

Annette Rocheleau—Assistant Coach
Shannon Schweyen—Assistant Coach
Trish Duce—Assistant Coach

PLAYERS

Katie Baker
Kellie Cole
Kenzie De Boer
Hannah Doran
McCalle Feller
Shanae Gilham
Torry Hill
Alexandra Hurley
Molly Klinker
DJ Reinhardt
Maggie Rickman
Carly Selvig
Alyssa Smith
Rachel Staudacher
Jordan Sullivan
Haley Vining

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

STAFF SERGEANT STEVEN BLASS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I rise to pay tribute to the life of SSG Steven Blass, who was killed in a helicopter crash in Afghanistan while serving his country. My thoughts and prayers are with his wife Tricia, his young son Hayden, his parents, Randy and Carol, and all his family and friends. I know they are feeling his loss very deeply now, as is the entire community of Estherville, IA, his hometown. I understand that Steven Blass was patriotic even as a child and that joining the Army had been a dream of his. He was doing what he loved when he gave the ultimate sacrifice. His love of country and zeal for freedom represent the very best of America. Like all the patriots before him, his sacrifice has helped keep the torch of liberty burning bright. The United States of America is indeed fortunate to have a native son like Steven Blass, eager to serve his country and risk everything for his fellow citizens. We are forever in his debt. Although it is a debt which we can never repay, it is a debt we must honor by remembering SSG Steven Blass and what he did for all of us.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT
ANNIVERSARY

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, this Saturday marks the third anniversary of the passage of the Affordable Care Act. At age 3, the law is protecting consumers against abusive insurance practices, helping seniors by lowering prescription drug costs, and building the infrastructure to expand health insurance coverage to millions of Americans. For the first time, patients' interests and needs are being put ahead of those of the insurance and drug companies.

The Obama administration has worked tirelessly to implement the law, in the face of constant opposition. My Republican colleagues in Congress have voted to repeal or defund the Affordable Care Act well over 30 times. It is a chilling, if useless, political refrain from the tea party.

On this third anniversary, it is important not only to reflect on how far

we have come but to continue pressing forward on the Affordable Care Act's many improvements to our health care system, particularly the delivery system reforms.

The Council of Economic Advisers' 2013 "Economic Report of the President" identified a number of sources of waste in our health care system, including the fragmentation of the delivery system; duplicate care and over-treatment; the failure of providers to adopt best practices; and payment fraud. The council notes:

Taken together, [these factors] have been estimated to account for between 13 and 26 percent of national health expenditures in 2011. The magnitude of this waste offers an equally large opportunity for spending reductions and improvement in quality of care an opportunity that underpins many of the provisions of the Affordable Care Act.

Thankfully, we have the tools necessary to seize the opportunity described by the Council of Economic Advisers to drive down costs and improve the quality of patient care. The Affordable Care Act included 45 provisions dedicated to improving the way we deliver health care in 5 priority areas: payment reform, primary and preventive care, measuring and reporting quality, administrative simplification, and health information technology.

The effort to extract from the wasteful swamp of our health care bureaucracy a lean, humane, patient-centered system is vital. National health spending hit \$2.7 trillion in 2011 or about 18 percent of GDP. The next least efficient developed country—the Netherlands—spent 12 percent of its GDP on health care in 2010. Germany and France spent 11.6 percent of their GDP on health care. If we were as efficient as the Netherlands, if we merely moved from last place to second-to-last place in health care efficiency, we would save over \$800 billion per year.

For all of our excess spending, one might expect that Americans live longer, healthier lives. But that is not the case. The Institute of Medicine recently compared the United States to 17 peer countries. We were worst for prevalence of diabetes among adults, worst for obesity across all age groups, and worst in infant mortality. We suffer higher death rates and worse outcomes for conditions such as heart disease and chronic lung disease.

According to the Week, avoidable infections passed on due to poor hospital hygiene kill as many people in the United States—about 103,000 a year—as AIDS, breast cancer, and auto accidents combined. These deaths are tragic because they are largely preventable. As we have shown in Rhode Island, when hospital staff follow a checklist of basic instructions washing their hands with soap, cleaning a patient's skin with antiseptic, placing sterile drapes over the patient, etc.—rates of infection plummet, and the costs of treating those infections disappear. The costs of treating the 100,000 who die, as well as the hundreds of

thousands who suffer nonlethal infections, disappear.

