

citizens of every other State that has taken these steps toward justice and fairness.

Frances Herbert and Takako Ueda are two Vermonters who know first hand the harm caused by this discriminatory Federal policy. For them, the issue is not ideological or political, it is deeply personal. They are legally married in the State of Vermont and have been formally committed to one another for more than a decade. Despite the fact that Vermont considers them to be a married couple, the Federal government does not. After many years of lawful presence in the United States, Ms. Ueda was faced with the impossible decision of choosing between her spouse and leaving the United States. Our Federal laws may split their family apart. This is unfair and it is wrong.

Not only does the Defense of Marriage Act infringe upon the States' traditional and historic right to define marriage, it denies many Americans equal treatment under the law. What good is a Federal law that dictates such a result? Ideological purity alone is not sufficient to overcome the harm that is caused. As I just acknowledged, my own thinking has evolved over the years as I have learned from my constituents and fellow Americans. Yet, repealing the Defense of Marriage Act would not force any State or individual to recognize a marriage they didn't agree with. Instead, it would restore the role that States have historically played in determining who can be married under its laws.

I am confident that justice and fairness will prevail in the end. Our Nation is too noble and our sense of liberty too strong to tolerate injustice without end. I am heartened by the progress that we are seeing across the country. Public consciousness is evolving, and will reach the point at which discrimination based on sexual orientation becomes another sad relic of our past. I believe we will look back at these prejudices with disappointment and regret, just as we have at other points in our history. But the capacity of our Nation to evolve and progress is a defining characteristic of the American spirit. And the American people ultimately come to reject that which is fundamentally unfair and unjust.

Just as Frances Herbert and Takako Ueda are living examples of just how devastating the Defense of Marriage Act is for so many Americans, there are others in Vermont who are facing and have faced the same struggles. Gordon Stewart, who testified before the Judiciary Committee in 2009, was compelled to sell his family's farm in Vermont and move abroad in order to live lawfully with his partner. Nancy Wasserman was compelled to leave Vermont and move to Canada to be able to live with her spouse. She can now legally enjoy the benefits of marriage that would otherwise be denied to her wife in the United States. Michael Upton, a doctor and native of Vermont

is forced to live apart from his loved one. No Vermonter, and no American, should be forced to make this choice.

In addition to my strong support for the repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act, I introduced the Uniting American Families Act to help right a part of this wrong. My legislation would grant same-sex binational couples the same immigration benefits provided to heterosexual couples. Passage of this important legislation would help put our country on par with over 25 other developed countries that value and respect human rights.

In the United States, 10 states and the District of Columbia have marriage equality laws. The tide continues to swell in favor of same-sex equality with the New Jersey Legislature passing a marriage equality bill this year, which was vetoed by Governor Christie. It is clear that Americans are increasingly accepting of same-sex loving relationships and marriages, and that more and more Americans are putting aside tired stereotypes and their personal preferences to support individual freedom and the basic rights of all Americans. Now, the Federal Government must respect the sovereignty of these States and the protections those States have provided its citizens.

Having worked over many months to support Takako Ueda and Frances Herbert, it is clear to me that the love and devotion that they have for one another is no different or less sacred than that which I share with my wife, Marcelle. It is no less real, or important, or worthy of protection and recognition. I have been blessed to be married for nearly 50 years. Marcelle and I have been able to enjoy the family unity and the benefits that legal recognition provides, and which I hope all Americans would agree is fundamental.

As the Senate moves through the second session of the 112th Congress, I will keep fighting for Takako Ueda and Frances Herbert, for Gordon Stewart, Nancy Wasserman, and Michael Upton, and for all Americans who face discrimination as the result of the Defense of Marriage Act. I know that justice is on our side.

HEALTH REFORM

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, during this second anniversary of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, I wish to discuss some of the benefits this law has already brought to consumers.

Millions of Americans nationwide and in California have already benefited from this law. For the first time, insurance companies are held accountable they cannot drop coverage just because someone gets sick, they cannot deny coverage because of a preexisting condition, and they cannot impose limits on the amount of care provided in a lifetime.

