

South Carolinians from all walks of life. Among some of the services they now provide are, auto, home, and life insurance, as well as financial services such as banking, loans, IRA, and credit cards.

I recall the year 1989 when the South Carolina Farm Bureau Insurance Company faced one of the biggest natural disasters in the history of our state: Hurricane Hugo. The South Carolina Farm Bureau rose to the occasion. It settled some 16,000 claims and paid out more than \$71 million. Then, in 1999, when Hurricane Floyd struck the coast, 90 percent of reported claims were settled within one week, setting a model, if not a record, for expeditious claims management.

Today, the South Carolina Farm Bureau Insurance Company has a presence in every county in the State, which is one reason they are able to provide such timely and quality service. There is a name that folks know and trust. I am proud of their service to our State, and wish them the best as they celebrate their 50th Anniversary and look to the future.

MOURNING THE TRAGIC BUS CRASH IN OSSEO, WISCONSIN

HON. RON KIND

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 17, 2005

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, today I rise with a heavy heart. I mourn with the citizens of western Wisconsin as we remember the lives of five people killed in a tragic school bus crash in Osseo, Wisconsin.

On Sunday, October 16, teachers, chaperons and members of the Chippewa Falls High School Marching Band were returning from a marching band championship when their bus struck an overturned tractor-trailer on Interstate 94 outside the city of Eau Claire. The band director, his wife and granddaughter, the bus driver, and a student teacher all were killed in the collision. Additionally, 29 other people were injured in this terrible accident.

Sunday should have been a day of celebration for the Chippewa Falls Community. The Cardinals' routine, "Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves," earned the school third place in its division at the Wisconsin School Music Association State Marching Band Championships in Whitewater. Instead of excitement over a job well done, the night would end in tragedy. At 2 a.m., the first of four buses carrying more than 200 students and 40 adults struck the overturned trailer on the dark road.

That day Wisconsin lost dedicated secondary education teachers and valued members of our community. The band director, Morgan Greenhalgh, affectionately called "G" by his students, was more than a teacher to them; he was a friend. His pupils said of him that he was able to bring out the best in his students, creating an extended family of those he taught. His peers said he was a wonderful teacher and a role model who will be impossible to replace.

Sadly, Therese Greenhalgh and their granddaughter, Morgan, also were lost in the crash. As was Brandon Atherton, a student teacher. Only 24 years old, Brandon attended the university of Wisconsin Eau Claire. Even at such a young age, he was committed to giving back

to the community. And finally, Paul Rasmus, the bus driver was killed. At 78 years old, he was in the golden years of life. Instead of living a simple life of retirement, he spent his last years in service to the students at Chippewa Falls High School.

There were 29 students and adults who suffered serious injuries as a result of the collision. My heart goes out to all those who were involved in this terrible accident, as well as the families, students, and the community that were effected that terrible morning. On behalf of all the residents of western Wisconsin, each of us shares in your loss, and our thoughts and prayers are with you and your loved ones.

INTRODUCING THE EVACUEES TAX RELIEF ACT

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 17, 2005

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce the Evacuees Tax Relief Act of 2005, legislation providing tax relief to those forced to abandon their homes because of a natural disaster. This legislation provides a tax credit or a tax deduction, depending on the wishes of the taxpayer, of up to \$5,000 for costs incurred because of a government-ordered mandatory or voluntary evacuation. Evacuees could use the credit to cover travel and lodging expenses associated with the evacuation, lost wages, property damages not otherwise compensated, and any other evacuation-related expenses. The tax credit is refundable up to the amount of income and payroll taxes a person would otherwise pay, thus ensuring working people who pay more in payroll than in income taxes are able to benefit from this tax relief. The credit is available retroactive to August of this year, so it is available to Katrina and Rita evacuees.

Having had parts of my district, including my home county, subject to mandatory evacuation because of Hurricane Rita, I have seen firsthand the burdens on those forced to uproot themselves and their families. Evacuees incur great costs in getting to safety, as well as loss from the storm damage. It can take many months, and even years, to fully recover from the devastation of a natural disaster. Given the unpredictable nature of natural disasters such as hurricanes and tornados, it is difficult for most families to adequately budget for these costs. The Evacuees Tax Relief Act helps Americans manage the fiscal costs of a natural disaster.

Mr. Speaker, it is hard to think of a more timely and more compassionate tax relief proposal than one aimed at helping families cope with the costs associated with being uprooted from their homes, jobs, and communities by a natural disaster. I hope all my colleagues will show compassion for those forced to flee their homes by cosponsoring the Evacuees Tax Relief Act.

