

notable alumni includes none other than our distinguished majority leader, Senator MCCONNELL. This is the University of Louisville.

The University of Louisville goes out of its way to expose its students to the reality of climate change. Professor Keith Mountain is chair of the University of Louisville Department of Geography and Geosciences. He has lectured on “Stewardship in a Time of Global Climate Change,” a talk about “how climate change is a measurable reality and how people have contributed to the trends.” That is the chair of the University of Louisville Department of Geography and Geosciences.

The University of Louisville has also brought in Lonnie Dupre, “mountain climber, polar explorer, and a climate change activist,” to describe for University of Louisville students “his personal witness of the detrimental effects of global climate change over 25 years of polar exploring.” They brought in prize-winning ecologist Diana Wall for a University of Louisville Biology Department lecture series to talk about “fragile soil systems and their role in climate change.”

University of Louisville students have been involved, too, in Climate Change Teach-Ins, where students, faculty, and staff join together “to inform, inspire and educate others about the climate change crisis.” One student concluded, “The university needs more events similar to the teach-in to raise awareness about climate change.” I hope they will consider raising awareness among their alumni as well.

Let me close this discussion with two slides that were prepared for Kentucky’s Governor’s Conference on Energy and the Environment for a presentation on “Kentucky and the President’s Climate Action Plan.” This is a depiction of our country’s energy mix broken out by renewables, natural gas, coal, petroleum, hydroelectric, and nuclear. We can see there are a lot of layers in the cake. This layer represents coal in the U.S. energy mix as of 2012. This is Kentucky’s energy mix. As we can see, it is a black wall of coal. Even Wyoming, which produces more than four times as much coal as Kentucky, has a more diverse energy mix than this. Could they do better? I think so.

There is a song called “Warm Kentucky Sunshine.” Kentucky has a town named Sunshine. There is even a cocktail called a Kentucky Sunshine. But we would never know it from their energy mix. That is one of the reasons that Kentucky’s efforts to prepare for the Clean Power Plan are so promising.

So before our distinguished majority leader, the senior Senator from Kentucky, asks all of the other States to throw in the towel on conforming to the U.S. Government’s plan for dealing with carbon pollution, I would ask that he acknowledge that his own State recognizes climate change as a problem and as an opportunity and that Kentucky is trying to do something about it.

As to the possibilities, ask Senator GRASSLEY, whose State has 28 percent wind energy. Look at Kentucky’s mix. Iowa has 28 percent wind energy.

As to the possibilities, the distinguished majority leader could ask his deputy majority leader, Senator CORNYN of Texas, whose home State has more than 10 percent wind energy and a solar industry providing more than 330 megawatts, more than 7,000 jobs, and rapid growth.

I hope Kentucky doesn’t decide to change its present course and to throw in the towel without even trying. We can do this.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

SGR LEGISLATION

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I am hopeful—and most of us are—that soon we will be able to consider Medicare legislation that has passed the House of Representatives. It is probably best known as the SGR permanent fix.

The SGR, which is a payment system that affects physicians under the Medicare system, is badly broken. On 17 previous occasions we have extended the current policy in order to make sure that physicians don’t get an automatic cut that would deny many Medicare beneficiaries access to their physicians. These are pretty extreme measures.

We all understand that it is time to permanently fix this—not just to eliminate the problem but to substitute a payment system that encourages physicians to provide high quality care and to deal with incentives that reduce the volume of care. And that is what the legislation that passed the House of Representatives does.

It fixes the problem on a permanent basis. I am certainly hopeful we can get that enacted shortly because it already passed the deadline in regard to when the current patch expired. The bill also provides for an extension for the Children’s Health Insurance Program. I do hope we can provide a longer extension than the 2 years that is provided in the House bill. I know there will be amendments offered to deal with that.

I want to talk about an amendment I will be offering. I am not sure how much time will be available when a consent arrangement is entered into—which I hope will be soon—to consider this. It is an amendment I am offering with Senator VITTER. It is a bipartisan amendment. In previous Congresses, we have had many of my Republican colleagues who have joined me, we have had many of my Democratic colleagues. This should be, I hope, a non-controversial amendment we can adopt.

