

I am a lifelong mountain climber, and I know from experience that any difficult climb includes storms, and you make a mistake finding your route along the way. But what matters is that you dust yourself off and you move forward. I think there have been a lot of storms on this journey so far, and it hasn't been perfectly smooth. But it has been in the right direction. Despite our stumbles and twists and turns along the way, we kept our eye on the summit in front of us, where providing quality affordable coverage for every American is a reality.

Every successful expedition, in my experience, has a leader, and I want to take a moment to recognize our leader, Senate Majority Leader REID. He has literally had the health and well-being of millions of Americans on his shoulders—some would say the weight of the world. That is a heavy backpack. But at the same time he has shouldered that load, been an unwavering advocate for reform, and he has exemplified the American resiliency which has helped make our Nation the greatest Nation on Earth.

I would also like to thank my staff, especially Jake Swanton and John Rayburn, who have worked tirelessly to fight for Colorado and make quality affordable health coverage a reality for millions of Americans.

As I close, I want to say how proud I am that the health care bills we passed this week will modernize our health care delivery system, increase much-needed choice and competition within the health insurance industry, and help put our economy back on track, while clearly improving the financial security of middle-class working families.

This has been an historic week for Colorado and for the American people. The victory, of course, isn't for the Senate or the House, or the President, or for our political parties, it is for the American people. I have certainly been humbled to have been given the opportunity to serve my great State during this unforgettable, long, and sustained debate, and I look forward to the important climbs that still await us as we implement this very important piece of legislation.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. KAUFMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. UDALL of Colorado). Without objection, it is so ordered.

PATIENT PROTECTION AND AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the signing of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act was historic. In addition to providing coverage and lowering health insurance costs for millions of

Americans, the legislation will truly transform how care is delivered in the United States. As part of this new law, we are improving Medicare for the seniors and people with disabilities who depend on the program, extending the solvency of the program, and closing the prescription drug doughnut hole.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act creates the Independent Payment Advisory Board, IPAB. The Finance Committee, led by Chairman BAUCUS and Senator ROCKEFELLER, devised the board to provide reason and expertise to Medicare payment policy. Experts have concluded that the board will in fact bend the cost curve, achieving key goals of health reform: lowering costs overall and increasing Medicare's longevity.

Built into the IPAB are protections for beneficiaries from limits on care and increased costs. The Senate will ensure that the new board operates in a transparent way with input from patients, providers, and experts to guarantee the best outcomes and continued access to care. Moreover, we in the Senate will oversee Medicare and the IPAB to protect the seniors and people with disabilities. Medicare is one of our most treasured programs, and the IPAB will only improve the program for beneficiaries in the future.

COWBOY POETRY WEEK

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the ninth annual Cowboy Poetry Week, which will be celebrated from April 18 to 24, 2010. Across the Western States, in public libraries, museums, and over the airwaves, cowboy poets and cowboy poetry enthusiasts will come together to celebrate the spirit of the West through this unique art form. What began as storytelling over the campfire has evolved into both a way to preserve the history and culture of the West, as well as a modern art form that embraces the cowboy way of life.

The National Cowboy Poetry Gathering, in Elko, NV, celebrated its 26th anniversary this January. Through events like this, cowboy poetry has experienced a resurgence in recent years, at once preserving recitation traditions that are a central form of artistry in communities throughout the West and promoting popular poetry and literature to the general public. At cowboy poetry gatherings, urban populations are able to glimpse a way of life that continues to exist on rangelands across the West.

As someone from a small town in Nevada, I have seen firsthand how the West has changed since I was young, but thanks to cowboy poets, among others, we will never lose the true spirit of the West. For this reason, I would like to thank the thousands of people out there in a few short weeks celebrating Cowboy Poetry Week, and I wish them all an enjoyable and successful week.

RECONCILIATION

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, over the last several days, the Senate voted on a number of amendments to H.R. 4872, the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010. This important legislation makes changes to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, which President Obama signed into law on Tuesday. In short, it makes a good bill better.

