

life, they would be wrong. I have been privileged to be Governor of my State, leader, and, as the Presiding Officer has, chairman of the National Governors Association, one of the great privileges of my life. I was privileged to be a Congressman for a little bit, treasurer of my State, and before that a naval flight officer for 20 some years, retired Navy captain. That is who I am. That is not all of who I am, but that is a better resume. If people say all I have ever done is my current job or my last job, they would say: Well, he is not very well rounded.

I want us to take a minute and say—I am going to date myself on this, but a guy named Paul Harvey used to do the news. He used to say page 1, and then he would say page 2. I am going to go to page 2. Page 2 is a little resume of some other things she has done with her life. I want to quote one of our old colleagues, Ken Salazar, who has known her for decades and hear what he has to say about her. She was born and raised in Colorado, I think has spent almost more than half of her life there. She has been, from time to time, among other things, chief of staff at the U.S. Department of Labor. She did that for several years. She also served as senior advisor on policy and initiatives for the city and county of Denver, CO. There are more people who live in the city and county around Denver than live in a lot of States, including my own. She has done that job.

Before that, a number of years ago, she had a number of roles in the office of mayor of Denver, for almost a decade, including deputy chief of staff. In a city that size, again as big or bigger than a number of States, that is a lot of responsibility.

She has been a senior policy advisor at the U.S. Department of Energy.

She has also served at the U.S. Department of Transportation, first as deputy chief of staff, and then later as chief of staff.

She has been a professor at the University of Denver. She has done all kinds of things. But she is a whole lot more than what people see and say: Well, I know what her last job was. She has done a whole lot before that. I think that helps prepare her for this job.

There has been a bunch of people who have been nominated to serve as Office of Personnel Management Director since I guess the 1970s. I think this is the first time we have ever had a situation where the President's nominee—I do not care what party, Democrat or Republican—where the OPM nominee has required cloture or even a rollcall vote since the agency was created in 1978. That is 35 years ago.

I want to quote Ken Salazar, one of my dearest friends, who was a Senator, went on to become Secretary of the Interior, who has known Katherine Archuleta for 25, 30 years, really all of her adult life. Here is what Ken Salazar says about Katherine Archuleta. He says she is a “terrific” human being.

He goes on to say she “helped create modern Denver” as we know it as deputy chief of staff through Mayor Pena. She led economic development efforts throughout the city. She was instrumental in the creation of the new Denver International Airport. Ken went on to say she was “a star of the Clinton team in the U.S. Department of Transportation.” Star.

I say to my friends and colleagues, we have to get past this situation—I do not care if it is a Democrat President or Republican President—where we leave these gaping holes in leadership in confirmed positions. It is not good for our country; it is not good for these departments; it is not good for morale; it is not good for efficiency. We are interested in getting work done.

You can disable the government by shutting it down or you can disable the government and make it less effective, less efficient, by making sure we do not have key people in the top leadership positions. It makes a difference if people are confirmed as secretaries, deputy secretaries, and these other positions.

As the agency responsible for managing our Federal workforce, OPM's mission is critical to ensuring that our government runs efficiently. Unfortunately, vacancies at the top levels of leadership have limited OPM's ability to fulfill its mandate. They have backlogs in terms of the processing they are supposed to be doing in job applications and others, people applying for pensions. They need to be addressed.

In Katherine Archuleta's hearing before a subcommittee chaired by Senator TESTER, one of the things she made clear is that she would make that her priority, going after the backlog, which I would say God bless her if she is confirmed. I hope she will be.

But at any given moment, we are lacking critical leadership in any number of positions in just about every agency. It undermines the effectiveness of our government. While Congress and the administration have taken some steps to address this problem, the fact remains we still have more work to do to ensure we have got the talented people in place to make these critical decisions.

This week, we consider the President's nomination of Katherine Archuleta to be the next Director of OPM, Office of Personnel Management. I have talked a little bit about her background. One of the other people who knows her pretty well, another Senator from Colorado, is Senator UDALL. She was actually introduced at her confirmation hearings along with MICHAEL BENNET. Here is what Senator UDALL said about Katrina Archuleta. He said, “Throughout her career, Katherine has demonstrated her ability to lead, to motivate and to work constructively with a diverse range of people and personalities.”

