

has responded to the Obama administration in the same ways it did to the Bush administration before the “reset.” Moscow has been playing this game for years. It has sold the same rug many times. The only thing that has changed is the price the United States has been willing to pay.

As anyone who ever shopped for a rug knows, the more you pay for it, the more valuable it seems. The Obama administration has paid a lot. In exchange for Russian cooperation, President Obama has killed the Bush administration’s planned missile defense installations in Poland and the Czech Republic. Obama has officially declared that Russia’s continued illegal military occupation of Georgia is no “obstacle” to U.S.-Russian civilian nuclear cooperation. The recent deal between Russia and Ukraine granting Russia control of a Crimean naval base through 2042 was shrugged off by Obama officials, as have been Putin’s suggestions for merging Russian and Ukrainian industries in a blatant bid to undermine Ukrainian sovereignty.

So at least one effect of the administration’s “reset” has been to produce a wave of insecurity throughout Eastern and Central Europe and the Baltics, where people are starting to fear they can no longer count on the United States to protect them from an expansive Russia. And for this the administration has gotten what? Yet another hollow U.N. Security Council resolution. Some observers suggest that Iran’s leaders are quaking in their boots, confronted by this great unity of the international “community.” More likely, they are laughing up their sleeves—along with the men in Moscow.

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HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I wish to acknowledge Memorial Day, which provides us with an opportunity to take time out from our busy lives to remember and honor those men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice to protect the United States and the liberties we hold dear.

Mississippians have a strong affinity for our national defense, with thousands of brave citizens volunteering to serve in the Armed Forces. We also understand that, unfortunately, we will lose loved ones as part of that dedication.

The very first Memorial Day, originally known as Decoration Day, was observed in 1868 by decorating the graves of Civil War soldiers, and since then Americans have set aside a time each year to honor their fallen heroes.

Columbus, MS, proudly claims to be the birthplace of this tradition, but Memorial Day wasn’t officially established as a Federal holiday until 1971. In the nearly 234 years since we became an independent nation, Americans have fought in numerous wars, and many have given their lives in defense of the ideals that the United States represents.

As we gather this year to commemorate Memorial Day, we can reflect on all of the Mississippians who have perished protecting our Nation, whether in battles long ago or in the ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Since the start of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom almost 10 years ago, more than 70 members of the Armed Forces with close ties to Mississippi have died fighting in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Since Memorial Day last year, nine Mississippi soldiers have died while serving the American people. Those valiant men include LCpl. Philip P. Clark, 19, of Brandon, died May 18, 2010; SGT Anthony O. Magee, 29, of Hattiesburg, died April 27, 2010; Army PFC Anthony Blount, 21, of Petal, died April 7, 2010; SSG William S. Ricketts, 27, of Corinth, died Feb 27, 2010; SFC Christopher D. Shaw, 26, of Natchez, died Sept. 29, 2009; SGT Matthew L. Ingram, 25, of Newton, died Aug. 21, 2009; and SFC Alejandro Granado, 42, of Fairfax, Va., died Aug. 2, 2009. Mississippi Guard; SFC Severin W. Summers III, 43, of Bentonla, died Aug. 2, 2009; and Army SSG Johnny Roosevelt Polk, 39, of Gulfport, died July 31, 2009.

I honor them, and my heart goes out to the families of all the brave Mississippi men and women in uniform who have died for our country. It is the endless support of families that motivates our service men and women to carry out their duties, and their dedication must not be forgotten this Memorial Day.

Congress is working diligently to provide our troops in Afghanistan with the funds necessary to finish the job and come home safely. I understand the necessity of matching our soldiers’ readiness with the means to complete their mission, and I am confident that the entire Mississippi delegation and Congress continue to take that duty very seriously.

As a veteran of the U.S. Navy, I am particularly thankful for the bravery and dedication of those who have fought and died for our country in our defense. We are blessed to live in a country that protects its citizens with such a fine, fighting force.

This Memorial Day, I encourage everyone to take a moment to remember the courageous American soldiers who have given their lives for our Nation and to thank their families. Our fallen warriors are true heroes, and we owe them our solemn gratitude for their service and sacrifice.

MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. President, next week our Nation will observe Memorial Day, an occasion on which we honor the men and women who gave this country what President Lincoln called “the last, full measure of devotion”—their very lives. President Lincoln uttered those now timeless words at a ceremony honoring thousands of Civil War troops who fell in a battle surrounding a small town called Gettysburg. To this day, his words reflect, with unparalleled clarity, the heroic sacrifices that made, and have kept, this country safe and free. This Memorial Day we once again honor those men and women.

How do we properly honor those who gave their lives while in military service? Lincoln answered that question—“We honor them by dedicating ourselves to the cause for which they gave themselves. We honor those who died by ensuring, in Lincoln’s words, that they “shall not have died in vain.” We carry on, we remember them, and we remember to tend to their comrades and their families who live among us still.

The Senate’s role in this important task, to honor veterans and their family members with the care and benefits they have earned, falls in part to the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs. I have had the honor of serving on that committee for 20 years, most recently as its Chairman. In that capacity, I am pleased to report on the progress Congress has made since last Memorial Day.

Last Memorial Day, Congress had good reason to be proud when looking back at recent gains for veterans and their families. Since 2007, we have passed historic appropriations bills to properly fund VA, following years of drastic underfunding. We passed the most substantive GI bill since World War II, which has already been put to use by hundreds of thousands of Americans. And we made wide-ranging reforms to the Department of Veterans Affairs—overhauling its mental health care and suicide prevention programs, and enhancing cooperation and collaboration between the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs.

This Memorial Day, we can be proud of having done even more to help VA adapt to the needs of today’s veterans and their families. I will focus on two of the most significant bills—one which reformed the broken funding process for veterans’ health care, and the other, which charts a course for VA where the needs of women veterans and family caregivers receive special attention.

When I became chairman of the committee, the VA health care system had endured many years of chronic underfunding, leading to health care rationing and budget shortfalls. While we succeeded in restoring VA’s budget to appropriate levels, we still had not addressed the underlying funding process—a one-year-at-a-time appropriations process that led to funding delays in 20 of the last 23 years. To fix this broken system, I introduced the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act. This bill was designed to take the process of advance appropriations—funding a program one year ahead of the regular appropriations process—and apply it to the Nation’s largest health care system. At this time last year, that bill was still pending in Congress. Since then, our colleagues overwhelmingly chose to support this legislation, and the President signed it into law. This change will be felt in every State of the Union. At the one thousand-plus points of care run by VA, administrators will know

what their budget will be for the current year and for the year to come. The 6 million veterans who are projected to seek VA care will not have to worry about whether their local VA clinic will have to go months without a proper budget, as they did in the past.

We now turn to the important task of overseeing the implementation of the new law and standing by should VA or the Administration ask for appropriate funding. We are currently working on the first budget with advance appropriations under the new authority, and I have been pleased with what has been a smooth transition.

At this point last year, many other veterans' initiatives were pending—for veterans in rural areas, for the caregivers of wounded warriors, and for women veterans—to name a few. All of these proposals, along with others, were wrapped into one important package—the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act. While this was a bipartisan bill from the beginning, its passage was far from assured. Isolated Members of Congress sought to block the bill at several stages, citing fears of cost and change. Resolute that it would be change for the better and that its cost is, in fact, a cost of war, the supporters of this bill prevailed last month when President Obama's signature made it law.

This new law's many provisions were reviewed by this body before we voted for them, so I will not again go into all of the details. Instead, I will highlight just a few of the changes in the new law:

For the families caring for wounded warriors, it brings an unprecedented permanent program to train, certify, and financially support them. With this important change, VA recognizes that the families of disabled veterans should be treated as partners, not ignored.

For a growing number of women veterans who served our Nation honorably, it brings changes to help VA adapt to their needs. These include an authorization for VA to provide health care for a woman veteran's newborn child for up to one week; a mandate for VA to implement a pilot program to provide child care and adjustment care to women veterans; and a requirement that VA train mental health providers to treat military sexual trauma.

For veterans in rural areas, the new law brings programs and reforms to break down barriers between them and the care they deserve. To name a few, these include travel reimbursements for veterans treated at VA facilities; grants for veterans service organization transporting veterans from remote areas; an expansion of telehealth options for veterans; and provisions promoting collaboration with community organizations and providers such as the Indian Health Services.

