



**SENATOR BLANCHE L. LINCOLN'S
END OF TERM REPORT 1999 - 2004**

As your U.S. Senator, I am proud to report to you on the status of my work for Arkansas during my first term in the U.S. Senate. Throughout my public service, I have dedicated myself to achieving common-sense solutions while building bipartisan consensus among my Senate colleagues. Arkansans expect results from their elected leaders and that is just what you will find throughout this report.

I developed critical farm legislation for Arkansas' farmers and producers, changed the 2001 tax cut to reflect Arkansas priorities, and brought needed federal dollars to communities throughout Arkansas. In addition, I fought to protect Arkansas businesses from unfair foreign competition, wrote legislation to create the Delta Regional Authority, and fought for fair treatment of our veterans, guardsmen, and reservists.

Along the way, I have been blessed with an experienced and capable staff in Arkansas and Washington dedicated to helping me represent Arkansas and achieving these results. As you review what we've already accomplished, it is my hope that you will not hesitate to contact me in the future as we work to build a better Arkansas for future generations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Blanche". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Blanche L. Lincoln

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CONSTITUENT SERVICE

Throughout her Senate career, Senator Blanche Lincoln has demonstrated a commitment to providing the best service to her constituents to help connect them to a federal government that is large and impersonal. Whether it is helping a veteran resolve a dispute with the Veteran's Administration (VA) or providing a tour of the U.S. Capitol for a family visiting Washington, DC, Senator Lincoln and her staff work tirelessly to help Arkansans secure government assistance and a variety of other services both in Washington and Arkansas.

To help better serve Arkansans, Senator Lincoln has located her main state office in Little Rock and has established a toll free 1-800 number to assist her constituents in contacting her. In addition, Lincoln became the first Arkansas Senator to open satellite offices in each congressional district throughout the state with offices currently in Jonesboro, Fort Smith, Texarkana. Her office in Monticello is temporarily closed for renovation. Lincoln has developed a Hispanic outreach program to attend to the needs of this growing population in Arkansas. She also employs a constituent service staff in Washington, DC to serve Arkansans visiting our nation's capital.

Making the federal government work for the people of Arkansas

Senator Lincoln believes that one of the most important services that she can provide to Arkansans is to give them easier access to their government. In her Little Rock office, she has established a staff of caseworkers who are well equipped to handle the various needs of Arkansans. Since 1999, her staff has directly helped more than 20,000 Arkansans resolve personal difficulties such as securing disability benefits from the Social Security Administration, transporting a deceased relative from overseas, or negotiating the maze of forms and paperwork to qualify for veterans health care benefits.

The following are some examples of cases that the Senator's has handled over the years:

- Immigration cases make up a large majority of Lincoln's caseload. Her staff deals with foreign embassies and consulates, local and central offices of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and the National Visa Center to aid her constituents. Lincoln has expedited visas for foreign doctors working in Arkansas to travel to international conferences or to visit their home country and worked to obtain visas for foreign citizens who wanted to visit relatives in the United States.
- Lincoln is also active in helping veterans. Her staff routinely corresponds with the national and regional office of the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA), Board of Veterans' Appeals, Court of Veterans' Appeals, VA hospitals, National Personnel Records Center, and Combat-Related Special Compensation on behalf of Arkansas veterans. These offices are often contacted about service connected disability, non-service connected disability, hospital

bills, pension appeals, military records, and burial issues. In addition, Lincoln has helped individual veterans from past conflicts obtain medals that they earned but never received.

- Lincoln has contacted the military on behalf of active duty Arkansans and their families. Recently, members of the National Guard and Reservists have been the primary focus of Lincoln and her staff because many Arkansas troops have been called into duty in Iraq and Afghanistan. Lincoln has assisted some soldiers in obtaining emergency leave to be with a sick relative. Lincoln has also helped the families of soldiers receive child support payments when a soldier is transferred to a different base and does not set up payments that should be paid to a spouse.
- Lincoln works persistently with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to provide farmers and producers with critical information that is provided by the Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and USDA Rural Development. Her staff has also helped many ag producers understand the impact of the 2002 new farm bill on their farm operations. Lincoln has intervened on behalf of constituents who experienced problems getting crop loan payments with FSA or are having crop insurance problems with the Risk Management Agency. The Senator has also assisted constituents with enrolling in NRCS conservation programs to improve their cash flow. Elderly and low income individuals have also received Lincoln's attention with their housing needs through USDA Rural Development programs.
- Senator Lincoln has assisted many hunters and outdoor enthusiasts who are seeking access to certain parts of land managed by the U.S. Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service. Individuals seeking to cut down timber on Forest Service land or having an event on Forest Service property have also been helped. In addition, Lincoln has helped facilitate land exchanges between the Forest Service or Fish and Wildlife Service and private land owners.
- Lincoln has served numerous constituents who have experienced problems with the Social Security Administration. Constituents who have experienced problems with disability benefits or confirmation of retirement benefits have been assisted by Lincoln and her staff. She has also obtained records from the Social Security Administration for the purpose of acquiring birth certificates. Lincoln has also worked on behalf of constituents who have had difficulties with Medicare Services and are unable to afford medical care and prescription drug coverage. Many of these individuals have been helped with payment for services and Lincoln has helped secure provider numbers for Medicare beneficiaries. Lincoln has also hosted Medicare forums throughout the state to educate constituents on the intricacies of the new Medicare prescription drug legislation.

Additional examples of casework assistance:

- Intervening with the Taxpayer Advocate Service of the IRS on behalf of constituents.

- Updating constituents on the status of cases before the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.
- Expediting the process of retirement applications for federal employees living in Arkansas with the Office of Personnel Management.
- Improving housing conditions for residents living in public housing managed by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).
- Searching for funding from the Small Business Administration and private organizations to help constituents start small businesses.
- Contacting the Department of Education to assist parents and students with federal aid for higher education.
- Helping constituents who have suffered from natural disasters with financial assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).
- Intervening with the U.S. Postal Service on behalf of Arkansans who have experienced difficulties with mail delivery or lost mail.
- Nominating qualified applicants to the U.S. Naval Academy, U.S. Military Academy at West Point, or the U.S. Air Force Academy.

Providing a connection throughout the state

Upon her election to the U.S. Senate, Senator Blanche Lincoln took the unusual step to hire a large field staff and open four field offices to provide assistance to local city and county entities throughout the entire state. Since 1999, Lincoln's field staff have visited each county in Arkansas an average of 10 times per year.

Lincoln's field staff attend city council meetings, quorum court meetings, and local chamber of commerce meetings in addition to other civic events. While Lincoln's staff has a very visible presence throughout the state, they do more than serve as an emissary for the Senator. Many of her field staff are active members of their community and serve on various committees and boards in their area. This integration allows both Senator Lincoln and local communities to benefit from her staff's presence and insight. Communities benefit because the field staff is able to relay important information directly to the Senator on behalf of citizens. Likewise, the Senator benefits through her regular contact with the field staff who assist local communities by employing a "hands on" approach.

As the grassroots representative for the Senator in local communities, the field staff often advises Senator Lincoln on important community initiatives or programs in the communities they cover. Their regular attendance at civic and community events makes them readily accessible to constituents and a wealth of knowledge for the Senator. Senator Lincoln refers to her field staff as “my eyes and ears while I’m away in Washington.”

The field offices also provide other valuable benefits to constituents. Instead of having to travel to Little Rock, constituents with casework issues can access the local office to call caseworkers, make copies of documents, and fax information to the state office. This is especially beneficial for elderly constituents who are often uncomfortable traveling to Little Rock and serves them in a way that was unavailable to them in the past.

Hispanic Outreach

During the last decade, Arkansas experienced one of the fastest Hispanic growth rates in the United States. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Arkansas’ Hispanic population grew by 337 percent from 1990-2000, and Hispanic immigrants were a major factor in our state’s net population gains during the last ten years. Many of the Hispanics immigrating into Arkansas are coming in search of a better life to work and raise their children and companies like Tyson and Wal-Mart, as well as opportunities in the agricultural sector, make Arkansas attractive to them.

The rapid growth of Hispanics in Arkansas prompted Senator Lincoln to look at ways to better address their needs. In the summer of 2002, Senator Lincoln commissioned a survey to assess the needs, demands, and impact of Hispanic newcomers in Arkansas. The results of the survey detailed potential problems for Hispanic immigrants in areas such as health and education. In addition, the survey noted that potential social tensions could arise due to the lack of language skills of these new residents and their unique social customs. However, Senator Lincoln also noted that there are many benefits that Hispanics bring to Arkansas, such as the same set of values that Arkansans hold in high regard, a tremendous work ethic and strong family ties.

Senator Lincoln committed in the Fall of 2002 to offer a full range of services to the Hispanic community. On February 24th, Senator Lincoln was one of three Members of Congress to receive the National Council of La Raza’s 2004 Capital Award for her contributions to the Hispanic community. The selection was based on three criteria: legislative record, constituent service, and institutional support.

In Arkansas, Lincoln has reached out to the community with the purpose of gaining trust, mitigating tensions between groups, and developing leadership. In the future, Senator Lincoln plans to help Hispanic businesses integrate into the mainstream, strengthen non-profits who work with the Hispanic Community, and partner with agencies like the state Attorney General’s office to conduct consumer fraud seminars for Hispanics.

Senator Lincoln has welcomed an immigration caseload increase of 20 percent since she has been working with Hispanics in Arkansas. She has worked with national organizations like La Raza and LULAC to develop grass roots organization at the local level, and two organizations in Arkansas have partnered with La Raza and LULAC to develop nine local chapters throughout the state.

She has worked closely with religious organizations in the state like the Catholic Church, the Methodist Church, the Baptist Church and other denominations who reach out to the Hispanic community. They have found Senator Lincoln's office to be a valuable resource for information, contacts, and guidance to reach this new segment of Arkansas' population.

Senator Lincoln is also concerned about the high rate of dropouts among Hispanic students. It is not unusual in poor Hispanic households for children to drop out of school to help support the family by working full time or part time jobs. Gender often plays a role in the dropout rate, and while 60 percent of dropouts are male, many females often become pregnant and dropout to care for their children. To address this problem, Senator Lincoln has worked to coordinate teen pregnancy awareness programs directed at Hispanic youth.

Language barriers also contribute to problems for Hispanic students. Lack of English fluency and a high rate of mobility often contribute to the high drop out rates of Hispanic students. Senator Lincoln has sought to rectify this problem by supporting ESL Academies and her staff has participated in graduation ceremonies of some 300 ESL teachers from all over Arkansas and worked closely with Andre Guererro who directs ESL efforts in Arkansas. In addition, Senator Lincoln is in frequent communication with migrant education centers in Hope, Little Rock, Jonesboro, Fort Smith, and Dardanelle to participate in events like migrant workers leadership workshops for teenagers. She has also worked to secure federal funds to continue these important programs that educate the children of workers who have contributed to the growth of Arkansas.

Making Washington feel like home

When Arkansans visit Washington, DC, Senator Lincoln wants her constituents to feel like her office is a home away from home. Senator Lincoln makes every effort to accommodate every Arkansan who would like to discuss legislative or funding issues when they visit Washington during the legislative sessions. When Senator Lincoln is not available, Lincoln's legislative and projects staff is available to meet with interested constituents.

Arkansans are also encouraged to take advantage of services provided by Lincoln's Washington office. Lincoln's constituent service staff assists numerous constituents with tours of the U.S. Capitol, White House, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Supreme Court, and Bureau of Printing and Engraving. Her staff is also happy to help constituents with their purchase of a United States flag and have it flown over the U.S. Capitol to commemorate special occasions

such as birthdays or retirement. Lincoln also helps obtain copies of legislation or other federal documents available from the Government Printing Office.