Now, at the very last minute, my colleagues on the other side have offered a number of amendments designed to play games with Americans' health care and to cause delays and obstructions as we reach final passage of this bill. I voted against the long list of amendments offered by the other side—as did the majority of the Senate—not because some weren't good amendments but because this was not the appropriate legislation to attach them to. I have been and will continue to be a champion of many of these issues, but I will not vote to play games with the health care of American families. Trying to tackle these issues at the last minutes of the health care debate is not appropriate or wise or responsible. Instead, I look forward to working with my colleagues in the coming months to find bipartisan solutions to these problems.

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, today I rise to speak on the important occasion of Women's History Month. Since 1987, the month of March has been dedicated not only to remembering and appreciating the distinguished accomplishments of women, but also to commending their continued positive influence on society. I would like to call particular attention to the contributions of North Carolina women, as they have consistently proven themselves to be revolutionary in their thoughts and actions and have contributed immensely to the development of our Nation since its conception.

Our way of life has been bettered in countless ways by women revolutionaries, crusaders, politicians, athletes, and everyday citizens of North Carolina. From the 51 patriotic women who organized the Edenton Tea Party to Dolley Madison, whose social grace and political acumen helped create the modern White House; from Harriet Jacobs, a North Carolina escaped slave who exposed the injustices of slavery in her "Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl," to Mary Jane Patterson, the first African-American woman to receive a bachelor of arts degree; from Tabitha Ann Holton, the first licensed female attorney in North Carolina and the South, to Dr. Annie Lowrie Alexander, the State's first female physician; from Sallie Walker Stockard, the first woman to graduate from the University of North Carolina to Kay Yow, the great North Carolina State University women's basketball coach who led

American women to gold at the 1988 Seoul Olympics; from Eliza Jane Pratt, the first woman to represent North Carolina in the United States Congress to Elizabeth Dole, the first female U.S. Senator from North Carolina and dedicated public servant, the history of North Carolina's women is America's history, and it is truly remarkable.

During Women's History Month, we honor the generations of women who have achieved notoriety in the past, however, we must do more than remember. It is imperative that we reflect on the present and prepare for the future. It is the hardworking North Carolina women who are continuing to serve our society as parents, doctors, teachers, nurses, businesswomen, soldiers, marines, and in countless other capacities that will impact our Nation's history in a powerful and positive way. We must build on the legacy of these great North Carolina women, especially those who serve anonymously and who have preserved the American way of life while contributing so much to the strength and character of our Nation. The women of our great State have triumphed throughout our history, and I know that they will play a leading role in our future.

CLOSING THE GUN SHOW LOOPHOLE

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, on March 4, 2010, John Patrick Bedell, a 36-year-old Californian with a history of mental illness, arrived at the Pentagon after a manic, cross-country journey. At 6:40 pm, Mr. Bedell, armed with two 9mm handguns, walked to the security checkpoint at the Pentagon entrance and started shooting. Three Pentagon security officers, Colin Richards, Jeffrey Amos and Marvin Carraway, returned fire and brought down Mr. Bedell, who later died from his injuries. Mr. Amos and Mr. Carraway were wounded in the exchange, but thankfully have fully recovered. If not for the decisive action taken by these brave officers, this apparently random attack could have claimed more victims. And while I am pleased the Pentagon's security system worked in this instance, I remain deeply troubled by the fact that Mr. Bedell was able to acquire firearms in the first place.

Since the shooting, law enforcement officials have been able to partially trace the firearms used by Mr. Bedell. One handgun was sold last year to a private individual at a Las Vegas gun show, and that person later resold the gun to a third person. At that point, according to authorities, they were not able to further trace the gun's ownership history until Mr. Bedell opened fire on March 4. This murky trail perfectly illustrates the danger of unregulated, private firearm transactions.

