

would not have put up with this for 1 minute. He would have asserted this institution's authority and this institution's responsibility—Congress' responsibility, if you will—to get to the bottom of this.

I served on the Iran-Contra special committee. It is not a bad thing for us to investigate an administration that appears to be out of whack, appears to be ignoring the basic tenets of the law, and appears to be hiding information from the public. Forget the public right now. How about the Congress? It is hard to respect an administration that acts like this.

We should be eager to get to the bottom of the circumstances surrounding the Benghazi attack, and my friends on the other side ought to quit trying to protect the administration when they know these are serious charges. These are serious matters. We have an obligation to get to the bottom of it, and let the chips fall where they may. There were four deaths here of heroes.

All the Members of this esteemed body—whether Democrat or Republican—should demand that Congress' institutional prerogatives are preserved and defended.

As members of the legislative branch, we have the fundamental right—and the accompanying duty—to exercise a lawful oversight function. When any Presidential administration engages in extreme resistance and demonstrates an unwillingness to cooperate with legitimate congressional investigations, we all—not just people on this side—have an institutional obligation to defend our rightful constitutional prerogatives.

These executive abuses matter. The Obama administration has clearly and consistently overstepped its authorities and ignored its obligations under our Constitution and Federal law. This overreach threatens the rule of law, and it undermines the governmental checks and balances necessary to secure our liberties as Americans.

President Obama promised unprecedented transparency that would restore trust and confidence in government. But his administration's lawless actions have heightened the need for more robust and effective congressional oversight.

As even a liberal Washington Post columnist opined earlier this week, "The Obama White House can blame its own secrecy and obsessive control over information" for the heightened scrutiny of its questionable activities.

Oversight investigations are a critical tool that Congress must use effectively to promote government accountability. The Obama administration's escalating strategy of stonewalling, even to the point of ignoring legal obligations and longstanding norms, now threatens our rightful role in calling the executive branch to account.

Indeed, the basic assumption that underlies the Constitution's plan of government, as James Madison explained in Federalist 47 and 51, is that:

The accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive, and judiciary, in the same hands, whether of one, a few, or many, and whether hereditary, self-appointed, or elective, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny. . . . But the great security against a gradual concentration of the several powers in the same department, consist in giving to those who administer each department the necessary constitutional means and personal motives to resist encroachments of the others.

The provision for defense must in this, as in all other cases, be made commensurate to the danger of attack. Ambition must be made to counteract ambition.

As Madison explained, it is incumbent upon each of us to insist on Congress' right and duty to investigate the executive branch, and to ensure that the administration abides by the most basic—the most fundamental—requirements of our constitutional system.

We owe the American people—not to mention the families of those who perished—a meaningful investigation of the Benghazi attack, not just to find answers to remaining questions but to affirm that this is still a Nation of laws and that the people's elected representatives are still capable of pursuing the truth and holding the executive branch accountable for its actions.

This is a matter of great concern to me, and I am sure it is to a lot of people who are starting to realize that there is a stonewalling like we haven't seen since Richard Nixon.

I don't know that the President has done this personally. I hope not. But he has to look into it.

If he doesn't, then I think it is up to the majority in this body to hold the administration to account, with the help of the minority, and to not have them ignore, disregard, and treat with contempt the rightful oversight that we have an honor and an obligation to do up here. This is really a very serious set of problems as far as I am concerned. I hope the President will get after his people down there.

I think one of the problems is we have a lot of young people in the White House right now who haven't had the experience. On the other hand, some of these things are so deliberate that we can't blame it on lack of experience. These folks know and the people in the Justice Department know. To have withheld these emails the way they did, knowing they were crucial to any investigation, is something we should not tolerate here in the Senate.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

Mr. REID. 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. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning busi-

ness, with Senators allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

TRIBUTE TO PAT BELL

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I rise today to honor an upstanding citizen from my home State, the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Pat Bell grew up in the heart of Appalachia and has spent his life working to better the region and the lives of those who call it home. The Lake Cumberland Area Development District will honor him on May 22 when they name their office building The Pat Bell Building.

