

countries. They loved America because they were free. I didn't know any better, but I knew I was free, and that was important—not just to me but to my parents and to many others as well.

Elaine and I are so grateful that we have been able to raise our six children, all of whom are married now, all of whom have children, and many of whom have our great-grandchildren.

The thing that tied us together more than anything else was religion in this freest of all nations. I am so grateful for this country. I am so grateful for the freedoms that we all take for granted. I am so grateful for my parents, who were just humble people, neither of whom had received any education beyond the eighth grade, but both were brilliant in his or her own way. The thing they taught us was religion and doing good to our fellow men and women.

I am so grateful for this great country. I am so grateful for all of the many blessings we have from religious freedom, and I don't want to see us lose that in the realm of political correctness.

In closing, I urge all of my colleagues to consider the state of religious liberty in the United States today. Only by strengthening this fundamental freedom can we secure the future of our own democracy and keep the rest of our freedoms alive and viable.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRUZ). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### WASTEFUL SPENDING

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I am here for my now 28th “Waste of the Week.” I have been coming to the floor of the Senate for 28 weeks pointing out government waste.

Some in this Chamber say we can't cut a penny more. We are down to the bone. We are far from it. This is just a small effort, having been shot down, in terms of anything larger to do to deal with our fiscal situation, because the White House simply does not want to engage in it. We at least ought to be able to take steps as a body to eliminate the kind of wasteful spending that takes place on a daily basis in Washington.

I have come down once a week to do this. I could come down every day, I could come down every hour and point out something in this vast array of Federal Government that never stops growing that simply falls in the category of waste, fraud, and abuse. So far we are well over our \$100 billion goal of accumulated waste. Today, this is No. 28. Specifically, this particular waste of the week is facilitator fraud in the

Social Security disability insurance fund.

What is the facilitator fraud? Facilitator fraud is when individuals with specialized knowledge use system as a means to fraudulently, illegally qualify people to receive SSDI benefits. They look for claimants either by putting out ads or using social media or word of mouth: Look, you too can get checks from the Federal Government even if you are not disabled because we have figured out how to qualify you. We will help you process these forms. We have connections with doctors and medical providers who will be able to give us written information, even though it is fraudulent and illegal, that you can use to justify with the Social Security Administration to qualify for Social Security disability.

Then, when those payments start, the facilitators get a percentage of that or they have worked out some kind of agreement that you will pay us this amount of money if we can get you the claim. Once disability payment is made, financial compensation to the facilitator is in place, and there is a vicious cycle of fraud and abuse. So instead of robbing Peter to pay Paul, Peter and Paul are robbing the Federal Government together and reaping the benefits.

Over the last 5 years, the Social Security Administration has seen an amazing increase in fraudulent activity associated with facilitators. The estimate is potentially 1 percent and perhaps even more—we haven't tied this down yet—of SSDI payments are affected by facilitator fraud. We have taken a rough estimate of what this would amount to over a 10-year period of time and dropped \$.4 billion. We think at least \$10 billion over 10 years is a conservative estimate of the waste of taxpayers' dollars through fraudulent, illegal means.

Last month the Social Security inspector general, Patrick O'Carroll, testified before the Joint Economic Committee, which I chair, and shared his concerns about this question. He said, “There are people out there in positions of trust that the agency relies on for information . . .” as to determining whether a claim is a legitimate claim for coverage. He said, “And if those people [whom we rely on] decide to defraud the government”—by sending in false claims, backed up by false medical support, the taxpayer is being taken to the cleaners. “We have found that in some cases the former Social Security employees”—that have left the employment of the Federal Government—“that understand the way the system works then go into conspiracies with unscrupulous medical providers and attorneys, where they will use improper information and facilitate getting in so that a person will get on benefits,” and they get the payment and the rewards.

Last year, a San Diego-area psychologist confessed to charging his patients \$200 each to fabricate medical evidence to support their disability claims.

Imagine getting up in the morning, going to your desk, you have the credentials of a doctor—in this case a psychologist—to issue an opinion as to what the claimant's medical condition is, and then participate in this cycle of fraudulent activity and be paid for it. That is his job. That is what he does every day. Fortunately, we caught him, and that is how we know about this.

In August of 2013, Federal law enforcement officials and the Puerto Rico Police Department arrested 75 people in Puerto Rico and dismantled a large-scale disability fraud scheme involving physicians and a claimant representative who is also a former Social Security Administration employee.

So not only are individuals doing this, but there are groups of individuals who are working through a system. These are just two small examples of what is happening. To give some credit, the discovery of this has produced some progress in terms of addressing this problem. The most recent budget deal reached in the Senate included increased funding for what is called the Cooperative Disability Investigation Units, which investigate suspicious disability claims and hopefully prevents fraud before it happens. Additionally, the Social Security Administration's regional Disability Fraud Pilot Program works specifically on facilitator fraud across the country trying to identify those high-dollar, high-impact cases involving third-party facilitators conspiring with claimants to defraud the Social Security Administration. It is a pilot program. I don't know why we haven't had that program in place from its very inception. Every agency distributing funds for individuals should have as a component of that agency an investigative process for fraud, waste, and abuse because—you name the program writing checks to claimants, and I believe we will be able to find those that are fraudulently taking money out of taxpayers' wallets.

