

have literally spent weeks and weeks and days and hours on this—Evan Schatz and Mike Spahn and John Righter and the others who are sitting behind us tonight—as well as Senator SESSIONS and all of his staff.

It is a tribute to their hard work and my lost voice that we are sitting here tonight ready to take the next step to get our country back on a better fiscal path.

I thank the Presiding Officer and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, I also would like to thank the staff. My group is here. And I say to Senator MURRAY, your team is fabulous.

We work hard on bills that come through the Senate, and there are a lot of challenges. But few are bigger than this, with all these amendments—hundreds of them that came through—and it was a real challenge.

I congratulate the staff, I congratulate the Senator's team, and I hope we can continue to have good relations as we go forward and work together.

I would mention Marcus Peacock, my staff director, who was fabulous. He enjoyed every minute of this. I asked him how he was doing, and he said: I am going to be sorry tomorrow when it is over. But maybe that is a sign of sickness. I do not know.

I want to express my appreciation to my staff: Dan Kowalski, Bill Beach, Greg D'Angelo, Gene Emmans, George Everly, Matt Giroux, Brittany Godwin, Tori Gorman, Graham Hixon, Andrew Herther, Chris Jackson, Cari Kelly, Joseph McCormack, Greg McNeill, Carlton Milsap, Marcus Peacock, Kim Proctor, John Selden, William Smith, Paul Winfree, Stephen Miller, Andrew Logan, Garrett Murch, and Katie Moses. I think that is everybody. Tori Gorman has been back there in the center of that zoo and did a great job for us trying to work on these amendments.

So, again, I would like to thank Senator MURRAY for her leadership, helping us get through this difficult time, and it is good to say that as of this time, 5 a.m., there has not been a day without a budget being passed in the Senate.

(Laughter.)

Mrs. MURRAY. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. PRYOR. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### AFFORDABLE CARE ACT ANNIVERSARY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, three years ago tomorrow, President Obama signed into law the Affordable Care Act. This landmark law will extend health insurance coverage to millions of uninsured Americans when the reforms are fully implemented next year. Getting to this point has been an arduous process. But in the end, this achievement proved that real reform is possible, and that the voices of so many Americans who over the years have called on their leaders to act have finally been heard.

Since its passage, Americans have seen the immediate benefits of the Affordable Care Act and 3 years later, those improvements continue. Seniors on Medicare who have high-cost prescriptions are continuing to receive help when trapped within the coverage gap known as the doughnut hole. The Affordable Care Act completely closes the coverage gap by 2020, and the new law makes it easier for seniors to afford prescription drugs in the meantime. In 2010, more than 7,000 Vermonters received a \$250 rebate to help cover the cost of their prescription drugs when they hit the doughnut hole. Last year alone, nearly 6,400 Vermonters with Medicare received a 50-percent discount on their covered brand-name prescriptions, resulting in an average savings of \$765 per person. Since the Affordable Care Act was signed into law, more than 5,000 young adults in Vermont have gained health insurance coverage under these reforms, which allow young adults to stay on their parents' plans until their 26th birthdays. The improvements we are seeing in Vermont go on and on: in 2011 and 2012, 71 million Americans and 151,000 Vermonters with private insurance gained access to and received preventative screening coverage with no deductible or copay, including more than 80,000 Medicare beneficiaries. These are just a few of the dozens of consumer protections included in the law that are benefiting Vermonters and all Americans every day, and in many ways.

The law goes into full swing next year as even more consumer protections are implemented and millions more Americans gain access to health insurance coverage. Beginning in January, insurance companies will no longer be allowed to deny coverage to individuals with preexisting health conditions or to charge higher premiums based on health status or gender. Unfortunately, estimates show that 44,000 Vermonters currently do not have health insurance, but with the Medicaid expansion contained in the Affordable Care Act, 84 percent of these Vermonters will qualify for Medicaid or a premium tax credit. Also important to Vermonters, to assist

Vermont with our State's work on implementing Vermont's State-based health insurance exchange—or marketplace—Vermont has received more than \$125,000,000 in grants for research and for information technology development, as well as almost \$3,480,000 for maternal health programs. These tangible initiatives help at-risk families gain the support they need to improve their children's health and ability to learn, and they help prevent child abuse.

I was proud as well to work with Senator GRASSLEY and others to include strong anti-fraud provisions in the law that already have helped prevent and detect fraudulent activities that in the past have cost American taxpayers multiple millions of dollars each year. Thanks in part to these efforts, \$4.2 billion was returned to taxpayers last year alone.