Patrick R. Bell was born and raised in McCreary County, Kentucky. Pat was always passionate about helping others, and once he finished his own education he began teaching in the McCreary County school system, rising to the position of school superintendent in the 1960s.

Following his tenure as superintendent, Pat was selected to be the Lake Cumberland Area Development District's first executive director. In this capacity Pat was able to increase the quality of life in the region by organizing infrastructure projects and developing initiatives to increase economic activity.

Pat left the LCADD after 12 years at the helm, but he never lost his desire to serve. In fact, his success at the LCADD led to his next post as the Director of the Lake Cumberland District Health Department. Pat served as director from 1982 until his retirement in 1994, during which the Lake Cumberland District Health Department expanded from five member counties to 10.

His retirement was short lived, however. Never one to turn down an opportunity to serve his community, Pat accepted an appointment to become mayor of Columbia, KY. He then ran for, and won, a second term, which expired in 2010. Although he is once again in retirement, his friends and family know him too well to rule out the possibility of future public service.

Pat Bell's seemingly unlimited capacity to serve others is an inspiration for us all. He truly has a servant's heart, and I ask that my Senate colleagues join me in honoring him today.

TRIBUTE TO JIM SHARPE

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I rise today to honor the long and distinguished career of Jim Sharpe. Now retired, Mr. Sharpe opened his first business in Somerset, KY, in 1947. Since that time he's opened several more, pioneered the houseboat business, and has become an irreplaceable fixture in his community.

Lake Cumberland is known by many as the "houseboat capital of the world"—a designation that is owed in no small part to Jim Sharpe. Jim was one of the first to pioneer the industry—building his first houseboat in

1953. Much has changed since he sold that first 10-by 24-foot steel boat, and Jim has been there for it all, often leading the way. Houseboats are now much bigger—up to 20 by 100 feet—and are made of aluminum and have on-board heating and cooling systems. One thing that never changed, though, is Jim's passion for building his customer's "dream boat."

Despite being one of the founding fathers of the industry, houseboats do not constitute the totality of his life's work. Jim has owned and operated several other businesses in Somerset in addition to Somerset Marine. In 1966, he developed Food Fair groceries, which he grew into a chain of 13 stores. Two years later, he opened Somerset's first fried chicken restaurant, Kettle Fried Chicken, and in 1974 he bought a car dealership, Pulaski Motor Company.

Although he is now retired, Jim still has plenty to keep him busy. Jim and his wife of nearly 65 years Mary Jo have four children and nine grandchildren, and he has also found time to pick up golf and travel the country.

Jim Sharpe's drive and determination in his business, his commitment to his community, and his love of his family can serve as an example to us all. I ask that my U.S. Senate colleagues join me in honoring this upstanding Kentucky citizen.

CLINICAL LABORATORY FEE SCHEDULE

Mr. BURR. Madam President, I would like to engage my colleague, the distinguished ranking member of the Finance Committee, in a short colloquy regarding Clinical Laboratory Fee Schedule payment reform provisions included in the SGR patch bill, Protecting Access to Medicare Act.

Mr. HATCH. I thank the Senator. I would be happy to engage my distinguished colleague in a colloquy. Further, many thanks to him for his leadership over the years on this issue.

Mr. BURR. I thank my colleague and commend his work and the work of his staff in the development of this proposal. Reform of the Clinical Laboratory Fee Schedule is an important priority. The current system does not allow for changes in reimbursement for specific tests and instead, cuts to lab reimbursement have been broad reductions to the fee schedule overall. This imprecise approach has hampered the ability of labs across the country to continue to innovate and improve the diagnosis and treatment of disease. The Protecting Access to Medicare Act reforms this outdated approach and establishes a system requiring laboratories to report market rates to establish Medicare reimbursement. It is my understanding that the intent of this provision is to ensure that Medicare rates reflect true market rates for laboratory services, and as such, that all sectors of the laboratory market should be represented in the reporting

system, including independent laboratories and hospital outreach laboratories that receive payment on a fee-for-service basis under the fee schedule. I ask my distinguished colleague if this is his understanding of the intent of this provision as well.