Providing opportunities for Arkansas' youth

Lincoln also offers the opportunity for many Arkansas college students to work in her Washington and Arkansas offices as interns. To be eligible, applicants must have completed at least their sophomore year of college and preference is given to Arkansas residents in the selection process. Interested students should contact the Little Rock office at (501) 375-2993 to obtain applications. For the summer intern program, applications are accepted through the end of February and decisions are made shortly thereafter.

ARKANSAS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Senator Lincoln believes that federal investment in Arkansas communities and infrastructure is key to the state's future. Throughout her first term, Senator Lincoln has worked with her constituents to secure vital federal funding for the state. She took the unusual step of creating a five-person special projects team based in her Arkansas and Washington, DC, offices to ensure constituents have prompt assistance with grant and appropriation requests. By working with fellow Arkansans and utilizing every possible resource, Lincoln's efforts have resulted in economic benefits that are improving the quality of life in Arkansas.

Lincoln has helped secure funding for Arkansas communities and organizations from state, federal and private funding sources. In addition, she has connected constituents with non-governmental organizations that provide technical assistance in the development of grant applications.

Senator Lincoln has also secured funding for important Arkansas projects through the annual Congressional appropriations process. These projects include everything from economic development initiatives to agricultural research to improvements at defense installations.

Community and Economic Development

Since 2002, Lincoln secured \$2.36 million for the restoration and reconstruction of 50 facilities in the Camp Ouachita National Historic District. Camp Ouachita was built on National Forest Service land in the 1930's by the Civilian Conservation Corps/Works Project Administration in Perry County and was used as a Girl Scout Camp until the early 1970's. The site is one of the few remaining clustered examples of CCC/WPA architecture in the country. Once it is fully restored, Camp Ouachita will serve as a multi-purpose center for economic development and community gatherings.

In Pocahontas, Lincoln saw another opportunity to stimulate the local economy. She supported a community driven project to raise more than \$800,000 through private grants, in-kind donations, and state funds to construct a new \$1.4 million building for the community's Studio for the Arts. This 16-years-old arts organization is popular not only in Randolph County but throughout Arkansas and neighboring states. The new building will house a larger dinner theater auditorium, catering and restaurant facilities, upgraded educational studios, a gift shop, and a state of the art theatrical facility. Among the activities that will be featured at the new facility are Elderhostels, group tours, summer youth camps and conferences. The Studio for the Arts also has a children's touring company that is sponsored by the Arkansas Literacy Council and the Arkansas Head Start Association. In addition to child-specific activities, the studio currently serves more than 7,500 people a year through the Imperial Dinner Theater performances. Since 2002, Lincoln has won \$550,000 in federal funds to assist in the completion of the new theater.

Like Pochontas, Eureka Springs has featured its cultural assets to foster growth locally. The city has worked diligently to restore the Eureka Springs Historical Auditorium, which was originally opened by John Phillip Sousa. This auditorium is on the National Register of Historic Places and is situated in the downtown, commercial district of Eureka Springs. Surrounded by more than 100 restored Victorian shops, historic bed and breakfast inns, museums, and hotels, the 986-seat auditorium signifies the town's importance as a national cultural, architectural, and historic treasure. In Fiscal Year 2003, Lincoln secured \$250,000 for the restoration and increased utilization of Arkansas' oldest operating auditorium.

Lincoln has also supported existing small businesses in their growth efforts. One such example is the Cherry Street Historic District in Helena. Cherry Street is a registered Historic District with the Department of the Interior and contains some of the most significant buildings, both architecturally and historically, in Arkansas. Many of the buildings in the district are vacant. Others are home to businesses owned and operated by women and minorities that are barely surviving. To further complicate the problem, local economic conditions are such that the cost of replacing and maintaining the roofs of the historic Cherry Street buildings are often more expensive than the current value of the building. Realizing that the loss of these buildings would only complicate future economic development in Helena, the Senator won \$500,000 in Fiscal Year 2004 to repair or replace the roofs for the historic buildings in the district.

Transportation Infrastructure

Improving roadways, bridges, and airport facilities is critical to Arkansas' ability to attract new industries and grow existing ones. That is why Lincoln aggressively pursues millions of dollars for Arkansas projects each year. In the recently completed Fiscal Year 2004 appropriations cycle, she worked with her colleagues to secure more than \$31 million for highway expansion and airport improvements.

Lincoln has worked diligently each year to secure funding for Interstate 69, Interstate 49, and U.S. Highway 412 during her first term. The economic benefits of completing each of these projects has been clear for some time. For example, when I-69 is completed, it will span 9 states, linking Canada and Mexico, and it is estimated that this Interstate will account for 63 percent of the nation's trade with Canada and Mexico. Further, improving these roadways will enhance safety for those traveling in Arkansas. During her first term, the Senator has worked to secure more than \$22 million for different sections of Highway 412, \$13 million for various sections of I-69, and almost \$12 million for sections of I-49.

The Senator has also focused on local improvements that are so critical for growth and safety. One example is Rogers, a vibrant community that is challenged because population growth is outpacing infrastructure development. It is the sixth fastest growing Metropolitan Statistical Area in the United States and has the second fastest growing job market in the U.S. This type of growth can bring a higher quality of life to Northwest Arkansas, but only if the infrastructure

keeps pace. In recent years, the city has come to the Senator seeking help with the construction of an exchange at Perry Road and I-540. The newly constructed Rogers High School at Dixieland and Perry Road, once on the outskirts of town, is now at the heart of growing residential and commercial developments. Due to the efforts of Lincoln and others in the Arkansas Congressional Delegation, \$4.6 million has been secured in the past two years for the exchange which will connect Perry Road with I-540, thus improving safety and traffic congestion.

Jonesboro is another fast-growing city that has sought help in alleviating traffic problems. In recent years, Lincoln has secured \$3.5 million to assist Jonesboro with the Caraway Road Overpass project. Caraway Road is one of the three major north-south thoroughfares in Jonesboro and serves as the primary entrance point into the Arkansas State University campus. Three medium use rail lines lie west of the southern entrance into campus and the up to 50 daily freight trains use the tracks daily. In addition, approximately 20,000 vehicles move through the intersection each day. Rail traffic slows the orderly flow of vehicle traffic on Caraway Road, hindering area commerce and raising serious safety concerns for pedestrians and motorists. Once completed, the project will improve vehicular traffic flow in and around the campus and eliminate unscheduled traffic delays.

Senator Lincoln has also helped to win funding for facility upgrades at Arkansas airports. One of the most critical needs for many airports has been the addition of an Instrument Landing System (ILS). These systems improve visibility and enhance safety for landings during unfavorable weather conditions. During recent years, the Senator secured more than \$5.5 million for systems at the airports in North Little Rock, Baxter County, Mena, and Stuttgart.

Defense Installations and Homeland Security

Arkansas plays a unique role in meeting America's national security needs as evidenced by federal investment in installations such as the Little Rock Air Force Base and the Pine Bluff Arsenal. Lincoln has aggressively pursued funding for Arkansas' military installations to enhance the ability of our military personnel to carry out their respective missions.

Working with other members of the Arkansas Congressional Delegation, the Senator secured \$1.35 billion in defense spending in the recently completed Fiscal Year 2004 appropriations cycle. This funding included \$24.3 million for facility upgrades and new equipment at the Pine Bluff Arsenal's White Phosphorous Facility currently housed in World War II era structures. Pine Bluff Arsenal possesses the only white phosphorus ammunition production capability for all U.S. Armed forces.

In addition to the White Phosphorous Facility, the Pine Bluff Arsenal is also home to the Clara Barton Center for Domestic Preparedness. The Clara Barton Center serves as the nation's only facility dedicated to preparing American Red Cross volunteers to safely carry out their mission

during a Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) incident. Since its opening in 2001, the Clara Barton Center has trained more than 750 American Red Cross personnel in delivering key support, such as feeding and sheltering the population in the aftermath of a catastrophic chemical, biological, radiological or high yield explosive attack. In 2003, Lincoln secured \$3 million for the Clara Barton Center to continue this vital mission and will continue to place a high priority on the work at the Clara Barton Center.

As America's premier C-130 training base, the Little Rock Air Force Base (LRAFB) has also been a priority for Lincoln. In Fiscal Year 2003, She worked to secure \$25.6 million for projects at the Air Force Base. These projects included: \$8.1 million for a maintenance training facility; \$2.1 million for an engine storage facility; \$12.9 million for a two-bay C-130J flight hangar; and \$2.5 million for a C-130J fuselage training facility. These projects were all necessary for the base to carry on its mission of being the nation's top C-130J schoolhouse. The Fiscal Year 2004 Defense Appropriations Bill also included an earmark for \$6 million in new funding for intelligence communications equipment to be used by the 123rd Intelligence Squadron at LRAFB. The equipment provides new age imagery capability to unmanned reconnaissance aerial vehicles such as the Predator, Global Hawk and the U-2.

Lincoln has also supported projects for Arkansas's National Guard Units. In Fiscal Year 2003, she helped win \$6 million for the construction of an 18,000 square foot operations and training center for the 188th Fighter Wing of the Arkansas Air National Guard stationed in Fort Smith, which is one of the nation's most experienced F-16 units. The center will house the wing air commander and his staff, the support group commander and his staff, the base finance office, the base personnel office, the public affairs staff, the office of the judge advocate and the recruiting office.

She also helped secure \$3.61 million for a National Guard Armory in Warren during the recently completed Fiscal Year 2004 appropriations cycle. The current facility, constructed in 1958, is the home for the 3rd Battalion 153 Infantry and supports a large number of staff sections that plan and coordinate all training for the subordinate units. The present armory lacks classroom areas, cooking facilities, adequate office space for personnel, adequate supply room and vault, air conditioning, freight dock, fuel facility and adequate parking spaces. The National Guard has an operational budget of more than \$2 million for Bradley County, which results in a significant economic impact on the area. To show the community's commitment to the National Guard and a new armory, the City of Warren donated a 27 acre site in the Warren Industrial Park.

Youth Programs

One of the Senator's highest priorities during her first term has been to ensure that youth organizations possess the funding needed to provide quality mentoring and tutoring programs. In 2003, Lincoln won funding for both the Arkansas YMCAs and the Arkansas Alliance of Boys and Girls Clubs.

Lincoln obtained \$450,000 for the YMCAs to develop new programs while also improving existing ones. This funding provided training for staff and volunteers in the area of Youth and Teen programs, with special emphasis being placed on prevention, mentoring and tutoring, arts and humanities, and family. Children served by YMCAs in Blytheville, Hot Springs, Jonesboro, Pine Bluff, Warren, North Little Rock, and Little Rock benefitted as a result of this grant.

Lincoln also lobbied her colleagues on the Senate Appropriations Committee to provide \$900,000 to support the Arkansas Boys and Girls Clubs, which serve 57,000 young Arkansans. Many of these youths come from court system referrals. In previous years, the State of Arkansas had appropriated a small amount to defer the additional costs of youths who were referred by the law enforcement community. Unfortunately, those funds were severely cut due to state budget shortfalls. Knowing that the Boys and Girls Clubs across the state would be forced to stretch program funds to cover these additional children, Lincoln secured the funding to aid in the clubs' efforts to expand after-school programs, drug and violence prevention activities and mentoring of at-risk children.