This law helps women, children, young adults, seniors, families, and individuals living with disabilities and chronic medical conditions.

In California, because of the law, over 12 million people no longer have a lifetime limit on their health insurance plan. This includes almost 4.5 million women and 3.26 million children.

Now, individuals and families with medical expenses do not have to worry that they will reach a point where insurance will no longer provide coverage. Eliminating lifetime caps on coverage and phasing out annual caps will reassure Californians that their health coverage will be there when they need it.

The health reform law is taking great strides to ensure affordable prescription drugs for Medicare beneficiaries.

Before health reform, Medicare beneficiaries were faced with a prescription drug coverage gap that was unaffordable for many. This so-called doughnut hole forced beneficiaries to pay 100 percent of their drug costs after they exceeded an initial coverage limit. As many as one in four seniors went without a prescription every year because they simply could not afford it.

Now, the law is closing this coverage gap, and already, an estimated 320,000 Medicare beneficiaries in California have saved almost \$172 million on prescription drugs.

Under the health reform law, insurance companies are already banned from denying coverage to children because of a preexisting condition, such as a heart defect, autism, or juvenile diabetes.

Parents no longer have to spend away college funds to cover children with medical conditions.

Beginning in 2014, health insurers are prohibited from denying anyone health insurance coverage because of a preexisting medical condition. This means that being pregnant can no longer be considered a preexisting condition. It means that individuals will no longer be prevented from purchasing affordable insurance simply because they had an accident, are sick, or got cancer.

Under the law, insurance companies have to pay more of the premium dollars they collect on actual medical care, not on profits.

In California, because of this provision, almost 9 million people are getting better value for their premium dollars. Furthermore, California has received over \$5 million in grants from the law to fight unreasonable premium increases and to bolster scrutiny of rates.

Because of the health reform law, young adults can now stay on their family insurance plan up to age 26. Previously, insurance companies could drop coverage for young adults, many times at age 19. Now the law makes it easier and more affordable for young adults to get health insurance.

Already over 350,000 young adults in California have benefited from this provision.

This law takes great strides to equalize insurance coverage for women and

to rid the system of discriminatory practices based on gender.

The practice of “gender-rating,” or charging more for insurance simply because of gender, is outlawed in the health reform law. This means that women can no longer be charged higher premiums.

Over a recent 3-year period, 7.3 million women 38 percent of women who tried to buy coverage on the individual market were either rejected altogether, charged a higher premium, or sold policies that excluded certain benefit coverage because of a “preexisting condition” like cancer or having been pregnant.

Now, women will be guaranteed coverage at a similar rate to men.

Already, almost 2.3 million Californian women with private insurance have access to no-cost preventive services because of the law. This includes necessary cancer screenings, such as mammograms, annual wellness exams, and contraception.

Additionally, over 1.6 million women in California who are on Medicare now have access to free preventive services because of the law.

These are just a few critical consumer protections that are now in play because of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, signed into law 2 years ago.

We have a long ways to go to improve our health care system and to ensure affordable quality care for all Americans, but these essential consumer protections take great strides to get us there.

RECOGNIZING RxIMPACT DAY

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the fourth annual RxIMPACT Day on Capitol Hill. This is a day to recognize the contribution of pharmacies to the American healthcare system. Hundreds of pharmacists, pharmacy school faculty and students, State pharmacy leaders and pharmacy company executives will visit the Capitol to share with Congress the importance of supporting legislation that protects access to neighborhood pharmacies and utilizes pharmacists to improve quality and reduce the costs of health care.

Over 260 advocates from 41 States have traveled to Washington to talk about their contributions in over 50,000 community pharmacies operating nationwide. These important health care providers are here to urge Congress to recognize the value of pharmacists and protect access to these medication experts as a part of our valued health care delivery system.

Pharmacists are some of the Nation's most accessible and trusted health care providers. Most Americans live within 5 miles of a community retail pharmacy. They are the ultimate do-it-all providers. Pharmacists prepare, bill, and dispense prescriptions. They offer patient counseling. With their specialized education, they also play a major

role in medication therapy management, disease management, immunizations, and health care screenings.

