

Secretary and Secretary of Agriculture and to Members of Congress for five farm bills and five child nutrition and WIC reauthorizations.

Over the course of his career, Mr. Ippolito served under six Presidents and eight Secretaries of Agriculture, five Chairmen of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture, and six chairmen of the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

In the Senate Agriculture Committee, in exercising our jurisdiction over FNS we not only work in a bipartisan fashion, we also work closely with the administration. When writing a farm bill or child nutrition and WIC reauthorization, we often call upon FNS staff, including Mr. Ippolito, for expertise. He put in many Saturday afternoons and late nights past 2:00 a.m. during legislative discussions and negotiations because of his dedication to providing Representatives, Senators, and our staff access to the information we need to serve the American people.

I commend Mr. Frank Ippolito for his many years of dedicated service to the U.S. Government and for the outstanding work he has done throughout his distinguished career. I congratulate him on the occasion of his retirement and extend my best wishes to him and his wife, Donna, in the years ahead.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I too wish to pay tribute to the accomplishments of Mr. Frank Ippolito and thank him for his many years of dedicated service to the American people and especially to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, FNS. Mr. Ippolito has done an outstanding job as the career civil servant responsible for communications between FNS and Congress. During his long tenure, this critical agency, which benefits millions of Americans, has been greatly improved.

Mr. Ippolito has crossed many a path with countless elected officials and staff over the years, and without regard to party affiliation, he has treated each and every one of us with dignity, respect, and a helpful attitude that allows the work of Government to be performed efficiently and effectively. And in addition to his professionalism and competence, he has always carried out his work with a generous spirit and a cheerful personality.

In sum, Mr. Ippolito exemplifies the very model of a public servant. Frank Ippolito reminds us that, at its best, working for the Federal Government is ultimately about working for the people of the United States. At the end of a career, all of us who have worked in the Government or elected office should ask ourselves if, as a result of our careers, the people throughout America are better off as the result of our efforts. I am confident that Frank can enter retirement after three decades secure in his knowledge that the answer to that question is an emphatic yes.

I thank Mr. Frank Ippolito for his years of extraordinary service and wish

him and his wife Donna all the best on this occasion for his retirement.

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES IN HEALTH CARE

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, this Congress has made little progress on health care.

We know the problems. Health costs are rising. The number of uninsured is growing. American companies, burdened by growing health-care obligations, are struggling to compete. And what has Congress done about it? Not much.

The trends are worsening. Last month, we learned that nearly 47 million Americans lack health insurance. That is up from a bit over 40 million in 2001. Last week we learned that health insurance premiums rose 7.7 percent last year. That is twice the rate of inflation. And nearly every day, I hear from an employer concerned about the rising cost of health care.

Unfortunately, this Congress has not made progress on these top-tier health issues. Congress has not made progress even where wide agreement exists.

There is wide agreement on health information technology, or health IT. Most experts agree that smarter use of health IT would cut costs. It would increase efficiency. It would reduce medical errors. And it would save lives.

Furthermore, health IT would help us to move to system of paying health care providers for the quality of care that they provide. That is an important priority of mine.

Last November, the Senate passed a health IT bill unanimously. That was nearly 11 months ago. Yet an agreement has still not been reached with the House on a compromise health IT bill.

This bill started with broad support across the Senate. But deliberations on this bill have now turned partisan. Recently, the majority has excluded Democrats from the conference committee deliberations.

There is also wide agreement on Medicare physician reimbursements. An overwhelming majority of Senators have urged action to prevent a pending 5.1 percent cut in the Medicare physician fee schedule for 2007. And there is broad agreement on the need to start rewarding quality in Medicare. But despite agreement on both issues, Congress has yet to act.

There is also wide agreement on helping seniors confused by the new Medicare drug benefit. The new Medicare drug program imposes a penalty on those who sign up after the enrollment deadline. But the way that the Government implemented the new Medicare drug program confused seniors.

In response, Chairman GRASSLEY and I joined a wide group of Senators to introduce legislation to waive the penalty for this year. But despite broad support for this measure, it remains unaddressed.