Another organization that has received the Senator's support is the Florence Crittenden Home (FCH) in Little Rock. FCH is the only residential home for pregnant teenagers in the state. In 2001, FCH treated approximately 120 teenage girls who average 13 years of age. The organization offers comprehensive services for at-risk female teens, single parent teens, and their infants and families. FCH provides schooling in both junior and senior high school subjects, job training skills, counseling and pregnancy prevention, prenatal and postnatal care, and nutritional and parenting classes. There are 32 full-time staff members and a resident RN on duty 24 hours a day. In Fiscal Year 2003, Lincoln secured \$270,000 that enabled the Florence Crittendon Home to expand services, educational programs, and an emergency shelter.

Lincoln has also been supportive of community-based efforts to address substance abuse issues faced by Arkansas youth. One example is her work with the Yell County Juvenile Detention Center in 2003. The center can accept juvenile offenders sentenced by Juvenile Judges from anywhere in the state. However, the majority of the population is from a rural 10 county area in north-central Arkansas.

In 2002, the center held approximately 650 inmates, ranging in age from 11 to 17 years. More than 80 percent of the juveniles entering the Yell County facility suffered from substance or violence abuse. Upon learning that the center lacked the funding to offer any drug or alcohol detoxification, counseling or rehabilitation, the Senator obtained a \$200,000 earmark for the center to provide a drug rehabilitation program that would reduce the numbers of repeat offenders while providing a chance for a productive life for many juvenile offenders.

Criminal Justice

Lincoln was an early champion of efforts by the Arkansas Crime Information Center and the Arkansas Sheriff's Association to launch an innovative jail booking system to improve the communications technology for Arkansas' law enforcement agencies. Since 2001, Lincoln has secured more than \$1.5 million for the Arkansas JusticeXchange Project. Federal assistance during Fiscal Year 2001 enabled 38 Arkansas county jails that had previously been unable to afford automated booking systems to receive the software to install the JusticeXchange system. A second round of funding linked the state's entire network of 75 county jails into a single, uniform booking system. Linking these jails helped prevent the inadvertent release of an offender who was wanted in another jurisdiction. JusticeXchange also provides notice of any existing records in the state or national databases and alerts jailers if the offender has an active warrant, an order of protection, or is a registered sex offender. The final phase of the project will enhance criminal history information, provide a connection that allows users to access JusticeXchange through the Arkansas Crime Information Center network without using the Internet, expand existing interfaces to collect more specific jail data, and integrate court data.

Lincoln also won \$1.4 million for the Criminal Justice Institute in Little Rock to conduct the Internet Project, which provides free Internet and e-mail service to more than 1,200 rural law enforcement agencies and tribal agencies in 48 states. Service is provided to these agencies at no cost for a period of three years, or indefinitely in areas where an Internet service provider is not available. The Internet Project also provides other benefits to the rural law enforcement community. Rural agencies that are on-line through the program are now able to access on-line continuing education classes and submit timely information such as uniform crime reports more efficiently through electronic means. They also receive technical assistance through a toll-free help desk, free web site hosting, access to informational resources and publications, hands-on assistance in applying for Justice Department grants that require on-line processing, and membership in *CopShare*, an e-mail list serve that successfully promotes the sharing of information between law enforcement agencies nationwide.

Providing law enforcement agencies with the necessary tools to fight substance abuse has been another Lincoln priority. Arkansas has been especially hard hit by the illegal production of methamphetamine. In 1999, 554 illicit labs were found in Arkansas, representing approximately 10% of all lab seizures in the U.S. During 2001, approximately 1,000 labs were seized. Lincoln has supported efforts to provide more than \$3 million to the Arkansas State Police since 2001 to combat this problem. Further, because approximately 90 percent of all law enforcement agencies in Arkansas are rural, Lincoln has also worked to provide proper training to these law enforcement personnel. She secured \$150,000 in Fiscal Year 2003 to aid the Criminal Justice Institute's training program, which includes a 32-hour course for rural law enforcement officers in Arkansas that teaches proper investigative techniques to ensure the successful prosecution of methamphetamine manufacturers.

Health Care

Lincoln is determined to ensure that all Arkansans have access to quality health care. One of the ways she has tried to make this a reality is to provide local health care centers with the resources to improve their facilities. In 2003, the Senator secured \$500,000 to assist the White River Medical Center in Batesville to build a new Women's Center. Arkansas has a comparatively high infant mortality rate, high teen pregnancy rate and a lack of prenatal care. The planned Women's Center will provide educational, diagnostic and therapeutic programs that specifically target these public health issues.

While working to ensure that Arkansas's senior citizens have a high quality of care, Senator Lincoln has also worked with organizations such as the Dermott City Community Nursing Home. Providing adequate therapy space is vital to this city-operated, 70-bed facility. Unfortunately, in 2002, the Dermott City Nursing Home faced limited bed space, inadequate equipment, and was unable to offer satisfactory services such as physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy to their residents. Lincoln was able to secure \$180,000 to help with the expansion of the facility.

Finally, Lincoln has also worked to alleviate the shortage of nurses in Arkansas. In 2003, she secured \$1.1 million for Arkansas State University-Mountain Home to build an Allied Health Building. ASU-Mountain Home's nursing program is among the most popular at this growing university, but sadly, ASU-Mountain Home is not in a position to accept more nursing students because of limited clinical and classroom facilities. However, with the funding Lincoln was able to provide in Fiscal Year 2003, the university will soon move forward with plans for a new facility that will serve more students.

Agricultural Research

During her first term, Senator Lincoln supported funding increases each year for the Arkansas Children's Nutrition Center. As part of the Arkansas Children's Hospital Research Institute, the center is one of six Human Nutrition Centers in the nation that are supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service. The Arkansas center conducts research on diet and dietary factors that optimize the nutrition and health of children from conception through adolescence and maximize their health as adults. The center has achieved some promising research breakthroughs that may help prevent breast cancer and colon cancer. The current research funding level for the center is \$5.8 million. In the recently completed Fiscal Year 2004 Agriculture Appropriations Bill, Lincoln secured an additional \$225,000 for the center. The Senator plans to continue her efforts to provide a funding level that compares more favorably to the nation's other Human Nutrition Centers.

Lincoln has also supported research to respond to water quality and quantity demands facing urban, industrial and agricultural economies. In Fiscal Year 2003, she helped obtain \$450,000

that would assist the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture in developing bio-environmental engineering solutions to provide state of the art watershed management tools. In addition, the funds would significantly reduce the non-point source (NPS) pollution of the surface and ground waters and provide adequate water to meet urban and agricultural needs. The problems addressed in this project will also be beneficial to other southern states which experience similar water quality and quantity problems.

FARM POLICY

As the daughter of a seventh generation Arkansas farm family, Senator Blanche Lincoln knows firsthand the problems and challenges facing Arkansas farmers and rural America. Arkansas is dependent on a healthy farm economy, and as a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, Senator Lincoln has worked tirelessly with her colleagues to revamp the failed policy of the 1996 Freedom to Farm Act and create a reliable safety net for farmers so that they can plan effectively for the future.

Fighting for the family farmer

In 1996, the famed farm reporter Orion Samuelson said we would never see \$2 corn again. With corn prices hitting \$5 and nearly every other commodity faring well, many farm economists believed that another golden age of agriculture was upon us. It was in this atmosphere that the 1996 Farm Bill, known as Freedom to Farm, was signed into law over the opposition of then U.S. Representative Blanche L. Lincoln.

Samuelson turned out to be right two years later, but not in the way he expected. Corn prices and the price of other commodities plunged, many to record lows, and stayed there for the next five years. As Lincoln had predicted, the 1996 Farm Bill, devoid of an adequate safety net for producers, could not address the crisis facing our nation's farm families. Upon entering the U.S. Senate, Lincoln resolved to work with Arkansas farmers and like-minded members of Congress on both sides of the aisle to find a solution to the many problems that farmers encountered.

Prior to passage of the 2002 farm bill, Lincoln fought for farmers during times of crisis and successfully secured an unprecedented level of ad hoc, emergency assistance (some \$31 billion from 1999 to 2002) to help Arkansas farm families survive the whipsaw of record low prices and severe crop losses. Lincoln also worked to enhance access to better crop insurance coverage under the Federal Crop Insurance Program, supporting the most sweeping improvements in the program's 62 year history.

Formulation of the 2002 Farm Bill began in earnest in 2001 when the House of Representatives held hearings to identify the shortcomings of the 1996 Farm Bill. Lincoln became one of the few voices calling for similar action in the Senate and chose people over politics when she introduced a bipartisan Farm Bill in the Senate. The legislation sponsored by Lincoln in the Senate would eventually serve as the framework for what would become the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 – or the 2002 Farm Bill.

Unfortunately, the 2002 Farm Bill pitted north-central and midwestern plains farmers against southern producers. Lincoln successfully fended off efforts by many in the Senate to place unreasonable limits on payments to southern farmers, whose year-around, capital intensive operations are typically more costly than small, single crop farms in the midwest.

The new law which Congress passed in 2002 included a number of provisions critical to Arkansas farmers and rural communities, including the following:

- **Higher Payment Limitations:** Support payments to farmers are capped at \$360,000, a significantly higher level than what was in the original Senate bill, which Lincoln had opposed. Southern farmers, whose crops are far more costly than those produced in other regions, have benefitted from the higher level of support.
- **Conservation:** The new farm program includes a record \$39 billion investment in a variety of measures that will strengthen conservation programs. Among these measures are an increase in the acreage caps of the Wetlands Reserve Program and the Conservation Reserve Program, both of which are important to Arkansas.
- **Nutrition:** A \$6.4 billion nutrition title also has enhanced the Food Stamp program; increased funding for the Emergency Food Assistance Program to \$140 million per year; provided additional commodities in the school lunch program; and increased funding for the Senior and Women, Infants, and Children nutrition programs.
- **Rural Development:** The \$1.03 billion rural development title promotes broadband service and local television access in rural areas; develops small businesses and local economies; funds rural firefighters and emergency personnel; and expedites applications for water and wastewater programs.
- **Energy:** The \$450 million energy title will promote biodiesel fuel use along with investment in renewable energy systems and improvements in energy efficiency.

Since the passage of the 2002 Farm bill, Senator Blanche Lincoln has continued to defend certain provisions of the new law. Despite recommended cuts of \$19 billion by House Appropriators and intense media pressure to ratchet down payment limitations on southern farmers, Senator Lincoln successfully led bipartisan efforts in the U.S. Senate to dodge both bullets. She helped avert both cuts to the 2002 Farm Bill and harmful payment limitations in the budget and appropriations process.

Senator Blanche Lincoln has not forgotten her farming roots and will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with Arkansas farm families in the coming years.

Promoting healthy forests

As the ranking member of the Senate Agriculture Committee's Subcommittee on Forestry, Senator Blanche Lincoln has worked across party lines to promote bipartisan legislation that will ensure that problems affecting Arkansas's forests can be addressed.

Perhaps the greatest concern about the health of Arkansas's forest is the epidemic of oak decline and mortality in the Ozark highlands. Oak decline is a natural occurrence in older forests or in areas where trees are stressed by conditions such as old age, over population of the forest, poor soil conditions, and the effects of several years of severe drought. Under normal conditions, oak decline is not necessarily fatal to the tree.

Unfortunately, these conditions have allowed insects such as the red oak borer to flourish throughout some Arkansas forests and threatened the health of many trees. Many estimates suggest that up to one million acres of red oaks have been affected in the Ozark highlands. First discovered in the late 1990's, this epidemic has demonstrated an ability to overwhelm and devastate. Concerned that this epidemic could lead to a complete loss of red oak from the Ozark highlands and cause long-term changes to the health of the forest ecosystem, Sen. Lincoln made this problem a top priority.

Time and again, she impressed upon her colleagues the need to provide the Forest Service with the tools necessary to immediately address the epidemic of oak decline and mortality. Ultimately, Sen. Lincoln's perseverance paid off as she effectively inserted provisions to address this problem which became law.

