

In 1993, she was elected secretary-treasurer of the Illinois AFL-CIO. At the time, there were only a handful of female officers in State labor federations, and Margaret stood out as the only female officer from an industrialized State. In 2000, she was elected president of the Illinois AFL-CIO—the first woman to serve as president in the State federation's 102-year history.

Under Margaret Blackshere's leadership, the Illinois AFL-CIO helped lead the fight to raise Illinois' minimum wage—not once but twice.

Margaret also led passionate efforts to guarantee women equal pay for equal work, to expand health care, and to improve Illinois' workers' compensation system.

She has a gift for uniting people from diverse backgrounds, with very different viewpoints, under a common goal. This is no easy task, and one that many politicians regularly attempt but often fail.

Margaret recognized the importance of forming an alliance with the Illinois Manufacturers Association and helped to save and create Illinois manufacturing jobs.

She also helped to establish the Transportation for Illinois Coalition, which included groups as diverse as the Illinois Automobile Asphalt and Pavement Association and the Chicago Transit Authority, to speak with a unified voice for Illinois' transportation funding needs.

As Margaret fought for Illinois' working families, she raised her own family and has two sons and four grandchildren.

She also devotes a great deal of time to charitable organizations. She has served on the boards of a wide variety of institutions, including the Illinois branches of United Way and American Red Cross, Alliance for Retired Americans, Voices for Illinois Children, Unemployment Insurance Advisory Board, and the Federal Reserve Board of Chicago. She also is a board member of the Illinois Women's Institute for Leadership, which helps prepare women with progressive values run for political office.

Over the years, Margaret has received many accolades and awards. In 2000, the Labor Council for Latin Advancement honored her with the Labor Leader Award, and the State of Israel presented her with the Israel Peace Medal. Margaret also received the Protector of Working People Award in 2002 from the Illinois State Crime Commission. Always proud of her Irish heritage, Margaret was delighted to be the Guest of Honor for Chicago's St. Patrick's Day Parade in 2003.

Margaret says that she doesn't really intend to retire—she will still be fighting the same fights but will do so as a volunteer. She believes her future efforts will involve reaching out to workers in countries across the globe.

Mr. President, I would like to congratulate Margaret Blackshere on her retirement and thank her for her ef-

forts to protect working families in Illinois and across the country. I wish her the very best in her future endeavors.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNITION OF WES WILKINS

• Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, today I wish to honor Wes Wilkins, of Middleton, DE, who will on May 2, 2007, receive the Dr. Gary Burch Memorial Award, given annually to the railroad worker who has done the most to improve the safety of railroad passengers. For more than 30 years, Wes has worked on our Nation's railroads. As one of Amtrak's most talented and innovative maintenance of way employees, he helped design the Switch Exchange System and provided input on every operational procedure involved with this new system of switching. The result of his talent helped to ensure reliable and safe train travel on virtually every mile of track between here and Boston, as well as across the Nation. Wes also formed the Production and Construction Safety Committee, whose purpose is to help ensure safe practices throughout Amtrak's Production Unit, which oversees installations. He is known for his countless hours of double- and triple-checking, of traveling to trouble spots, and of helping teach others about safety. His ability to operate almost every piece of maintenance equipment Amtrak uses and his success in instilling safety in the minds of his coworkers make him quite worthy of this award. As someone who rides Amtrak to work, I can testify to the importance rail transportation plays in providing affordable, reliable, safe transportation and I feel safer knowing someone like Wes is working on the front lines. Delaware is home to two of Amtrak's most important maintenance shops, and I congratulate all of the Amtrak employees of Delaware who helped Wes earn this award. Wes should be proud of all he has done to make this possible and I wish him the best as he continues a distinguished career of public service.●

CELEBRATING PURDUE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES' CENTENNIAL

• Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, I am pleased today to join my fellow Hoosiers in commemorating Purdue University Libraries' centennial as a Federal Depository Library. Since 1907, the staff of the Purdue University Libraries has worked diligently to provide Hoosiers with access to contemporary and historical information about our Nation and the workings of our Federal Government.

I am hopeful that this signal milestone will serve as a reminder to all Hoosiers of the remarkable resources available at the Purdue University Libraries through the Federal Depository Loan Program. As the Federal Depository

Loan Program makes these resources available free of charge, I would encourage Hoosiers to utilize them as they learn and work together.

I am grateful for the important service of the staff at the Purdue University Libraries, and I wish them congratulations on this auspicious occasion.●

HELEN ROBSON WALTON

• Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, it is with great pleasure that I today I honor the late Helen Robson Walton. Helen touched countless lives within her community, across Arkansas and throughout the world.

Born on December 3, 1919, in Claremore, OK, Helen graduated college in 1941 with a bachelor's degree in finance from the University of Oklahoma School of Business. Two years later she married Sam Walton and they formed a lasting relationship of love, friendship and as business partners. Helen and Sam Walton opened their first retail store, a Ben Franklin "five and dime" in Newport, AR, in 1945.

The daughter of a successful lawyer, banker and rancher, Helen had a natural instinct for good management and played an active role in the family business. She firmly believed in the concept of family partnerships and insisted that their four children—Rob, John, Jim and Alice—were partners of Walton Enterprises. At the time, they were all under the age of 10.

Helen was also admired for her graceful, down-to-earth demeanor. She was active in the First Presbyterian Church in Bentonville and the first woman ever elected to vice chairwoman of the board of trustees for the Presbyterian Church, USA, Foundation.

As a natural leader who recognized the importance of putting others before self, Helen devoted a large portion of her time to the Walton Family Foundation. Under her leadership, the foundation has given generously to numerous Arkansas organizations, including the University of Arkansas, the Walton Arts Center in Fayetteville and Crystal Bridges. Her commitment to education has also touched hundreds of lives in Central America. Since 1985, she personally supervised a \$3.6 million scholarship program for Central American students to study at John Brown University in Siloam Springs, University of the Ozarks and Harding University in Searcy. Knowing the vast majority of these students would return home, Helen wanted to provide them with higher educational opportunities so they could later contribute to the well-being and economic development of their local communities.

Her generosity of time, energy and goodwill towards others is an example we all can follow. I join Arkansans in offering my prayers and condolences for the Robson and Walton families during this difficult time.●