What it does is provide a permanent fix, as we do for physicians, for the physical therapy cap. I was in the House of Representatives in 1997 when we passed the Balanced Budget Act of

1997. I was on the Ways and Means Committee. I remember a chairman’s mark coming to us. For the first time there was a cap placed on physical therapy services.

I asked the chairman of the committee why was this being done. There was absolutely no policy reason whatsoever for imposing an arbitrary cap on the amount of physical therapy services. When you think about it, what it does is discriminate against those who have the greatest needs, those who have severe needs, those who have a stroke or traumatic brain injury or a spinal cord injury or managing Parkinson’s disease, multiple sclerosis, arthritis.

These are the individuals who run up against the cap and therefore could be denied the ability to deal with their needs, causing them, in many cases, to incur much greater costs. It makes no sense whatsoever, the therapy cap.

For that reason, on a pretty regular basis, we have extended the revised policy. Twelve times we have done it to prevent the implementation of the therapy cap. We have acknowledged the negative consequences that would result from the imposition of such limits. In 2009, a report issued by the Medicare Payment Advisory Committee, MEDPAC, it was estimated that the therapy cap, if enforced without an exception process, could harm 931,000 Medicare beneficiaries.

So we have an identical situation on the therapy cap as we do with the SGR physician reimbursement issue. That is why historically these two measures have always been moved together in tandem. What my amendment will do, cosponsored by Senator VITTER, is permanently fix the therapy cap issue by replacing the arbitrary limits on outpatient rehab therapy services with a more rational system which will require prior authorizations in certain circumstances.

So we fix it permanently, as we do the physicians’ reimbursement issue. I do not need to tell the Presiding Officer that we do not always have an opportunity to get legislation done here. I do think we have a chance—an excellent chance—that this bill we will be taking up is going to be signed by the President in the next few days.

This is our opportunity to get several matters taken care of. The therapy cap cries out for that type of attention. So I would urge my colleagues, when this amendment comes up—it is cosponsored by a large number of my colleagues. As I already mentioned, Senator VITTER, who is my cosponsor. On the Democratic side, we have both Senator REID and Senator REED, Senator WHITEHOUSE, Senator HIRONO, Senator CASEY, Senator SHAHEEN, Senator MENENDEZ, Senator MIKULSKI, Senator BROWN, Senator STABENOW, Senator LEAHY, Senator CANTWELL, Senator BENNET, Senator BOOKER.

I could mention many of my Republican colleagues who have joined me in the past in the repeal of the therapy

cap that are expressing an interest to help in this regard. I hope I will have their support on this amendment. Let's get it done. I think it is important for Medicare beneficiaries to know they are not at risk of losing the opportunity for their physician to treat them under the Medicare system.

If we do not take care of the SGR problem, that is a real, real concern of Medicare beneficiaries, as to whether their physicians will be available for them. The same thing is true with the therapy cap. Let's remove this uncertainty. Let's get it fixed. We have the opportunity to do that. So I would urge my colleagues to support my efforts that are supported by AARP and many of the outside groups.

Let's vote for the SGR bill but also vote for the amendment I will offer with Senator VITTER that will permanently fix the therapy cap. We will have a chance to do that I hope either later tonight or tomorrow.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TRIBUTE TO FEDERAL EMPLOYEE MATTHEW O'NEILL

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I do not know if I am going to be able to have time to get into this. For the last several months this year, I have been taking time 1 day a month to talk a bit about an employee in the Department of Homeland Security. Of all the Departments in the Federal Government—the largest Department—it has the lowest morale. We have been working hard with them to do something about that.

We are doing small things that nonetheless is to remind everybody that folks in the Department of Homeland Security, in some cases, risk their lives, invest their lives in trying to make sure we have a life and a good life and a safe life. They are worthy of our praise. What I am going to do tonight—unless I get run off the floor because of other business—I want to talk about one of them.

As the Presiding Officer knows, the Department was recently the center of a budget battle on Capitol Hill. For weeks, it was unclear if the Department was going to face a shutdown, another short-term continuing resolution or receive the full-year funding they needed. Fortunately, Congress did its job and sent a clean funding bill for the rest of the fiscal year to the President's desk.

The employees are grateful for that and certainly I am as well. While the Department's employees and leadership can now return to their focus on

keeping America safe from threats our country faces, we should not ignore the harm the latest debate inflicted on the already low morale of employees at the Department.