TAX RELIEF & SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Even before she ascended to the powerful Senate Finance Committee in 2001, Senator Blanche Lincoln, played a unique and pivotal role in formation of tax policy. Arkansas has a unique economy that relies heavily on small business, agriculture, and entrepreneurship, and having been raised on a farm in east Arkansas, Lincoln understands the unique challenges of running a small business in a rural state. That is why she works hard to change the focus in Washington to Main Street, not just Wall Street.

Not only is Arkansas' economy unique, so are its taxpayers. Because of the low average income in the state, Arkansans are also generally less affected by progressive federal taxes. Conversely, Arkansans are disproportionately impacted by lesser known and less understood taxes such as the regressive payroll tax and various excise taxes. Through many tax policy debates in the Senate, she has earned a reputation as someone who fights for her constituents.

The Senate's voice for working families

When President Bush proposed his first tax cut to Congress in 2001, the federal government was operating at a surplus of more than \$5 trillion, and Lincoln agreed it was time to reward taxpayers who had helped balance the budget. However, she was prepared to fight for the interests of Arkansans. She argued that President Bush's \$1.6 trillion proposed tax cut was too costly and the benefits were tilted to favor wealthier states such as California, Connecticut, and New York. She worked to reduce the size of the tax cut package to \$1.2 trillion to preserve most of the budget surpluses to protect Social Security. Lincoln then offered an alternative to the President's tax cut package with a message to her colleagues that she could support tax cuts, but only if her state and her constituents were treated fairly.

Senator Lincoln's alternative proposal, dubbed "the Arkansas Plan," sparked bipartisan negotiations on the 2001 tax bill and provided the Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee a framework for drafting a bill which would ultimately pass the Senate with 12 Democratic votes. Lincoln embraced the President's proposal to double the child tax credit from \$500 to \$1,000, but demanded that the credit be made refundable for the first time so those taxpayers who earn too little to pay federal income taxes, yet are working and paying payroll taxes, could also receive a tax cut. More than 140,000 Arkansas families, 37% of families with children, would not have received the child tax credit had Lincoln not stepped in on their behalf. Senator Lincoln also insisted that tax relief for lower income taxpayers who are paying the income tax should be accelerated more quickly than tax cuts for higher income individuals.

Lincoln took a stand in the Arkansas plan for Alternative Minimum Tax relief retirement savings and marriage penalty relief, as well as estate tax relief for family business, and made her support of the tax bill contingent upon these demands. Lincoln's pivotal position as a swing vote enabled

her to force Senate, House, and White House negotiators to take her priorities seriously. Ultimately all of her demands were accepted, and her steadfastness helped turn a bill that was bad for Arkansas into a law which provided real tax relief to almost every working Arkansan.

In 2003, President Bush proposed another round of tax cuts that were bad for Arkansas. During consideration of his 2003 tax cut proposal, Senator Lincoln fought to accelerate the refundable portion of the child credit that she helped enact in 2001 so that all working families could benefit. Under the President's proposal, families earning between \$10,000 and \$27,000 were not eligible for the child credit expansion. Not only did this leave 76,000 Arkansas families and their 132,000 children without access to the child credit, six and a half million families across the country representing 12 million children were left behind. Senator Lincoln's amendment was designed to correct this inequity without adding to the government's growing deficit. The \$3.5 billion cost of the amendment was offset by closing several tax loopholes identified through investigations of the business practices of Enron.

Unfortunately, her provision was dropped by House and Senate negotiators, and the bill was sent to President Bush without her provision. Senator Lincoln promptly introduced her amendment as a stand-alone bill and gathered 52 bipartisan cosponsors in the Senate. As pressure began to build to adopt the Lincoln bill, Finance Committee Chairman Charles Grassley negotiated a compromise bill with Lincoln. The compromise included Lincoln's refundable provision as well as another Lincoln provision calling for the uniform definition of a child, the Senate's version of the Military Tax Fairness Act and a reduction in the marriage penalty associated with the child credit. The Grassley/Lincoln Bill then passed the Senate by a vote of 94-2.

Unfortunately, the leadership of the House of Representatives used the Lincoln bill as another opportunity to create even more tax breaks for the wealthy. The House voted along party lines for an \$82 billion version of the child tax credit that was loaded with giveaways for wealthy families and business interests. These maneuvers have stalled the child tax credit for low income working families, which twice passed the Senate, and despite Senator Lincoln's best efforts, many working Arkansas families did not receive a \$400 check per child last summer.

The Senate voice for southern small business

Senator Lincoln understands that small business is the engine of the Arkansas economy. She works hard to make sure that government taxation does not put small and rural businesses in a competitive disadvantage to national firms and large corporations. Lincoln's dedication to tax fairness for family-owned business led her to introduce legislation with Senator Hatch (R-Utah) to bring tax fairness to so called "S-corporations." S corps are closely held businesses which often compete not only with larger publicly traded corporations, but also with Limited Liability Companies (LLCs). S-corporations struggle to compete against the advantage that C-corporations have in raising capital. They also must meet archaic rules and regulations in order to receive the same tax benefits that LLCs enjoy. S-corporations employ thousands of Arkansans

and Lincoln continues to work with her Finance Committee colleagues to provide equity in the tax code for S-corporations.

Knowing that closely held businesses are the backbone of the Arkansas economy, Lincoln has emerged as a leader on the issue of estate tax repeal. The federal estate tax is a complex area of law and often the economic realities of the tax are misunderstood and poorly characterized by politicians and media outlets. Lincoln has consistently supported repeal of the estate tax because she is concerned that family-owned businesses are at a competitive disadvantage to publicly traded businesses with whom they compete. For example, a family owned bank in a farming community in Arkansas would likely be forced to take hundreds of thousands of dollars a year out of the bank's revenues in order to purchase life insurance policies on the owner of the bank. This insurance will then be used to pay the federal government when the assets of the bank are included in the estate of the owner and the estate tax is assessed against his estate. If the bank had not spent this money on insurance policies, the assets of the bank would have to be sold in order to pay the tax upon the owner's death. This drain of resources puts the local bank at a competitive disadvantage to the national conglomerate banks which are publicly traded and have no reason to worry about the death of any of its executives. Anyone who has watched the decline of the family owned newspaper can see the dangerous effect that the federal estate tax has on these important institutions as national chains have gobbled them up one by one.

Lincoln has supported repeal of the estate tax and worked to put repeal in place in the 2001 tax bill. However, as budget deficits have exploded in recent years, the likelihood and propriety of full repeal have become questionable. In fact, several leaders in Congress have ruled out full repeal. This is why Senator Lincoln has introduced S. 34, the Estate Tax Repeal Acceleration (ExTRA) for Family-Owned Businesses and Farms Act.

The goal of the Lincoln ExTRA bill is that *no family-owned farm or business will ever pay the estate tax* regardless of size, value, or acreage. Upon the death of the owner, the executor of the estate would simply set those assets aside and pass them on to the heirs completely intact. Unlike other assets involved in an estate, the value of the business assets would not be updated, but would be valued as though the original owner still owned them. This would provide a disincentive for the heirs to liquidate the business because a capital gains tax would be imposed upon such a sale. No estate tax would be assessed and no expensive planning or insurance would be required. The family, however, would have the flexibility to manage their business as they see fit, without government oversight. Nonbusiness assets owned by the decedent would still be subject to the estate tax if they exceeded the exemption amount (\$7 million per couple by 2009).

Senator Lincoln has also been a leader on other important small business initiatives. She is the lead sponsor of the Reforestation Tax Act to help small forestry operations, like those we have in Arkansas, receive preferential tax treatment for their efficient management and harvesting of the forests. In addition, she has fought to accelerate and expand expensing provisions for small business investments which have helped spur small business growth and protect rural jobs. Lincoln has also focused on spanning the divide between the high tech community and rural

small business by sponsoring legislation to help bring high speed internet into rural areas which would otherwise be neglected

The Senate's voice for common sense solutions: Fixing the looming Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT) problem

A little known tax crisis is looming on the horizon. It is encroachment of the Alternative Minimum Tax upon middle income taxpayers. Facing public outrage in 1969 over the ability of some wealthy individuals to totally avoid income taxes, Congress, enacted the individual alternative minimum tax (AMT). For individuals who pay no income tax by taking advantage of preferences and incentives in the tax code, the AMT is calculated by adding back the various tax preference items to the taxpayer's taxable income under his regular income tax. This amount becomes an individual's tax base for the AMT, and it is then compared to his ordinary income tax liability. A two-tiered tax rate structure of 26% and 28% is then assessed against the taxpayer, and the individual pays whichever is higher, the AMT tax liability or his regular income tax liability.

Unfortunately, Congress did not index the threshold amount to inflation and what was once a lofty income level is now a middle class salary. It is estimated that if no changes are made to the AMT, then the number of taxpayers subject to the AMT will increase from approximately 1.8 million in 2001 to over 35 million by 2010. For this reason, Senator Lincoln has introduced legislation to reform the AMT. Through her efforts, a provision was added to the recently passed tax cut bill which prevents Congress from further exacerbating the AMT problems.

Although Lincoln will continue to be a steady voice for AMT reform, many problems still loom. In fact, if the provisions of the 2001 tax bill are made permanent, an estimated 41 million middle income taxpayers will be subject to the AMT by 2012. Moreover, fixing the problem will be expensive. It is estimated that repealing the individual AMT could cost \$640 to \$840 billion over the 2003-2012 period. Indexation of the AMT would cost around \$400 billion over the same period.

Easing government access for small business

Lincoln has also fought to relieve the burden on small businesses by reducing the amount of paperwork needed to comply with certain government regulations. Her legislation was passed by Congress and was signed by President Bush in 2002. Her bill allows small business owners to be one step closer to freedom from excessive government red tape.

Specifically, the Small Business Paperwork Review Act addresses the regulatory problems faced by small business owners. In an effort to simplify and streamline communications, the legislation requires all federal departments to have a single point of contact for small businesses

to ask paperwork questions. The bill will also require the Office of Management and Budget to publish annually all information gathering requirements for small businesses so they know exactly what is expected of them, and eventually this information will be made available on the internet.

Lincoln's legislation also set up a task force comprised of small business representatives and government agency representatives to explore the development of a website that would allow small businesses to comply with government regulations online. The website would save small business owners undue steps by directing them to the proper agency.

FAIR & FREE TRADE

Throughout her Senate career, Senator Blanche Lincoln has consistently worked to reduce trade barriers while ensuring that trade is fair. As a member of the powerful Senate Finance Committee, with jurisdiction over all trade agreements, Senator Lincoln is uniquely positioned to ensure that agreements entered into by the United States are not only good for America – but good for Arkansas as well.

Arkansas farmers produce one of the safest and most abundant food supplies in the world. Products such as soybeans, cotton, and rice are produced in great abundance, and the health of many large and small farming communities throughout Arkansas depends on having access to world markets. That is why Senator Lincoln has been an advocate for opening trade to traditionally closed economies such as Cuba and China which will readily consume Arkansas commodities. Lincoln has also joined with Arkansas farm families and business leaders to support passage of Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) to allow the President to negotiate new unilateral and bilateral trade agreements on an expedited basis before receiving final Congressional approval.

Although Lincoln advocates opening markets to Arkansas products, she has also worked to identify unfair trading practices by our trading partners that harm Arkansas industries. When these unfortunate situations occur, Lincoln has worked on legislative remedies. In addition, she has personally called on the President and Cabinet members to correct trade irregularities with foreign leaders and has testified before the International Trade Commission (ITC), which is charged with evaluating and ruling on circumstances of unfair trade, to demand swift, adequate and appropriate responses to trade disparities.

