

NATIONAL MEDICINE ABUSE AWARENESS MONTH

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, as Chairman of the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control, I rise in strong support of efforts being made across the country to reduce prescription drug abuse as part of National Medicine Abuse Awareness Month. In California, and throughout the country, the misuse and abuse of prescription and over the counter drugs is a significant problem. While the consequences are tragic and profound, they are also preventable.

According to the Office of National Drug Control Policy, prescription drug abuse is our Nation's fastest-growing drug problem. The U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's 2012 National Survey on Drug Use and Health found that over the past decade, the non-medical use of prescription drugs among persons 12 years or older rose from 1.9 million in 2002 to 11.1 million in 2011. The 2012 National Survey on Drug Use and Health estimates that the abuse of prescription medications such as pain killers, tranquilizers, stimulants, and sedatives is second only to marijuana, the No. 1 abused drug in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control have classified prescription drug abuse as an epidemic.

To combat the epidemic of prescription drug and over the counter medicine abuse, many community anti-drug coalitions are working to raise awareness about the negative consequences associated with the misuse of these drugs.

The North Coastal Prevention Coalition in California is just one example of a coalition pushing back against this problem. Together with San Diego County's Prescription Drug Task Force, the Coalition has worked to create county-wide Pain Prescribing Guidelines. They have helped facilitate National Take Back Days during which individuals are able to turn over unused prescription drugs. They also developed and disseminated a brochure on "Safe Pain Prescribing" to emergency room physicians.

I would like to acknowledge the critical efforts of the North Coastal Prevention Coalition and other anti-drug coalitions throughout the country in raising awareness about and combating the misuse of prescription medications. By designating October 2013 as National Medicine Abuse Awareness Month, Americans are able to reaffirm our national, state and local level commitment to living healthy, drug-free lives.

VA EMERGENCY CARE

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, on Monday I introduced a bill, S. 1588, with Senators MORAN, ISAKSON, and BEGICH to provide an emergency safety net to roughly 144,000 veterans waiting for VA care. I thank my colleagues for their

support. This bill fixes a catch-22 in current law that puts veterans who have recently returned from overseas at financial risk if they experience a medical emergency.

Under current law, a veteran enrolled in the VA system who receives emergency care at a non-VA facility can be reimbursed for those costs only if the veteran had also received care at a VA facility in the preceding 24 months. The intent of this requirement is to encourage veterans to seek preventative care, which decreases the need for more expensive emergency care. The problem is thousands of veterans have recently come home from overseas and they can't meet the 24-month requirement through no fault of their own. These veterans have scheduled their first new patient examination with VA, but they have not yet received their examination because of VA waiting times.

In other words, they haven't received their first VA appointment because of VA waiting times, but if they need to go to a non-VA hospital for a medical emergency VA cannot reimburse them because they haven't received their first VA appointment.

VA estimates 144,000 veterans are caught in this catch-22. With the war in Afghanistan ending, even more veterans will be affected. This is why veteran service organizations such as the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America are supporting this measure.

This bill gives VA the flexibility to reimburse veterans who have not yet received their new patient examination if the veterans have to go to a non-VA hospital for a medical emergency. For Hawaii veterans in rural Oahu or the neighbor islands who live far from VA facilities, emergency care outside the VA may be their only option. Just last week I met a veteran from Waianae who had a medical emergency while waiting 4 months for his first appointment at VA. Veterans such as he who were denied VA reimbursement would get much needed relief under this legislation.

In its FY2014 budget request, VA asked for the statutory authority provided by this legislation. The VA has already budgeted for this new authority in its FY2014 budget request, and the funding provided in H.R. 2216, as reported by the Senate Appropriations Committee on June 27, 2013, is sufficient to cover any additional costs VA will incur using this new authority.

I urge my colleagues to cosponsor this commonsense legislation. We owe it to our brave men and women in uniform who put their lives on the line for our country that the VA has the tools it needs to better serve new veterans accessing the care they have earned.

CONGRATULATING AZERBAIJAN

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, today I wish to congratulate and offer my support and encouragement to the people and government of Azerbaijan. On Oc-

tober 9 Azerbaijanis overwhelmingly reelected President Aliyev to a third five year term in only their fifth Presidential election since Azerbaijan gained its independence in 1991.