Under the Brady Law, before an individual can purchase a gun from a licensed dealer, they must pass a background check to ensure they are not le-

gally prohibited from purchasing a firearm. In 2008, 9.9 million background checks were conducted for firearm purchases, 147,000 of which were rejected. The majority of these denials were the consequence of a prior conviction, indictment or a history of mental illness. However, when an individual purchases a handgun from a private citizen, who is not a licensed gun dealer, there are no requirements to ensure that the purchaser is not in a prohibited category. Neither the Las Vegas gun show sale, nor the subsequent private transactions that ultimately resulted in Mr. Bedell acquiring the firearm, were regulated. Due to this "gun show loophole" in federal law, authorities were not aware of, or able to block this string of private sales, which led to Mr. Bedell purchasing the weapon and using it to attack the Pentagon. In fact, according to news reports, Mr. Bedell attempted to buy a gun from a licensed firearm dealer in California, but the sale was blocked because he fell into a prohibited category.

Because private party transactions account for approximately 40 percent of all gun sales, current Federal background check requirements have a limited impact on the overall rates of gun related violent crime. To better protect our communities from gun related violence, background checks should be required for all prospective firearm transactions, including private transactions. To that end, I am a cosponsor of the Gun Show Background Check Act of 2009, S.843, which was introduced by Senator FRANK LAUTENBERG. This bill would extend the protections of the Brady Law to purchases made at gun shows, thereby closing the loophole that currently permits gun sales without criminal background checks. I urge my colleagues to take up and pass this commonsense legislation.

PASSAGE OF S. 3186

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I am pleased that the Senate acted to pass legislation that will extend key provisions of the Satellite Home Viewer Act through the end of April. The statutory licenses and Communications Act authorizations that are contained in this act allow consumers to receive broadcast network stations by satellite. These consumers are otherwise unable to receive these signals over-the-air, and ensuring that they continue to have access to network programming is critical. I understand that the House of Representatives also took up and passed the Senate measure last night. By passing this short-term extension, we can be sure that nobody will be left in the dark while Congress is away. I look forward to a full reauthorization of this act being signed into law once we return from Easter recess.

RED CROSS MONTH

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I wish today to join with the American

Red Cross and celebrate March as American Red Cross Month. Throughout the history of this organization, the American Red Cross has demonstrated not only their fierce and patriotic loyalty to this country and our needs but to those abroad as well.

This year, many of our brothers and sisters worldwide have experienced extreme devastation. The earthquakes in Haiti and Chile showed us not only how fragile life can be but the importance of humanitarian response to those in need.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, a Russian novelist, historian, and Nobel Laureate for literature knew the power of our interconnectedness as it relates to our own humanity. He said, "The salvation of mankind lies only in making everything the concern of all."

No other organization embodies this philosophy more than the American Red Cross and of the vision articulated by Clara Barton, founder of this wonderful organization that has helped countless individuals—both domestic and abroad—in times of crisis.

Whether comforting a wounded soldier during battle, assisting those who are recovering from a natural disaster, or administering life-saving blood to a sick patient, the American Red Cross is there, never wavering but standing steadfast in the service to humanity.

This year especially, they have been ever vigilant in remaining true to the humanitarian nature of their organization. In Haiti, the Red Cross distributions of food and relief supplies continue throughout urban settlements and are reaching approximately 12,500 people each day. To date, nearly 27,000 people have been vaccinated in the coordinated immunization campaign, in which the Red Cross health care units and the Haitian National Red Cross Society are participating. The American Red Cross has provided approximately \$375,000 in operational funding for this campaign.

In Chile, the American Red Cross has increased the funds committed from its International Response Fund to \$250,000 in support of Red Cross response operations. It will be contributing these funds toward the International Federation's emergency appeal. Additionally, the International Federation has announced a disaster plan of action and funding in the amount of \$6.4 million to support Chilean Red Cross relief operations to assist 75,000 people for 6 months in the areas of shelter, water and sanitation, health and telecommunications. This is in addition to \$280,000 released from its Disaster Response Emergency Fund.

Like the national headquarters of the American Red Cross, I am extremely proud of our Kansas chapters of the American Red Cross organizations and volunteers. From responding to our own State's natural disasters, to providing programs to our troops such as the Holiday Mail for Heroes Program to providing much needed health and wellness courses—these individuals are