Senator Lincoln's tenacity on behalf of her constituents has proven to be effective in assisting Arkansans when foreign competitors ignore internationally accepted rules that govern global trade. In cases such as illegally imported catfish from Vietnam, softwood lumber dumping from Canada, and steel dumping from Europe, Asia, and South America, Lincoln has been a vigorous advocate for Arkansas industries. Lincoln has also acted when foreign governments, like Mexico and Russia, take illegal steps to block Arkansas exports, like rice and poultry, into their markets. Because of Senator Lincoln's perseverance, some foreign countries have, in fact, changed the way they do business.

Ensuring a level playing field for Arkansas workers

Trade Adjustment Assistance

Senator Lincoln has fought to provide a helping hand to workers, businesses, and farmers who might suffer because of foreign competition. She helped write and enact legislation that strengthened the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) programs in a number of ways, including the extension of assistance for health insurance and an increase in support for individuals seeking

further education or job re-training. She was also an original author of legislation that expanded TAA to include farmers.

Catfish

Time and again, Senator Blanche Lincoln has demonstrated the perseverance necessary to reverse illegal trading practices utilized by foreign competitors. Perhaps the most blatant example of this type of practice occurred when Vietnamese fish farmers began mislabeling their basa fish as “catfish” and illegally dumping their product on the U.S. market.

Following the termination of the U.S. trade embargo against Vietnam in 1994, Vietnamese basa farmers began exporting their unknown fish to the United States. Seeking a foothold for their product, Vietnamese producers began experimenting with marketing this fish under various names such as, China sole, white river cobbler, and other misleading labels. Despite their best efforts, sales of their product in the United States remained minimal.

However, beginning in the late 1990s, sales for basa fish increased dramatically as Vietnamese producers began to actively export and market their fish as “catfish.” Reports by the ITC noted that the volume of Vietnamese basa imports into the United States grew over 400% between 1999 and 2001, from 4.8 million pounds in 1999 to 11.8 million in 2000 to 24.4 million pounds in 2001. Furthermore, the ITC found “widespread underselling” by the Vietnamese of their product - a common maneuver used to unfairly capture market share.

After hearing from the Catfish Farmers of Arkansas about the devastating effect these practices were having on the catfish industry in the state, Lincoln began using every diplomatic measure at her disposal to resolve the situation before further damage was done. However, efforts at diplomacy fell short of the desired result. Lincoln then took her case to the floor of the United States Senate and demanded that the circumstances change immediately.

After describing the dishonest steps that the Vietnamese were using to depress the price and the market share for grain fed, farm raised Arkansas catfish, Lincoln successfully built a strong bipartisan majority and passed legislation that ended the onslaught of mislabeled Vietnamese basa fish imports by forcing Vietnamese producers to properly label their product. Through Senator Lincoln’s efforts, Arkansas catfish farmers have rebuilt their industry and experienced a record production of 661.5 million pounds of catfish with sales of \$425 million in 2003.

Steel

As the recipient of the Woman of Steel Award for her undying support of Arkansas steel workers and manufacturers, Senator Blanche Lincoln recognizes the enormous contribution this industry makes to her state’s economy and communities.

In the United States Senate, she is a member of the Steel Caucus and proudly represents the most

efficient producers of steel in the world. Throughout her career, Lincoln has worked to ensure that our steel producers compete on a level playing field in the global marketplace.

All too often, our trading partners ignore the internationally established rules that govern global trade to the detriment of those who follow the rules. When these circumstances occur, Lincoln has a proven track record of fighting for fairness.

Another example of illegal trade practices occurred in the steel market when foreign steel producers began dumping their underpriced and highly subsidized product on the U.S. market. Through her position on the Senate Finance Committee, Lincoln monitored this unfair trading practice and demanded that the necessary retaliatory steps be taken to defend American producers. In letters to the President, testimony before the ITC, statements during Finance Committee trade hearings and direct questioning of administration officials, Senator Lincoln effectively stated her case and ultimately persuaded the Administration to use the strongest retaliation at America's disposal.

Using our trade laws, which are designed to protect any industry from unfair trade, the President put in place restrictive tariffs to stop the onslaught of illegally dumped steel. Although he would ultimately remove these tariffs before their intended expiration date, this step provided the domestic steel industry with the breathing room that they required to regain footing in the market and compete favorably with foreign producers.

Softwood Lumber

Senator Lincoln has also been at the forefront to end the dumping of softwood lumber by Canada which is having a major affect on the viability of the Arkansas forest industry. Over two decades old, this still unresolved dispute continues to have negative implications for employees in Arkansas's timber industry. Facing massive Canadian subsidies, which artificially encourages lumber production irrespective of market conditions, Arkansas's timber industry struggles to survive.

Senator Lincoln has worked tirelessly with the Clinton and Bush Administrations to address this international dilemma. Since her first days in the United States Senate, she has been in frequent contact with the Administration and our trade representatives to encourage a more level playing field in the global timber market.

Just as in other instances of unfair trade, Senator Lincoln encouraged the Administration to use any means necessary to retaliate against Canada's steadfast denial to sell timber in an open and competitive manner. Heeding her words, the President agreed to place high-level duties on Canadian timber imports. Senator Lincoln firmly believes these tariffs are a necessary means to reach a long-term solution that benefits Arkansas.

Opening foreign markets to Arkansas commodities

Cuba

Senator Lincoln has consistently been a strong advocate for normalized relations with Cuba throughout her legislative career and is a member of the Cuba Working Group. In the four decades since an embargo was imposed against Cuba for political reasons, the Cuban economy has fallen into disarray, yet Fidel Castro remains in power. Cuba is no longer a security threat to the United States, and the embargo has harmed the Cuban people, while Castro and the Cuban elite tightened their grip on the country's isolated economy. In fact, the farmers of Cuba are incapable of producing enough to sustain the 11 million inhabitants of the Caribbean island. Therefore, food must be imported.

Lincoln believes that continuing this embargo hurts not only the Cuban people. It also hurts our own economy and our nation's farmers. For soybeans alone, opening trade with Cuba could mean a \$60 million market. Arkansas rice producers could ship 400,000 tons of rice down the Mississippi River, through the Gulf of Mexico to the Cuban people while providing them with a higher quality, cheaper product if the embargo is lifted.

Lincoln led a delegation of Arkansas farmers to Havana in 2000 to see firsthand the impact of U.S. policy and the potential opportunities that exist if the embargo is lifted. Lincoln entered Havana focused on Cuba's potential as a new trade market for Arkansas agriculture producers. During her visit, she also met with opponents of the Castro regime who have been persecuted for attempting to highlight the disparate human rights treatment in Cuba. These dissidents told Lincoln that the embargo gives the Cuban government an excuse for the sorry state of the economy and the challenges the country faces. By lifting the embargo, Lincoln believes that the Cuban people would be exposed to many of the problems with their government. Instead of blaming the United States for their troubles, only Fidel Castro would be to blame.

Upon returning, Lincoln was more confident than ever that the U.S. embargo on Cuba must be lifted. She is a cosponsor of legislation to end the embargo and is working with her colleagues to end this failed policy.

China

Senator Blanche Lincoln has also been a leading advocate in the Senate for Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) with China. Due to her efforts, China was granted this status by Congress in 2000, and it paved the way for China to join the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001 after 15 years of negotiations with the United States and other WTO members. The potential impact of this arrangement cannot be overstated. China is home to one-fifth of the world's population and is growing by 7 percent each year. Access to China's enormous population will help open valuable markets for Arkansas agricultural products such as rice, poultry, soybean and cotton. For instance, under its WTO accession agreement, China has cut

tariffs on rice to one percent. Also, China is already the second leading market for U.S. poultry exports and will cut tariffs in half from 20 percent to 10 percent for frozen poultry cuts in 2004.

While Lincoln supported opening these markets to Arkansas producers, she also shares concerns about human rights abuses in China against persons who protest government policy, organize support for democratic reforms, and profess their religious beliefs. In 2001, she supported a Senate resolution which called upon the People's Republic of China to end its human rights abuses in China and Tibet. Lincoln firmly believes that as America's trading relationship with China continues to evolve, it is important to remind Chinese leaders of their responsibility to respect the inherent dignity of every human being and improve labor and environmental standards.

INVESTING IN THE DELTA

Raised within a seventh generation cotton and rice farming family, Blanche Lincoln is truly a daughter of the Delta. She likes to say she is one of the few members of the Senate Agriculture Committee who has actually scouted cotton and walked rice levees. She attended public schools in Helena, Arkansas and witnessed the transition of the Delta from a region of thriving agricultural commerce to one of poverty and chronic unemployment. Since first going to Congress as a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives in 1992, she has fought to attract more government and private investment into the Arkansas Delta.

In 1994, she introduced The Lower Mississippi Delta Initiatives Act and Senator Dale Bumpers introduced companion legislation in the Senate. Although their initiative did not become law, Lincoln proved to be an outspoken advocate for economic development throughout the Delta and the stage was set.

Five years later, Lincoln used her new position as U.S. Senator to marshal enough support in Congress to gain passage of her legislation to create the Delta Regional Authority. President Bill Clinton signed the bill into law in December 2000, and her goal of establishing a one-stop resource to spur economic development in the Delta was closer to reality.

During 2004, Senator Lincoln is again leading the charge in Congress to focus attention on the Delta by co-founding a Congressional Delta Caucus. The Congressional Delta Caucus will serve as a forum for the 45 Senate and House Members representing Delta counties in Congress to join together to advance policy initiatives and funding that positively impacts the Delta. Senator Lincoln looks forward to continuing to work with her colleagues in Congress to make a difference in this culturally rich but economically impoverished region.

Bringing Opportunity to the Delta

When Sen. Lincoln introduced S. 1622, the Delta Regional Authority Act, she enlisted the aid of now-Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, R-TN. Together, they envisioned that the Delta Regional Authority would:

- provide technical assistance to small, poorer localities that have only part-time staff to negotiate the sometimes complicated application process necessary for acquiring federal funding for critically important transportation, housing, infrastructure and economic development projects;
- aid needy localities in meeting the matching fund requirements of federal programs;
- foster cooperation among state and local governments, private sector interests, and non-profit groups to determine region-wide solutions to common problems.

Although the bill was signed into law by President Clinton, it was President George Bush who appointed Pete Johnson as Federal Co-Chairman of the Delta Regional Authority (DRA) and chose Clarksdale, Mississippi, as the site for DRA's new headquarters. The federal legislation required a Board of Governors consisting of the governors of the 8 states or their designees to select one of their members to serve as the State Co-Chairman.

The Delta Regional Authority: From Dream to Reality

In 2002, Arkansas had the second highest funding for DRA grants with a total of \$4,476,097. Below are some examples of projects completed with DRA funds in that year

- West Memphis received \$250,000 to continue the West Memphis Transit System service for one year. The service connects low-to-moderate-income residential areas to businesses and services in the community. With the aid of a federal grant, the Arkansas Highway Transportation Department matched funding for the Transit System which helped accelerate the growth of the project.
- The City of Knobel (Clay County) received \$65,300 to match a USDA grant to rehabilitate the town's water storage tank. The tank had been painted with lead-based paint and without the rehabilitation, the citizens of Knobel would not have had safe water.
- The City of McGehee received \$212,400 to renovate a 45,000 square foot building that would be leased for manufacturing purposes to Temple Products for a period of 10 years. In addition to the DRA grant, the City of McGehee and Temple Products collectively provided \$158,700 for the project.