I, along with several of my colleagues, met privately with President Aliyev in Baku several months ago to discuss the great challenges facing Azerbaijan, the United States, and our allies in the region.

I took this opportunity to personally thank President Aliyev, his government, and the Azerbaijani people for their unwavering support for the United States government and its people.

President Aliyev was among the first few foreign leaders to call President Bush immediately after the attacks on 9/11 to offer his country's prayers and tangible support at a time of great crisis in our Nation.

The United States and Azerbaijan share many common strategic interests. Azerbaijan plays a vital role in efforts ranging from counter-terrorism, energy security, to the transit of U.S. and NATO supplies to and from Afghanistan.

As an important partner in the region, Azerbaijan is an active participant in NATO's Partnership for Peace program and was among the first nations to militarily support American led efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Azerbaijan's stability and prosperity in the South Caucasus, along with its continued commitment to democratic reforms, will serve as an important beacon of hope in a complex region.

NATIONAL LIBERTY MEMORIAL

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I wish to speak today about an effort long championed by my predecessors in the Senate, Senators Dodd and Lieberman, and to express my commitment to carry on their work. That important project, the National Liberty Memorial, will commemorate the patriotism of African American soldiers during the American Revolution.

From the very first days of the American Revolution, African Americans took part in the effort to establish a new nation and secure liberty's blessings. They did this despite the fact that the vast majority of their brothers and sisters remained slaves.

Many of these African American patriots were from Connecticut. In 1976, the town of Milford established a memorial to six black soldiers of the Revolutionary War. Nero Hawley, a slave who joined the Continental Army and served at Valley Forge, was later freed after the war. You can visit his grave today at Riverside Cemetery in Trumbull. Jupiter Mars lived an extraordinary life, serving in the Continental Army during the war. He now rests in peace in beautiful Norfolk, CT. Cato Meed enlisted in the Continental Army in Norwich in 1777, and served at Valley Forge with General Washington.

These soldiers fought in every battle of the Revolutionary War, from the

colonists' defeat at the Battle of Long Island to our final victory at Yorktown. At every point, African American men served bravely and with honor. In fact, one of the first men to die in America's struggle for independence was Crispus Attucks, who was shot by British troops during the Boston massacre. This dedication to the war effort continued right up to the last battle when Salem Poor, a freed slave, earned commendation recommendations from 14 officers for his bravery at Bunker Hill. In recounting Poor's performance at the battle, officers wrote there were too many heroic deeds to describe.

Committed to the cause of American independence, African American soldiers filled every role that the war required of them, whether they served on local militias, worked as cooks and carpenters in camps like Valley Forge, or served as crewmembers on America's first Navy ships. Many African Americans escaped the bondage of slavery to join the American Navy. Still others, like James Armistead, acted as spies for the Revolution by providing American patriots with vital information needed to win the war. Regardless of their roles, they served ably and with distinction.

After the war, the agreements negotiated between slaves and masters were largely honored and the patriots freed upon either enlistment or the end of the war. However, once they had put down the weapons used to win the Nation's independence, a few had to resort to legal means to enforce their claim to liberty. For one patriot—James Robinson, later of Detroit, MI, who also fought in the War of 1812—freedom did not come until the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. Many other African Americans remained trapped in bondage as the institution of slavery expanded in spite of lawsuits, petitions, and agitation.

Many of these African American soldiers would go on to organize early abolitionist and civil rights organizations. One such man was Samuel Harris, a soldier, Baptist minister, and early abolitionist who said, "Liberty is dear to my heart. I cannot endure the thought that my countrymen live as slaves." Nevertheless, despite their valiant service to this country's founding, many African American soldiers were not treated with the dignity that their service demanded. While this country's founding documents stated that all men were created equal, the Nation still sought to hold many Americans as property.

It is estimated that the names of at least half of these brave soldiers would have been lost to history had it not been for the efforts of Plainville, CT native Lena Santos Ferguson. Five years ago, the Daughters of the American Revolution fulfilled a promise made to her in 1984 to identify as many African American Revolutionary War soldiers and patriots as possible. "Forgotten Patriots," contains the names

of over 5,000, as well as the communities where they once resided. Nearly 20 Connecticut towns have approved resolutions that honor them, and they have joined the ranks of those seeking construction of the National Liberty Memorial.

