

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that 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.

RECOGNIZING THE 100TH BIRTHDAY OF GERTRUDE SILVIA RUDIAK

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to acknowledge the 100th birthday of an incredible Nevadan, Gertrude Silvia Rudiak. For more than 70 years, Gertrude has been a leader in southern Nevada and has remained committed to her family, community, and faith.

Nearly a century ago, on August 2, 1915, Gertrude was born to Jewish immigrant parents in Dickinson, ND. As a child, her family moved from place to place across the country, but it was her parents' understanding of the value of higher education that brought them to the west coast. In California, she attended the University of California-Berkeley, where she received her bachelor's degree in music. Later, Gertrude built upon her skill set and earned credentials from the Business College of Oakland in office procedure. With undeniable tenacity and the knowledge she gained, she was able to work through the Great Depression.

In 1942, Gertrude met the love of her life, George Rudiak, and they married in September the same year. George was born in Moscow, Russia, and the experiences he and his family endured as they immigrated to the United States greatly shaped the man he became and the civil work he pursued later in his life.

George had received a law degree from the Boalt Hall School of Jurisprudence at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1940, but finding a job was a challenge. He was able to do some work for the State of California and the U.S. Employment Services; and in the midst of World War II, George enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps. The first place he was assigned was the Western Flying Training Command at Santa Ana. George was later transferred to the Las Vegas Gunnery School, which is now Nellis Air Force Base. Though the young couple was only stationed in Las Vegas for a short time, they fell in love with the city and moved back to plant their roots in the desert sand as soon as George was honorably discharged in 1946.

The Las Vegas of the 1940s was quite different from the Las Vegas of today. Approximately 21,000 people called the city home, and there was racial segregation. Some even referred to Las Vegas as the "Mississippi of the West." As the first city attorney of North Las Vegas, a Nevada Legislator, and chairman of the Nevada Equal Rights Commission, George was committed to bringing equality to Nevada. Gertrude

supported his efforts; and for more than 70 years, has made civic, religious, and humanitarian contributions of her own that have shaped our community. Today, all Las Vegans benefit from the compassionate work of Gertrude and George to make our community a better and more just place.

George Rudiak was a lawyer's lawyer. He was the lawyer we all looked to as the gold standard for an ethical, competent, experienced trial lawyer.

There are truly selfless people in the world, and Gertrude is one of these people. She is dedicated to her five children, their children, and their children's children and still finds time to improve her community. Over the past seven decades, she has filled traditionally male-held positions on community boards, including becoming the first female to serve on the board of Temple Beth Sholom, and has been a champion of secular and Jewish education in Las Vegas and Israel. Her efforts have been recognized by the Jewish National Fund, the United Jewish Appeal, and the Anti-Defamation League. Additionally, Mayor Carolyn Goodman presented Gertrude with the rare honor of a key to the city of Las Vegas in 2014. On more than one occasion, the city has declared August 2, Gertrude's birthday, Gertrude Rudiak Day in recognition of her long-standing commitment to Las Vegas.

I am grateful for Gertrude's contributions to our State, and I wish her a happy 100th birthday. May this year bring Gertrude and her family much health and happiness.

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF MEDICARE AND MEDICAID

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, in 1965, millions of Americans and nearly half the country's seniors couldn't afford basic health care. But that began to change 50 years ago today. President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Medicare program for the elderly and the Medicaid program for low-income adults, children, pregnant women, and people with disabilities.

Although it was signed by President Johnson, it "started with the man from Independence," . . . Harry S. Truman. In 1949, Truman became the first President to publicly support a national health insurance program and sent a bill to Congress that would give health insurance to everyone age 65 and older. Critics called the idea "socialized medicine," and the effort failed.

Sixteen years later, President Johnson believed "the times had caught up with the idea." And he was right. Today, 46 million older adults and 9 million people with disabilities depend on Medicare for health care and economic security. In Illinois, 1.9 million people are enrolled in Medicare.

And because of the Affordable Care Act, the program has grown stronger. The Medicare Part A trust fund is now expected to be solvent for an additional 13 years because of the Affordable Care

Act. The Affordable Care Act is also helping seniors with the cost of their prescription drugs. Since the passage of the ACA, people with Medicare in Illinois have saved over \$554 million on prescription drugs, because we closed the donut hole. That is an average savings of \$925 for each Illinois senior. The Affordable Care Act also expanded Medicare coverage of certain preventive services, such as mammograms or colonoscopies, without any cost sharing.