In 2003, Arkansas grants totaled \$974,302.44 leveraging over \$2 million for 8 projects. The majority of these projects focused on infrastructure needs in the Delta. Those projects include:

- The City of Magness in Independence County received \$86,000 to finish a \$990,900 wastewater system. Prior to the grant, the town was relying on private septic tanks and field lines which were not water tight and allowed untreated wastewater to seep into the soil and ground water. The Arkansas Department of Health indicated that over 50% of the town's septic systems malfunctioned. With the help of the DRA, the citizens of Magness will now be able to drink clean, safe water.
- The City of Wabbaseka received \$61,500 to complete a \$278,000 upgrade of the wastewater treatment plant to comply with an Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality consent order.

- The Blytheville-Gosnell Regional Airport Authority received \$100,000 to upgrade its runway which had exceeded its useful life by over 20 years. The improvements encouraged a potential commercial lessee to locate a branch operation at the airport bringing business to the community.

Senator Lincoln helped create the DRA and has continued to work closely with the young agency to improve the Federal Grant Program and provide guidance and direction. It is Senator Lincoln's hope that the DRA will focus on regional projects that offer economic solutions and enhance the quality of life for citizens in the Delta Region.

CIVIL RIGHTS

As the youngest and only the 17th woman ever to serve in the U.S. Senate, Senator Lincoln understands how important it is that the principles of equality and opportunity apply to all Americans and believes that Congress has a duty to ensure that discrimination does not prevent anyone from realizing their full potential. Throughout her public service, Lincoln has remained a strong advocate in the Senate for anti-discrimination policies.

Addressing discrimination against black farmers

Since her election to the U.S. Senate, Senator Blanche Lincoln has worked to facilitate claims of discrimination by black farmers against the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). For the past decade, many black farmers have been denied loans or been forced to wait longer than non-minority farmers for farm assistance. These farmers have stressed that they have faced foreclosure on their farms or financial ruin because USDA denied or delayed timely assistance. This problem was further exacerbated by allegations that USDA failed to properly investigate or respond to the numerous complaints by the farmers. After a settlement was reached between the lawyers for the black farmers and USDA in 1999, ending a two year class action lawsuit, nearly 20,000 claims were filed against the agency for discrimination on the basis of race for farm loans or assistance. Many of these claims are still being resolved today.

Although a settlement was reached, many black farmers have continued to assert that the claims process established in the settlement is unfair, and inconsistencies exist where some claims are being denied while similar claims are being approved. Due to these reports, Lincoln intervened on behalf of black farmers and urged USDA and the Clinton Administration to settle this case so affected farmers could receive help as soon as possible. Lincoln met on numerous occasions with USDA officials to receive assurance that the discriminatory practices of the 1980's have ended and pressed the Department of Justice (DOJ) to handle discrimination claims from the lawsuit settlement in a fair and timely manner.

While these steps addressed some problems in the system, Lincoln was not satisfied with the progress being made. During the debate of the 2002 farm bill, Lincoln sought to rectify this problem once and for all and helped draft legislation to establish a new position at USDA, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights. This office would be charged with resolving disputes between black farmers and the Department. In addition, the Office of Civil Rights will ensure that institutional and structural inadequacies are corrected through the implementation of 13 civil rights initiatives. Although these claims of discrimination continue to be addressed, Senator Lincoln continues to monitor the Department's progress through her position on the Senate Agriculture Committee to ensure that government assistance is equally available to all citizens of this country.

Fighting for minority health care

As a member of the Senate Finance Committee, Lincoln has worked with her colleagues to provide more complete health care coverage for all segments of our population. During the 106th Congress, she was an original cosponsor of the Health Care Fairness Act for Minority Health which Congress approved and President Clinton signed into law. This law provides \$130.2 million in funding to establish a National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities to research health care disparities affecting minorities and the socioeconomically disadvantaged. One area of focus for the center will be to provide funding for support programs targeting diseases and conditions that disproportionately affect minority groups and other populations with health disparities.

In addition, Lincoln has worked to provide adequate funding for all programs focused on the fight against the HIV/AIDS epidemic. HIV/AIDS cases continue to rise among women of color and the Surgeon General projects that 80 percent of women newly infected with HIV will be African-American or Hispanic. Those new cases, combined with more people living with HIV/AIDS and living longer than ever before, have expanded medical caseloads to our community-based organizations that offer services to these populations. While the cost of HIV/AIDS drugs continues to rise as does the number of people in need of such drugs, the percentage of those who can afford these life-saving medicines continues to decline.

Recognizing the contributions of African-Americans

During the 106th Congress, Lincoln introduced the African-American Slave Recognition Resolution to honor African-Americans who helped build our nation's capitol. Senator Lincoln worked with Congressman J.C. Watts, who introduced a companion resolution in the House of Representatives, to form a bicameral task force which will recommend a memorial to honor the slave laborers who built the Congressional building.

Lincoln also supported legislation in 1999 to give President Clinton the authority to award the Congressional Gold Medal to Rosa Parks for her contributions to the nation. The Congressional Gold Medal is considered the most distinguished honor that Congress can bestow upon an individual citizen.

HONORING OUR VETERANS

Throughout her career, Senator Blanche Lincoln has worked hard to honor the sacrifice of Arkansans who fought to defend the freedoms we enjoy today. She has the highest respect for the men and women who have served our nation in the Armed Services and has worked in Congress to improve benefits and services for veterans and their families. Her father fought in Korea, and she was raised from an early age to have tremendous respect for the unselfish service of the men and women of the Armed Services.

Listening to veterans

In November 2000, Senator Lincoln formed the Arkansas Veterans Advisory Council to help her better represent the needs of veterans. This council includes veterans and their representatives from across the state who regularly communicate with Lincoln regarding their views on issues before Congress. Through advisory council meetings and direct communications, the council has proven to be an invaluable asset to Lincoln on the issues like retirement benefits, health care, and research funding at the VA Hospital in Little Rock.

A leading advocate for full benefits to service connected disabled veterans

Under current law dating back to the 19th century, disabled military retirees are denied their full benefits when their disability pay is deducted from their retirement pay. Throughout her first term, Senator Lincoln has fought to ensure that all retired veterans with service-connected disabilities receive full concurrent receipt of both their military retirement and disability benefits. She has consistently helped introduce legislation called the "Retired Pay Restoration Act" and fought to the end of the 2003 legislative session for final enactment.

Although the Senate adopted a modified version of the full concurrent receipt that Lincoln advocated, the Congress failed to act before adjournment last year. Full concurrent receipt of military disability and retirement benefits will remain a priority for Lincoln. She has urged the President to encourage his allies in the House of Representatives to state their objections to concurrent receipt or allow it to pass.

Ensuring our citizen soldiers and their families have access to health care

Senator Lincoln introduced legislation in 2003 to allow members of the National Guard and Reserves, as well as their families, to sign up for TRICARE coverage at any time, regardless of whether the Guard or Reservist is activated. This amendment was included in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2004 and signed into law by President Bush. Before this provision was passed by Congress, National Guard and Reservist families could not enroll in the

TRICARE program unless the Guard or Reserve member was activated with orders lasting over 30 days.

As of December 2003, approximately 2,000 guard and reserve members from Arkansas were activated among the almost 200,000 guard and reserve members who have been activated nationwide. Another 3,500 members of Arkansas' 39th Brigade are scheduled for deployment to Iraq during Spring, 2004. Currently, nearly 20% of reservists do not have any health care coverage while they are not on active duty. In this time of increased dependence upon the members of our National Guard and Reserves, Senator Lincoln feels it is imperative that we increase benefits for these valuable members and their families even when they are not on active duty.

Protecting our flag

Throughout her nine years in Congress, Senator Lincoln has fought to enact a Constitutional amendment that would prohibit the physical desecration of the American flag. In 2001, Senator Lincoln helped introduce the amendment in the Senate which fell only four votes short of the necessary 67 votes for the Senate to clear it for ratification by three-fourths of the states.

Having met with many veterans groups and their supporters from across the state of Arkansas, Senator Lincoln is convinced that a constitutional amendment banning flag desecration is necessary to ensure the proper respect for the symbol of our liberty. Her father, grandfather and uncles fought to protect the values and principles that our flag represents, and Senator Lincoln plans to continue to support a Constitutional amendment protecting the flag throughout her tenure in public service.

SENIORS & MEDICARE

As a member of the so-called “Sandwich Generation” who care for their children and aging parents simultaneously, Senator Blanche Lincoln is keenly aware of the many issues affecting older Americans. She has taken a special interest in preparing health care providers and the Medicare system for the inevitable aging of America. During her first term in the Senate, she has hosted several constituent forums on aging, long-term care, and caregiving issues in Arkansas while emerging as an effective leader on aging issues in the Senate.

Fighting for a prescription drug benefit for seniors

After more than a decade of debate, Senator Lincoln helped Congress pass legislation providing a prescription drug benefit to seniors. While not perfect, the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act is an historic opportunity and a good start. This bill represents a \$400 billion expansion of the Medicare program – the largest expansion of the entitlement since Medicare was created nearly 40 years ago. In the face of growing deficits, there may not have been another chance to add a prescription drug benefit to Medicare for many years. In the meantime, Arkansas’ seniors and disabled would have continued to wait for help.

Medicare provides health care for a special population of Americans - millions of seniors, individuals with disabilities, and people with kidney failure. Lincoln has worked to modernize Medicare by adding a prescription drug benefit to the program while empowering seniors to take charge of their health by providing new preventive measures, better coordination of care, and protecting Medicare's long-standing tradition of allowing beneficiaries to choose the health care providers they want. Her objective has been to shift the focus of Medicare from one that simply *treats* illness and disability to one that *prevents* disease and disability. By acknowledging the numerous technological advancements in health care and making them available to Medicare patients, Lincoln believes that preventive care will be less costly than emergency care for catastrophic illness.

- ***Ensuring Seniors Can Stay in Medicare and Obtain Drug Coverage:*** Using her influence on the powerful Finance Committee, Lincoln played a key role in crafting Medicare reform provisions most significant to Arkansans. She worked to ensure that the greatest help goes to those seniors who struggle to afford both their food and medicine and for those who incur high drug costs. She led the way against President Bush’s plan to privatize Medicare which would have forced seniors to leave traditional Medicare to get prescription drug coverage through a private HMO. Lincoln fought to ensure the drug plan would be available for all seniors, and she helped ensure that the new Medicare drug benefit is voluntary and will force no senior to drop existing coverage.
- ***Ensuring Special Help for Neediest Seniors:*** More than 40% of Arkansas seniors in Medicare have incomes below 150% of the Federal Poverty Level, earning \$14,505 per year

for individuals and \$19,577 for couples per year. These are the seniors who struggle to pay for food, heat, and other necessities in order to afford their lifesaving drugs. Lincoln fought in the Senate Finance Committee to ensure that seniors with low incomes would get special assistance with their premiums, deductibles, and cost-sharing. She helped increase the asset test levels from \$4,000 to \$10,000, adjust these levels yearly for inflation, and reduce the paperwork burden for eligible seniors. As a result of this change, many more seniors in Arkansas will receive financial assistance from Medicare to afford their prescriptions so they may live longer, healthier lives.

