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JEFF, PETE PROVIDE BOOST FOR SCIENTIFIC RESURGENCE
David Broder's right: Senate approval of the America COMPETES Act, he notes in today's column, is big news. This nation lurching from lethargy to the moon during the dozen exciting years that followed Russia's launch of Sputnik 248 years ago, where within four months America had launched its own satellite in orbit while back on earth our local news section Saturday that this was overdue action on the math-and-science front.

The measure, the full name of which is America Creating Opportunities for Meaningfully Promoting Excellence in Education and Science Act, is a $16-billion authorization of new money to invest heavily in physical-sciences research, recruitment of new math and science teachers nationwide, while updating those in the field. It would be part of a $60 billion campaign to put America back on top in science research and development, to provide them more steady work. The bipartisan bill was approved by an 88–8 tally. But at least as important, perhaps the most important piece of legislation of this two-year session. Almost no one noticed.

Jeff has a point. The bill, boldly named "the America COMPETES Act," authorized an additional $16 billion over four years as part of a $60 billion effort to “double spending currently available” and to provide grants to researchers and invest more in high-risk, high-payoff research. As Alexander noted, “these were recommendations of a National Academy of Sciences task force” that he and others had asked to tell Congress the 10 things it most urgently needs to do: “to help America keep its brainpower advantage so we can keep our jobs from going to China and India.

Jeff Bingaman, who has spent so much of his Capitol Hill career urging his colleagues to support the sciences and academics in general, sponsored a 2005 study—the report that carried a title both ominous and promising: ''Rising Above the Gathering Storm.” It told our nation the challenge of China, India and other nations in science and technology—which could cost our country its competitiveness in world markets.

If evidence were needed to support that concern, need only look at our schools: Only 29 percent of eighth-graders nationwide are proficient in science. In New Mexico, only 18 percent did.

This isn't a Sputnik situation of 50 years ago, where within four months America had its own satellite in orbit while back on earth science fairs were the rage; this is a case of what James E. Casey founded UPS in 1907 with the mission of bringing packages to people, 360,600 employees here in the United States, and to make deliveries to over 200 countries and territories worldwide. By constantly innovating and improving service and

Jeff Bingaman, and fellow Sen. Pete Domenici, so often teammates in bipartisan initiatives, have put their skills and influence together for this push. They're their parties' highest-ranking members of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, and Domenici's influence is influential on the budget and appropriations committees.

New Mexico, with its national scientific laboratories, stands to benefit from this initiative—which comes, we hope, en buena hora for the people of our region. Just last week, contractors for Los Alamos National Laboratory laid off scores more of the work-force. The contraction and maintenance people there have always been at the mercy of LANL's whims, and those of its academic and technical allies. But some of their children are seeing the need for higher education to provide them steady work. The America COMPETES Act could raise awareness of, and provide support for, generations of homegrown scientific and technical people.

The bill still must make it through the House of Representatives—and as Broder implies, our nation's news media could and should help the effort along.

On Monday, with few of his colleagues present and the Senate press galleries largely unoccupied, Sen. Lamar Alexander of Tennessee took the floor to make one of those personal statements that fill the Congressional Record, but rarely go any further. "Last week," he said, "while the media covered Iraq and U.S. attorneys, the Senate was spending crucial time passing perhaps the most important piece of legislation of this two-year session. Almost no one noticed.

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through the dedication of its employees, UPS has reached the pinnacle of its industry and has set the standard by which its competitors must follow.

I am proud to say that since opening their first facility in Newark, N.J., in 1907, UPS has maintained a steadfast presence in my home State of New Jersey. It employs more than 18,000 people statewide, making it one of the 10 largest employers in our State. I recently had the privilege and opportunity to visit a UPS hub in Edison to help commemorate its 100th anniversary. At the Edison facility, 3,000 dedicated employees process and sort packages originating from and destined for points all over our State. Individuals and businesses across New Jersey rely on their efforts every day, and the intricate and sophisticated processes used by these employees ensure that important packages and documents are delivered on time.

I encourage my colleagues to join me in congratulating UPS on 100 years in business. I personally extend my best wishes to the company and its employees in New Jersey and across the world for many more years of success and prosperity.

TRIBUTE TO WALTER M. “WALLY” SCHIRRA

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. President, I want to commend a great American, Astronaut Walter M. “Wally” Schirra, who passed away today. Captain Schirra leaves behind a praiseworthy legacy as a Navy veteran, a pioneer for NASA and of outer-space exploration, a television commentator, and a devoted husband and father.

Captain Schirra began his distinguished career in the U.S. Navy when he arrived in Annapolis in the early days of World War II; he graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1945 and served a pilot through Naval Flight Training in Pensacola, Fla. Through an exchange program with the Air Force during the Korean war, he proudly served our Nation as a pilot of F-86 Sabres. He carried this dedicated service to America into the stratosphere and beyond, making history as one of the “Original Seven” astronauts named by NASA to the Mercury program. On October 3, 1962, Captain Schirra became the first man to orbit the Earth 6 times. He is unique in that he is the only astronaut to have flown in NASA’s first 3 space programs: Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo. After retiring from NASA, he later served with distinction as a widely known television commentator at CBS.

