

said, Erik's determination, sincerity, thoughtfulness, and character will be sorely missed in the halls of the Russell Building. I wish Erik and his beautiful wife Tina the best in all of their endeavors, and sincerely thank Erik for his remarkable commitment to public service.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island is recognized.

#### HONORING MICHAEL MCGOVERN

Mr. REED. Madam President, I rise to recognize and honor the significant accomplishments of Special Olympics Rhode Island executive director Mike McGovern. Mike is retiring this month after 21 years of working to expand opportunities for Rhode Islanders with disabilities. He has been a lifelong friend, since grammar school and high school. He is someone I respect and admire immensely, and this respect and admiration is shared by the entire community of Rhode Island.

He has demonstrated a lifelong commitment to upholding the mission and values of the Special Olympics. Mike's special dedication and enthusiasm have ensured that the Special Olympics Rhode Island remains one of the most impressive organizations in our State, providing year-round sports training and competitions to approximately 2,700 young and adult athletes across the State.

Mike began his involvement with Special Olympics Rhode Island as a volunteer for 18 years, every year pitching in, helping out. That is the way he is—a generous heart, a great sense of community and neighborliness. He then served as assistant executive director for Special Olympics Rhode Island from 1988 to 1998, when he took over the role of executive director.

Under his leadership, Special Olympics Rhode Island expanded the number of sports offered to 20. His athlete-centered approach helped the program experience a 40-percent increase in competitors.

Mike has also worked hard to ensure that the funding goals of Special Olympics Rhode Island were achieved. During his time with Special Olympics Rhode Island, the organization built a budget surplus of over \$1 million. He also helped launch a capital campaign to establish a permanent home for Special Olympics Rhode Island. His innovative spirit, which characterized his entire tenure, was evident in many different ways—particularly 33 years ago, when he and several friends cofounded the Penguin Plunge, which is an annual New Year's Day ritual in Jamestown, RI, where hardy souls, hundreds of them, brave the frigid waters of Narragansett Bay to raise money for Special Olympics Rhode Island and raise a feeling of camaraderie, fellowship, and good spirits to begin the year.

Last month, Mike attended his final games as executive director. Held at the University of Rhode Island in King-

ston, Special Olympics Rhode Island dedicated its 2009 State summer games to Mike McGovern for his outstanding, long-time commitment to the Special Olympics. Speaking at the games, he spoke of being inspired by the courage of the athletes through their ability to defy stereotypes, to compete, to strive—all of them—to win. We, too, are inspired by his commitment to a very noble cause.

Through his presence at the organization, he imbued it with a special spirit. That spirit will be missed. But he will continue to serve because that is his nature.

Thank you, Mike, for your exemplary service. You have been a strong advocate for thousands of Special Olympics athletes, both on and off the playing field. Your dedicated leadership and hard work have helped thousands of Rhode Islanders with disabilities achieve their goals.

Also, you have been a great success in something as important—as a husband, as a father, as a friend. I wish you and your lovely family, your wife and your children, the best in your well-deserved retirement.

Let me conclude by saying Rhode Island's special athletes have never had a more special friend than Mike McGovern.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

Mr. ISAKSON. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to address the Chamber as in morning business for up to 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### HONORING JIM WOOTEN

Mr. ISAKSON. Madam President, it is a distinct honor and privilege for me to stand on the floor of the Senate to pay tribute to a gentleman I went to college with, a gentleman who has reported on politics and government in Georgia for the better part of the last 35 years, a gentleman who recently announced his retirement at the end of this month from the associate editorial page responsibilities at the Atlanta Journal and Constitution.

Mr. Jim Wooten, born and raised in McRae, GA, veteran of Vietnam, 20 years in the Georgia Air National Guard, former President of the Georgia Press Association, lifetime trustee of the Georgia Press Association's educational fund, has made a tremendous contribution to our State and to the public lives of all our people. I rise to pay tribute to him.

One of the greatest tributes of all that I can share is what happened on Monday, at lunch this week. I had a luncheon with the Board of Cox Enterprises. The Cox newspapers own the Atlanta Constitution, as they do the Palm Beach Post and the Dayton paper. They own many other businesses. It is a huge privately held company.

At that luncheon, unsolicited by me, the name of Jim Wooten came up and, one by one, the leaders of Cox Enterprises talked about the tremendous contributions that Jim Wooten has made to their newspaper.

As one who was first elected in 1976 and has been written about many times by Jim Wooten, I wanted to add my tribute to his journalistic talent and the contribution he has made. I am not sure I know of any other writer I have read who has reported on what is going on in politics in our State, who has gotten it right more often—in fact always—than Jim Wooten.

Conservative? Yes, he is conservative. But he is pragmatic. When he writes his opinions on the editorial page of the Atlanta Constitution, it makes a difference in the minds and attitudes of Georgia's people.

I say job well done to Jim Wooten. I hope his retirement is successful and rewarding in every way he wishes it to be, and I thank him very much for all the contributions he has made to the lives of all Georgians and, in one case, to this Georgian.

#### HOUSING

Mr. ISAKSON. I would like to talk for a minute, if I can, Madam President, about a very important issue. I don't come to the floor all that often, but people will tell you I come to the floor too often to talk about the housing industry. I am going to do it for a little bit tonight because it is critically important to our economy and to our country.

A year and a half ago, I introduced a piece of legislation, in January of 2008, creating a housing tax credit of \$15,000 for any family who would buy and occupy their home as a principal residence in the United States. I did so because housing had collapsed, foreclosures were beginning to become rampant and are rampant today. Standing inventory proliferated, builders were going out of business, and our economy was in a downward slide.

The CBO score on that \$15,000 tax credit is \$34.2 billion, and I was told last January that was too expensive, we couldn't afford to do it. By my last count—Senator COBURN is a better counter than I am—we spent about \$5.5 trillion trying to fix an economy that has been in a continual downward slide.

Fortunately, in July of last year, with the help of Members on both sides, we did get a tax credit passed, but it was basically an interest-free loan for \$7,500, it was means tested to families who were first-time home buyers or had incomes under \$150,000. It did no good.

Later in the year, I finally convinced this body, and we took off the limitation in terms of the payback and made it a real tax credit and raised it from \$7,500 to \$8,000 and it has made a difference. First-time home buyers used it and the market stabilized, but we don't