We are going to keep coming here every week putting the spotlight on waste, fraud, and abuse. Today we add another \$10 billion to the total, which keeps growing and growing. Now it is a total of \$128,812 billion of documented waste, fraud, and abuse. This is not something we make up. This is not something we read about in the paper. This is something where agencies of the Federal Government, which have accountability and responsibility to try to dig in and find this abuse, provide information on a regular basis, but it is something taxpayers simply cannot afford, should not be obligated to pay, and highlights the fact that we have a government growing beyond its means.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

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

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

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EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that morning business be extended until 3 p.m. today, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

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RECESS

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess as under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 12:28 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

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REMEMBERING GOVERNOR OLENE WALKER

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Governor Olene Walker, Utah's 15th Governor, who passed away on Saturday, November 28, 2015, at the age of 85. She was the first woman to serve as Utah's Governor, worked as Lieutenant Governor for over 11 years, and was a member of the Utah Legislature for 8 years.

Olene Walker will be remembered and revered by Utahns not because of the many firsts she pioneered in politics but for her commitment to leave a legacy of public and, more importantly, private service based on principles that truly last. Olene Walker's life and career were centered in the principles of lifelong learning, selfless service, and making a difference through civil discourse and meaningful dialogue.

Governor Walker believed that the best way to open a mind was to read a book. Immediately upon becoming Governor, she launched her Read With a Child Program, focused on getting adults to read with a child for 20 minutes every day. She knew that 20 minutes of daily reading would not only transform children across the State by getting them to read at or above grade level, but it would transport them to magical places, big ideas, and brighter futures. Because she became Governor at the age of 73—and as a grandmother—I think she also recognized that 20 minutes of reading with a child would inspire the adults in the State of Utah as well.

Governor Walker was never far from a book or a group of children to read to, often choosing her personal favorite from Dr. Seuss, "Oh, the Places You'll

Go!" Governor Walker went many places in her public service but sent thousands and thousands of Utah children on adventures never to be forgotten in the wonderful world of good books. She was living proof that books expand the mind and that a mind expanded, especially the mind of a child, could never return to its original state. I was inspired when reading her obituary that the last line, in typical Olene Walker style, stated: "In lieu of flowers, please read with a child." Her commitment to the principle of lifelong learning is a legacy in and of itself.

Governor Walker also understood that it didn't really matter where she served, but how she served. Whether working alongside her husband in the family's snack business, in the legislature or in the Governor's office, Olene Walker knew that her time on this Earth would never be measured by the titles she held but by the impact and influence that she had on others. She understood and lived by the adage: "We are to live our lives not by days, but by deeds, not by seasons, but by service." After leaving the Governor's mansion, she participated in literacy forums, served an LDS mission with her husband in New York, and at an age when most people slow down, Olene Walker took on a new and, many would say, daunting challenge of leading dozens of 3- to 11-year-old children for 2 hours every Sunday in her LDS congregation.

Governor Walker served with confidence, charisma, and charm that was elevating and at the same time enlightening. National political players, rural farmers, business executives, and children were equally inspired by her energetic approach, and they responded to her invitation to engage because they sensed that what they were about to experience was not about Governor Walker; it was about them.

In an age of egomaniacs and narcissists, Olene Walker's example of selfless service in high office is a model for all to follow—a model that all people should try to emulate. Governor Walker also understood the principle that mean-spirited arguments produce little, while meaningful dialogue creates much. She was known for her disarming style and for her corresponding ability to pull people into a conversation. She believed and lived by a motto that my office is committed to. The solution to any and every problem begins when someone says: Let's talk about it. Olene Walker challenged political candidates, elected officials of both parties, and young people in particular to transcend the talk-radio style bombast in personal attacks in favor of civil, serious, and substantive discussions. The Olene S. Walker Institute of Politics & Public Service, at her beloved Weber State University, is a testament to her commitment to make a difference through a more meaningful and deeper dialogue.

A picture of Olene Walker taken inside the Governor's mansion contains an interesting image that illuminates

much of what Olene Walker was really all about. Resting on a desk in the background of the picture is a statue of a vibrant, energetic, pioneering Brigham Young. He is walking swiftly, leading with staff in hand, eyes set on a bright future as he began the audacious endeavor of being the first to establish a lasting legacy in the tops of the Rocky Mountains. In the picture, the statue of Brigham Young almost appears to be trying to keep up with Governor Walker. Only Olene Walker could get a trailblazing Brigham Young to pick up the pace. Governor Walker, likewise, was a pioneer and a trailblazer, moving swiftly, leading with a clear vision of a better society, and guided by her principles of lifelong learning, selfless service, and civil dialogue. Her life of many firsts will be celebrated and emulated for generations to come because it was founded on and inspired by such principles—principles that will truly last.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

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TRAGEDY AT PLANNED PARENTHOOD CLINIC IN COLORADO SPRINGS

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I am here to reflect on the tragedy that occurred in Colorado Springs last week. There, a gunman attacked a Planned Parenthood clinic, killing three people and injuring nine others. Colorado is mourning the losses of the three who were murdered, all of whom were parents in the prime of their lives and all of whom represented the best of our State.

Officer Garrett Swasey was one of the first officers to arrive at the scene. He had served as an officer at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs Police Department for 6 years. Garrett had been married to his wife Rachel for 17 years. He leaves behind his two children—Faith, who is only 6, and Elijah, who just turned 11 on Sunday. His wife said:

His greatest joys were his family, his church, and his profession. We will cherish his memory, especially those times he spent tossing the football to his son and snuggling with his daughter on the couch.

She went on to note:

Helping others brought him deep satisfaction and being a police officer was a part of him. In the end, his last act was for the safety and well-being of others and was a tribute to his life.

Officer Swasey's actions last Friday spoke to his extraordinary courage and selflessness. As a university police officer, he wasn't under any obligation to respond when he first heard of the incident through emergency radio. He could have looked the other way. Yet he was one of the first to arrive at Planned Parenthood, which is 4 miles away from the university.

His good friend and copastor said that Officer Swasey often responded to dangerous calls off campus and that he put other people's lives before his own.