Eighty-six percent of rural Americans reside within a 10-mile radius of a sole community pharmacy. As the face of community health care, pharmacies across the Nation offer these and other cost-saving programs and services to help patients take medicines appropriately to achieve positive results. For more than a century, pharmacies and pharmacists have supported folks in Montana and throughout America with these important patient care services. It is critical we work to support their unique contributions.

As we continue to make health care better and more affordable, we should adopt policies that recognize the health and financial benefits from helping patients adhere to their medications. This helps to improve health outcomes and reduces the risks of adverse events and unnecessary costly hospital readmissions and emergency room visits. Unfortunately, only half of Americans living with chronic diseases adhere to their drug regimens. Patient nonadherence costs the Nation's economy an estimated \$290 billion each year, not to mention the avoidable loss of quality of life for patients and their loved ones.

Congress recognized the important role of local pharmacists when it included a medication therapy management, MTM, benefit in the Medicare Part D Program. By improving patient health outcomes, we have seen better efficiency and savings in the prescription drug program. That is why I support community pharmacists' efforts to strengthen the MTM benefit so it is available for seniors and others struggling with chronic conditions and other illnesses.

Medicaid beneficiaries also deserve access to the most cost-effective medications. The Affordable Care Act made important changes to pharmacy reimbursement for generic drugs in the Medicaid program. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services recently issued a proposed rule to implement these important changes, and it will be critical for Congress to monitor this rulemaking to ensure it is consistent with congressional intent.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the vital role pharmacies play in the field of public health. All 50 States recognize the role pharmacists play by supporting their ability to administer immunizations and other important preventative services in Medicare, both Part B and Part D, and other Federal health programs.

Today, as the cochair of the Senate Community Pharmacy Caucus, I celebrate the value of pharmacists and support efforts to protect access to neighborhood and community pharmacies. I appreciate how pharmacies improve the quality and reduce the costs of health care.

In recognition of the fourth annual NACDS RxIMPACT Day on Capitol

Hill, I would like to congratulate pharmacy leaders, pharmacists, students, and executives, and the pharmacy community for their contributions to the good health of the American people.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

COLORADO VETERANS RESOURCE COALITION AND CRAWFORD HOUSE

• Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, today I wish to express my support and appreciation for the Colorado Veterans Resource Coalition, CVRC, and Crawford House, which has offered our veterans in Colorado Springs a decade of support and recovery services.

CVRC was first formed on March 9, 2000, operating in a small, three-bedroom house on Cucharrus Street with a live-in house manager and two residents. Its first dormitory was later named in honor of WWII Medal of Honor recipient and proud native son of Colorado, William J. Crawford, with his family's permission.

On February 14, 2012, Crawford House marked its 10th anniversary, completing its first decade of successful veteran recovery services to homeless and disabled veterans in Colorado Springs. In that decade, more than 1,100 veterans successfully completed Veterans Administration programs, and 80 percent of these alumni remain successfully in the community. Many of these veterans reestablished relationships with their spouses, families, and friends; completed secondary and advanced education; and entered in to the workforce as self-sustaining citizens.

On December 1, 2003, the Colorado Veterans Resource Coalition and Crawford House added additional services, and on January 14, 2004, CVRC began purchasing two adjacent houses on Weber Street for graduating veterans to live in inexpensively while restarting their lives. These new facilities freed Crawford House beds to treat more homeless and disabled veterans. Today, both of these houses are fully paid for, which helps lower our future veteran treatment costs. It was my privilege to tour Crawford House and to meet with the staff and residents. The passion and commitment of those who work there, as well as their unending commitment to serving those who have served our Nation, is an inspiration and example to all Coloradans.

Therefore, Mr. President, I want the RECORD to show my deep appreciation and gratitude—along with that of all Coloradans—for the contributions of volunteers, organizations, and individuals who created, expanded, and continually improved the Colorado Veterans Resource Coalition and Crawford House.●

TRIBUTE TO WOODY HARRELL

• Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, on the occasion of his upcoming retirement, I