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY—100 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 17, 2005

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, out on the hot, windy, arid plains of West Texas, where the prairie dog and the coyote make their home, amidst the tumble weeds, is a school that is the oasis of private Christian education and excellence. Celebrating its 100th year, Abilene Christian University, with its over 4000 students and 200 faculty members, has progressed dramatically since its beginning in 1906 as Childress Classical Institute.

Mr. J.W. Childress sold A.B. Barret some land outside Abilene, Texas to start a Christian school. The Church of Christ in Abilene backed the project. Then in 1912, when Jesse P. Sewell became President, the school started using the name Abilene Christian College, or commonly referred to as Abilene Christian.

The school moved its campus in 1929 after receiving money from the city of Abilene and land donated by the people of the city. The new campus permanently moved to the Northeast portion of town, fondly referred to as the Hill. ACC eventually became Abilene Christian University in 1976.

The school has students from all 50 states and 60 foreign countries. ACU is proud to be a liberal arts institution and has excellent programs in Business, Bible and Education. Numerous students go on to receive graduate degrees at ACU and other universities. All four of my kids, Kim, Kara, Kurt, and Kellee Lyn attended ACU.

The school has had tremendous athletic programs and its track program has won National Championships for over 60 years. The purple and white Wildcats are now in NCAA Division II and compete in all major sports.

Having been a student at ACU, the school—affiliated with the Churches of Christ—is a unique experience. The people who are at the University, not just the students, but the teachers and administration are a unique type of people.

Garvin Beauchamp, former head football coach, and then Dean of students, did much for me personally to make me see the importance of making good choices in life—He, like other faculty and staff, routinely has students in his home for informal gatherings, Bar-B-Que, and pizza. Students are taught by professors with very few teaching assistants.

I remember several Political Science classes I took from Dr. Gary Thompson that had 10 students learning politics.

My senior year at ACU, I was president of Galaxy Social Club—similar to Fraternities at other schools. We had an annual big event, a formal banquet, for our club. I drove an old 1962 Chevy Nova SS, more like a hot rod instead of a dating vehicle. And I wanted to borrow a nicer car to impress my date. Being the President of the club, I also needed a vehicle to make a statement at the party. So I went to the office of the President of the University and met with President Don Morris. I candidly told him my dilemma.

Then, I asked him if I could borrow his car because his well recognized Lincoln with license plates ACC-1 was the best car in town.

So I asked Dr. Morris if we could trade cars on that particular Saturday night of the banquet. Well, he did not say "If I lend you my car, I'll have to do it for everybody." He didn't mention liability issues. He just said "come over, leave me your car" and asked me to return his car after the date.

So I borrowed the President's car, impressed my date, made my fellow club members envious and had a grand time cruising Abilene, Texas in the President's Lincoln town car. I even drove by the ever popular Mack Eplan's Drive In to show off.

When I returned Dr. Morris's car that evening, he was waiting for me at his kitchen table. He was reading the Bible and probably praying to the Almighty for the safety of his car. We exchanged car keys and that was that.

But Dr. Morris, like many at Abilene Christian displayed an example of the unique character of the university.

Now the 11th President, Royce Money is continuing to lead the school with a determination to follow the mission of the school: "To educate students for Christian Service and leadership throughout the world."

So congratulations to Abilene Christian University in celebrating its 100th year. And thanks for influencing and educating so many students to be a remarkable difference in our nation. The world is a better place because of that Texas school out on the plains of West Texas.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT ACT

HON. STEVE BUYER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 17, 2005

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, today, I am introducing legislation, along with Ranking Member EVANS and other distinguished Members of the Committee, will introduce legislation that will mandate the Department of Veterans' Affairs to empower the Department's Chief Information Officer with authority over resources, budget and personnel related to information technology for the Department.

Since coming to Congress in 1993, I have witnessed this Committee struggle with VA's inability to adequately manage its IT funding and IT modernization efforts.

While there have been significant improvements in VA's IT modernization efforts, the improvements have come at significant cost to our Veterans: \$600 million plus for a decade of VETSNET—the automated compensation and pension claims processing system that still has not been implemented in 10 years. \$342 million for CoreFLS—the failed financial management system. \$300 million for the HR Links—the failed automated personnel system. \$485 million annually to maintain VISTA, VA's 25-year-old medical information system.

