

until they are sick to get coverage, driving up the costs for everyone else in the meantime. This will mean that many of the consumer protections in the law, such as the ban on preexisting health conditions, would disappear, once again leaving millions uninsured. For sake of the health and security of our Nation, the Supreme Court should not cast aside this landmark law and Congress's time-honored ability to act on behalf of the American people.

The affordable care act is a tremendous achievement that will improve the lives of Americans for generations to come. For decades, we have heard heartbreaking stories about the enormous challenges Americans face because they are uninsured or underinsured. With each year that we move forward to implement the features of the affordable care act, these stories are becoming fewer and fewer and are being replaced by stories of the success of these reforms, one family at a time, all across Vermont and all across America.

There is still much more to accomplish, and there are still millions of Americans who are struggling to buy or keep adequate health insurance coverage for their families or themselves. As these reforms are implemented over the next few years, I will continue to work with Vermonters and the Department of Health and Human Services to help Americans have the access to the quality, affordable health insurance that each and every American needs and deserves.

I yield the floor.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

Mr. LEAHY, Madam President, I note in morning business that the bipartisan Violence Against Women Act reauthorization now has 61 cosponsors. I thank Senator CRAPO for his leadership and commend the Senators from both parties who came to the floor last week to speak about the importance of reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act.

I want to thank Senators MIKULSKI, MURRAY, MURKOWSKI, KLOBUCHAR, HAGAN, SHAHEEN, FEINSTEIN and BOXER for coming to the Senate floor last week to express bipartisan support for the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act and to emphasize the importance of reauthorizing this landmark legislation. I hope that their statements will point the way for the Senate to act soon to pass this important legislation.

Senator KLOBUCHAR spoke about her time as a prosecutor in Hennepin County, MN, and her efforts to put the focus on children's needs in domestic violence cases. She spoke about the dangers faced by law enforcement and the loss of a young officer who was killed while responding to a domestic violence call and who left behind a wife and three young children.

We heard from the respected senior Senator from Alaska, Senator MUR-

KOWSKI, who spoke of the message we need to send so that victims can have confidence and muster the courage to leave an abusive situation. She spoke about the important commitment we make against sexual assault and domestic violence in this legislation and our expanded efforts in rural communities such as the villages of rural Alaska.

The Senate heard last Thursday, as well, from Senator MIKULSKI, Senator MURRAY, Senator HAGAN, Senator SHAHEEN, Senator FEINSTEIN and Senator BOXER, the author of a House bill in 1990 that was an important part of this effort. Eight Senators came to the floor to remind us all why this measure is important and that the Senate should proceed to pass it.

For almost 18 years, the Violence Against Women Act—VAWA—has been the centerpiece of the Federal Government's commitment to combating domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. The impact of this landmark law has been remarkable. It has provided life saving assistance to hundreds of thousands of women, men, and children, and the annual incidence of domestic violence has fallen by more than 50 percent since the law was first passed.

Support for the Violence Against Women Act has always been bipartisan, and I appreciate the bipartisan support that this reauthorization bill has already received. Senator CRAPO and I introduced the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act in November. With Senators HELLER and AYOTTE joining the bill this week, it is now cosponsored by 61 senators from both sides of the aisle, reaching a critical level of bipartisan support.

The Violence Against Women Act is not about partisan politics. It is about saving women's lives and responding to the scourge of domestic and sexual violence. We should consider the bill and pass it because it is vitally important legislation. The legislation now before the Senate is informed by the experiences and needs of survivors of domestic and sexual violence all around the country, and by the recommendations of the tireless professionals who serve them every day. It builds on the progress that has been made in reducing domestic and sexual violence and makes vital improvements to respond to remaining, unmet needs, as we have each time we have authorized and reauthorized the Violence Against Women Act.

Our legislation includes key improvements that are needed to better serve the victims of violence. Because incidence of sexual assault remains high, while reporting rates, prosecution rates, and conviction rates remain appallingly low, this reauthorization increases VAWA's focus on effective responses to sexual assault. It also encourages the use of new, evidence-based methods that can be very effective in preventing domestic violence homicide. The provisions of the bill are described

and explained in the committee report, which was also filed last week.