- ***Ensuring Drug Coverage in Rural Areas:*** Concerned that drug-only plans may not provide the stability or predictability that seniors want and need, Lincoln fought to include a government “fallback” drug plan to guarantee seniors that if private insurance is not available, traditional Medicare will be there to offer the drug benefit. She knows that most HMO’s will view rural areas as “unprofitable.” The fallback plan she helped devise will guarantee rural seniors drug coverage through traditional Medicare where private plans are not offered.
- ***Access to Cheap Drugs from Canada:*** Lincoln fought for a provision allowing pharmacists and wholesalers to re-import prescription drugs from Canada as long as the Food and Drug Administration has certified the safety of the drugs. She has consistently supported bills to allow re-importation from Canada, but both the Clinton and Bush administrations have refused to implement the law saying they could not guarantee safety of the drugs. The new Medicare bill requires the Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary to report back to Congress within one year on what steps must be taken to re-import drugs from Canada safely. The new law also brings generic drugs to the market faster in order to protect seniors from soaring drug costs and give them less expensive generic options.
- ***Providing a New Preventive Benefit to Medicare:*** Lincoln fought to include new preventive benefits in Medicare. For the first time, Medicare will cover an initial preventive physical examination for new Medicare beneficiaries. Medicare will also cover cholesterol and blood lipid screenings. The new law also includes Lincoln’s plan to provide Medicare coverage of diabetes screenings and short-term coverage (2004 and 2005) of self-injectable and anti-oral medications. She changed the new benefit to include coverage for insulin syringes, which is important for diabetics. Roughly 40% of the senior population with diabetes use syringes to inject insulin into their bodies to control their diabetes every day. Without Lincoln’s amendment, syringe purchases – which can be especially expensive for seniors on fixed incomes – would not count towards cost-sharing and yearly maximum out-of-pocket expenses.
- ***Help for Rural Hospitals:*** Due largely to Lincoln’s efforts, the new law includes the largest, most comprehensive rural package ever considered by Congress for small rural hospitals, low-volume hospitals, and other rural providers. She fought to correct the disparities in Medicare payments to rural and urban hospitals, resulting in an increase of more than \$366

million to rural health care providers in Arkansas alone. This means that citizens in rural areas will continue to have ready access to health care.

- ***Help for Physicians:*** Lincoln fought to ensure that all physicians and providers such as physician assistants, nurse practitioners, occupational therapists, physical therapists and other providers will see a 1.5% payment rate increase under the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule instead of a 4.5% payment cut in 2004 that was proposed by the House of Representatives. An additional 1.5% increase will replace another proposed cut in 2005.
- ***New 5% Bonus Payment to Physicians in Under Served Areas:*** To help rural and other areas recruit and retain more physicians, Lincoln fought to ensure that Medicare will pay a 5% bonus to physicians providing care in scarcity areas from 2005 through 2007. Both primary care doctors and specialists would be eligible for this bonus. Also, the new law includes a Lincoln provision to value physician work in the Medicare reimbursement formula. This will increase Medicare payments to physicians in Arkansas.
- ***Moratorium on Therapy Caps:*** Lincoln helped win a two year moratorium on the unfair cap on physical, speech, and occupational therapy services. This cap imposed by the Medicare administration would have limited therapy treatment to a value of only \$1,500 per year. Many seniors exceed this cap at mid-year.
- ***Help for Military Retirees:*** Lincoln successfully included her amendment in the new Medicare law to waive temporarily the late enrollment penalty for military retirees and their spouses who apply for Medicare Part B and to permit year-round enrollment so that retirees can access the new benefits immediately.

FAMILIES & CHILDREN

As a working mother of twin children, Senator Blanche Lincoln brings a unique perspective to the U.S. Senate. She understands many of the problems facing working women who must balance the dual responsibilities of family and career. As a member of the Senate Finance Committee, Lincoln has worked to extend tax relief to low-income working families and to enhance welfare to work initiatives so that child care and transportation are more affordable for welfare moms who are trying to work and live independently.

Lincoln also believes that children are our most precious resource, and that every effort must be made to protect their future. That is why she has introduced Medicaid legislation that will reduce premature births and offer health insurance for young adults. In addition, Lincoln has been a leading proponent of child safety and is a leading advocate for missing and exploited children.

Making Child Care Affordable

As a member of the U.S. House of Representatives in 1996, Senator Lincoln served as a House conferee on welfare reform and worked to foster self-sufficiency through work among welfare recipients. During the last five years, millions of people have left welfare rolls for work, including more than 9,000 Arkansas families. Welfare reform has worked so well because leaders in Congress, like Lincoln, have remained true to the original aim of welfare policy – to serve as a safety-net in difficult times and to help families become self-sufficient. However, many Arkansans who remain on welfare face greater barriers to work, requiring more attention and resources than those who have already left.

In Arkansas, 75% of families reported having at least one barrier to employment, and more than one out of four reported having three or more barriers, including child care, transportation, education and training, mental health, domestic violence, and substance abuse. The number of barriers that poor mothers face definitely affects their employability. The greatest barriers in Arkansas are access to transportation and child care.

Senator Lincoln, who has shadowed welfare moms in Arkansas, is fighting to help individuals overcome those barriers. Lincoln introduced the “Making Work Pay Act of 2002,” which would credit states for successfully moving people into good-paying jobs, as opposed to simply reducing their welfare caseloads. Many of Lincoln’s provisions were included in the welfare reform proposal passed by the Senate Finance Committee in 2002 and would provide greater funding for transportation, child care, and job training. Unfortunately, this bill was not considered on the Senate floor during the 107th Congress and has yet to be considered by the Republican controlled Senate.

Working to reduce premature births

Senator Lincoln introduced legislation in October 2003, to reduce the incidence of prematurity and improve the health of women of childbearing age and their children. Today, one in eight infants is born too early. Unfortunately, in Arkansas, the problem of preterm births is even more dramatic. In 2001, more than 13 percent of births were preterm, ranking Arkansas 43rd in the nation. This is a clear wake-up call that action must be taken to reduce the number of premature births and improve the health of hundreds of thousands of infants born each year. Additionally, the cost savings that would result from bringing healthy babies into the world is substantial. Lincoln's legislation gives states increased flexibility and provides federal resources to improve access to prenatal care for low-income pregnant women.

Protecting America's children

Throughout her political career, Senator Lincoln has worked to raise awareness of the plight of missing and exploited children and their families. In the Spring of 2003, Lincoln and several of her colleagues in the Senate formed a bipartisan Senate Caucus on Missing and Exploited Children to study the problem and to develop legislative solutions. Lincoln believes that Congress should lead the way in making this problem a national priority by coordinating efforts between lawmakers, communities, and law enforcement agencies to help find missing children and return them to their families.

Since her service in the U.S. House of Representatives, Lincoln has worked to establish Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) throughout Arkansas to combat child abuse. In addition, Lincoln has spearheaded a letter with her Senate colleagues to provide approximately \$26 million in funding for CACs throughout the country since 2002. CACs are community partnerships committed to pursuing the truth in child abuse investigations. CACs are based in child welcoming facilities that enable law enforcement, prosecutors, child protective services, and the medical and mental health communities to work as a team in handling cases of severe child abuse. CACs operate in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Virgin Islands.

Communities with CACs report increased successful prosecution of perpetrators; consistent follow-up to child abuse reports; medical and mental health referrals for the victims; and consistent, compassionate support for child victims and their families. The Centers provide an efficient, cost-effective mechanism of handling child abuse cases and are strongly supported by law enforcement, prosecutors, and the judiciary.

Advocating for child safety

In 2000, Senator Lincoln introduced legislation known as the Child Passenger Protection Act which was signed into law by President Clinton to modernize and improve safety standards for

children's car seats. As many as 600 children under age five are killed each year in car accidents. Under Lincoln's legislation, the federal government is modernizing its outdated testing methods for child safety seats, expanding efforts to protect children in various types of collisions, and close the "child safety gap" that leaves older children unprotected. The new law includes new federal regulations to ensure greater protection against head injuries in side-impact collisions, and instructs the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) to provide parents with accurate, easy-to-understand information on how to choose a car or booster seat.

Addressing the issue of international child abduction

Senator Lincoln has testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on behalf of American parents like her constituent, Margaret McClain, to draw greater attention to the issue of international child abduction by non-custodial parents. Lincoln believes that U.S. policy toward child abductions is severely flawed and has called for a more vigorous action on the part of the Bush administration to bring these kidnaped American citizens home.

Lincoln introduced legislation in conjunction with Congressman Dan Burton in the House to insist that the U.S. Government protect U.S. citizens held against their will. She also introduced legislation in the 107th Congress to allow the Secretary of State to deny visas to the extended families and employers of individuals who kidnap U.S. citizens.

EDUCATION

Senator Lincoln believes that children are our most precious resource. A recent report revealed that only 13 percent of Arkansas fourth graders are able to read at the fourth grade level based on national standardized tests and only 2 percent of our African American fourth grade students perform at grade level. In addition, only 39 percent of Arkansas' 308 school districts teach all of the 38 required units of the state's core curriculum, and 49 percent of all schools in Arkansas are not accredited. Moreover, Arkansas ranks 49th in the nation in the percentage of citizens who hold a college degree. Lincoln has been a leading advocate in the fight to increase federal funding to public schools and reverse these trends in Arkansas public schools.

Lincoln also believes that students in rural areas ought to have access to the same advanced technologies and learning opportunities that are available to students in urban areas. In a study released in 2003 by the Washington, D.C.-based Rural School and Community Trust, Arkansas was ranked 7th in the nation among states that need to improve education in rural areas.

Addressing deficiencies in our education system

Upon her election to the U.S. Senate, Blanche Lincoln worked tirelessly for two and a half years to reform the federal public school system. She began making her mark by helping craft a new approach to federal education policy in November, 1999, known as the Three R's bill, or the Public Education Reinvestment, Reinvention and Responsibility Act.

In an attempt to divert resources to the schools most in need, the Three R's bill sought to significantly streamline the mass of federal education programs, provide public schools with much more funding and flexibility, and ultimately hold states and school districts accountable for producing results. Overall, the Three R's would have increased federal investment in public education and would target most of those new dollars to the nation's neediest school districts. In Arkansas, schools would have received approximately \$40 million more for disadvantaged students in Fiscal Year 2001 alone.

The Three R's bill also sought to invest in teachers and attempted to double the number of teachers in our nation's schools. Education experts agree that teacher quality is as important to raising student achievement as any other factor. Lincoln's bill would have consolidated several teacher training initiatives into a single formula grant program for improving the quality of public school teachers, principals and administrators. In addition, the Three R's would have given states and school districts more flexibility to design effective teacher recruitment and professional development initiatives to meet their specific needs.

Lincoln's stamp on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (No Child Left Behind).

The Three R's plan served as the catalyst for the education reform package that ultimately passed the Senate and was signed into law. After President Bush was elected, he introduced the No Child Left Behind Act, which included many performance-based provisions from the Three-R's bill.

As passed into law, the No Child Left Behind Act calls for record increases in federal funding, targets aid to the poorest schools, streamlines a number of federal programs, strengthens local autonomy, and puts in place a comprehensive accountability system that for the first time will hold schools responsible for steadily improving the learning of their students and closing the achievement gap between rich and poor and between whites and minorities.

On paper, this initiative represents real progress for public school education. However, President Bush, with support from his allies in Congress, has repeatedly reneged on his promise to adequately fund full implementation of this landmark bill. Senator Lincoln has warned that increased requirements without adequate federal assistance would have a disastrous effect on public schools.

Improving English for Immigrant Students

During consideration of the Leave No Child Behind Act, the Senate adopted Lincoln's amendment that called for an increase in federal funding to help language minority students master English. Lincoln's amendment will increase federal language instruction funding for immigrant students who will be required to meet higher English proficiency standards under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act Reauthorization Bill. Senator Lincoln's amendment expresses a strong commitment to enhance educational opportunities for LEP students by increasing and distributing federal resources for LEP programs while requiring LEP and immigrant students to meet higher standards.