At the beginning of this year President Obama signed into law legislation that was passed by the Congress last year that once again affirmed our public commitment to memorialize these brave patriots through a new memorial in the Monumental Core of our capital city. Liberty Fund D.C., a nonprofit established to lead the effort to construct the memorial, is currently working with architects and Federal agencies to make that goal a reality.

I believe that we must do what we can to build this memorial. Further, I believe that a key feature of any such memorial is that it should be visually tied to the Washington Monument, the most prominent Revolutionary-era monument in the District. There should be a clear sightline from the memorial to the Washington Monument.

For good reason, constructing any new memorial in the Washington, DC area is a rigorous process, and there are a number of prerequisites to be met before construction can begin. I look forward to continuing to work with Liberty Fund D.C. to achieve the goals of this important legislation, to ensure that a monument to the African American patriots of the Revolutionary War be constructed in a prominent location in our Nation's capital.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO COLONEL KIRK VAN PELT

• Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize and congratulate Arkansas's native son, COL Kirk Van Pelt, for attaining to the rank of brigadier general. On November 3 of this year, Colonel Van Pelt will receive this well-deserved promotion at a ceremony in Arkansas.

Colonel Van Pelt began his military career in 1983 and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in 1985. Colonel Van Pelt has served in a variety of positions in the 39th Infantry Brigade, including Company Commander, Battalion Operations Officer, Battalion Executive Officer, Battalion Commander, Brigade Operations Officer, Brigade XO, Deputy Brigade Commander, and Brigade Commander. Colonel Van Pelt also served as the Commandant of the Arkansas Regional Training Institute Officer Candidate School and the Arkansas Army National Guard G3.

Colonel Van Pelt is a graduate of Excelsior College and received a master's degree from the U.S. Army War College in 2011. He is a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom and has received numerous awards and decorations for his

service to our country, which include the Bronze Star Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Meritorious Service Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Army Commendation Medal with five Oak Leaf Clusters, the Army Achievement Medal, the Army Reserve Component Achievement Medal with seven Oak Leaf Clusters, the Iraqi Campaign Medal with Bronze Service Star, the National Defense Service Medal with Bronze Service Star, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Humanitarian Service Medal, the Armed Forces Reserve Medal, the Army Service Ribbon, the Overseas Service Ribbon with Numeral '2', the Army Reserve Component Overseas Training Ribbon with Numeral '2', and the Joint Meritorious Unit Citation.

In addition to his excellent military career, Colonel Van Pelt is also the vice president of AIC Inc., a systems integration firm in Sherwood, AR. He and his wife, Kelley, have raised three children: James, a senior at the University of Central Arkansas, Katie, a freshman at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, and Hannah, a junior at North Little Rock High School.

Colonel Van Pelt is a valued servant to the people of Arkansas and the United States of America. Our State and Nation have been fortunate to have Colonel Van Pelt's 30 years of service, and I can only hope he can serve another 30 years. I thank him again for his dedication and commitment to keeping our Nation and State safe.●

TRIBUTE TO BRIGADIER GENERAL ROGER MCCLELLAN

• Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, today I wish to acknowledge and thank BG Roger McClellan, who will retire from the Arkansas Army National Guard at the end of this month after proudly serving 36 years.

A native of Warren, AR, Brigadier General McClellan is a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom and has served in a variety of positions in the Arkansas Army National Guard's 39th Infantry Brigade, including Battalion Commander, Civil Affairs Officer S-5, and Deputy Commander of the 39th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

Since January 1, 2008, Brigadier General McClellan has served as the Arkansas Army National Guard Land Component Commander, where he has been responsible for the overall readiness, training, maintenance, and operational employment of the units assigned and attached to the Arkansas Army National Guard, a position which he has commanded with distinction.

Brigadier General McClellan is a graduate of the University of Arkansas at Monticello and has earned master's degrees from Louisiana Tech University in 1983 and the United States Army War College in 2003. He has received numerous awards and decorations for his service to our country,