There is also wide agreement that we need to sustain important health safe-

ty net programs. In 3 months, funding for transitional medical assistance—TMA—will expire. TMA provides temporary health coverage to low-income working parents moving from welfare to work. Without a TMA extension, nearly 800,000 working parents will lose the temporary health coverage that they need to leave welfare and lead independent lives.

There is also wide agreement that we need to enact technical corrections to last year's Deficit Reduction Act. While I did not vote for that bill, it is important that Congress clarify any misunderstandings over its intent. I know that Chairman GRASSLEY shares my interest in getting this done as soon as possible.

There is also wide agreement to support the Children's Health Insurance Program, or CHIP. CHIP has helped cut the number of uninsured kids from 10.7 million in 1997 to 8.3 million in 2005. But despite this success, 17 States face federal funding shortfalls in their CHIP programs. These shortfalls potentially jeopardize coverage for hundreds of thousands of kids. We cannot afford to lose ground in our fight to provide more health coverage for children.

There is also wide agreement that we need to improve health care in Indian Country. In June, the Finance Committee reported legislation to improve access to Medicare, Medicaid, and CHIP in Indian Country. That bill is now part of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act. That bill is being held hostage by a handful of opponents on the other side.

There is no shortage of important health issues. Many health issues spark intense partisan disagreement. But that is generally not true about the ones that I just described.

That is why it is so disappointing that these issues—from Medicare physician payments to transitional Medicaid—remain unaddressed.

If we are ever going to make progress on the most difficult problems facing our health system—rising costs, the uninsured, threats to American competitiveness—we will have to work together and pass legislation. That we cannot even work together on issues with wide agreement is deeply troubling.

NATIONAL EMPLOY OLDER WORKERS WEEK

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today in recognition of National Employ Older Workers Week, celebrated September 24-30, 2006. All too often we concentrate only on the social and economic challenges that the rapidly increasing numbers of older Americans present this Nation. This week's designation provides the opportunity to highlight the vital role that older workers can and do play in fostering a competitive economy through their workplace contributions.

As the baby boomer generation has begun to reach traditional retirement

age, this mature workforce is breaking down the negative stereotypes that cast older workers as frail, unproductive, and resistant to technological advances. Today's older generation of Americans has persevered through economic hard times and flourished in prosperity, endured war and enjoyed peace, and embraced more dramatic technological advances in science, medicine, transportation and communications than any other generation in our history. This breadth of experience should be viewed as a valuable asset bridging this country's past and future. National Employ Older Workers Week is our opportunity to recognize the wealth of experience older Americans have acquired and can contribute to the 21st century workplace, as well as the importance of work in helping seniors maintain their independence, health, and well-being.

Mr. President, I encourage my colleagues to join me in recognition of National Employ Older Workers Week. As chairman of the Senate Special Committee on Aging, I look forward to working with my colleagues to encourage the hiring and retention of older workers. We honor these workers for their experience and the contributions they have made throughout their lifetimes, and look forward to their continued contributions to our country's prosperity.

IMPROVING ELECTION PRACTICES FOR NOVEMBER 7TH

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, there has been much discussion and debate over the last 6 years on the best way to modernize the way we run Federal elections. As a result of the Help America Vote Act of 2002, HAVA, the Election Assistance Commission, EAC, a bipartisan independent agency, was created. One of the EAC's duties is to serve as a clearinghouse of election administration information for the use of election officials, the information of voters, and the good of our democracy.

The Election Assistance Commission has recently released four documents that serve as an overview on good election administration practices in preparation for the November 7 Federal elections. States are making the final push to implement the new election administration requirements enacted in HAVA which must be in place by November. As with any new Federal requirements, it is anticipated that there may be problems with new technologies, administrative failures, or human error. In light of some of the challenges faced by election officials in primaries over the last few weeks, these best practices guidelines are both timely and instructive for those who are responsible for conducting our Federal elections this fall.

The first document, "Quick Start Management Guide for New Voting Systems," covers basic polling place planning and management operations for those jurisdictions that have re-

cently purchased new voting equipment. This document includes recommendations on contingency plans, testing procedures, and security.