Improving educational opportunities for low-income students

Lincoln has been a champion for programs that will help low-income, first-generation college students prepare for, enter, and graduate from college. While student financial aid programs help students overcome financial barriers to higher education, TRIO Programs help students overcome class, social and cultural barriers. Considering that Arkansas has one of the lowest percentages of residents with a four-year college degree, the more than 50 TRIO programs currently serving participants in Arkansas provide a critical source of encouragement and support to thousands of students who might otherwise never receive their college degree. In addition, Lincoln has circulated a letter to increase federal support for the TRIO programs every year for the past three

years. This is part of her campaign to increase the population served under these programs from six percent to 10 percent of eligible students.

Improving educational opportunities for rural students

Having personally attended public schools while growing up in Helena, Arkansas, Lincoln has been a leader in the Senate for federal programs that address the specific needs of rural school districts. She is a member of the Senate Rural Education Caucus and frequently speaks out about the unique challenges that face rural educators.

She co-authored a program that was included in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 that directs additional funding specifically to rural school districts. Known as the Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP), it will allow rural schools to combine federal funding from various formula grants that, by themselves, are too small to use in a meaningful way. Under this program, rural schools will be eligible for a supplemental grant and will have greater flexibility to use federal resources to improve student achievement. In 2002, well over half of Arkansas' school districts received approximately \$5.6 million in total funding to help meet critical educational needs.

Improving educational opportunities for pre-school students

In October of 2003, Lincoln released a set of specific principles to strengthen the Head Start preschool development program, calling for a greater focus on developing language and number skills and setting higher standards for teachers. Specifically, she called for reforms to Head Start that would protect the federal role in administering the program. Senator Lincoln called for the following reforms:

- Increased support for literacy, language development, and numbers literacy, including outreach and support for children learning English.
- Enhanced support for support services such as health screenings, immunizations, social services, and nutrition.
- Tougher professional standards for Head Start teachers and greater resources for teacher training.
- Greater emphasis on research-based assessment standards for measuring student ability and teacher accountability.

Senator Lincoln outlined her principles in a bipartisan letter to Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee Chairman Judd Gregg (R-N.H.) and Ranking Member Ted

Kennedy (D-Mass.) in advance of hearings in the committee to reauthorize Head Start Gregg and Kennedy are chairman and ranking member, respectively, of the committee.

Recognizing the Blues

A self-proclaimed daughter of the Delta, Senator Lincoln was pleased to pass a Senate resolution to recognize 2003 as the “Year of the Blues.” Coordinated by Memphis-based The Blues Foundation and the Experience Music Project, the Year of the Blues was a multi-faceted entertainment, education, and outreach program formed to both celebrate and create greater awareness for the blues and its place in the history and evolution of music and culture, both in the United States and around the world. The program was anchored by high profile events and featured a wide array of participants, projects, and components designed to reach a large audience, as well as support for blues oriented education and outreach programs, such as Blues in the Schools.

Lincoln was especially pleased to be involved in the project because her hometown of Helena has played a large role in the development of the blues. Today, Helena serves as a temporary blues Mecca each October when the three-day King Biscuit Blues Festival takes place. It is also the site of one of the longest running daily music shows, “King Biscuit Time,” which continues to air every weekday at 12:15 pm on KFFA radio from the Delta Cultural Center Visitors’ Center. “King Biscuit Time” has been an integral part of life and culture in the Delta and debuted in November 1941.

ENERGY INDEPENDENCE

Throughout her legislative career, Senator Lincoln has taken an active role in shaping our nation's energy policy. As a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, Lincoln's hard work and dedication earned her a seat on the powerful Energy and Commerce Committee. During that time, she wielded influence on key issues affecting her district, and seven of her bills became law during the 1995-1996 session when Republicans controlled Congress. After winning election to the U.S. Senate, she served on the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources from 1999 to 2001.

Lincoln believes that past spikes in energy prices and unstable supplies of power can be combated by developing new energy resources and promoting conservation and the use of renewable sources, such as soybeans and animal waste, which are in abundant supply in Arkansas. That is why she has worked tirelessly to implement a cohesive national energy policy centered around accessibility to resources, transmitting these resources to the consumer, and encouraging industrial and individual consumers to use more renewable energy sources. It is only through new technologies that we can answer America's demand for energy.

As a member of the Senate Finance Committee, Lincoln has found new ways to influence national energy policy. She introduced legislation to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and foreign oil by developing alternative sources of energy, and several of her energy tax incentives were included in a Senate Energy Tax Incentive package. Specifically, Lincoln's provisions will provide tax credits for: the production of biodiesel; the manufacture of energy efficient home appliances; and the use of fuels produced from animal and agricultural wastes and landfill gas. These tax credits will help reduce the initial costs of renewable energy production and encourage more American companies to seek alternatives to fossil fuels. This incentive package was included in the final Energy bill which failed by two votes last year. Lincoln plans to keep fighting to ensure that the Energy Bill, with her provisions intact, will be enacted into law in 2004.

Helping to Make Biodiesel a Viable Energy Source

During both the 107th and 108th Congresses, Lincoln introduced the Biodiesel Promotion Act, to provide tax incentives for the production of biodiesel from agricultural oils, recycled oils, and animal fats. This legislation will ensure that biodiesel becomes a central component of this nation's automobile fuel market. An increase in the use of biodiesel would provide a new market for Arkansas' soybean farmers and would benefit the environment while reducing our dependence on foreign oil.

Biodiesel, which can be made from just about any agricultural oil including oils from soybeans, cottonseed, or rice, is renewable, contains no petroleum, and blends easily with petroleum diesel. It can be added directly into the gas tank of a compression-ignition, diesel engine vehicle with no major modifications. Biodiesel is biodegradable and non-toxic, contains no sulfur, and it is the

first and only alternative fuel to meet EPA's Tier I and II health effects testing standards. Even after years of research and market development, biodiesel is not yet cost-competitive with petroleum diesel. The market support and tax incentives provided in the Biodiesel Promotion Act will help in leveling the field for biodiesel blends and help jumpstart this new industry.

Encouraging Conservation Through More Efficient Appliances

Senator Lincoln firmly believes that the solution to our nation's energy problems can not be solved by simply searching for new sources of energy. We must also find ways to conserve energy and use it more efficiently. That is why Lincoln has introduced and fought for passage of the Resource Efficient Appliance Incentives Act since her first term in the Senate. This bill encourages manufacturers of household appliances to identify new methods to use energy more efficiently by providing tax credits for the production of super energy-efficient clothes washers and refrigerators.

Through Lincoln's efforts, this bill has also been included in the current energy bill. If signed into law, the tax credits would be available for five years but would be capped for each manufacturer. Further, the tax incentives contained in this legislation are constructed to encourage manufacturers to exceed new federal efficiency requirements by up to 35 percent. If enacted, the Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers estimates these super energy-efficient appliances could save the average family \$100 per year – or \$1,400 per family over the lifetime of the appliance. Senator Lincoln's legislation will create the incentives necessary to increase the production and sale of these super energy-efficient appliances in the short term while passing along energy savings to the American consumer.

Making Natural Gas More Available for the Citizens of Arkansas

Over the next 20 years, America's demand for energy is expected to grow by 32 percent. During that period, consumer demand for natural gas is expected to grow at almost twice the rate of other energy sources, due to its economic, environmental, and operational benefits. That level of natural gas use is almost 60 percent greater than the highest recorded level.

To satisfy this projected demand, Senator Lincoln crafted the Gas Distribution Infrastructure Investment Act, to reduce the tax depreciation of natural gas pipelines, equipment, and infrastructure assets from 20 to 10 years. Shrinking the lifetime over which an asset is depreciated enables natural gas producers to generate higher cash flows during the most productive period of an asset's lifetime. This benefit will allow manufacturers to invest in infrastructure development and pipeline expansion which is crucial if America's homes are to continue to rely on clean-burning natural gas to heat their homes and fuel their appliances. Lincoln successfully fought for the inclusion of this provision in the pending Energy Bill.

Reducing our Dependence on Foreign Oil

Senator Lincoln has also worked to reduce the crippling effect of America's dependence on foreign oil by encouraging the development of new and innovative energy sources. She has introduced three bills: the Agricultural Waste Renewable Energy Production Act; the Capturing Landfill Gas for Energy Act; and the Waste to Energy Utilization Act to accomplish this objective. Each of these bills provide tax incentives to encourage investment in these exciting new sources of energy and also were included in the pending Energy Bill.

Agricultural Waste Renewable Energy Production Act

Thanks to new technological developments, we can now produce significant quantities of alternative fuels from agricultural and animal wastes in an environmentally friendly manner but production incentives are needed to assure implementation and commercialization of this new generation of technology. The Agricultural Waste Renewable Energy Production Act would amend the tax code to include alternative fuels produced from all biomass wastes. The most readily available of these wastes are agricultural and animal wastes, municipal wastes, plastics, used tires, and forest product wastes. This production incentive opportunity would provide significant new annual quantities of alternative fuel to replace foreign imported oil and should be considered a government investment in the nation's future.

If these incentives are implemented, large marketable quantities of quality alternative fuel products can be produced as a replacement for foreign imported oil. These processes can achieve the desired results in an environmentally positive way that essentially converts all wastes to products and provides an answer for waste disposal problems.

Capturing Landfill Gas for Energy Act

Congress recognized the importance of landfill gas (LFG) for energy diversity and national security by providing a tax credit in 1980 and extending it for nearly two decades. LFG is a renewable fuel that can be used directly as an energy source for heating, as a clean burning vehicle fuel, or as a hydrogen source for fuel cells. Furthermore, it can power generators to produce electricity. The Capturing Landfill Gas for Energy Act is designed to encourage additional collection and productive use of methane gas generated by garbage decomposing in America's landfills.

In addition to the value of LFG as an important contribution to our overall energy strategy, there are compelling environmental reasons to encourage these projects. Uncontrolled landfill gas can create fire hazards and odors and can impair air quality. The methane in landfill gas is 21 times more potent than carbon dioxide as a greenhouse gas. Even the large landfills that are required under the Clean Air Act to collect their gas and control non-methane organic compounds often find it more economic to simply flare or otherwise waste the gas rather than use the methane. Some smaller landfills are not required to collect the gas, and may continue to emit it for decades under the Clean Air Act. Thus, LFG projects

not only reduce local and regional air pollution while yielding a renewable source of energy, they can also reduce the country's yearly emissions of greenhouse gases by a very substantial amount at a relatively small cost.

Waste to Energy Utilization Act of 2003

Arkansas stands with other environmentally conscious states in understanding that waste-to-energy technology saves valuable land and significantly reduces the amount of greenhouse gases that would have been released into our atmosphere without its operation. The volume of waste is reduced by greater than 90% in a waste-to-energy facility, and EPA has confirmed that more than 33 million tons of greenhouse gases are avoided annually by the combustion of municipal solid waste. Municipal solid waste is a sustainable source of clean, renewable energy. The Waste to Energy Utilization Act would encourage investment in this unique, clean source of energy spurring its growth in the United States.

Nearly 2000 communities nationwide rely on waste-to-energy facilities to safely dispose of trash and generate clean, renewable energy that meets the power need of more than two and a half million homes. The U.S. Conference of Mayors has repeatedly urged Congress to include provisions that promote waste-to-energy in tax legislation and they are joined by the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners, the Business Council for Sustainable Energy, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers.

SEFOR: A government blight on Northwest Arkansas

Senator Lincoln also inserted language in the Energy Bill to clean up the Southeast Fast Oxide Reactor (SEFOR) site in Northwest Arkansas. The SEFOR site was a federal experimental nuclear reactor located near Strickler, Arkansas. SEFOR has sat idle and contaminated for 30 years, and although the nuclear material has been removed, many hazardous contaminants are still prevalent. The federal government helped create these contaminants, and Lincoln believes that the government is obligated to help clean them up. She began working on cleaning up this site when she arrived in the Senate and will continue to fight for important legislation like this for the citizens of Arkansas.