Republicans. He is always very intense. He and I don't always agree but we agree more than people think. But one thing no one can ever take away from the junior Senator from Alabama is the seriousness of his being in the Senate.

LAS VEGAS NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the 20th anniversary of the Las Vegas Natural History Museum. For two decades the Las Vegas Natural History Museum has provided children and families from all across southern Nevada with the opportunity to learn about science and history in an educational setting outside of the classroom. It is my great pleasure to honor this fine institution, its employees, and the museum's board members before the U.S. Senate today.

The museum started in 1989 when a group of dedicated citizens petitioned the Las Vegas City Council to find a permanent home for a collection of wildlife and prehistoric exhibits. In July 1991, the museum opened its doors to the people of Las Vegas with a collection of loaned wildlife and prehistoric exhibits. Today, the museum has acquired a world-class collection of artifacts for their multimillion dollar collection. Even the Smithsonian Institution has taken notice of our museum. In 2002, the Las Vegas Natural History Museum became an affiliate with the Smithsonian Institution, granting them access to the Smithsonian's vast collection of exhibits.

While many museums across the country have struggled with the economic downturn, the Las Vegas Natural History Museum continues to thrive and grow. Last year, the Las Vegas Natural History Museum provided educational tours to 30,000 students in Clark County. All of their programs are designed by grade level to meet State educational requirements. The museum also provides opportunities for at-risk schools to visit the museum free of charge. Their Open Doors Program provided scholarships that allowed nearly 20,000 visitors from at-risk or economically disadvantaged schools to experience the museum.

I am proud to join with my fellow Nevadans in recognizing the Las Vegas Natural History Museum on reaching this important milestone. For 20 years, this institution has provided the children of southern Nevada with an interactive learning experience, and I have no doubt that the museum will continue to be an important part of our community for years to come.

RESPECT FOR MARRIAGE ACT

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, today I have added my name as a cosponsor of S. 598, the Respect for Marriage Act. This legislation would repeal the Defense of Marriage Act, DOMA, which I voted for in 1996.

I now believe it was a mistake for the Federal Government to legislate in this area in a way that overrides the effect of State laws. Prior to the enactment of DOMA, the Federal Government had deferred to the States to determine what constitutes marriage. I believe we should return to that position.

I also believe it is wrong, and probably unconstitutional, for the Federal Government to treat married couples differently solely on the basis of their sexual orientation.

Enactment of the Respect for Marriage Act will help ensure that the full protections of our Constitution apply to all of our citizens.

COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask the Senate to join me in acknowledging the 15 Columbia River Basin tribes' involvement in the Columbia River Treaty negotiation and review process. As some of you may know, the Columbia River Treaty is an agreement between Canada and the United States on the development and operation of the major hydroelectric dams in the Columbia River Basin. It addresses power and flood control benefits in both countries. The treaty has been in effect since 1964. Under the provisions of the existing treaty, if either country wishes to modify or cancel the treaty, it must notify the other country by the year 2014.

With 2014 approaching, the United States and Canadian treaty "entities" have already begun talks regarding a possible extension and modification of the treaty. The Columbia River Treaty review team has designated representatives from 15 Columbia River tribes, also known as the Sovereign Review Team, SRT. The Columbia Basin tribes have vital cultural and natural resources at stake since their homelands are located in the area affected by the treaty and, as sovereign units of government and members of the Sovereign Review Team, SRT—they have a right to play an important role in those negotiations. It is important to recognize the unique fishing rights for salmon that will have to be taken into account during any negotiations of this treaty with our neighbors to the north. The outcome of these negotiations could have a profound impact on the Northwestern United States.

I really appreciate one of the designated tribal representatives from Oregon, the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, for their continuous involvement. I also appreciate the other members of the Sovereign Review Team. The tribes and folks from the Pacific Northwest all share a common desire for proactive approaches in salmon restoration and recovery, and it is important to come together with shared strengths, joint efforts and coordinated education strategies.

Unfortunately, the Columbia River Treaty was enacted during a time in our history when consideration was not given to the treaty's effects on the natural and cultural resources of tribes/first nations whose homelands are located within the Columbia River Basin. Lack of previous dialogue and inclusion of tribal perspectives has disrupted regional and tribal interests by leading to the degradation of rivers, the salmon population, traditional food sources, natural resources, and tribal customs and identities.

The Columbia River Treaty Review provides an opportunity for the United States to include Columbia Basin tribes in the treaty review process. I want to emphasize the importance of tribal consultation and incorporation of traditional knowledge in this process—to ensure protection and conservation of the numerous natural resources that tribal people's way of life are dependent on.

The treaty review provides an opportunity to discuss and learn ways to strengthen both the government-to-government relationship that exists between the United States and the individual Indian nations as well as the U.S.'s position relative to Canada. This can lead the U.S. to advance its relationship with 15 additional sovereigns. I have enjoyed working with tribes on a number of important issues; I value our continued friendship and look forward to working together in the future. I am proud to support the 15 Columbia River Basin tribes in their efforts to stand alongside the United States in negotiations of the Columbia River Treaty and stand ready to assist in any way I can.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Pate, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 2:03 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 2219. An act making appropriations for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2012, and for other purposes.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bill was read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated: