statehood hearings held by the House and Senate spanned more than 3,500 pages in the printed record.

Alaskans tirelessly advocated for statehood. On November 8, 1955, 55 men and women assembled at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks for Alaska's Constitutional Convention. These delegates worked for 75 days, and their efforts produced a precedent-setting constitution.

Thanks to the dedication of George Lehleitner of Louisiana and C.W. Bill Snedden, the publisher of the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, our constitution included Alaska's version of the "Tennessee Plan". Under this plan, our territory elected a congressional delegation without federal approval. Our constitution—and this plan—ultimately became the basis for congressional approval of statehood.

Alaskans also made countless trips to Washington, DC, to testify in support of statehood. These visits were

critical to our success—in 1957, the House Insular Affairs Committee reported, "Alaska is in all ways ready for statehood."

Forty-two years after the introduction of the first statehood bill, our long wait finally ended. On May 12, 1958, Representative Clair Engle moved to bring the Alaska statehood bill to the floor of the House. He sought and received a special privileged status which is reserved for statehood bills. This status allowed him to circumvent the Rules Committee, which had blocked statehood legislation for more than 11 months.

Right up until the end, statehood for Alaska faced fierce opposition. In the Senate, a small group of opponents prolonged the debate for 5 long days and nights. I was among the many Alaskans who gathered in the viewing galleries above this Chamber on June 30, 1958, waiting for the historic vote. At 8:02 pm, the Senate passed the Alaska statehood bill by a vote of 64 to 20. Six months later, on January 3, 1959, we officially became the 49th State in the Union.

I come to the floor today to pay tribute to the Alaskans who fought for statehood and our good friends in Congress who supported them. Bob Bartlett, our State's delegate in the House, worked on statehood for 14 years. He was assisted by men like Leo O'Brien of New York, who chaired the Territories Subcommittee; John Saylor of Pennsylvania, who led the floor fight for Republican supporters; Clair Engle of California, who chaired the Insular Affairs Committee; and Sam Rayburn, the Speaker of the House.

In the Senate, Alaskans found a good friend in Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson of Washington State, who was chairman of Territories on the Interior Committee. Senator Jackson helped plan the successful strategy that put the vote for statehood over the top. Twenty-five years later, Senator Jackson cosponsored a resolution celebrating the silver anniversary of Alaska's statehood. Earlier this week, Senator MURKOWSKI and I offered a similar resolution, this time to commemorate our State's golden anniversary in 2009.

Alaskans also found many good friends outside of the Halls of Congress. President Eisenhower, President Truman, and Secretary of the Interior Fred Seaton each supported our campaign for statehood. It was my great privilege to know and serve with many of these men. I am particularly indebted to Secretary Seaton, who asked me to serve as his legislative counsel, Assistant to the Secretary, and ultimately the Solicitor of the Department of the Interior during the Eisenhower administration. These positions gave me the opportunity to work on the Alaska Statehood Act.

History has proven those who criticized Seward's purchase—and those who opposed statehood—wrong. When William Seward purchased Alaska from Russia, he paid \$7,200,000—less than 2

cents per acre. With the full rights and opportunities granted to the states in our Union, Alaska has more than made good on this investment—the Federal revenue from the development of our resources has repaid this investment hundreds of times over.

The list of our State's opportunities remains promising. We have vast coal reserves and enormous potential in oil and gas both on and off our shores. Trillions of feet of gas hydrates lie beneath our permafrost. Our State's 34,000 miles of shoreline are the gateway to some of our Nation's most promising tidal and ocean energy prospects. Our forests contain much of the Nation's timber and pulp. Sixty percent of our country's commercial fish harvest is caught in the waters off of our State's shores.

Our geographic location was a vital asset during World War II and the Cold War, and it continues to offer our Armed Forces important strategic advantages. Our location has also helped boost our Nation's trade with Canada, Russia, and nations throughout Asia.

Our State's greatest resource, however, will always be our people. Alaskans are resourceful, enterprising, and fiercely independent. Our pioneer spirit runs deep. And the traditions and heritage of our Alaska Native people have greatly contributed to our country's cultural life.

The list of our State's opportunities is long, but we are still a young State. For each of our opportunities, there is a challenge to overcome. The Federal Government owns more than 60 percent of our lands. We have only 14,000 miles of roads. Seventy percent of our towns, villages, and cities can be reached only by boat or air. If we are to fulfill our potential, we will need greater understanding of these facts.

Forty-eight years is not a long time. In fact, our State is younger than all but eight of the Members who serve in this Senate. Our ability to fulfill our potential depends on the willingness of those who serve in Congress to provide us with the opportunities and support given to other States when they were in similar stages of their development.

On this anniversary of statehood, Alaskans honor those who made this milestone possible. And we share our hope that—once again—we will find friends in Congress and elsewhere that will help us fulfill our State's potential.

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY RULES OF PROCEDURE

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the rules adopted on January 31, 2007, by the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry be printed in the RECORD.

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