The second document, "Quick Start Management Guide for Poll Workers," discusses best practices for recruiting, training, and retaining poll workers. These best practices include election day recommendations for establishing a dedicated phone line for poll workers and creating a troubleshooting guide for problems at the polls.

A third guide, "Quick Start Management Guide for Voting System Security," discusses methods of assessing technological or procedural flaws in election security, and suggests protocols on how to improve the secure functioning of the elections process. These protocols include installing only certified software, implementing procedures and systems to control physical access to voting systems, and maintaining an inventory of all election materials.

Finally, the fourth guide, "Quick Start Management Guide for Ballot Preparation/Printing and Pre-election Testing," provides recommendations for ballot preparation and logic and accuracy testing of systems. These best practices include testing all components of the system prior to election day, replacing all batteries before each election, and ensuring that all state laws and procedures for logic and accuracy testing have been followed.

These guides have been developed based on best practices used successfully by election officials across this Nation. While many jurisdictions may already be considering these procedures, I wanted to bring these guides to the attention of my colleagues in the hope that they will pass this information on to their state and local election officials for use in the November Federal elections.

These recommendations may not cover every potential election problem faced by poll workers and voters in the fall elections. State law in some jurisdictions may even preclude election officials from implementing some of these best practices. However, these documents raise potential issues for everyone involved in the elections process to consider, and offer concrete solutions to the challenging administrative problems that impact state and local election officials. Most importantly, these procedures can help ensure that every eligible American will have an equal opportunity to cast a vote and have that vote counted in the November Federal elections.

The text of these four Quick Start Guides can be accessed on the Election Assistance Commission Internet Web site, <http://www.eac.gov> by following links to: Guide for New Voting Systems; Voting System Security Guide; Poll Workers Guide; and Ballot Preparation/Printing & Pre-Election Testing Guide.

THE KYOTO DECLARATION OF RELIGIONS FOR PEACE

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, the organization known as Religions for Peace constitutes a global network of inter-religious councils and affiliated groups, harnessed to encourage cooperation among the world's religious communities to transform conflict, build peace and advance sustainable development.

Founded in 1970 as an international, nonsectarian organization, Religions for Peace is now the largest coalition of the world's religious communities.

President of Religions for Peace is His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan bin Talal of Jordan.

Secretary General of WCRP, as the organization is known, is Dr. William F. Vendley, of the United States.

Our former colleague and my fellow Hoosier, John Brademas, who served in the House of Representatives from Indiana for 22 years and then became president of New York University, which he now serves as President Emeritus, is an International Trustee of Religions for Peace.

Last month, in Kyoto, Japan, more than 800 religious leaders, from all major traditions and over 100 countries, met at the Eighth World Assembly of the World Conference of Religions for Peace.

The theme of this assembly was Confronting Violence and Advancing Shared Security.

At the request of our former colleague Representative Brademas, I ask unanimous consent to have the final statement issued by the Kyoto Assembly printed in the RECORD.

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

THE KYOTO DECLARATION ON CONFRONTING VIOLENCE AND ADVANCING SHARED SECURITY— RELIGIONS FOR PEACE EIGHTH WORLD ASSEMBLY

PREAMBLE

Representing all major religious traditions and every region of the world, more than eight hundred religious leaders from over one hundred countries convened in Kyoto, Japan as the Eighth World Assembly of the World Conference of Religions for Peace to address the theme, "Confronting Violence and Advancing Shared Security." We, the Assembly Delegates, come from the global Religions for Peace network of local, national, regional, and international inter-religious councils and groups, as well as networks of youth and women of faith. We recognize and build on the significant contributions and statements of youth and women of faith made in their respective assemblies.

The first Religions for Peace World Assembly that convened in Kyoto in 1970, and every Assembly since, affirmed deeply held and widely shared religious principles that still inspire our search for peace with justice today. We share a conviction of the fundamental unity of the human family, and the equality and dignity of all human beings. We affirm the sacredness of the individual person and the importance of his or her freedom of conscience. We are committed to the ethical values and attitudes commonly shared by our religious traditions. We uphold the value of life manifest in human community