

TRIBUTE TO NELDA BARTON-COLLINGS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to a good friend, Nelda Barton-Collings. Mrs. Barton-Collings is a well-respected Kentuckian and businesswoman, recently retired after serving 28 years on the Republican National Committee.

Mrs. Barton-Collings resides in Corbin, KY, where she was married to Dr. Harold Bryan Barton. After the passing of Dr. Barton she took on the ownership and operation of his two nursing homes. At the same time, she took night classes to become a licensed nursing home administrator. She has since grown those two nursing homes into numerous nursing homes and banks throughout eastern Kentucky.

Mrs. Barton-Collings used her vast business skills to serve her community, State, and eventually her Nation by committing to public service. She started out as a precinct chair, and then rose to become Kentucky's national committeewoman for the GOP. In 1982, President Ronald Reagan appointed her to the Federal Council on Aging. In 1990, she was the first woman elected chairman of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce while serving on the President's Council on Rural America and the National Advisory Council to Small Business Administration, through an appointment by President George H.W. Bush.

She has long been a voice of great leadership on the Republican National Committee, where she was the first woman from Kentucky to address the RNC and call the meeting to order. Her position gave her opportunities to extend democratic ideas and philosophy to the former Soviet Union. She and 40 other political and business professionals volunteered to visit the Soviet Union in 1990 to discuss the foundations of a democratic government. "They want freedom so badly; we hoped that we have helped them in some way," she said of her experience in the Soviet Union.

Nelda has given the good people of Kentucky and this Nation over 28 years of public service, and I would like to ask my colleagues to join me in honoring this committed public servant. The News Journal in Corbin, KY, published an article highlighting her accomplishments and what a champion she is for the Commonwealth of Kentucky, and I ask unanimous consent that the full article be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the News Journal, May 28, 2008]
LONGTIME SUPPORTER HONORED WITH
PORTRAIT, CLASSROOM

On Sunday, May 18, friends and family of Nelda Barton-Collings gathered at Cumberland Inn on the campus of University of the Cumberlands to recognize this extraordinary woman at a luncheon given in her honor.

As Dr. Jim Taylor, UC president said, "Today we honor a lady who has made, and

who continues to make a significant and substantial contribution to our area, to our state, and, indeed, to our nation. Dr. Nelda Barton-Collings truly is a legend in her own time." After the luncheon, the assembly proceeded to the Hutton School of Business, where a portrait of Mrs. Barton-Collings adorns a special classroom, which bears her name, in recognition of her faithfulness and support of UC.

A native of Providence, Webster County, Kentucky, Barton-Collings attended Western Kentucky University for two years before she entered the Norton Memorial Infirmary in Louisville, where she became a certified medical technologist. In Corbin, as the wife of Dr. Harold Bryan Barton, she became active in local organizations and held leadership positions in church, political, civic, medical, youth, educational and women's groups.

After Dr. Barton's death, she took over his business, which consisted of two nursing homes, and completed the Williamsburg Nursing Home, then under construction. At that time, she enrolled in night classes at University of the Cumberlands and later became a Kentucky Licensed Nursing Home Administrator. She and her business partner continued to build or buy a total of eight long-term healthcare facilities in Eastern Kentucky. A business woman ahead of her time, Barton-Collings has owned banks, pharmacies, rental properties, weekly newspapers, a cinema, and several other businesses. The newspapers, long-term care facilities and banks have won state awards and recognitions.

In 1990, Barton-Collings became the first woman elected chairman of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce. In 1982, she received a Presidential appointment from President Ronald Reagan to the Federal Council on Aging, where she served until 1987. From 1990-92, she served on the President's Council on Rural America and the National Advisory Council to Small Business Administration, appointed by President George H.W. Bush.

As an active member of the Republican Party for more than 50 years, Barton-Collings moved up the ranks from a precinct chair to Republican National Committee member representing Kentucky, a position she held for 28 years. Elected vice chair for an eight-year term and secretary of the Republican National Committee for another eight years, Barton-Collings earned the honor of calling to order the Republican National Convention in 1996.

But, this was not her first convention appearance, as she was the first woman from Kentucky to present an address at a Republican National Convention, when, in Detroit, Michigan, in 1980, she spoke on "The Business of Caring for the Elderly." During her tenure on the Republican National Committee, she was a charter member and appointed secretary-treasurer of the National Institute on International Affairs, and she served on the Foreign Affairs Committee, which allowed her to travel extensively to foreign countries to promote democracy.

Recently honored by the Kentucky Commission on Women as a "Kentucky Woman Remembered" for her many achievements, Barton-Collings's portrait now hangs in the Kentucky State Capitol.

Through the years, she has received numerous other awards and honors, including an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from University of the Cumberlands, as well as the Kentucky Medical Association's Outstanding Layperson Award, the John Sherman Cooper Distinguished Service Award from Kentucky Young Republicans and the Dwight David Eisenhower Award.

Currently, the chairman of the board of Bretara, LLC and Tri County Cineplex, LLC,

Barton-Collings also serves on the Kentucky Economic Development Partnership Board; as secretary of the University of Kentucky Center on Aging; and as chair of University of the Cumberlands Board of Visitors.

Married to Dr. Jack Collings of Owensboro, Kentucky from March of 1992 until his death in 2000, Barton-Collings is the mother of five, grandmother of ten, step-grandmother of twelve, and great-grandmother of two.

Dr. Jim Taylor, University of the Cumberlands president, said, "It is entirely appropriate that Mrs. Barton-Collings's picture hangs in this room where our students will study business principles and practices, for she certainly exemplifies the ideal of a true businesswoman."

Through her remarkable career and her stellar service to her fellow humans, she is a role model for our aspiring business leaders, and we are honored that she is an alumna of University of the Cumberlands, Nelda, as we say here in these beautiful mountains, "You do us proud."

WEST VIRGINIA DAY 2008

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, as a Senator from West Virginia, I wish to pay tribute to our State on the commemoration of our admittance into the Union on this day in 1863—and to honor the nearly 2 million people who are proud to call it home.

When people think of West Virginia their thoughts turn to our mountains, our rolling green hills, and rivers. It is a place of immense natural beauty and scenic wonders. Still others may think of our most abundant natural resource, coal, or even our steel. Every fall, many college sports fans turn their thoughts to our incredible football teams.

West Virginia, without question, is all of these things. But what truly sets us apart from other places is our people. West Virginians are the hardest working, nicest people you all ever have the chance to meet. They are the reason that so many people choose to come back again and again to our State. They are real people who possess an abundant spirit of hope, optimism, and authenticity. More than anything else, they are the heart and soul of our great State.

So it seems only fitting on this West Virginia Day that we pause for a few moments and think about the lasting contributions that our coal miners, steel workers, teachers, public servants, and next door neighbors have made not just on our State, but on our Nation.

West Virginia is rooted in rich culture. Our Appalachian heritage is immortalized in song and prose. It is a place where the pioneering spirit is still alive and well. Our communities are not just bound together by ZIP Codes but in sharing responsibility to care for and look out for each other. We are still a place where neighbor helping neighbor is a way of life, and our children are raised to honor their family and to love our country.

West Virginia is place where values such as compassion, self-reliance, loyalty, love, unselfishness, and faith are both timely and timeless.