The provisions that a minority on the Judiciary Committee labeled controversial are, in fact, modest changes to meet the genuine, unmet needs that service providers, who help victims every day, have told us they desperately need. As every prior VAWA authorization has done, this bill takes steps to recognize those victims whose needs are not being served and find ways to help them. This is not new or different. It should not be a basis for partisan division. The provisions are not extreme, and they are not political.

This reauthorization seeks to ensure that services provided under the Violence Against Women Act are available for all victims, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Research has proven that domestic and sexual violence affects all communities, but victims of different sexual orientations or gender identities have had a more difficult time obtaining basic services. There is nothing radical or new about saying that all victims are entitled to services. This is what the Violence Against Women Act has always done. It reaches out to help all victims. As Senator FEINSTEIN said last week: "[T]hese are improvements. Domestic violence is domestic violence."

Domestic and sexual violence against Native women continues to be a problem of epidemic proportions. Just as we made strides when we enacted the Tribal Law and Order Act two years ago, we can take responsible steps to more effectively protect Native women. Working with the Indian Affairs Committee, we have included a provision to fill a loophole in jurisdiction in order to allow tribal courts jurisdiction over perpetrators who have significant ties to the tribe in a very limited set of domestic violence cases involving an Indian victim on Indian land. This provision would allow prosecution of cases that currently are simply not addressed, and it would do so in a way that guarantees defendants comprehensive rights.

The bill would allow a modest increase in the number of available U visas. Law enforcement is authorized to request visas for immigrant victims who are helping their investigations. These visas are key law enforcement tools that allow perpetrators of serious crimes to be brought to justice. They were created in VAWA previously with bipartisan support. The Department of Homeland Security and the Fraternal Order of Police strongly support this provision because it serves law enforcement purposes.

We all know that while the economy is now improving, these remain difficult economic times, and taxpayer money must be spent responsibly. That is why in our bill, we consolidate 13 programs into four in an effort to reduce duplication and bureaucratic barriers. The bill would cut the authorization level for VAWA by more than \$135 million a year, a decrease of nearly 20

percent from the last reauthorization. The legislation also includes significant accountability provisions, including audit requirements, enforcement mechanisms, and restrictions on grants and costs.

Our bipartisan bill is the product of careful consideration and has widespread support. I have reached out to those who have opposed these provisions to work out a time agreement to govern amendments. The Judiciary Committee passed this bill after considering the amendments offered by the minority. That is what the Senate should do. Then we should move forward and pass this important measure with strong bipartisan support. These problems are too serious for us to delay. We should reauthorize this law now.

This is crucial, commonsense legislation that has been endorsed by more than 700 State and national organizations. Numerous religious and faith-based organizations as well as our law enforcement partners have endorsed this VAWA reauthorization bill. The Violence Against Women Act should not be a partisan matter. The last two times the Violence Against Women Act was reauthorized, it was unanimously approved by the Senate. Although it seems that partisan gridlock is too often the default in the Senate over the last couple of years, it remains my hope working with our Republican cosponsors and if those who have voted for VAWA in the past come forward to support it, we can pass our VAWA reauthorization with a strong bipartisan majority.

Domestic and sexual violence knows no political party. Its victims are Republican and Democrat; rich and poor, young and old, male and female. Let us work together and pass strong VAWA reauthorization legislation without delay. It is a law that has saved countless lives, and it is an example of what we can accomplish when we work together.

TRIBUTE TO HERBERT S. VERRILL

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I rise today to pay tribute to a man who has made a great sacrifice to protect and defend the liberties of his beloved United States, and the Republic of France as well: 2LT Herbert S. Verrill of Laurel County, KY. Mr. Verrill is a veteran of World War II and served a tour of duty in Europe in 1945. Today he is 92 years old and resides on Old Whitley Road in Laurel County.

Mr. Verrill, or "Herb" as many call him, served in the U.S. Army, Company E, 399th Infantry Regiment, 100th Infantry Division. Near Reyersviller, France, on March 15, 1945, he commanded a small troop. He was just a lieutenant, and at the time he and his men ventured into the midst of an attack that day. To Herb's horror, his unit found themselves trapped in a maze of barbed wire and landmines while bullets whizzed around them.

Herb accidentally set off one of the buried mines, and the explosion took off his foot in a nearly fatal wound. In a superhuman act of courage, Herb ignored the pain and forgot the wound he had just received. All the 24-year-old lieutenant would think about was the safety of his troop. Using the one foot he had left, Herb directed his men safely out of the middle of the heated skirmish.