This legislation, the "Department of Veterans Affairs Information Technology Management Improvement Act" will ensure accountability in VA IT spending, and reorganize VA's IT infrastructure to better serve our nation's veterans.

HONORING GEORGE HALE

HON. MICHAEL H. MICHAUD

OF MAINE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 17, 2005

Mr. MICHAUD. Mr. Speaker, Maine has a long tradition of honoring men and women who have made a positive impact on the community and the people around them. This is why I would like to recognize George Hale. George has spent his life working with and helping others.

George first began working with others when he was in the Navy. He would then go on to serve in Korea as a medic, working with the sick and wounded. A Cleveland native, George eventually found his way to Maine where he has had a distinguished 50 year career doing what he loves: broadcasting. During this career he has become an icon to a vast number of Mainers and he has become a legend as a high school basketball announcer. He has used his broadcasting skills to the benefit of others too. For the last 15 years George has helped host the Muscular Dystrophy Telethons on WABI TV. He has also done important work for the Maine Chapter of the March of Dimes and countless communities around Maine.

For these reasons George is being honored by the Maine Chapter of the March of Dimes tonight for a lifetime of achievement and involvement with the community. On behalf of the residents of Maine's Second Congressional District, and for myself personally, I would like to congratulate George Hale on this honor and also thank him for all the work he has done for the people of Maine.

THANKING FORMER GOVERNOR JAMES B. HUNT FOR HIS LEADERSHIP ON EDUCATION

HON. STENY H. HOYER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 17, 2005

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, James B. Hunt—the four-term Governor of North Carolina, is not only a model public servant, a proud democrat and a long-time dear friend, he is the rare visionary who actually knows how to implement his vision and get demonstrable results.

The "No Child Left Behind Act" was an historic bipartisan achievement for our Nation. And it was a signal accomplishment for President Bush and Members on both sides of the aisle in Congress.

But the fact is, governor Hunt was in the vanguard of the movement for education reform in the States and his hard work helped inspire the enactment of this important Federal law.

When it comes to education, Jim Hunt not only put North Carolina on the map, he has helped move the Tarheel State toward the top of the heap.

His smart start program—a public-private partnership in each of North Carolina's 100 counties—helps provide quality child care, health care and family support for each child who needs it.

The "Judy Centers" in Maryland—named for my late wife, who was a strong advocate of

early childhood education—provide many of the same services.

Jim Hunt helped set up North Carolina's primary reading program. He helped reduce class size, and create a dropout prevention program.

And, he established the State's school of science and mathematics, the Microelectronics Center of North Carolina, and the North Carolina Biotechnology Center.

He also helped put in place one of the most rigorous, approaches to measuring student performance, requiring mastery before promotion and graduation and providing assistance to turn around failing schools.

When it comes to education reform that gets results, no one in America has had a more profound impact than Jim Hunt.

He didn't just claim victory after signing these initiatives into law. He demanded—and received—results.

For example, The Rand Corporation reported that North Carolina Public Schools improved test scores more than any other State in the 1990s.

And, the 1997 national education goals report showed that North Carolina had the most impressive improvements toward reaching educational goals outlined by the panel, and made significant progress in science and math.

But Governor Hunt's contributions have been felt far beyond the borders of North Carolina.

They have been felt throughout the Nation.

As the founding chair of the national board for professional teaching standards, Jim Hunt has been a driving force in improving student achievement by raising teaching standards.

Quite simply, the national board helps teachers improve their skills, so that they can better serve their students.

Governor Hunt has always recognized that the key to a first-rate education is first-rate teaching.

And, through the national board he has helped raise the bar, striving to give professional educators the respect and training that they deserve.

Finally, let me say that Jim Hunt has always understood and focused on the nexus between educational achievement and economic success.

Today, figures from across the political spectrum—Bill Clinton, Newt Gingrich, Bill Gates and the U.S. Chamber—recognize and are talking about that nexus.

"We are living in a world," said President Clinton, "Where what you can earn is a function of what you can learn."

This issue, the centrality of education and knowledge in today's global economy, unites all of us.

And Jim Hunt has recognized that for more than 25 years.

A few years ago, the Raleigh News and Observer stated that, "Jim Hunt served his State with practical accomplishment and with forceful leadership in times of crisis. Of that, he, and we, can be proud."

Governor Hunt is a trailblazer who has lit the path to personal fulfillment and professional accomplishment for literally thousands of North Carolinians and men and women all across this Nation.

His insight has been invaluable. His determination has been essential. And his leadership has been practical, productive and profound.