

hand at the wheel. He has shown extraordinarily sound judgment. He's always been ready to do whatever he was asked, whatever it took. Most of all, Billy knew who we all worked for: 4 million Kentuckians. For 8 years, Billy has been my right-hand man.

Two years ago, Billy was invaluable to me in my reelection campaign. Once again, he proved himself equal to any challenge. He was the one man who knew everything that was going on and what everyone else was doing. He was and is unflappable, steady, and always confident.

He gave it everything he had—and always with a smile on his face. And it wasn't easy for him, I know. With a young family at home, he sacrificed much. He's very fortunate that Holly's an understanding wife.

More than anyone else, Billy is responsible for fostering the feeling of family in my office. It's one of the things we'll miss most about him. He always made staff feel like they're more than just a group of people in an office. He's grown close to a lot of them over the years, and they all love him and admire him.

But as tough as this change is for me, I know it's as tough for Billy too. Here's a guy who went to the same school from kindergarten through the 12th grade, lived in the same house his whole childhood, and has had the same work e-mail address since we started using e-mail around here. But he is making this change for the right reason. When he announced his decision, Billy said, "I love this office, I love the Senate, and I love Kentucky . . . but I love my family more." And no one can begrudge him that.

So while this is a loss for me, my staff, my colleagues in the Senate, and the many people he's helped in Kentucky over the years, it is a gain for Billy's wife Holly, and their two little boys Billy and Tucker. And I wish the Piper family great happiness. I can hardly believe the man I am saying goodbye to is the same young man who stood for a high-school photo with me back in 1986.

Sadly, Billy's parents aren't here to share in Billy's sendoff from the Senate. But if you knew Bill and Ann Piper, you would not be surprised by the kind of person Billy is or the success he has become. And I know they would be bursting with pride if they were here today to see what their son's accomplished. It was the love of a strong family that started Billy off on the right track, and it is because of his love for his family today that we bid him farewell. You can't say Billy Piper's priorities aren't in the right place.

Before I finish, I would just like to read from an e-mail Billy sent to the entire staff on his last day—an e-mail that sums up the kind of guy Billy is. Here's what he wrote: "The great honor of my professional life has been being able to call myself a McTeamer for nearly 20 years. This is an experience I will treasure all the more because of

the wonderful friends I have made along the way. I am better for having known and worked with each of you. Thank you for all you have done and continue to do. I am in your debt."

Billy, as usual, you are generous with praise for everyone but yourself. But we're the ones who are thankful. We are the ones who are better for having known you. And the honor was all ours. Most of all, though, the honor was mine to stand alongside you through the years, as your mentor and your friend. I watched as you inspired others. You've inspired me. Thank you for your service and your friendship.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, just as the majority leader started to leave the floor, I said to him, what an amazing 2 years. I just left an interview upstairs where a major network asked me: What do you think you have accomplished over the last 2 years?

I said to him: I can't speak for what happened 30 or 40 years ago in the Senate; I wasn't around. But I can tell you that in the 28 years I have been in the House and Senate, I have never seen a more amazing, productive session of Congress.

In the Senate, you had to put it into perspective. At the same time we were accomplishing these things, we were facing record numbers of filibusters—more obstacles than ever in history. Yet, when you look at the record that was written over the last 2 years in this Chamber and in the House of Representatives, working with the President, it is nothing short of amazing.

Allow me to go through my checklist here. I am sure others will question some things I put on the list and add some of their own particularly the Senator from Iowa, Senator HARKIN, who certainly is an inspiring leader on so many of these important issues.

First and foremost, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. That is what the President came to Washington to initiate to stop this recession and slow down the growth in unemployment. None of us is happy with the state of the economy, but it would have been dramatically worse had we not done that.

Two, Wall Street reform. We looked at the root causes of the recession and said we are going to change the law and add oversight and investigators to stop Wall Street from bringing us another recession some day in the future.

No. 3, the HIRE Act, a jobs package to encourage businesses to hire unemployed workers. We have been focusing on jobs since we got here, and we need to continue that focus.

No. 4 was a measure we passed in this lameduck session, the middle-class tax package, extending middle-class tax breaks for working families and lower income families, I might add, as well as others in the year to come so we can keep this economic growth moving in the right direction.

No. 5, credit card company regulations, long overdue. People complained about abuses by credit card companies, and we passed major regulatory reform.

No. 6, small business lending fund. The Small Business Credit and Jobs Act could provide up to \$300 billion in loans to small businesses across America that were having trouble finding money in the private sector. That could, I think, dramatically increase jobs from small businesses.

No. 7 occurred as part of our agenda in the lameduck session, the extension of unemployment insurance. Time and again we did it and then in the tax package we extended it for 13 months so that millions of Americans would have a basic check to buy with each week.

First-time home buyers tax credit is No. 8, which encourages more people to buy homes for the first time and it gave them a tax incentive to achieve that.

The next item I will mention is health care reform. Some would put it as No. 1. I certainly would put it as No. 1 or No. 2. This is the first President in almost 90 years to successfully tackle the challenge of the rising cost of health care and the need for basic reform. Sure, it is controversial, but as the provisions of this health care reform bill unfold and are implemented, they can bring us to a point where the cost of health care will come down and there will be more available to people who currently are not protected.

No. 10, the Children's Health Insurance Program. We reauthorized and expanded it. After two vetoes by the former President, this bill expanded health insurance coverage for over 4 million previously uninsured children.

No. 11—my hats off to the Senator from Iowa—food safety. There were times in the last week or two that it was a dead duck in the lameduck. Somehow or another, it found its wings and started to fly and was passed by both the House and the Senate.

I worked on this measure for 16 years. The Senator from Iowa brought it across the finish line with the kind of skills he has developed as a leader in the Senate. It is great to team up with him. People's lives will be saved and people spared serious illness because of this bill.

No. 12, child nutrition, a favorite of the First Lady. I thank Senator BLANCHE LINCOLN, who is leaving us, for her leadership on this issue. We are providing nutritious meals to hungry children and increasing the Federal reimbursement rate for school meals so local governments do not have to absorb the increased cost.

No. 13—here is an issue front and center in my career in the House and Senate—tobacco regulation. The bill we passed calls on the Food and Drug Administration to regulate the manufacture, sale, and promotion of tobacco products. The things we did in this bill, I say to Senator HARKIN, would have

been unthinkable 10 years ago. But we did them to try to keep these tobacco products out of the hands of kids.

No. 14 on my list is something that passed a few hours ago, ratifying the New START treaty. This is what the President needed. This is what America needed. We only have one President. We want to give him the authority to keep America safe. We want his word to be good. We want him to engage former adversaries as future allies with the passage of the New START treaty.

No. 15 is one near and dear to my heart. It was originally introduced by Hillary Clinton, and when she left to join the President's Cabinet, I asked if I could take up the cause of passing the veterans caregiver assistance bill. In a word, it means those disabled veterans who return home, who are fortunate to have a spouse, a parent, or a member of their family who will sacrifice their own lives to make sure they are comfortable in their homes will receive some help from the government. These are people who get to stay home as disabled veterans and, because someone in the family will stay with them where they want to be, at considerably less expense to our government but in the right, positive environment for our disabled veterans. This bill gives those veteran caregivers a little additional assistance, some respite time, and a modest stipend each month so they can continue to do this invaluable work on behalf of the men and women who sacrifice so much for our country.

No. 16 we passed today as well, the 9/11 Health and Compensation Act. We said so much in tribute to first responders—police, firefighters and others—who came to Ground Zero when they were called. Today we said we were going to stand by them with any illness that came about as a result of that experience.

No. 17, repeal of don't ask, don't tell. I went to that ceremony today, and I have to tell you, I thought it was one of the most profound experiences I had. To see an auditorium filled with people who cared so much for this issue, many of whom have seen their lives wrecked because of discrimination based on their sexual orientation. The Pledge of Allegiance was given by retired Air Force COL Margarethe Cammermeyer. I know her story well because I told it so many times. She was an Air Force nurse who risked her life to save the lives of servicemen in Vietnam who rose through the ranks until one day she announced, when asked, that she was a lesbian. She was discharged, retired from the service. Never in the course of her military career had anything about her sexual preference had any impact on her service to the Nation, but she was discriminated against because of who she was.

She gave the Pledge of Allegiance today with tears in her eyes and joined all of us applauding President Obama as he finally signed this bill repealing don't ask, don't tell.