After the war, Herb returned home to Kentucky and settled down. He married, fathered three successful children, and found his way back to civilian life. For the next many years Herb, like many other World War II veterans, kept the courage and selflessness he had shown on the battlefield to himself. He sat by quietly and humbly, watching those around him enjoy the freedoms and liberties he and many others had made such a great sacrifice to preserve. Although Herb had done his best to move on, the world would not forget the great heroism that he had shown.

Herb received a letter from the Consul General of France, based in Chicago, IL, in July of 2011. He had been named a Knight of the Legion of Honor by the President of the French Republic, one of the highest awards one can receive in the country of France. The letter read:

My fellow countrymen will never forget your sacrifice. Their children and grandchildren are as proud of your courageous actions as can be your own children and grandchildren. This outstanding distinction is the highest honor that France can bestow upon those who have achieved remarkable deeds for France. It is also a sign of gratitude for your invaluable contribution to the liberation of France during these difficult times in the history of our nation.

The award was authorized on July 4, 2011.

Herb was also recognized by the country whose flag he had worn on his uniform in Europe—the United States of America. He received the Distinguished Service Cross. The letter he received from GEN Donald Storm recalled the "indomitable courage and resolution" displayed by Herb during the battle in Reyersviller that "prevented confusion and consequent casualties among the men, which made possible the capture of the objective."

Herb's nephew, Randy Stanifer, is in awe of the great sacrifice that was made by the service men and women during the Second World War. "The men from those wars were pre-cell phones and pre-Internet," he says. "They were out in the field and would go months without hearing from their families. They went through many things and when most of them came home, they didn't talk about it."

Randy went on to declare, "I think we should all pause for a few minutes and recognize the things they had to go through and appreciate their sacrifices."

Herb was extremely pleased to receive both awards. He is one of the few remaining veterans of World War II;

sadly, our country loses more every day. He answered his country's call to serve, and he did so valiantly. Herbert Verrill undoubtedly deserves every recognition.

Mr. President, at this time I would like to ask my Senate colleagues to join me in commemorating the service and sacrifice made by 2LT Herbert S. Verrill in World War II on behalf of the United States of America and the French Republic.

Recently an article appeared in the Laurel County-area publication the Sentinel Echo. The article highlighted the courageous life of Mr. Verrill and reported on the awards bestowed upon him by the French Republic and the United States in July, 2011. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that said article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Sentinel Echo, Aug. 26, 2011]

LAUREL MAN RECEIVES FRENCH MILITARY HONOR

(By Nita Johnson)

A local veteran of World War II recently received two honors for his military service, one of which is the highest honor bestowed by the French government.

Herbert Verrill of Old Whitley Road was presented with the Knight of the Legion of Honor on behalf of the President of the French Republic through the Consul General of France, based in Chicago. He also received the Distinguished Service Cross for his valor in leading his men away from harm during a battle in France and for directing his company to continue an attack, despite being injured himself.

Verrill served with the United States Army Company E, 399th Infantry Regiment, 100th Infantry Division near Reyersviller, France, on March 15, 1945. Verrill, a lieutenant at the time, was leading his troops through an attack by enemy forces—through mines and barbed wire—when he accidentally set off one of the mines. The explosion blew Verrill's foot off. In spite of the pain and trauma, Verrill kept his fellow comrades and their safety foremost, and ordered them away from the minefield. He continued to ensure their safety and defense by continuing to direct the men by hand and arm signals.

Verrill received the letter from Graham Paul, Consul General of France in Chicago, Ill., last month.

"It is my pleasure . . . to inform you, on behalf of the people of France, the President of the French Republic has named you Knight of the Legion of Honor for your valorous action during World War II," the citation reads. "My fellow countrymen will never forget your sacrifice. Their children and grandchildren are as proud of your courageous actions as can be your own children and grandchildren. This outstanding distinction is the highest honor that France can bestow upon those who have achieved remarkable deeds for France. It is also a sign of gratitude for your invaluable contribution to the liberation of France during these difficult times in the history of our nation."

The award was authorized through a decree from the President of the French Republic on July 4, 2011.

Verrill was also presented with the Distinguished Service Cross by the American government for his courageous acts. The citation outlining Verrill's heroic act reads: "The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress,