BOB EDWARDS AND NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO

• Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, the management of National Public Radio has announced that Bob Edwards, the host of ''Morning Edition'' for a quarter century, will be removed from the show at the end of this month. NPR executive vice president Ken Stern explained that getting rid of Edwards was part of ''a natural evolution.'' He says that it was ''a programming decision about the right sound.''

''Natural evolution?'' The ''right sound?'' I have no idea what these words mean. In fact, I have yet to talk to anyone who knows what those words mean.

If NPR's management wants to remove a star broadcaster, enormously popular all across America, you would think they would offer a clear, coherent explanation. But, no, the best we are offered is that they want a different ''sound.''

Well, this is not very sound on the part of NPR management. Think about it: Bob Edwards has been the host of ''Morning Edition'' for 25 years. He has won every radio broadcasting award imaginable, including the 1999 Peabody Award. He has built ''Morning Edition'' into the No. 1 morning show on radio in the United States, with almost 13 million loyal listeners. He has played a major role in doubling NPR's audience over the last 10 years.

Now, I didn't go to Harvard Business School. I don't have the business and management credentials of the top executives at NPR. But I have enough sense to heed the oldest and wisest rule of management: If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

If you are fortunate to have the best in the business, a broadcaster who is the heart and soul of the No. 1 morning show on radio, then, for heaven's sake, you don't remove him. You don't dump him. You raise his pay.

Characteristically, Bob Edwards was gracious and restrained. He said, ''I would love to have stayed with 'Morning Edition.' But it is not my candy store.''

No, ''Morning Edition'' is not Bob Edwards' candy store. Nor is National Public Radio the candy store of Mr. Stern, Jay Kernis, Kevin klose, and the other NPR executives apparently responsible for this decision.

I would remind them that NPR's middle name is ''Public.'' National Public Radio and its affiliate stations depend on taxpayer dollars and contributions from ordinary Americans. NPR depends on the public's support. And I have yet to talk to one person, one member of Congress, one listerner of public radio who supports this decision.

Americans are speaking up and expressing their unhappiness. NPR has been deluged with telephone calls and e-mails. And I certainly encourage people to call their local NPR station or go to the NPR website at www.npr.org, where you can register your dissatisfaction. Urge NPR's executives to reconsider this unwise decision. Urge them to listen to their listeners.

Let me be clear, I do not advocate or support any kind of boycott of NPR. It would be a misguided and counterproductive for people to withhold contributions to their local NPR station. After all, National Public Radio is a national treasure. It is the gold standard of radio news and journalism. And we should do nothing that undermines it.

But we have a right to speak up. And we need to speak up. So by all means, send an e-mail to NPR. The address of the ombudsman at NPR is simple enough: ombudsman@npr.org. In addition, call your local NPR affiliate. Urge them to request NPR to reconsider its decision to remove Bob Edwards from ''Morning Edition.'' And if NPR digs in its heels, urge your local affiliate to discontinue ''Morning Edition'' and find alternative programming for the morning time slot.

Obviously, I am personally a big fan of Bob Edwards. I listen to him virtually every morning, and have for as long as I can remember. He is a straight-shooter, smart, erudite, witty, and calm. He doesn't shout or rant. In other words, he adds class to radio news reporting and interviews.

So I urge executives at National Public Radio to reconsider their decision to remove Bob Edwards from ''Morning Edition.'' And I urge Americans who share my respect for Bob Edwards to make their voices heard.•

IN MEMORIAM OF NORMAN A. LEBEL

• Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to reflect on the life of Professor Norman A. LeBel, who passed away on December 21, 2003. Professor LeBel's life was dedicated to organic chemistry research where he was an outstanding example to his colleagues and an inspiration to his students.

Professor LeBel was born in Augusta, Maine on March 22, 1931, and received an A.B. degree in chemistry from Bowdoin College in 1952. Professor LeBel and his wife Connie, also from Maine, returned often to the States.

Professor LeBel obtained a Ph.D. in organic chemistry from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1957. He then moved to Detroit, MI, where he began a 40-year career at Wayne State University in the Department of Chemistry, during which time he directed the research of 32 Ph.D. students. Professor LeBel made numerous contributions to organic chemistry during his long career, the most notable being the development of the chemical transformation commonly called the LeBel Reaction. He retired in 1996, after serving Wayne State University as chairman of the chemistry department; as chief of staff for the office of the provost; and as interim dean of the College of Liberal Arts.

Professor LeBel served the American Chemical Society (ACS) in a number of roles, starting as chairman of the Awards Committee of the Detroit Section (1961–1962), then secretary-treasurer of the Division of Organic Chemistry (1965–1969). He was a division councilor for 20 years, starting in 1970, and served on the Committees on Publications, Nominations & Elections, and Divisional Activities. Professor LeBel was also general chairman of the international chemistry meeting known as Pacifichem 2000.

Among his many awards, Professor LeBel received the Wayne State University President's Award for Excellence in Teaching in 1981, the ACS Organic Chemistry Division's Paul G. Gassman Distinguished Service Award in 1996, and the ACS Santa Clara Valley Section's Shirley B. Radding Award in 2001.

In conclusion, I want to express my condolences to Professor LeBel's family and former students. His contributions to the field of organic chemistry are only equaled by his devotion to higher education.•

ASSISTED LIVING

• Mr. BREAUX. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the Louisiana Assisted Living Association, LALA, which will be celebrating ''Assisted Living Day'' open April 14, 2004 in the State capitol. Both in my home State and in States across the Nation, disabled individuals and older Americans are voicing their demand for a wide range of long-term services. Assisted living represents a significant piece of that continuum of care.

Decades ago, those in need of long-term care had limited options—family caregivers, skilled nursing homes or institutional care. In many cases, family caregivers cannot provide the proper level of care for their loved one for a variety of reasons. In other instances, the person does not require the high level, around-the-clock care of a skilled nursing facility or institution. Now, many disabled persons and older Americans with functional limitations and/or cognitive impairments are finding the assistance they need and desire in assisted living, and in other home and community-based settings.

Unfortunately, our Federal financing structure has a strong institutional bias and does not reflect Americans' growing desire to be cared for in settings other than nursing homes or institutions. Public preference is not the only momentum driving this need for change—we see this direction in our courts as well. At the Federal level, the landmark Olmstead decision underscored this push toward allowing our countrys' elderly and disabled to live in the least restrictive settings for as long as possible. And, in my home State of Louisiana, this momentum was echoed in the Barthelemy case, in which the court strengthened the rights of people to get assistance in