

SPECIAL ENVOY APPOINTMENT

Mr. KAINE. Madam President, as chairman of the Near East and South and Central Asia subcommittee on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, today I cosponsored S. 653, a bill that authorizes the President to appoint a Special Envoy within the Department of State to Promote Religious Freedom of Religious Minorities in the Near East and South Central Asia.

Unfortunately, there is a wide range of persecuted minorities who too often are victims of discrimination, marginalization, and violence in the region. Coptic Christians in Egypt, Baha'i in Iran, Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan, and Christians in Syria are examples of communities and faiths that suffer intolerance.

I believe that all peoples deserve equal treatment, regardless of faith, and I hope the appointment of a Special Envoy within the State Department will help protect those universal rights.

HONORING THE JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER OF GREATER COLUMBUS

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, today I wish to honor the 100th anniversary of the Jewish Community Center of Greater Columbus. The center promotes physical, intellectual, and spiritual wellness for the 6,500 members across Central Ohio.

Joseph Schonthal, an immigrant from Austria, founded the Jewish Community Center in 1913 to assist immigrants from Eastern Europe as they settled into their new life in the United States. The center provided those immigrants with a community center to learn and to grow. Mr. Schonthal also established Camp Schonthal in the center, one of the first Jewish camps in the region.

Today, the Jewish Community Center has several centers located around Columbus that provide adult, youth, and early childhood programs. The center is home to several cultural events a year and hosts a recreation and wellness center.

The Jewish Community Center recently opened the Columbus Jewish Day School to provide children from kindergarten through the fifth grade with a general curriculum, while also helping to foster their Jewish heritage.

The Jewish Community Center of Greater Columbus provides the Jewish community in Central Ohio with educational and cultural programs for members of all ages. I congratulate all who were involved in making its first 100 years a success.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO RAYMOND S. BURTON

• Ms. AYOTTE. Madam President, today I wish to honor the remarkable service of a great New Hampshire statesman: Councilor Raymond S. Burton of Bath.

Councilor Burton has devoted his life to serving the people of New Hampshire—and it is been a labor of love. He has served with great distinction, remarkable diligence, Yankee wit and wisdom, and a deep and abiding love for the people of northern New Hampshire.

For 18 terms, he has represented District One on the State's Executive Council, distinguishing himself as a tireless champion for the North Country. Ray is the longest serving Executive Councilor in New Hampshire's history.

He has also served for 22 years as a Grafton County Commissioner, and is now the board's Clerk. His position as a county commissioner allows him to double his efforts to improve the lives of the people of northern New Hampshire, which is his life's work.

This past weekend, Councilor Burton made the very sad announcement that he will not seek reelection to either elected post next year. This was no doubt a difficult decision for Ray, given his decades of service. I look forward to being in Council District One on Friday to join with Ray's many friends and supporters to honor his unmatched record of service to our state.

I am confident that he will continue to give 110 percent to serving his constituents, just as he has done for decades.

But his announcement represents a tremendous loss, not just for the people of the North County, but for citizens across New Hampshire.

Daniel Webster once said, “. . . in the mountains of New Hampshire, God Almighty has hung out a sign to show that there He makes men.” Webster was referring to our beloved Old Man of the Mountain. But he could have just as easily been talking about Councilor Ray Burton, a gold standard public official of unmatched stature.

No one brings the same level of dedication, commitment, and enthusiasm to public life as Ray Burton.

To him, public service is not just a privilege—it is a calling and a true joy. And no one is better at constituent service than Ray Burton.

District One is vast, stretching from Pittsburg on the Canadian border south to the Lakes Region, and from the Connecticut River Valley to the Mount Washington Valley.

He has logged countless miles traveling the villages, towns, cities and counties of his district, frequently behind the wheel of a classic car. And if he is not driving an antique car, you will frequently find him on a snowmobile.

Seventeen hour days are not unusual for Councilor Burton. He has been known to start days in Claremont and finish way up in northern Coos County, before returning to his cherished home in Bath.

No community gathering or meeting is too small for Councilor Burton. If it is important to his constituents, it is important to him.

He has said for many years that he always runs for office like he is three votes behind—a real statement, given that he has served on the Executive

Council for nearly 4 decades, frequently was the nominee of both the Republicans and the Democrats, and comfortably wins reelection by double digit margins. It just goes to show you how seriously he takes the job and how eager he is to make a difference in the lives of his constituents.

The fruits of his labor can be found across Council District One, whether it is an improved bridge or road, or an initiative to strengthen the economy and create jobs.

It can also be found in quieter ways: the constituent he helped with a state agency, or the citizen who needed a hand with local or county government

In addition to handing out his trademark combs, Ray gladly gives out his office number, his home office number, his car phone number and his email address—and he encourages people to use them. They call for help in times of need—and he delivers results.

In fact, a former State commissioner once joked that when she switched on her computer on Monday mornings, she would find two dozen emails from Councilor Burton. That would not surprise me, given his view that the concerns of his constituents are of paramount importance and should go straight to the top. I can personally report having received dozens of inquiries from Ray—signed with his familiar line, “May I hear from you?”

When not traveling his district, Ray is an enormously respected leader in Concord, where he first arrived in the late 1960s to work as a Sergeant at Arms in the State House of Representatives and the State Senate. Remarkably, he has served at the Statehouse during the administrations of 10 governors.

In 1976, he was first elected to New Hampshire's Executive Council, an executive branch panel that functions as a check on executive power and dates back to 1680. It is a position he has held since 1981, earning the honorary title of “dean” of the council.

When I served as New Hampshire's Attorney General, I saw up close that Councilor Burton is someone who does his homework, asks tough questions, and fights with every fiber of his being for what he believes is right. I also saw how deeply he loves our State—and how hard he fights for the people of northern New Hampshire.

Beyond his tremendous efforts on behalf of his constituents, Ray also deserves great credit for working to prepare future generations of leaders. After his election to the Executive Council, he initiated a student internship program, which has become legendary in New Hampshire. Over the years, 140 interns have served Councilor Burton. Many of these young men and women have gone on to great careers in politics and government, carrying on his proud tradition of excellence in public service. I know that Ray's interns are a source of tremendous pride to him, and I commend him