

service that stands as an example to us all.

Her political career began in the late 1960s when she launched a campaign to stop the construction of a highway over historic neighborhoods in Baltimore. Once she won that battle, she decided to run for the Baltimore City Council in 1971. Forty years later, and following a successful stint in the U.S. House of Representatives, BARBARA MIKULSKI continues to blaze an impressive trail. During her 26 years in the Senate, she became the first woman to sit on the Senate Appropriations Committee, the first Democratic woman elected to Senate leadership, and now has crossed yet another milestone, passing Senator Margaret Chase Smith of Maine as the longest serving female Senator.

It is not just the length of her service that we celebrate, it is its quality. No one is better at drilling down to the gist of an issue, and expressing it in punchy unforgettable terms. No one cheers us more than when she tells us to “stand tall, square our shoulders, put on our lipstick and rise to the occasion.” No one better combines the idealism of politics with the proactive abilities of government. As she told me once with a twinkle in her eye, “I’m a reformer, and a bit of a ward healer too.” More than anything, she never forgot her roots as a champion for those who need one.

In her years in the Senate, BARBARA MIKULSKI’s dedication to her constituents and women’s rights has been clear: from becoming a champion of women’s health issues and abortion rights, to organizing training seminars for woman of both parties elected to the Senate, to sponsoring and pushing through the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009.

During my 4 years as a U.S. Senator, I have had the great privilege to work with her to pass landmark health care reform legislation out of the HELP Committee. I also serve with her on the Intelligence Committee, and worked closely with her on the Senate Intelligence Committee’s Cyber Task Force to evaluate cyber threats and issue recommendations to the full committee.

And, while Rhode Island and Maryland are hundreds of miles apart, Barbara and her staff are truly my neighbors here in the Senate. Her office is next door to mine in the Hart Building. From a friendly hello to each other as we pass in the hall, to accompanying each other as we walk to the Senate floor, to the delicious treats her wonderful receptionist Mrs. O’Malley occasionally makes for our office, it has truly been a pleasure to share our little corner of the Hart Building.

I know that all of us here in this Chamber are proud to call “Senator BARB” our colleague and friend as she makes history. Her hard work and independent spirit have enriched the Senate and I wish her all the best in the years to come. On behalf of all Rhode Islanders, I congratulate you for this milestone in our Nation’s history.

REFORM AMERICA’S BROKEN IMMIGRATION SYSTEM ACT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, once again, at the beginning of a new Congress, Majority Leader REID has signaled his intent to improve our Nation’s immigration system with a plan to transform and modernize our laws to meet the needs of the country.

I support the majority leader in this effort, as I have now for several Congresses. The American people recognize that our current immigration system is deeply flawed. It is far too easily exploited by unscrupulous employers and others who seek to profit from the vulnerabilities of those seeking work and a new life. We can and should put an end to the too common abuses and transform our system into an orderly, secure, and efficient way to strengthen our economy and fulfill our humanitarian traditions.

We must also confront the situation created by the millions of undocumented people who are living and working in the shadows in the United States—the vast majority of whom are otherwise following our laws and making positive contributions to our economy. We can all agree that we have arrived at a point that is not sustainable, and we must face up to it with a solution that is achievable. As both President Bush and President Obama, along with their Secretaries of Homeland Security, have acknowledged, we cannot simply enforce our way out of a broken immigration system. I agree.

We must reject the easy slogans that reduce this highly complex problem to a bumper sticker solution—something the late Senator Ted Kennedy spoke against so passionately. When we talk about the millions of immigrants living and working in the United States as a mass of “illegals” to be sent out of the United States, we denigrate their humanity. As a nation, we can agree that we will have no tolerance for those who are out of status and go on to commit crimes. But for those whose only transgression was entering the United States unlawfully in search of a better life for themselves and their families, we should proceed in a manner that is consistent with our best qualities as a humanitarian and compassionate nation.

Achieving what the majority leader has proposed will not be easy. We have experienced the difficulty again and again in recent years. I am heartened that the legislation the majority leader introduced includes reference to the DREAM Act and to AgJOBS, both of which I have strongly supported for many years. Even if our progress is incremental, I believe that working on behalf of America’s farmers and individuals whose undocumented status is not a result of their own volition is a sound starting place.