The bill makes other important changes, from eliminating copayments for catastrophically disabled veterans to strengthening VA's ability to re-

cruit and retain first-class health care professionals. These valuable changes and others are now law, thanks to the support of Congress and the President.

As I noted at the outset, these measures, which demonstrate Congress's gratitude to our troops abroad and veterans at home, are the best way we can honor those who gave their lives in service to their country. While much remains to be done, as we pause this Memorial Day, we can recall the significant changes over the past year.

I close by expressing once more my gratitude to the patriots who are with us in the flesh and in spirit, and to the nation and the national ideals that unite us all.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, as you are aware, on Memorial Day citizens across our great country pause to reflect on our fallen heroes. American hearts swell with pride as men and women everywhere stand just a little bit taller when hearing our National Anthem, and they feel a lump in their throat at the sound of a bugle playing taps. We stand proud and remember our Nation's sons and daughters who no longer stand with us but whose names and memories remain forever preserved in our hearts. On Memorial Day, our Nation weighs and respects the price of our freedom.

We can and we should learn from those Americans who went to war but never returned home. For them, service meant accepting the risk that they might not have a chance to enjoy the freedom their service protects. They selflessly chose to serve anyway. For the fallen, honor meant the privilege of wearing a U.S. military uniform and a chance to earn the respect that it garners around the world despite the risk that it might make them a target for those who mean us harm. For them, selflessness meant answering a call for help from a fellow soldier, without hesitation, even if chances were high that it would be their final act.

These timeless qualities of service, honor, respect, and selflessness form the bedrock of military service in a free society. On Memorial Day, we commemorate those who lived according to these principles so that we might assemble in this Chamber and across the land as free people, safe under the umbrella of protection that their brothers and sisters continue to provide around the world today.

It is appropriate that on Memorial Day, we should set aside our differences and unite as Americans—a unified nation with one common voice to honor our fallen. Let us celebrate that we are a free nation, a proud nation, a nation guided by principles and universal truths. And although we may disagree on many things, we do so peacefully and lawfully. Even in tough times such as these, we remain a beacon of light around the world for those who can only imagine a life of freedom as they struggle to survive under the grip of tyranny and oppression. Today we remember the men and women who

kept that beacon lit and consider the gravity of their sacrifice.

As a nation, we must also remember that with every fallen soldier there is a family left behind. We should appreciate with compassion and respect their enduring sacrifice and provide for them the support and gratitude they deserve. Ours is a grateful nation.

Often quoted is our Declaration of Independence that proclaims "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." It is those who have answered that call to service who ensured that our gift of liberty is not only unalienable, it is also enduring.

REMEMBERING DR. GEORGE TILLER

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, 1 year ago this week, Dr. George Tiller, a provider of critical reproductive health services, was shot to death while at church in Wichita, KS. The anniversary of his death serves as a solemn reminder of the violence that reproductive health professionals face today.

Unfortunately, like so many of his colleagues who treat women across this country, Dr. Tiller faced years of constant harassment, intimidation and death threats. These acts of violence eventually culminated in his murder.

We know, however, that Dr. Tiller's murder is not an isolated incident. A pattern of intimidation, threats and violence against reproductive health providers exists in this country and must end.

Since 1993, eight clinic workers have been murdered in the United States. During that time period there have been thousands of reported acts of violence against providers of reproductive health care including bombings, arson, death threats, kidnappings and assaults. As the Tiller murder demonstrates, we simply cannot tolerate any form of harassment and threats to health care providers and their patients.

I remember clearly 10 years ago tomorrow—May 28, 2000—when the Concord Feminist Health Center in my home State of New Hampshire was the victim of an arson attack. The facility suffered extensive damage, costing tens of thousands of dollars to repair. Thankfully, no one was injured in the attack. It was not merely the cost of the repairs that was so troubling—what was troubling was that this act of hate and intimidation left the community feeling fearful and uncertain. No one should live with that fear and certainly not because they provide critical health care services to women.

I recently heard the story about a reproductive health center director in Colorado who reports that he often wears a bulletproof vest in public. He said: "I walk out of my office and the first thing I do is look at the parking garage that the hospital built two