Delivery system reform has real promise in improving the management and prevention of chronic disease. These diseases accounted for 7 out of 10 deaths in the United States in 2011 and at least 75 percent of our health care spending.

I am not alone in saying that a correct diagnosis of the problem will lead us to delivery system reform. Gail Wilensky, the former Administrator of the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services under President George H.W. Bush, said in 2011, "If we don't redesign what we are doing, we can't just cut unit reimbursement and think we are somehow getting a better system."

In the private sector, George Halvorson, chairman and CEO of Kaiser Permanente said, "There are people right now who want to cut benefits and ration care and have that be the avenue to cost reduction in this country and that's wrong. It's so wrong, it's almost criminal. It's an inept way of thinking about health care."

Saving money by reforming how we deliver health care isn't just possible, it is happening. At a 2011 hearing I chaired of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, Greg Poulsen of Intermountain Healthcare said:

Intermountain and other organizations have shown that improving quality is compatible with lowering costs and, indeed, high-quality care is generally less expensive than substandard care.

So when Republicans say we must cut Medicare and Medicaid benefits to fix our deficit, that assertion is flat-out wrong.

Attacking Medicare and Medicaid is consistent with a particular political ideology, but it is not consistent with the facts. It ignores the fact that we operate a wildly inefficient health care system and that our health care spending problem is systemwide, not unique to Federal health programs. It is not just Medicare and Medicaid; former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said of the Defense budget, "We're being eaten alive by health care."

The President's Council of Economic Advisers estimates that we could save approximately \$700 billion every year in our health care system without compromising health outcomes. The Institute of Medicine recently put this number at \$750 billion. Other groups are even more optimistic: The New England Healthcare Institute has reported that \$850 billion could be saved annually. The Lewin Group and former Bush Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill have estimated annual savings of a staggering \$1 trillion. Most recently, the Commonwealth Fund laid out a set of policies that would accelerate health care delivery system reform and slow health spending by \$2 trillion over the next 10 years.

These savings will have a dramatic impact on the Federal budget. The Federal Government spends 40 percent of

America's health care expenditures. If the estimate by the Council of Economic Advisers is correct, we could reduce the Federal deficit by up to \$280 billion per year. If we achieve only one-quarter of the Council of Economic Advisers' estimate, the Federal savings would be \$70 billion annually. Over a 10-year budget period, that amounts to \$700 billion in Federal health care savings all without taking away any benefits, all while likely improving quality of care.

In a report I issued last year for the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, I found that the administration has made considerable progress on implementing the 45 delivery system reform provisions in the law. But more can and must be done. Specifically, I again urge the administration to set a cost-savings target for health care delivery system reform. A cost-savings target will focus, guide, and spur the administration's efforts in a manner that vague intentions to "bend the health care cost curve" will not. As the Commonwealth Fund concluded, "The establishment of targets can serve both as a metric to guide policy development and as an incentive for all involved parties to act to make them effective."

In 1961, President Kennedy declared that within 10 years the United States would put a man on the Moon and return him safely. The message—and the mission outlined—was clear. The result was a vast mobilization of private and public resources to achieve that purpose.

This administration has a similar opportunity—particularly now, at the height of the implementation of the Affordable Care Act. We need to put the full force of American innovation and ingenuity into achieving a serious cost-savings target for our Nation's health care system. But it is hard to do that if they won't set one.

I urge the administration to set a cost-savings target, with a number and a date. And then let's get to work to give American families the health care system they deserve. Instead of waste and inefficiency, poor outcomes and missed opportunities, we would have a health care system that is the envy of the world.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

MUSIC EDUCATION

• Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I rise with great pride that my home State of West Virginia received special recognition today for its support of music education in our public school system. The recognition came from three organizations that are committed to music education—the VH1 Save The Music Foundation, the National Association of Music Merchants—NAMM, and the National Association for Music Education—NAfME.

I want to extend my personal thanks to the leaders of all three organizations

for recognizing West Virginia, for their support of our efforts to rebuild music programs in our State and for making a special day even more special—with an award ceremony today that included performances by singer-songwriter Vanessa Carlton, jazz guitarist and former New York Yankees champion Bernie Williams and Red Hot Chili Peppers drummer Chad Smith.

