

The letter follows:

U.S. SENATOR,  
Washington, DC, May 6, 1997.  
Brig. Gen. KENNETH W. HESS,  
Commander, 319 Air Refueling Wing, Grand  
Forks Air Force Base, Grand Forks, ND.

DEAR GENERAL HESS: Working on the disaster has become all consuming, but I did want to take a moment to let you know how much I appreciate the courtesies you extended to me and my staff on our recent stay. Too, I shall be forever grateful to you for all you have done for the people of North Dakota.

The night-time evacuation of the city of Grand Forks would have been impossible without the availability of the Grand Forks Air Force Base facilities to those in need of shelter. Your quick response and leadership made a situation rife with danger manageable. This same helpful attitude was evident everywhere on the Base—encouragement, hope, and a warm smile went along with the uniform whether at the Emergency Operations Center of the Command Center. And, kindness did not hamper your efficiency—The Grand Forks Air Force Base was a gracious host to the President of the United States and six Cabinet Members in the midst of a disaster.

General Hess, you can be very proud of the men and women of the 319 Air Refueling Wing. One Airman mentioned to a member of my staff, "We're glad to help out. We are just one big Grand Forks family."

With deepest appreciation,

Sincerely

KENT CONRAD,  
U.S. Senate.●

#### RECOGNITION OF ROSS P. MARINE

● Mr. BOND. Mr. President, On May 31, 1998, Ross P. Marine, DHL, MHA, Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Trinity Luthern Hospital, Kansas City, Missouri, and former Administrator, Truman Medical Center East (Truman East), and the Director of Public Health for the Jackson County Health Department (JCHD), is receiving the Citizen of the Year award from UNICO/Kansas City Chapter. As the recipient, he may select a charity of his choice to receive half the proceeds from the awards dinner. Mr. Marine has chosen to give his donation to the Truman Medical Center East Auxiliary's commitment to the renovation of the Obstetrics Unit into a new Labor, Delivery, Recovery and Postpartum wing at Truman East.

UNICO stands for Unity, Neighborliness, Integrity, Clarity and Opportunity and is a national organization made up of men and women of Italian descent who work for positive community service. A Board member or current officer nominates the candidate, for Citizen of the year. Candidates must have an interest in their community and working with others to make their community a better place.

Mr. Marine has continually shown that he not only has concern for the betterment of his community, but has also taken a leadership role. He made health care more accessible by starting five public health outreach facilities. Truman East received \$38 million in renovation and expansion because of Mr. Marine's efforts. While embracing the credo of UNICO, "Service above

Self," he has helped his community and therefore Missouri as a whole. He has been appointed to numerous Boards of Directors and received many awards for all his outstanding achievements.

Commending Mr. Marine for his many years of service to his community and the field of medicine, I am glad to say that the State of Missouri is enriched with his wisdom and leadership. I join the many who congratulate and thank him for his hard work and wish him continued success in future years.●

#### CELEBRATION OF INTERNATIONAL SPACE DAY

● Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, as the senior Senator from the state that launched the Mercury astronaut pioneers into space, sent Apollo astronauts to the moon, and has hosted numerous space shuttle launches since 1981, it is a tremendous privilege to lead the U.S. Senate in recognizing May 21 as "International Space Day."

Our nation's exciting adventure in space began just over forty years ago, with the launch of the Explorer I satellite on January 31, 1958. The celebration of this anniversary gave us cause to look back at America's four decades in space. "International Space Day" gives us a chance to look forward and assess how to seize the space opportunities of the future.

Mr. President, forty years after we launched our first satellite and nearly thirty years since Neil Armstrong took mankind's first steps on the lunar surface, Americans remain captivated by the exploration of space.

Students across the nation eagerly study past achievements and future adventures in space exploration. In Florida, tourists flock to the Kennedy Space Center on Cape Canaveral to see the famed launch pads and rockets that have boosted man into space. Right here in Washington, the National Air and Space Museum, National Space Society, and the aerospace industry have put space right on Congress' doorstep.

"International Space Day" is an appropriate occasion to reflect on how our exploration and utilization of space dramatically affects our day-to-day lives. It is especially timely this week, when the breakdown of the Galaxy Four satellite has wreaked havoc in our nation's telecommunications sector. Many of us have constituents who were unable to listen to National Public Radio's reports on this week's floor debate on comprehensive tobacco legislation. Thousands of Americans have been inconvenienced because their pagers do not work. Doctors, businesses, television viewers and radio listeners—virtually everyone in our society—have been affected.

Relatively few Americans have had the opportunity to escape the Earth's atmosphere and gravity, but space affects all of us. Galaxy Four is just one example of how critical the utilization of space is to our economy. We are on

the brink of a new frontier in commercial space activity, with almost weekly launches of new communications satellites and the most competitive space launch market in decades.

In 1998, the Senate will have a unique opportunity to remove barriers that impede U.S. companies in the exploration of this new frontier. U.S. Senator CONNIE MACK and I introduced the Commercial Space Act in the Senate last fall and we hope to see it passed soon.

Mr. President, this is an exciting time to be discussing space issues in the U.S. Congress. At NASA's Kennedy Space Center—the nation's premiere launch base—the space shuttle continues to faithfully serve our manned space program. An international team of engineers and astronauts is assembling a new space station. In 1997 and early 1998, the Mars Pathfinder blazed a four-wheel drive trail on the Red Planet and the launch of the Lunar Prospector marked our return to the moon. In October, my colleague JOHN GLENN of Ohio will return to space after thirty-seven years on Earth. VentureStar is under development as our nation's space vehicle of the future. And space tourism—featuring space planes that operate from traditional airports—is becoming more and more of a likelihood.

I hope these developments inspire young Americans to develop the science, math, and engineering expertise that our nation needs to maintain its leadership in space. Congress should encourage efforts like that of the U.S. Space Foundation's Mission Home, a program that brings together space societies and aerospace companies to educate communities all over the nation about our exciting future in space.

Mr. President, Disneyland will rededicate its Tomorrowland on Friday—forty-three years after it first inspired young adventurers to aim beyond the stratosphere. I will depend on all 100 members of this legislative body to help make sure that the United States is actively preparing for its tomorrowland by keeping our nation on the forefront of the exploration, utilization, and commercialization of space today. Working together, we can ensure that every day is space day in the U.S. Senate.●

#### 50TH BIRTHDAY OF THE ISRAEL'S INDEPENDENCE

● Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President, in 1948 when Israel was fighting its most costly war ever—the war for independence—Israel's future Prime Minister was told by the greatest military experts in the world that his newly created State of 600,000 had no chance of surviving. Now, in 1998, Israel is celebrating its 50th year of independence.

I commend the Jewish Federation of the Scranton-Lackawanna community for observing this historic occasion the weekend of May 1-3.

The State of Israel became a home for Jews after more than 6 million European Jews were massacred during the Holocaust. Over the past 50 years, Israel has acted as a refuge for thousands of Jews throughout the world and integrated them into their society, while rebuilding a nation and creating an active democratic political system.

On May 17, I joined Mayor Edward Rendell and Israeli Consul General Daniel Ashbel in Philadelphia to celebrate Israel's 50th Independence Day birthday party. During the opening ceremonies, I thought of how Israel is a land of wonderful contrast. It is both a nation of great history and a nation of great accomplishment. From the historical perspective, the events that have sprung forth from that land over the centuries are overwhelming to even consider. No matter what religious tradition one might follow, the basic laws that went on to frame many of the tenants of our democratic form of government, and the rules of conduct in a civil society, came out of the land we have always called Yis-ra-el.

Today, Israel has a growing economy, farms on land that were once claimed by the deserts, and high-tech companies producing cutting edge products for our global marketplace. No other society in the course of human history can claim such progress in 50 short years. No other nation can claim to have risen to these heights from the horrors of the Holocaust. That is why Israel is so unique, so special, and so deserving of our unyielding and unconditional support.

The United States has always maintained a relationship with Israel that is based on mutual respect. America's commitment to Israel's security undergirds the entire peace process and provides Israel the confidence it needs to take very real risks for peace. I encourage the United States to continue to act in a respectable manner by not imposing a settlement on Israel that is contrary to its national security interests.●

#### WE THE PEOPLE . . . THE CITIZEN AND THE CONSTITUTION COMPETITION

● Mr. CLELAND. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the following students from Dunwoody High School in Dunwoody, Georgia and their teacher for their excellent performance in the We the People . . . The Citizen and the Constitution. I would like to congratulate the students who competed in this year's competition: Bakari Brock, Jennifer Campbell, Richard Cartwright, Michael Cayes, Carol Chandler, Melissa Chastney, Zack Cullens, Melissa Derick, Kevin Franklin, Erin Green, Judy Hudgins, Rebecca Lamb, Dwayne O'Mard, Sandra Park, Andrea Pierce, Jennifer Price, Scot Prudhomme, Jennifer Sibling, Geren Stone, Dannon Taylor, David Weiner, David Yoo, and teacher Celeste Boemker. I would also like to recognize the efforts of the

State Coordinator, Michele Collins and District Coordinator, John Carr, who helped these students make it to the finals.