Let's not forget this is also the 50th Anniversary of Medicaid. Medicaid has been a lifeline for millions of people, especially children. My friends on the other side of the aisle find it easy to discredit a government program, but this isn't about a program. It is about the people who benefit from them.

Over 54 million people benefit from Medicaid. Before the Affordable Care Act, two out of three people on Medicaid were pregnant women and children. That is 36 million of our most vulnerable citizens. Medicaid also serves people with disabilities, including many low-income Americans with disabilities who would have nowhere else to turn.

Before the Affordable Care Act, almost 3 million people were covered by Medicaid in Illinois and more than half of all births were covered by Medicaid. Now, anyone living below 133 percent of poverty can join Medicaid. That's a single person earning less than \$15,654 a year, or a family of three bringing in \$26,720. And for this population, the Federal Government picks up 100% of the cost. Because of the Affordable Care Act, more than 570,000 people in Illinois are now covered by Medicaid. I call that a success.

Just ask Christopher Greenwood if this law is making a difference. Christopher Greenwood is a community health and prevention coordinator for the City of Rockford working to help people sign up for health insurance. He helped a 50-year-old woman enroll in Medicaid, and she was excited to have coverage for preventive services like a mammogram.

According to Christopher:

People aren't realizing the benefits of the Affordable Care Act. It's all about prevention services. When we tell people they need to sign up, they think they don't need it. But when we start telling them the benefits, to see the looks on their faces, it's all really cool.

You know who else benefits from Medicaid? Providers, hospitals and doctors. Ask a provider back home: What would you prefer? Reimbursement by Medicaid or not be paid at all? The answer is obvious.

Medicare and Medicaid save lives. The programs provide high quality health care to millions of people. Yes, we owe something to Truman for this idea. We owe something to Johnson for signing it into law. And today, we should focus on further strengthening these programs so they can serve future generations.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, this week, we commemorate the 50th anniversary of Medicare and Medicaid, programs that have made such a difference in the lives of so many.

Upon signing these programs into law 50 years ago, then-President Lyndon Johnson reminded us of a shared tradition within our great Nation—one that “calls upon us never to be indifferent toward despair . . . commands us never to turn away from helplessness . . . directs us never to ignore or to spurn those who suffer unended in a land that is bursting with abundance.”

That deep-seated tradition—to lend a hand to our neighbors and friends and to honor our mothers and fathers—is what guided Congress and country to do the right thing so many years ago. With the stroke of his pen, President Johnson, and all those who fought before and alongside him, made sure that there would be care for the sick and serenity for the fearful.

I know just how important Medicare and Medicaid are for the people who rely upon them. In the 1960s, I was a young social worker in Baltimore for “Operation REASON” (Responding to the Elderly’s Abilities & Sickness Otherwise Neglected). Our goal was to help Maryland seniors get the health care they needed. You have to remember, in those days, when you retired, you usually lost your health insurance, which meant that many seniors also lost access to their doctors and health care.

More than half of America’s seniors had no health insurance. This meant that middle-class seniors were a heart attack away from bankruptcy, a cancer diagnosis away from destitution. It didn’t matter if you were a senior of modest means or middle-class. Everyone was vulnerable.

But our job was to help. So, with teams led by social workers and nurses, we worked to help sick elderly people get health coverage and get to their doctor’s office. We were focused on helping seniors who had neglected their chronic conditions because of inability to travel, ignorance of services available to them, fear of asserting their right to such services, or other barriers placed in their way.

I saw firsthand how hard Baltimore’s seniors were struggling. They were forgoing medical care because they didn’t have insurance, because they couldn’t afford the bills, or simply because they didn’t have transportation to get to doctor’s office or hospital. I knew Medicare and Medicaid could help these seniors and all seniors.

So every single day I would go out to churches and senior citizen centers. I would inform people about their options, organize transportation for them, and help them fill out complicated forms. In those days, we didn’t have computers or cell phones. We had to physically go meet seniors where they were. And it worked. After 4 months of operation, we had 103 clients with a variety of chronic diseases, and we helped them get the care they needed.