I enjoyed their performances, but I also was moved by their stories of personal and professional benefits from their music education. Their stories made clear how the opportunity to learn about the arts and to perform as an artist helps students' ideas and realities beyond words and numbers in textbooks.

But even more special was the fact that the Save The Music award ceremony included a performance from a student jazz ensemble from Shepherdstown Middle School, which received a VH1 Save The Music grant in 2012. I was so proud to listen to these young musicians. They are a wonderful example of the extraordinary way music can impact the lives of students, not just in West Virginia but all over the country.

I would like to congratulate these students on their performance today and on their many accomplishments leading up to this special day—and I wish them many more successes in the future. Also, I would like to especially thank Shepherdstown Middle School Principal Elizabeth Best and Shepherdstown music teacher Mrs. Chad Conant for their generous contributions and assistance.

On behalf of the State of West Virginia, I was honored to accept, along with fellow West Virginia Senator JAY ROCKEFELLER and Randall Reid-Smith, Commissioner of the West Virginia Division of Culture and History, a Support Music Award from NAMM, which works in partnership with the VH1 Save The Music Foundation and NAfME.

I deeply appreciate the acknowledgment of our efforts to support music education. And, of course, I deeply appreciate the contributions to music education that these organizations make in West Virginia and throughout the United States.

The VH1 Save the Music Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to restoring instrumental music education programs in America's public schools, and raising awareness about the importance of music as part of each child's complete education. To date, VH1 Save the Music has provided more than \$49.5 million in new musical instruments to 1,850 public schools in more than 192 school districts around the country, impacting the lives of over 2.1 million children. Research sponsored by NAMM shows clearly that students participating in music education do better in school and go on to college.

Since 2009, the VH1 Save the Music Foundation has given instrumental

music education grants valued at \$1.05 million to 35 schools in 30 counties throughout West Virginia. And I am informed that the Foundation is committed to funding music education in all 55 counties of the Mountain State. This initiative started when I was Governor, and I am pleased to see it moving forward so positively.

This collaboration is a true example of the huge benefits of public-private partnerships. It is also a strong incentive for all of us to work for more Federal and State funding to enhance music education in our public schools.

In today's global economy, creativity is essential. Consequently, education in the arts is more important than ever because education in the arts helps students be inventive, resourceful and imaginative. Music education is not just a privilege—it is essential.●

REMEMBERING VIRGINIA "GINNY" HILL WOOD

• Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, today I wish to honor Virginia "Ginny" Hill Wood. On March 8, 2013, Ginny passed away at the young age of 95. Alaska lost a true pioneer and advocate for Alaska's wilderness. The Alaskan outdoors was always at the center of her life; she guided her last backcountry trip at age 70, cross-country skied into her mid-80s, and gardened into her early 90s.

Born Virginia Hill on October 24, 1917, Ginny grew up in Washington and Oregon, where she fell in love with the outdoors. She took her first plane ride at the early age of 4 sitting in her father's lap as they flew with a barnstorming pilot. Ginny attended Washington State University, and in 1938 she took a break when she biked through Europe for a year before resuming her studies at the University of Washington. She was eager to pursue her passion for flying, and joined the Civilian Pilot Training Service in college. During World War II, she enrolled in the Women Airforce Service Pilots corps, known as WASP, and ferried all types of military planes throughout the Lower 48.

Her flying and sense of adventure brought her north to Alaska. Ginny landed, literally, in Fairbanks, AK at Weeks Field on a very cold New Year's Day in 1947—along with fellow pilot and great friend Celia Hunter in a second aircraft. Her arrival in Fairbanks when the town was just barely out of its rough mining camp days is illustrative of her pioneering spirit. People were not flocking to Fairbanks in January of 1947, and it was especially rare to find a female pilot. She soon began flying tourists from Fairbanks to Kotzebue. In the late 1940's Ginny took a bicycling tour throughout postwar Europe with Celia Hunter, and when asked where she was from, Ginny would say "Alaska."

In 1950, Ginny married Morton "Woody" Wood, a forest ranger at Mt. McKinley National Park. On a rainy