This bright group of young students competed against 49 other classes from around the nation, testing their knowledge of the United States Constitution and our government. Administered by the Center for Civic Education, the program is the most extensive of its kind, reaching more than 26 million students in elementary, middle and high schools. The students spent hours in role playing and testing to prepare themselves for this competition. The three-day program simulates a Congressional hearing in which students' presentations are judged on the basis of their knowledge of constitutional principles and their ability to apply them to historical and contemporary issues.

Mr. President, it is with great pride that I offer my congratulations to these students from Dunwoody High School for their outstanding performance at the We the People competition, and wish them continuing success with their future studies.●

#### CONTINUING JUDICIAL VACANCY CRISIS IN THE SECOND CIRCUIT

● Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, the Senate's Republican leadership is refusing to take action to end the judicial emergency in the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit.

On March 25, the five continuing vacancies on the 13-member court caused Chief Judge Ralph Winter to certify a Circuit emergency, to begin canceling hearings and to take the unprecedented step of having 3-judge panels convened that include only one Second Circuit judge. On April 23, Chief Judge Winter was forced to issue additional emergency orders. For two months and into the foreseeable future the Senate has neglected its responsibility to the people of the Second Circuit.

I have been urging favorable Senate action on the nomination of Judge Sonia Sotomayor to the Second Circuit to fill a longstanding vacancy for many months. That nomination remains stalled on the Senate calendar. Two weeks ago the nomination of Chester J. Straub to the Second Circuit was favorably reported by the Judiciary Committee. That nomination is now also on the Senate calendar awaiting action. Today, the Senate Judiciary Committee is favorably reporting two additional nominees to the Second Circuit, Judge Rosemary Pooler and Robert Sack. That makes four nominees to the Second Circuit awaiting confirmation, four nominees who can end the judicial vacancies crisis that plagues the Second Circuit. But for the inaction of the Majority Leader in calling for votes by the Senate on this qualified nominees, the crisis could end this week. I, again, urge that action.

Before the last recess I introduced legislation calling upon the Senate to address this kind of judicial emergency

before it takes another extended recess. The Senate has pending before it four outstanding nominees to the Second Circuit whose confirmations would end this crisis.

Unfortunately Republican Senate leadership has not taken the judicial vacancies crisis seriously and has failed to take the concerted action needed to end it. They continue to perpetuate vacancies in almost one in 10 federal judgeships.

With 11 nominees on the Senate calendar and 32 pending in Committee, we could be making a difference if we would take our responsibilities to the federal courts seriously and devote the time necessary to consider these nominations and confirm them. Instead, we are having hearings at a rate on one a month, barely keeping up with attrition and hardly making a dent in the vacancies crisis that the Chief Justice of the United States has called the most serious problem confronting the judiciary.

By a vote of 16 to 2, the Judiciary Committee reported the nomination of Judge Sonia Sotomayor to the Senate. That was on March 5, 1998, over two months ago. No action has been taken or scheduled on that nomination and no explanation for the delay has been forthcoming. This is the oldest judicial nomination pending on the Senate Executive Calendar. In spite of an April 8 letter to the Senate Republican Leader signed by all six Senators from the three States forming the Second Circuit urging prompt action, this nomination continues to be stalled by anonymous objections. Our bipartisan letter to the Majority Leader asked that he call up for prompt consideration by the Senate the nomination of Judge Sonia Sotomayor. That was over one month ago.

Judge Sonia Sotomayor is a qualified nominee who was confirmed to the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York in 1992 after being nominated by President Bush. She attended Princeton University and Yale Law School. She worked for over four years in the New York District Attorney's Office as an Assistant District Attorney and was in private practice with Pavia & Harcourt in New York. She is strongly supported by Senator MOYNIHAN and Senator D'AMATO.

She is a source of pride to Puerto Rican and other Hispanic supporters and to women. When confirmed she will be only the second woman and second judge of Puerto Rican descent to serve on the Second Circuit.

Judge Rosemary Pooler was nominated back on November 6, 1997, as was Robert Sack, a partner in the law firm of Gibson Dunn & Crutcher. They participated in a confirmation hearing on May 14 and were reported to the Senate by the Judiciary Committee today.

Since May 7 the fourth pending nomination to the Second Circuit, that of Chester J. Straub, has also been on the