

way America's youth approach problems and give them more control over their futures. The mission of the CEO program is "to prepare youths to be responsible, enterprising individuals who become entrepreneurs and contribute to the economic development and sustainability of their community."

Throughout this program, participants visit 30 to 50 community businesses during the school year. They learn how to start their own businesses from actual CEOs of local, national, and international companies. They also develop important life skills: critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork, and communication. Through this program, students gain a new sense of self-confidence to become future business leaders.

The success of the CEO program would not be possible without Craig Lindvahl, the executive director of the Midland Institute for Entrepreneurship in Effingham, IL. Every day he works to empower students through the CEO program. Craig, who is a nationally recognized teacher and filmmaker, has spent the last 5 years teaching the CEO program and bringing together business people, community leaders, and students from high schools across Illinois. The program has also expanded into Minnesota and Indiana.

Under Craig's leadership, the CEO program is helping build a strong foundation for our students, which will have a lasting effect on their futures. Our Nation's economy is evolving at a rapid rate, and in order to meet labor demands and foster innovation, we need mentors like Craig and programs like CEO to help prepare our students with the necessary skills to be competitive and successful. I had a chance to see this for myself when I visited the Williamson and Jackson Counties CEO classes in May and watched students present their final projects.

It is with great pride that today I recognize the Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities program for the transformative education they are providing the next generation of entrepreneurs and community leaders.

TRIBUTE TO DAVID YEPSEN

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I want to take a few moments to acknowledge David Yepsen, director of the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University, SIU. Earlier this year, David announced that he would be retiring in late October.

Prior to joining the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at SIU, David was a political writer, editor, and columnist. He spent over three decades at the Des Moines Register. If you have a passion for covering politics, like David Yepsen does, there is no better place to be. Every 4 years, the political class descends on Iowa, and no one takes this more seriously than Iowans. Iowans and politicians fill churches, community centers, schools, libraries, and homes on cold winter nights to talk politics

with friends and neighbors. At the center of this political three-ring circus is the Des Moines Register, and for nine Presidential campaign cycles, that meant David Yepsen.

It should come as no surprise that David has had a lifelong interest in politics. In high school, he was elected student body president, governor of the Iowa American Legion's Boys' State program, and U.S. senator in the group's Boys Nation program.

David Yepsen is "Mr. Iowa." Born in Jefferson, IA, David graduated from the University of Iowa, studied journalism and mass communications at Iowa State University, and earned a masters in public administration from Drake University in Des Moines. In 1977, David became a Statehouse reporter for the Des Moines Register. And in 1983, he got his big break becoming the Des Moines Register's chief political reporter. He was later named political editor and, in 2000, was promoted to full-time political columnist.

In 1997, after retiring from the U.S. Senate, Paul Simon established a public policy institute at Southern Illinois University. When it first opened, the institute was considered a think tank by many, but not by Paul Simon. He called it a "do tank." In 2009, David Yepsen became director of the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute, and under his leadership, it was exactly that. Throughout the years, he has organized countless events—including a "pizza and politics" program—encouraging students on campus to get involved in politics and government. David never lost sight of Paul Simon's vision and always searched for ways the institute could educate the public and even influence Washington, DC. He was always looking for opportunities to take the institute to the next level.

Although Senator Paul Simon never saw David Yepsen lead his institute, it was clear what he thought of him and the job he would do. In 1988, when Senator Simon ran for the Democratic nomination to be President of the United States, he praised David's objectivity. He said: "Every four years the chief political reporter for the Des Moines Register becomes the most important reporter in the nation. It is a position that could cause vanity and abuse. To his credit, David Yepsen handled this position with sensitivity and balance. And he worked hard." That is high praise, but well deserved.

Some of the best advice I have received is from Senator Paul Simon. He used to say that "when people disagree with my vote I want them to say that it's because I'm ignorant or stupid, not because I'm greedy or making money." With his credentials and years at the Des Moines Register, David had plenty of opportunities to cash in on his success and make money, but instead, he chose to take a job as director of the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at SIU in Carbondale, IL. Paul Simon would have been proud.

I want to congratulate David Yepsen on his distinguished career and thank

him for continuing the outstanding work started by Senator Paul Simon at Southern Illinois University. I especially want to thank David's wife, Dr. Mary Stuart, and daughter Elizabeth for sharing so much of their husband and father with the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at SIU. I wish him and his family all the best.

NOMINATION OF JEFFREY DELAURENTIS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, yesterday President Obama nominated Jeffrey DeLaurentis to be U.S. Ambassador to Cuba. If confirmed, Mr. DeLaurentis would be the first U.S. Ambassador in Havana in more than half a century.

I have known Jeff DeLaurentis since he became the U.S. chief of mission in Havana, and he is the obvious choice to be ambassador. He is a career diplomat who is universally respected by his peers and by Democrats and Republicans in Congress for his intellect, his integrity, and his thoughtfulness.

The decision to resume diplomatic relations with Cuba has been widely supported, and the number of Americans traveling to Cuba is increasing dramatically. We need an ambassador who knows Cuba, who is respected by the Cuban Government, and who will stand up for U.S. interests and values. Jeff DeLaurentis is that person. The Cuban people have their ambassador in Washington. The American people need their ambassador in Havana.

Not surprisingly, one Senator who has opposed the resumption of diplomatic relations with Cuba criticized the nomination of Mr. DeLaurentis. While he did not challenge Mr. DeLaurentis's qualifications for the job, since he is obviously exceptionally well qualified, the Senator instead said "rewarding the Castro government with a U.S. ambassador is another last-ditch legacy project for the president that needs to be stopped." He said the nomination "should go nowhere until the Castro regime makes significant and irreversible progress in the areas of human rights and political freedom for the Cuban people." He was joined in his opposition to Mr. DeLaurentis's nomination by another Senator.

Having been to Cuba many times where I have met with Cuban Government officials, as well as with critics of the government, including some who have been persecuted and imprisoned, no one is a stronger defender of human rights there than I am. Like President Obama, we all want the Cuban people to be able to express themselves freely and to choose their own leaders in a free and fair election.

For 50 years, we have tried the isolationist approach advocated by a dwindling minority of Members of Congress, and it has failed miserably. The Castros are still in power, and Cuba is still a country where political dissent is not tolerated.

No one who knows Cuba expected the resumption of diplomatic relations to