The passion that Wally Schirra had for space exploration and his accomplishments as a pioneer astronaut underscores the importance of our continuing to strengthen the NASA space program. The Apollo 7 mission—under the command of Schirra—proved to the those at NASA that they had the ability to send a spacecraft into orbit around the moon. Since then, NASA has taken many giant leaps. We must continue the exploration, research, and discovery that have all constituted NASA’s trademark for decades.

Exploration into outer space helps us to better understand the world in which we live. NASA understood this well when they sent Captain Wally Schirra into outer space nearly 45 years ago; I am hopeful that this vision and reach will only continue to grow with time.

On behalf of Florida and the people of the United States, I thank Captain Schirra for his service to country and the science he helped to advance. He will be missed.

HONORING MAINELY TRUSSES

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, I wish today to recognize, for the week of April 29, an excelling entrepreneur from my home State who has been awarded the Maine 2007 Small Business Person of the Year, Michael Boulet. Mike is truly one of our Nation’s shining small business stories. His company—Mainely Trusses—exemplifies the heart and soul of the American dream becoming reality.

Last March, I had the privilege to witness first hand the products and services that Mike’s company provides when he was awarded an intermediary relending program loan from Kennebec Valley Council of Governments.

Mike’s investment in his company through the Small Business Administration’s Maine Small Business Development Center and Costal Enterprises, Inc., has paid tremendous dividends for the future of Mainely Trusses—with a state-of-the-art facility, new technologies, a dedication to customer service, and full benefits for his employees. In fact, Mainely Trusses is so advanced that they use all laser beams to construct the trusses which is completely driven by computer software and highly skilled employees.

Since Mike has been president, Mainely Trusses has shown no signs of slowing down, growing from 3 to 50 employees over the last 15 years—a tremendous achievement for any business. Think about it—that is a 1,600-percent increase. Just imagine if we had that kind of explosive progress in the U.S. Congress, then we would really be onto something.

And then there is all the more remarkable is Mike’s courage to take on the family business after his father, John Boulet, passed away in a work-related accident. But Mike doesn’t just reserve his considerable talents and energy for his business—he also exhibits those traits in the community. He is a small business laboratory for the future of Mainely Trusses—with a dedication to providing our Nation’s economy.

Mike is truly one of our Nation’s shining small businesses, and a small business laboratory for the country. This year, at the vanguard of Maine entrepreneurs stands Mike Boulet. Once again, I would like congratulate Mike for being an exceptional model for Maine and the Nation. We here in the Senate wish Mike all the best for many more successful years to come.

TRIBUTE TO VINCENZO ANTONIO MANNO

Mr. VOINOVICH. Mr. President, today I honor the musical genius of fellow Ohioan Vincenzo Antonio Manno, a renowned opera singer and devoted professor of music.

Mr. Manno was born and raised in my great hometown of Cleveland, OH. In fact, he grew up right down the street from my family in the Collinwood neighborhood—the same neighborhood I live in still today. But his musical gift eventually took him far beyond Collinwood to some of the finest music institutions in Europe.

Cleveland’s rich cultural environment and outstanding music tradition prepared Mr. Manno for his world-renowned career. Before completing his studies at Oberlin College under the tutelage of Professor Richard Mill, Mr. Manno was trained at the Cleveland Music School Settlement under Burton Garlinghouse and John Shurtleff; at summer sessions in Chautauqua, NY, under Josefine Antoine; and at the Cleveland Institute of Music under Eugene Steuerman.

After receiving his degree from Oberlin, Mr. Manno continued his studies on a Fulbright Fellowship in Italy at Santa Cecilia in Rome with Ettore Campogalliani. His promising career in Milan continued with Dr. Otto Mueller, who was affiliated for years with the Metropolitan Opera House of New York.

The fact is small businesses are the critical element in our efforts to strengthen and bolster the Nation’s economy. It used to be said, “What’s good for General Motors is good for the Nation.” Now, it is what is good for small business that is best for the Nation and job growth.

As ranking member of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, I am reminded daily of the immense—and often overlooked—contributions that Maine and other Americans make. They are the unsung heroes of our Nation’s economy, creating two-thirds of all new jobs throughout our country.

That is why I appreciate SBA’s commitment to providing our Nation’s small businesses, as they have helped Mike, with the financial and business development tools to help them grow and excel. With more than 5.3 million jobs created or retained since 1999, this is proof-positive that our investment in the SBA is paying tremendous dividends to the Nation’s economy.

We understand that Maine is a vital part of the American economy. Mike’s company provides the best for many more successful years to come.

Mr. Manno's dedication to music has taken him far beyond his hometown. He is an American dream come true, and we in the Senate wish Mike all the best for many more successful years to come.

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