Among other important goals, the legislation calls on Congress to “support our national and economic security.” Along with AgJOBS and the DREAM Act, I hope Senators will also

recognize the fundamental unfairness that exists in our immigration laws for gay and lesbian Americans and that this is also an economic issue. I have said many times that no American should be forced to choose between their loved ones and their country. But this is the reality many Americans face, and it is wrong. Due to this false choice, many talented Americans choose to leave their country for nations that treat binational, same-sex couples fairly, often at a cost to their employers and our Nation’s economic growth.

There are existing immigration programs that Congress should strongly support and improve, such as the EB-5 Regional Center Program, which has a proven record as an engine to promote job creation and capital investment in American communities. With permanence, added efficiencies, and strong oversight, this program can continue to operate as an economically productive part of our overall immigration system. We must also reform our refugee laws to ensure that those in need of protection find safety in the United States.

Americans have endured the bitter politics of immigration for far too long. The hurtful rhetoric has obstructed progress and has deepened the divisions on an issue that will require bipartisanship and compromise on all sides. It is my sincere hope that the divisions are not too deep to be repaired and that we can make progress on fixing our struggling system. A rational, economically productive, and humane immigration system should be a cornerstone of our democracy; a source of pride instead of anger, frustration or intolerance. Our history demonstrates that immigration to the United States and the tremendous diversity that has resulted, has set us apart as an example of freedom and unity for the rest of the world. I hope as the 112th Congress begins, we will work together toward a better system for America and all Americans.

APPOINTMENT OF JEFFREY R. IMMELT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I would like to salute Jeffrey R. Immelt for agreeing to chair the President’s new Council on Jobs and Competitiveness.

Mr. Immelt knows quite a bit about creating jobs, promoting innovation, and competing in the marketplace. As the chairman and chief executive officer of General Electric, Mr. Immelt has led the company through a major expansion into growth markets overseas and made GE a leader in manufacturing a new generation of environmentally friendly technologies. Now, as we transition from stabilizing our economy to increasing employment and growth, Mr. Immelt’s experience leading GE will help him counsel the President through our long-term recovery.

Mr. Immelt knows that innovation is the key to America’s economic growth.

Consequently, GE relies heavily on the U.S. patent system. I have been very happy to work with Mr. Immelt and GE as strong proponents of bipartisan patent reform legislation.

I recently met with Mr. Immelt and was impressed by his determination to make GE even more competitive in the future than it has been in the past. He has original ideas on investing in research and development and understands that reviving and updating America's manufacturing economy is critical to creating jobs in this country. I have always been impressed with his commitment to manufacturing in Rutland, VT, where GE Aviation has a major plant.

In honor of his willingness to serve in this new capacity, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD Mr. Immelt's recent op-ed, "A blueprint for keeping America competitive."

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

[From the Washington Post, Jan. 21, 2011]

A BLUEPRINT FOR KEEPING AMERICA
COMPETITIVE

(By Jeffrey R. Immelt)

President Obama has asked me to chair his new President's Council on Jobs and Competitiveness. I have served for the past two years on the President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board, and I look forward to leading the next phase of this effort as we transition from recovery to long-term growth. The president and I are committed to a candid and full dialogue among business, labor and government to help ensure that the United States has the most competitive and innovative economy in the world.

Business leaders should provide expertise in service of our country. My predecessors at GE have done so, as have leaders of many other great American companies. There is always a healthy tension between the public and private sectors. However, we all share a responsibility to drive national competitiveness, particularly during economic unrest. This is one of those times.

My hope is that the council will be a sounding board for ideas and a catalyst for action on jobs and competitiveness. It will include small and large businesses, labor, economists and government. Areas that we will focus on include:

Manufacturing and exports: We need a coordinated commitment among business, labor and government to expand our manufacturing base and increase exports. The assumption made by many that the United States could transition from a technology-based, export-oriented economic powerhouse to a services-led, consumption-based economy without any serious loss of jobs, prosperity or prestige was fundamentally wrong. But there is nothing inevitable about America's declining manufacturing competitiveness if we work together to reverse it. For example, we have returned many GE appliance manufacturing jobs to the States by collaborating with our unions and making our operations more efficient.

Working with Boeing CEO Jim McNerney, who leads the President's Export Council, the Council on Jobs and Competitiveness will look for ways to harness the power of international markets—home to more than 95 percent of the world's consumers. Currently, the United States ranks lowest among the world's largest manufacturing na-

tions in the ratio of domestically produced goods sold overseas, or export intensity. We must set as our highest economic priority not just increasing our exports, as the president has pledged, but also making the United States the world's leading exporter in the 21st century.