More than 200,000 men and women work for the Department of Homeland Security, really just to do one mission; that is, to create a safe, secure, and resilient place where the American way of life can thrive. Many of those employees, again as I said earlier, put their lives on the line every single day.

Whether these employees are securing our borders, securing our skies, responding to natural disasters or bolstering our defenses in the cyber world, few other Federal agencies and employees touch the lives of so many Americans on a daily basis more than do the employees of the Department of Homeland Security. There is no question that they deserve to be treated better than the way Congress has been treating them lately.

That is one of the reasons why over the past few months I have been coming to the floor to recognize the work of at least a few of the many exemplary Department of Homeland Security employees.

In February, I spoke about Ramiro Garza, Jr., a Border Patrol agent at U.S. Customs and Border Protection. I had the opportunity to meet Mr. Garza early in February in McAllen, TX, while on a visit to the Mexican border in South Texas with Senators RON JOHNSON and BEN SASSE. In the past summer, Mr. Garza played an instrumental role in quickly setting up an emergency operations center and processing facility, which he now runs, to help Customs and Border Protection better manage unaccompanied minors and families apprehended along the southern border.

Today, I rise to speak about another dedicated and outstanding employee of the Department of Homeland Security. His name is Matthew O'Neill. Matthew is employed as a special agent within the U.S. Secret Service.

Over the past several months, there have been incidents, including some as recently as this month, that have again raised serious questions about the Agency and its ability to fulfill its responsibilities. The Agency's leadership is still addressing these incidents and taking steps to implement reforms to improve the Agency from the inside out.

So while it is important for us to usher in a new chapter for the U.S. Secret Service, it is important also that we shine some light on some brave men and women at the Agency who continue to serve our country and carry out their missions with distinction. Special Agent Matthew O'Neill is one of the many hard-working public servants whose day-to-day work deserves special recognition.

We live in a world that has become increasingly digitized. Nearly all Americans, including Members of this Chamber and me, are spending more

and more of our time online, whether it is to do our banking, our shopping, communicating with loved ones or simply getting our work done on a day-to-day basis.

Americans' ability to go online in a safe and secure environment is at the core of Special Agent O'Neill's work. You see, agents in the U.S. Secret Service are not only responsible for protecting the President, the First Family, and other dignitaries as well, some agents, such as Special Agent O'Neill, do their work in cyber space—not outer space but cyber space. And there in that cyber space are criminals who are elusive, and the threats they pose to us are sophisticated and many.

Put simply, Agent O'Neill's job is to target cyber criminals taking aim at the American consumer, businesses, and our national community online.

Financial crime has evolved dramatically in the nearly 20 years since Special Agent O'Neill began his career with the Secret Service. Not that long ago, criminals would go to a bank, perhaps maybe a jewelry store or a convenience store, to steal money and maybe some other valuables.

Today, they don't even need to go outside to steal items of great value from businesses, from the Federal Government or from the rest of us consumers and regular citizens. Criminals just need access to the Internet. These data breaches are disruptive to our economy. They cause worry and confusion for millions of American consumers and for businesses. But thanks to his dedication and expertise, Special Agent O'Neill has helped the Federal Government to try to stay ahead of the curve and keep our most sensitive information and our property secure.

Special Agent O'Neill is originally from Dumfries, VA. He graduated from James Madison University in Harrisonburg, VA—that makes him a Duke—before joining his career with the Secret Service in 1998 in the New Haven, CT, office. From 2003 to 2007, he served in the Vice Presidential and Special Services Division in Washington, DC.

However, it is while serving in his current role, one primarily performed in cyber space, that Special Agent O'Neill has become one of the top cyber warriors defending our security online. In this position, he has helped to lead a number of complex transnational cyber crime investigations. These investigations have focused on crimes ranging from hacks into check-out lanes at brick-and-mortar stores to the online sale of stolen, personally identifiable information, such as Social Security numbers.

In one investigation, Special Agent O'Neill identified Web site portals that sold the personal information of approximately 30 million Americans to other cyber criminals, potentially putting victims at risk for identity theft or credit card fraud or worse.

To uncover the criminals running and participating in this scheme, Special Agent O'Neill sought and executed