Her story is a story of firsts. Although neither of her parents completed high school, they worked tire-

lessly to create better opportunities for their children. Throughout her career, she served as an example for women and Latinos and would be the first Latina Director of OPM.

The President nominated her to this critical position back in May. We held a hearing to consider her nomination—Senator JON TESTER held it. We voted her out of committee shortly thereafter. At her confirmation hearing, Ms. Archuleta committed to quickly taking steps to identify some of OPM's challenges, such as continuing to implement the multistate plan under the Affordable Care Act, reducing the retirement claims backlog to ensure retirees receive their full pension benefits without serious delays, which many retirees see today.

As to the recruiting and retaining the next generation of Federal employees, I think we have a nominee who is qualified. We have a nominee who has been vetted. We have a nominee who is ready to go to work. It is our responsibility to give her a swift vote, a thoughtful vote, but a swift vote here on the Senate floor, I hope this week, so she can go to work, take the reins at OPM, and begin directing this critical agency with oversight from us.

When the Presiding Officer was Governor of his State of West Virginia, when I was privileged to be Governor of my State, the tradition in Delaware is the Governor would nominate the people to serve on his or her cabinet. The tradition in our State was to nominate division directors under the cabinet secretaries. The tradition in my State is that the legislature, the senate to which the nominees were sent, would hold hearings, and would vote up or down without delay on those nominations. I think in the 8 years I was privileged to serve as Governor of my State, every one of them was confirmed. I do not think I ever lost a nomination for a cabinet secretary or for division director. That is the way we do business in Delaware. That is the way we ought to do business here.

If you have a nominee who is qualified, who has good integrity, is going to work hard, surround themselves with good people and has a track record he or she can be proud of, that nominee deserves a vote. Let's give this nominee a vote and let's give her a chance to go to work.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

SUPERSTORM SANDY

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Today it has been exactly 1 year since Superstorm Sandy hit my home State of New York and the surrounding region. Today is a very solemn day where we pause to ponder the unimaginable loss of 61 precious lives and the great collective pain as countless other lives were shattered. Over 300,000 homes were damaged or destroyed and businesses lay in rubble. Over 250,000 businesses were affected, many of which are still unable to open their doors.

There is something else to remember today. In the days and weeks that followed Superstorm Sandy, we also saw the absolute best of New York. We know New Yorkers are a resilient bunch. We get knocked down, but we get right back up.

As I traveled all across New York City, I saw neighbors coming together, going door to door to help the homebound, donating resources, volunteering their time, clearing debris. In the Rockaways I saw hundreds of residents create an impromptu bustling plaza of hot food, clothing, and anything people might need.

I remember talking to one small business owner in Staten Island whose restaurant was nearly split in two by a boat from a nearby marina, and he simply said to me: "We will rebuild this better than it was before," before agreeing to have dinner together this time next year in that very spot where that boat was resting. He said yes, and we had lunch at his restaurant only a few months ago. It was amazing.

In Westchester, a small business owner gave me a hug, and she vowed she would rebuild. She said defiantly, "This is our community."

On Long Island, I walked the streets of Lindenhurst, Massapequa, and visited Long Beach and Fire Island. While the devastation I saw was awful, I have never met more resilient and compassionate people. I witnessed homeowners struggling to pick up their own pieces and to get it out of the way to help neighbors, sharing food, sharing water supplies, giving each other rides to the stores, sharing generators, and clearing each others' debris.

While the road to recovery is very long and very hard, New Yorkers will rebuild. They will rebuild stronger, but we all have to do our part. Too many communities are still recovering and rebuilding. Some families are actually still homeless, living in trailers or confined to the second floor of their homes and still waiting for additional assistance. Too many homeowners have not yet received the funding to repair their homes and their businesses. Too often, those who are struggling to rebuild have been caught in red tape.

Throughout the past year, I have pushed to change some of the Federal policies that have stood in the way of recovery. We have had some successes. We were successful at pushing FEMA to extend critical deadlines for Sandy survivors to document their losses, so that those who have had trouble getting back into their homes are not prevented from filing flood insurance claims.