In only 3 years, Vermonters across our State have seen the many benefits of health care reform unfold in their lives. I see and hear about these improvements and pocketbook savings in visits to every corner of our State. At home in Middlesex and throughout Vermont, whether I am in the grocery store, at the gas pump, or at church, I am constantly reminded of how important access to quality affordable health care is to individuals and families. I applaud Vermont's efforts to expand the Affordable Care Act's reach even further to help every resident secure health insurance. I am proud that the Affordable Care Act offers Vermont the foundation it needs to reach this goal, and I look forward to working to see that it is met.

Regrettably, opponents of the Affordable Care Act continue to misleadingly attack the law in an attempt to undermine its implementation. The moment President Obama signed this bill into law, opponents sought to continue their political battle by challenging the landmark legislation in the courts. With the legal challenges now nearly resolved, we are now seeing amendments filed to every bill we consider on the floor, aimed at repealing or gutting the Affordable Care Act. In fact, on the budget resolution we are considering today, dozens of amendments have been filed in an effort to block the Affordable Care Act's implementation, to undermine its success in making lives better across the land, or to repeal the law completely. This is unfortunate, it is shortsighted, and it is cynical. Even more shameful is the budget resolution considered and passed by the House this week. The House-passed budget would make drastic changes to the Medicaid Program causing 14 to 20 million Americans to lose health coverage; it would replace Medicare with a voucher scheme costing seniors at least \$6000 more per year; and would completely repeal all the consumer protections included in the Affordable Care Act.

The Affordable Care Act is not perfect, but in the true interests of the

people we represent we should be working together to ensure its success. We can make improvements where necessary, but we must allow full implementation to continue. Already the Affordable Care Act has changed so many lives for the better, and we must not turn our backs on the millions more who will have access to health care next year because of these reforms.

The Affordable Care Act is a tremendous achievement that will improve the lives of Americans for generations to come. This anniversary is a time to renew our commitment to completing this important work on behalf of the American people, who are counting on us to do the right thing. With each year that we move forward to implement the features of this landmark health care reform law, the stories of families not being able to gain access to affordable coverage 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. I look forward to continuing to work with Vermont and with the administration as the law moves forward in its fourth year.

#### BRATTLEBORO REFORMER CENTENNIAL

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, in visiting with fellow Vermonters in and around Brattleboro in southern Vermont last weekend, I appreciated the opportunity to be in town during the month The Brattleboro Reformer marked its centennial anniversary. Local newspapers serve their communities in so many vital ways, and we in Vermont are blessed to have so many that have endured and served for so long.

These are challenging times for newspapers, as newsrooms and publishers adapt to rapidly changing technologies and public preferences. The Brattleboro Reformer has been quick on its feet to meet these challenges. I join with all Vermonters in congratulating The Reformer's hard-working staff on this historic anniversary, and we wish them many more.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a recent news article about this milestone.

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

THE BRATTLEBORO REFORMER TURNS 100  
[From the Vermont Digger, March 10, 2013]  
(By Randolph T. Holhut)

BRATTLEBORO—The Brattleboro Reformer celebrated its 100th anniversary as a daily newspaper with cake, coffee, and an open house for well-wishers on March 1.

For Publisher Ed Woods, the fact that a small town in Vermont has held on to its daily newspaper while other major cities have seen their daily papers cut back in publishing frequency, or close down altogether, is a testament to the uniqueness of Windham County.

"Southern Vermont is different from the rest of the country," said Woods, who has

been the Reformer's publisher since 2008. "We're providing news and information in the way that our customers request it."

That means delivering a paper-and-ink edition of the Reformer every day but Sunday, while gradually building up an audience that wants its news online.

According to the most recent circulation figures for the Reformer by the Audit Bureau of Circulations, the paper's total average daily circulation was 6,756 print editions and 1,093 digital editions, or a total of 7,849 as of March 31, 2012.

For the Saturday Weekend Reformer, circulation was 8,155 print and 1,091 digital for a total of 9,246.

By comparison, in the March 31, 2007, report, total average circulation was 9,684 on weekdays and 10,709 on Saturdays.

Although print circulation is down, Executive Editor Tom D'Errico is quick to point out that the digital reach of the paper is growing.

The paper currently has 6,000 followers of its Facebook page, which D'Errico said it is using as a breaking news site that complements [www.Reformer.com](http://www.Reformer.com), and there are 1,200 subscribers to the paper's Twitter feed.

"These things didn't exist for us two and a half years ago," said Woods. "Social media is bringing our news to a new audience. The transition to digital is going to happen, but it's going to happen more slowly here." He cited the slow progress of bringing universal broadband coverage to southern Vermont, and the older population of the county that still prefers a paper-and-ink news source.

