teacher's certificate. She taught first grade for 3 years in St. Paul, MN, while her husband, Russ, completed graduate school and later taught second and fourth grade in Boiling Springs, PA, when Russ started his political science teaching career.

When Ann and Russ moved their young family to Forest Grove, Ann continued her education and enrolled in night classes at Pacific University where Russ had started teaching. In addition to raising their two sons, Tony and Jason, Ann also began volunteering in Forest Grove's library across the street from her classes.

Eventually, Ann's enthusiasm to share her love of reading turned into a career spanning five decades. The library became Ann's classroom where she worked with parents and caregivers to help children become active readers.

In 1975, Ann and her former colleague Barbara Dunnette organized BEAR month—Be Enthusiastic About Reading—at the Forest Grove Library, and the tradition has continued ever since. January 2016 will be the 37th annual BEAR month at Forest Grove.

Ann's dedication and love of learning is an inspiration to our State and our Nation, and I have no doubt there are kids today who are better off because of Ann's selfless devotion. I thank Ann for her many years of hard work and for the great things she has done to promote reading and literacy in the Forest Grove community.●

TRIBUTE TO ANNE WOIWODE

● Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize Anne Woiwode of Okemos, MI, as she ends 35 years of service with the Sierra Club's Michigan chapter. Through her leadership, the organization's work has been critical in preserving numerous wilderness areas, tracking and curtailing pollution, and leading the fight for clean energy in the beautiful State of Michigan. I am honored to acknowledge Ms. Woiwode's career-long commitment to safeguarding the flourishing habitats and environmental wonders Michigan has to offer.

Ms. Woiwode began her involvement with the Sierra Club as a young mother after moving to Michigan with her husband, Tom, in 1980. Her impact was felt immediately, and the environmental community grew quickly. In 1983, Anne became the chapter chair, and in 1985 she became its first executive director. Knowing the power of collaboration in changing policy, she helped form the Michigan Environmental Council, MEC, in 1980, serving in many leadership roles over the years. Thanks to her direction, the MEC is a fully independent organization with over 70 member groups, and it continues to provide policy expertise to the environmental community.

Breathtaking wildernesses like the Nordhouse Dunes and Sturgeon River Gorge exist due in part to Ms. Woiwode's dedication. She was instrumental in the establishment of 90,000 acres of protected wilderness under the Michigan Wilderness Heritage Act of 1987. Today countless species of plants and animals flourish in these protected ecosystems.

In addition to working to preserve Michigan's diverse ecosystems, Ms. Woiwode also dedicated over a decade of work to reducing pollution from concentrated animal feeding operations, CAFOs, or animal factories. Ms. Woiwode came to listen when rural residents and small family farms reached out for help, even though they were too intimidated by their CAFO neighbors to provide names. Countless stories and evidence of animal waste carried into Michigan's waterways, toxic fumes from millions of gallons of raw sewage spread on massive farm fields, and sickness were responded to in attempts to reduce CAFO pollution. While it's still a problem in Michigan, thanks to Ms. Woiwode, the Sierra Club's Michigan chapter is recognized as the national expert in tracking CAFO pollution.

While her commitment to protecting Michigan's ecosystems and tracking pollution are worth acknowledging alone, Ms. Woiwode's leadership in turning Michigan toward a clean energy future is perhaps the most important step in preserving Michigan's environment. Through the Clean Energy NOW Coalition, she organized environmental and citizens groups to protest the construction of eight proposed coal power plants in Michigan without additional review by the Governor. The coalition's emphasis on citizen pressure and legal avenues led to a Governor's executive directive requiring further review of the proposed plants and eventually a complete stop in construction.

I am honored to ask my colleagues to join me today in recognizing Ms. Anne Woiwode's service to the Sierra Club's Michigan Chapter. While her passion and leadership will be dearly missed, I know she has inspired future generations to continue fighting for the natural wonders and beautiful, vibrant ecosystems of Michigan.●

VERMONT ESSAY FINALISTS

● Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I ask to have printed in the RECORD copies of some of the finalist essays written by Vermont High School students as part of the sixth annual ''What is the State of the Union'' essay contest conducted by my office. These finalists were selected from nearly 800 entries.

The material follows:

FARYAL AFSAR, MOUNT MANSFIELD UNION HIGH SCHOOL (FINALIST)

''Whoever kills an innocent person it is as if he has killed all humanity''—Quran 5:32.

Being a Muslim girl in the world, I hear many bad things about my religion or my country. Sometimes when people come to know that I'm a Muslim girl they may think that I'm a terrorist, yet I wonder how only 0.03% extremists can represent 1.6 billion people of the world. As a child, I grew up in a loving Muslim family. My parents didn't even permit us to kill a spider or an ant. I was never told to spread violence in the world. I was never taught in my school or house to be an extremist. In my reading of our holy book, I only found words of wisdom and peace so then why are the extremists labeled as Muslims? How can we say they belong to a certain religious group if they kill innocent people?

As an exchange student from Pakistan coming to Vermont, I was first afraid of coming to a country that may see me as a terrorist since I am a Muslim. I thought I may be bullied or someone would call me a terrorist in school but the love I have received from people here is what I had never imagined. But still when I hear negative news about Muslims or my country on TV or the internet, it hurts me. I want to help people understand Islam and my country. A month ago after the ISIS attacks in Paris, this topic was raised again and political leaders started saying that Muslims shouldn't be allowed to enter the U.S. I ask, is this really the solution to the terrorist problem? How is it that I have been welcomed so warmly through this exchange program and yet there are those who generalize and state that Muslims are not welcome here?

Each year hundreds of exchange students from the Muslim world come to the U.S and the students and their host families form a special bond. These relationships form strong connections and the memories live forever. Our country's leaders should look at what we are doing; young people can play just as an important role as our current leaders. We are not spreading any violence; we are trying to know each other. We are humans and we care about each other. It's not because we're from the same background or religion. What matters the most is how strongly we are bonded to each other.

The problem of terrorism is not a problem for one country but for the whole world, and the solution to it is not blaming each other and closing boundaries but rather knowing and helping each other. I believe that if people open themselves to new experiences and start knowing each other, the world would be a good place.

MEGAN BROMLEY, MILTON SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL (FINALIST)

My fellow Americans, sometimes overlooked are the basic human rights and needs of the people. While this may entail many topics, I would like to focus on a major issue that has slid under the radar for far too long. The epidemic of rape and sexual assault runs rampant through our country and not much has been done to change this continuing tragedy. Steps may be taken. The first step must address the unprocessed rape kits. Throughout our country there are over 20,000 unprocessed rape kits. Add to this the estimate that 68% of rapes or sexual assaults that occur go unreported. Imagine how large the number of unanalyzed kits there would then be if even 50% more were to be reported. This is a challenging issue and it cannot be solved overnight, however there are steps to take in the right direction aside from moral and ethical obligations.

One solution that could be enforced is a quota, by this I imply that every city must meet a certain number of kits processed in order to get the number of prosecutors facing jail time or other capital punishment inclining. Too many cases go without investigation even after the kit has been used and the victim has been tested, this crime is not fading away and must be faced head on not shied away from due to technical complications that can be entirely avoided. The federal government should follow through with