We were able to get the Department of Housing and Urban Development to relax regulations that would have prevented substantially damaged homes from accessing critical recovery funds. We received assurances from the Army Corps of Engineers that they will fund critical shore protection projects at full Federal expense, ensuring that these projects can move forward quickly

without having to wait for our communities to find the matching funds out of very tough and local struggling budgets that are already stretched too thin.

That is not enough. For all of our successes, we are still facing so many challenges. There is still far too much red tape getting in between families and recovery. My office hears every single day from homeowners and families who are struggling just to move forward.

Many of us are working on a bipartisan bill to postpone the potentially disastrous flood insurance rate increases coming into effect as a result of the Biggert-Waters flood insurance reform law. I urge my colleagues in the Senate to pass this bipartisan bill that was introduced by Senator MENENDEZ and Senator ISAKSON that would delay the premium increases set to go into effect until after FEMA has completed a study and provided Congress with a plan to make the rates more affordable. Our families working so hard to rebuild, frankly, deserve nothing less.

Some homeowners, even as they do rebuild, have started seeing their rates increase. This would cause so many of our constituents to be forced out of their homes and communities that they love, that they have lived in their whole lives. This is why the Menendez-Isakson bill is so critical and why I strongly urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this commonsense legislation.

As we focus on providing communities with all of the resources they need to rebuild from Sandy, the Federal Government is partnering with States, local governments, the private sector, and academia to develop solutions that will protect us from the next disaster. We know that for every dollar spent to make our homes, businesses, and infrastructure more resilient, \$4 is saved in potential recovery costs down the road.

Earlier this year Senator WICKER and I introduced the STRONG Act, which stands for Strengthening the Resiliency of Our Nation on the Ground. This bipartisan bill seeks to build on the progress that has been made locally by requiring the Federal Government to develop a national resiliency strategy, assess where there are gaps and opportunities for improvements. It also creates a new information portal for both the public and private sectors to share information about how to strengthen our communities and protect against future extreme weather threats.

We have come a long way in the past year, but I am very sad to say we have so much more work to be done. Our communities are working as hard as ever to recover, but we have to work equally as hard toward rebuilding and being better prepared for the next storm.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

OBAMACARE

Mr. BARRASSO. Later this week we will hit the 1-month anniversary of the launch of President Obama's health insurance exchanges. My question is, what have we learned the past 4 weeks? We know the rollout of the exchanges and the healthcare.gov Web site, Americans would agree, has been disastrous.

Last week the Associated Press ran a headline about what people in my home State of Wyoming had experienced. It said: "National health insurance site sputters in Wyoming."

The article goes on to talk about the health care law, the Web site, and says: "Wyoming Insurance Commissioner Tom Hirsig said Monday that he's personally been unable to register on the Federal Government's Wyoming site despite trying every day."

The insurance commissioner from the State of Wyoming has been unable to register on the Federal Government's Wyoming site despite trying every day starting October 1. This is the same story we have seen all across the country.

We have also learned over the past 4 weeks that the President's health care law is much more than just a failed Web site. What we know is that there is sticker shock hitting people all across the country as they start shopping and find that higher premiums are what they are facing. They are going to be paying much higher premiums if they are able to buy health insurance, if they are able to get through the exchange.

CBS News had the story of one woman in Florida whose health insurance will cost 11 times what she is currently paying—from \$54 a month to \$591 a month.

Over the past 4 weeks, another thing we have learned is that many people have received notices in the mail—cancellation notices—from their insurance companies. They are being told that the insurance policies, the coverage they have had, is being cancelled. Only a small number of people have been able to get insurance through the government exchanges so far. We have seen that over the last month.

In testimony today in the House hearing, a person from the administration said they cannot tell us how many people have been unable to get insurance through the exchanges, but we know that hundreds of thousands of people are losing the insurance they had.

Here is what one woman told CBS: "What I have right now is what I'm happy with, and I just want to know why I can't keep what I have. Why do I have to be forced into something else?"

Like many Americans, this is a person who actually believed President Obama when he promised that if people liked the insurance they had, they could keep it. Now she learned under the President's health care law, it is not only a Web site, it is a broken promise. It turns out if the White