Free trade: America cannot expand its manufacturing base without reatly increasing the volume of goods it sells overseas. That is why I applaud the free-trade agreement recently concluded between the United States and South Korea, which will eliminate barriers to U.S. exports and support export-oriented jobs. We should seek to conclude trade and investment agreements with other fast-growing markets and modernize our systems for export finance and trade control. Those who advocate increasing domestic manufacturing jobs by erecting trade barriers have it exactly wrong.

Innovation: Businesses should invest more of their cash and resources in advanced products and technologies that will create jobs in the United States, and government should incentivize this investment in innovation. Today, GE is investing more than ever in research and development—about 6 percent of revenue—aimed at solving challenges in transportation, energy and health care. As one of America's largest exporters, GE remains committed to producing more products in the United States, which is our home and largest market. In the past two years, GE has created about 6,000 manufacturing jobs in the States, many resulting from investments in innovations such as advanced batteries, which we will make at our 100-year-old plant in Schenectady, N.Y.

GE sells more than 96 percent of its products to the private sector, where America's future must be built. But government can help business invest in our shared future. A sound and competitive tax system and a partnership between business and government on education and innovation in areas where America can lead, such as clean energy, are essential to sustainable growth.

It is possible to be a competitive global enterprise and still care about your home. In fact, it is not just possible but imperative. There is no easy solution to "fix" the American economy. Persistent and high unemployment—and the pessimism it breeds—should not be accepted. We must work together to construct an economy that creates more opportunity for more people.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

LANCE CORPORAL MICHAEL GEARY

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, it is with deep sadness that I rise to honor the life of LCpl Michael Geary, who died on December 8, 2010, from wounds received in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, while supporting Operation Enduring Freedom. He was just 20 years old at the time of his death, and 5 months into his first tour of duty as a Marine. Michael was a member of the 2nd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force, based at Camp Lejeune, NC.

A native of Derry, NH, Michael graduated from Pinkerton Academy in June 2009. As early as age 14, he wanted to join the Marines. Michael left for boot camp in North Carolina just 1 month after graduating high school to fulfill his life-long dream.

Admirably, Michael wished to represent our country to the best of his

ability—so much so that, prior to his deployment, he studied Afghan culture in order to increase his cultural awareness and to communicate more effectively with the people of Afghanistan, especially Afghan youth.

Michael is described by his loved ones as loyal, good-natured, and driven. From attaining his black belt in karate to competing on the gridiron for the Pinkerton Astros, his drive was truly inspiring. His family attributes the personal growth of his younger cousin, Luke, to Michael's relentless drive and his dedication to the ones he loved. Michael is Luke's hero. This young patriot is also a hero to the State of New Hampshire and our entire country.

LCpl Michael Geary made the ultimate sacrifice in the defense of the country he loved and for that he has earned our enduring gratitude. I hope his family can find comfort in knowing that all Americans share a deep appreciation for his heroic service.

Michael is survived by his parents, Timothy and Nancy Geary of Derry, NH. He also leaves behind a caring extended family and many dear friends. This young hero will be missed by all.

I ask my colleagues and all Americans to please join me in honoring the life, service and sacrifice of LCpl Michael Geary.

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, tonight's State of the Union Address is a unique opportunity for the President to speak directly to the American people and offer his course for the country. The President is promoting trade as part of his agenda and I commend him for highlighting global competitiveness as an economic imperative. With the upcoming debate on the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement, the President has an opportunity to speak candidly with the American people about the benefits and challenges posed by trade. Doing this supports the case that the United States needs new policies to rise to the challenges of a global economy.

In order to avoid a divisive, ugly fight over trade, I would like to hear the President say in his speech that he will seek to establish a new compact between workers, business, and government about how to increase our competitiveness in the global economy. It is important to try to reach this consensus before Congress is asked to consider the controversial free-trade agreements, FTAs, reached with Korea, Colombia, and Panama.

The President has already begun down this path by ramping up efforts to combat unfair trade practices and establishing the National Export Initiative with the goal of doubling exports over the next 5 years. These are both important strategies. In approaching the pending FTAs, it is vital that he talk about more than just exports; he must also highlight the value of imports, two-way trade, and the