Mr. HATCH. The Senator is correct. And I thank my good friend from North Carolina for raising this issue. I concur; the intent of the provisions of the bill reforming the Medicare Clinical Laboratory Fee Schedule is to ensure that Medicare rates reflect true market rates, and that commercial payment rates to all sectors of the lab market should be represented, including independent laboratories and hospital outreach laboratories.

Mr. BURR. I thank the Senator for his insights and his work on reform of the Clinical Laboratory Fee Schedule.

WORLD WAR II VETERANS VISIT

Mr. MANCHIN. Madam President, I am filled with so much pride every time our military veterans visit our Nation's Capital and have the opportunity to stand before the memorials built to honor them.

This weekend, 93 veterans from North Central West Virginia, escorted by 55 guardians, will be traveling to Washington, DC, to see the memorials that commemorate their sacrifice and valor. This will mark the very first Honor Flight from North Central West Virginia—which is my hometown region of the "Mountain State."

Fifty World War II veterans, 42 Korean war veterans and one terminally ill Vietnam war veteran will fly from the small town of Clarksburg, WV, to Reagan National Airport, and before they lift off on a truly memorable and moving day, I look forward to greeting our vets bright and early at the local airport to wish them a safe trip to our Nation's Capital. I also will express my deepest gratitude to these special men who helped keep America free and made the world a safer place for liberty-loving people across our country and beyond our borders.

Upon their arrival, 30 Active-Duty sailors from the National Naval Medical Center and 8 marines from the USS *West Virginia* submarine will accompany the Honor Flight entourage during their daylong adventure.

These heroic West Virginians will travel to Washington to visit the World War II, Vietnam, Korean, FDR, Air Force, and Iwo Jima Memorials as well attend a ceremony at Arlington Cemetery.

While their step has slowed, their spirit is keen, their pride is undiminished, and their patriotism is immeasurable.

No matter the war, no matter the rank, no matter the duty, every one of these 93 veterans answered America's call and served our great country with the utmost valor. In our time of need, they stepped forward and said: I will do it—I will protect this country.

This trip to our Nation's Capital is just one way to say thank you.

But the West Virginia's North Central community has much more planned to show their gratitude for these devoted and courageous veterans. Upon the Honor Flight's return Saturday evening, hundreds of West Virginians will welcome home our returning vets, including National Guardsmen, Civil Air Patrol volunteers, Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts and our famous West Virginia University Mountaineer, Mike Garcia.

In addition, more than 155 band members from the Busy Bee Band and Honeybees of East Fairmont High School will perform a medley of patriotic songs, led by their band director and former marine, T.J. Bean.

I want to express my gratitude to my hometown community for their tireless efforts to make this Honor Flight a reality. I especially thank Butch Phillips and all the people who have been instrumental in planning and fulfilling this truly special experience for our 93 West Virginia veterans.

This generation of Americans was united by a common purpose and by common values—duty, honor, courage, service, integrity, love of family and country, and their triumph over oppression will be forever remembered.

Let us remember that these Honor Flights show tribute to all who have served this great country, so may God bless the United States of America and all the men and women who keep us free.

LOUISIANA GRAY DAY

Ms. LANDRIEU. Madam President, I wish to honor Louisiana Gray Day, this Friday, May 9, and the thousands of Louisianians and Americans with brain cancer and their families. Brain cancer is one of the most incurable forms of cancer and has an average survival period of only 1 to 2 years. It does not discriminate—striking men, women, and children of any race and at any age. Over 688,000 Americans are living with a primary brain tumor and each year over 69,700 people are diagnosed with primary malignant and nonmalignant tumors. Brain tumors are the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths in children under age 20, the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths in males ages 20 to 39, and the fifth leading cause of cancer-related deaths in females ages 20 to 39.

More so than any other cancer, brain tumors can have life-altering psychological, cognitive, behavioral, and physical effects. To help increase awareness and advance medical research for the various forms of brain cancer, the month of May is recognized nationally as brain cancer awareness month. My State has adopted May 9 in particular as the day when the citizens of the State are encouraged to wear the color gray to raise brain cancer awareness.

Brain cancer has unfortunately affected many in my State. Today I