And Congress took notice of what we were doing. In 1966, I was invited to come testify before Congress in the Senate Subcommittee on Aging, which was chaired by Senator Kennedy. We told the committee what we were doing, told them who we were fighting for. We were fighting for people in need, people who lived in unsafe housing, had inadequate diet and clothing, a dearth of recreational opportunities, who were lonely and were in need of health care.

These people, our seniors and our families of modest means, were the reason Congress passed Medicare and Medicaid in the first place. And thank God we did.

Today, 55 million Americans—nearly every senior—has access to Medicare’s guarantee. An additional 68 million of our Nation’s most vulnerable have health care coverage thanks to Medicaid. Because of Medicare and Medicaid, more Americans have health insurance. Before Medicare, 48 percent of seniors had no insurance. Today, only 2 percent of seniors are uninsured. Out of pocket costs have decreased. Before Medicare, seniors paid 56 percent of health care expenses out of pocket. Today, seniors only pay 13 percent. Life expectancy is longer. Medicare has contributed to a 5-year increase in life expectancy after age 65. Deaths from heart disease have dropped by a third for people over age 65. Our elderly’s poverty rate has declined dramatically, from 29 percent in 1966 to 10 percent today. Seniors have more affordable drugs. Since 2010, over 8 million seniors have saved more than \$11 billion on prescription drugs. Kids are getting comprehensive early childhood screenings, and 32 million children nationwide now get needed childhood screenings.

In Maryland alone, Medicare ensures that 1 million Maryland seniors can get the health care they need at prices they can afford. And Medicaid ensures that 975,000 Marylanders can get the health care they need, including 478,000 Maryland kids—that is one in three of Maryland’s children—149,000 Marylanders with disabilities, and 77,000 of our low-income seniors.

Over the past half century, we have seen Medicare and Medicaid prolong and enhance the lives of millions of Americans. Ensuring access to health care for America’s most vulnerable ranks as one of our Nation’s greatest public health accomplishments. That is why I am committed to doing everything within my power to keep Medicare and Medicaid strong, so that these programs can continue helping those who rely on them today, as well as those who will need them tomorrow.

That means fighting for reforms that keep Medicare solvent, as we did in the Affordable Care Act, where we extended Medicare’s solvency by more than a decade. It means fighting for improvements that make Medicare stronger, as we did in the Affordable Care Act, where we closed the prescrip-

tion drug “donut hole,” where we gave seniors free preventive services, where we put the focus on quality of care, not quantity of care.

And it means fighting to protect these vital programs from those who want to turn them from a guarantee into a voucher and political promise, as Republicans have repeatedly tried to do in their budget proposals.

Make no mistake, Republican proposals to privatize Medicare, to turn it into a voucher program, would end Medicare as we know it. I will not let that happen. I will fight side-by-side with those 1 million Maryland seniors and 55 million American seniors. We will fight to keep Medicare and Medicaid strong and healthy so that they can continue to provide for the health care needs of our citizens.

As you can see, there is a lot to celebrate as we mark Medicare and Medicaid’s 50th anniversary. For the past five decades, these programs have accomplished their two main goals: ensuring access to health care for the elderly, for the disabled, and for those of modest means. And protecting people against the financial hardship of health care costs.

I consider it a great honor and privilege that I have been able to devote so much of my career to protecting, improving, and fighting on behalf of Medicare and Medicaid and all the people served by these programs. From my days as a young social worker helping seniors and families get the health care they needed, to my days in the House and Senate fighting against efforts to privatize Medicare or block grant Medicaid, to those years spent working to refresh and improve these programs through the Affordable Care Act, including closing the “donut hole,” expanding Medicaid eligibility, and ensuring seniors could get free preventive screenings.

I believe “honor thy father and mother” is a good commandment to live by and a good policy to govern by. That is why I have fought to save and strengthen Medicare and Medicaid to ensure that health care is affordable, accessible, reliable, and undeniable.

PLANNED PARENTHOOD

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I wish to take a moment to express my disdain for the reprehensible actions of Planned Parenthood and my support for the defense of all the unborn babies subject to this group’s immoral practices.

Thanks to the Center for Medical Progress, the Nation has quickly been made aware that Planned Parenthood affiliates across the country have been modifying their abortion procedures for the specific purpose of preserving organs from the fetuses being aborted in exchange for compensation. In the video released this week, a former procurement technician explains how the procurement of certain body parts warrants a higher level of compensation,