No. 18 is a bill I worked on, and the most unlikely political odd couple on

Capitol Hill, JEFF SESSIONS. It is the Fair Sentencing Act which reduced the unfair disparity in sentencing between crack and powder cocaine. There are literally thousands of men and women serving time in prison because of this disparity in sentencing. Senator SESSIONS and I reached an accommodation, an agreement, a compromise on sentencing which brings us closer to the reality of the danger of the narcotics involved. I thank him for his bipartisan cooperation.

No. 19 is the first bill signed by President Obama as President of the United States, the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, to try to once and for all end discrimination of women in the workplace.

No. 20, the hate crimes prevention bill. That is one I think is absolutely essential to renew the promise in America that we will never discriminate against people based on sexual orientation, race, gender, creed, or national origin. That bill was long overdue. The Matthew Shepard family, who helped us pass that bill, was instrumental in moving America forward in the field of human rights.

I am sure Senator HARKIN can add three or four of his own to that list.

When I look back and reflect on 2 years of hard work, it is worth the effort. All the long nights, all the time away from family, some of the frustration, all of the anger, all of it was worth it when we look back in time and say in our time here, many of us believe we have helped to move America forward with the work we have done in the Congress.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I listened very carefully to my friend from Illinois as he went down his list. I admit it is a pretty thorough list. I may have missed one. I was conversing with another Senator briefly. Did I miss the higher education bill? The list covered everything else, I say to my friend. The Higher Education Act, which historically, I say to Senator DURBIN, in 1992, Senator Kennedy, then the chair of the committee which I now chair, had done a study to see whether direct loans would be better than the indirect loans that go through banks for students going to college.

We had this study done, this pilot program. In 1993 and 1994, the pilot program ran. By 1994, the data was in. The Direct Loan Program worked well. It saved tons of money, and the schools liked it, students liked it. Our goal was that in 1995, we were going to then expand it nationwide. Of course, we know what happened in 1995. We lost the Congress. It went to the Republican side.

The Republicans did not want to expand the Direct Loan Program. They wanted to keep it going through the banks. Banks loved it. Who does not like free money? From 1995 on, we never had the opportunity to ever expand the Direct Loan Program and

save all this money, until finally when Barack Obama became President and Democrats took over the House and the Senate, we were able to pass it and, as the Senator knows, we signed that into law, I think if I am not mistaken, in February of this year right after we passed the health care bill, and it was part of the health care bill.

In passing that bill, we went from indirect loans to Direct Loan Program and save \$60 billion in 10 years. We took that money and put it in better Pell grants for students.

I say to my friend to illustrate, sometimes it takes a long time around here to get things done. If you persevere and the stars align right, you can get it done. It is also a way of saying to my friend from Illinois, thank you for what you did for food safety. I get a lot of accolades. I just happened to be here as chairman of the committee at the right time to get it through. Anyone who knows anything about this issue knows Senator DURBIN was the Senator who got this going. I always wondered how many years ago. He said 16 years ago.

Again, there is perseverance, stick to it. When you know what is right and good for this country, do not give up and hang in there. Senator DURBIN hung in there for 16 long years. We finally got the bill done and passed. I think the President will be signing it into law some time before January 5.

A lot fewer people will get sick, a lot more families will be healthy, and our food will be safer because of the efforts of Senator DURBIN. I publicly thank him for all of his work on this bill.

TRIBUTE TO RETIRING SENATORS

EVAN BAYH

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, time and time I have come to the floor to give a few remarks about Senators who are retiring and leaving the Senate. They all contributed in their unique way one way or the other to the Senate. Now I find myself with two left about whom I want to comment on their way out of the Senate.

In the closing days of the 111th Congress, we are saying goodbye to a number of colleagues, including a veteran Member, much respected on both sides of the aisle. I speak of the Senator from Indiana, Mr. BAYH.

I listened with great interest to Senator BAYH's eloquent farewell remarks earlier this month. The Senator was also kind enough to have them typed up and sent to our offices.

Looking back on his 12 years in this body, he spoke about times of national crisis, including after the 9/11 attacks and during the financial meltdown of 2008. He talked of a time when Senators acted not as Democrats and Republicans but as patriots concerned of doing one thing: doing what is right for the American people. He said that these times of bipartisan action were with the Senate at its very best.

For more than two decades, Senator BAYH has embodied everything that is