D'Errico, who became the managing editor of the Reformer in 2007, said that social media—Facebook, Twitter, and the like—has become critical to the way his paper gathers and disseminates the news. "That's how people tip us off to stories now," he said. "It's easy and instantaneous, compared to email or a phone call."

And, with a newsroom that is smaller than it used to be, it allows the four full-time reporters to cover more ground than before.

#### LONG HISTORY

Although the Reformer published its first daily edition on March 3, 1913, the paper had long history prior to that date.

Charles Davenport, a stalwart Democrat, started The Windham County Reformer in 1876 as a weekly paper to counter what Davenport believed was the pro-Republican bias of The Vermont Phoenix—then the dominant weekly newspaper in Brattleboro.

Howard C. Rice bought an interest in the paper from Davenport in 1905, and two years later, moved it into the American Building on Main Street—the Reformer's home for the next seven decades until it moved to its present location on Black Mountain Road in October 1981.

Few had faith that Brattleboro could support its own daily paper, but Rice eventually convinced Windham County that it could consume its news in daily bites, and like it. That began in 1913, when the Phoenix and Reformer merged. The Phoenix continued as the weekly edition of the Reformer until it was discontinued in 1955. By that point, the daily Reformer's circulation had grown from less than 2,500 to more than 7,000.

Rice stepped down as editor and publisher in 1950 and was succeeded by John S. Hooper. The Rice family continued to own the paper until 1966, when it was purchased by the Miller family, owners of The Berkshire Eagle in Pittsfield, Mass.

Under the Millers, the changes came fast and frequent. Offset printing was introduced in 1969, and molten lead and Linotypes gave way to computerized typesetting and paste-up. Typewriters gave way to video display terminals in the late 1970s. The biggest

change of all, besides the move to the new plant off Putney Road, was the switch from afternoon to morning publication in 1982.

All of these changes were overseen by Norman Runion, who started at the Reformer as Hooper's assistant in 1969 and became the managing editor in 1971.

By the time the Reformer celebrated its 75th anniversary as a daily in 1988, circulation had grown to more than 10,000. Runion retired two years later, leaving a legacy of building what former Boston Globe editor Tom Winship once called the best small newspaper in New England.

But the next big change came in 1995, when the Miller family sold the paper to Denver-based MediaNews Group (MNG), ending more than eight decades of local ownership.

#### CHANGE IS CONSTANT.

In the years since the sale of the paper to MediaNews Group, the paper has made the change from analog to digital, in the design of its news pages as well as its photography.

Delivery of the news changed also. The World Wide Web went from a curiosity to a disruptive force in publishing in the space of a decade, and papers large and small have scrambled to keep up.

Meanwhile, MNG acquired the Town Crier family of free weeklies in the late 1990s, and expanded the Black Mountain Road plant to accommodate their new purchase. They also bought the Original Vermont Observer, another weekly, in the mid-2000s. The papers were ultimately merged into one weekly, and were discontinued in 2012.

But for all the turmoil of a changing industry, and changing economics, the Reformer endures. With MNG joining the Journal Register Company to form Digital First Media in 2011, there has been a greater emphasis on transforming the two newspaper companies into one online media company.

"John Paton [the CEO of Digital First] has brought to us a business model to make the transition to digital media," said Woods. "We are beginning to see the resources arrive here to make that transition. Our mission to provide the news hasn't changed, just the way we deliver the news."

And both Woods and D'Errico say they have come to realize what a humbling experience it is to run a newspaper that people still feel passionate about, and are quick to offer an opinion about.

"A lot is changing in this industry, and it is impossible not to embrace the change," said Woods. "But our core responsibility is not changing at all."

"Small-town newspapers offer something that can't be found anywhere else," said D'Errico. "While big city newspapers are struggling, our focus on local news makes us as valuable today as we were in 1913."

#### PATUXENT RIVER NAVAL AIR STATION

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I rise to speak on the 70th anniversary of the commissioning of Naval Air Station, NAS, Patuxent River. On April 1, 1943 the base was commissioned and the Navy Department issued the following press release:

"Naval Air Station, Patuxent, situated on a 6,500-acre tract at Cedar Point, Maryland, was commissioned today with Rear Admiral John S. McCain, U.S.N., Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics; Rear Admiral F. L. Reichmuth, U.S.N., Commandant of the Potomac River Naval Command, and Representative Landsdale G. Sasser of Maryland speaking at the commissioning exercises.