

fees by kicking poor working people off of Medicaid for failure to pay monthly contributions similar to premiums. This plan forced people making \$10,000 a year, \$5,000 a year, or even homeless people with virtually no income to pay a monthly contribution or be penalized. As a result of Ms. Verma's work, about 2,500 Hoosiers have been cut from care. Evaluations of this plan by independent experts show it is confusing to beneficiaries and has not demonstrated better results than traditional Medicaid expansion. Meanwhile, enrollment is far lower than projected.

During my meeting with her and in her testimony before the Senate Finance Committee, Ms. Verma stated that Medicaid should not be an option for able-bodied people. Ms. Verma seems to think the private sector can serve this population on its own. Based on what we know about the historical affordability challenges in the individual health insurance market, I find this notion hard to believe.

My State is innovating in Medicaid through "rebalancing" from nursing homes to home and community care, integrating behavioral health and primary care, and adopting of innovative new waivers through collaboration with the Federal Government. In fact, Washington State realized more than \$2.5 billion in savings over 15 years through rebalancing efforts; yet Ms. Verma will not commit to a single delivery system reform idea.

Ms. Verma claims Medicaid is a top-down Federal power grab. On the contrary, Medicaid is an optional State program, with all States participating. Every State participates because they know Medicaid is a good strategy for covering a low-income and vulnerable population and supporting their healthcare delivery system. Medicaid is highly flexible right now, and States have wide latitude over eligibility, benefits, provider reimbursements, and overall administration of their Medicaid programs.

Ms. Verma claims Medicaid produces poor outcomes, but she cannot offer a single credible clinical outcome or quality measure that the program is not achieving. Meanwhile, data show that patient satisfaction in Medicaid is high and the program achieves improved public health and clinical outcomes for its patients.

Most concerning, Ms. Verma has repeatedly endorsed the administration and Republicans' plan to permanently cap Medicaid, which would hurt patients, States, health providers, and local economies.

I am voting no on Seema Verma's nomination for CMS Administrator because I cannot endorse a full-scale assault on the Medicaid Program.

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, Seema Verma has a proven track record of helping States create patient-centered healthcare systems that improve quality and access and give individuals and families more control over their healthcare. Due to a family commit-

ment, I was unable to participate in the cloture vote. However, I strongly support Ms. Verma's nomination and look forward to working with her on the many important healthcare issues facing Florida and our country.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

#### TRIBUTE TO GLEN HANSON

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I have been coming down to the floor for the past several months recognizing Alaskans who make our State great and our country better for all of us. I really enjoy doing this because it gives me an opportunity to share the excellent work my citizens are doing in their communities. It also gives me a few minutes to highlight to all my colleagues here in the Senate—and to some of those Americans who might be watching at home—to talk a little bit more about the unique place I call home and am honored to serve and represent in the Senate.

This week, I would like to honor pilot Glen Hanson, who is right now somewhere flying above racing sled dogs in the far north in Alaska, literally as we speak.

Before I get to how he is helping Alaskans and how he is this week's Alaskan of the Week, let me take you back through a remarkable bit of history that happened in Nome, AK, in 1925, when a diphtheria serum was desperately needed for the children in Nome. The nearest batch of serum was 1,000 miles away in Anchorage, AK. There weren't—and still aren't—any roads that connect Nome to Anchorage. There was very challenging winter weather during this time, so no airplanes could fly. In fact, the nearest train station was over 700 miles away from Nome, so people traveled mostly by dog sled.

On the night of January 27, 1925, musher "Wild Bill" Shannon tied a 20-pound package of serum wrapped in protective fur around his sled. He and his nine dogs started the journey called then the "Great Race of Mercy" across the frozen Alaska land. Miles later, he met up with another racer and another team of dogs, and the relay continued all across Alaska, over 1,000 miles—20 mushers and 150 sled dogs—through some of the world's most rugged terrain and some of the world's most brutal weather. In fact, right now in parts of Alaska where the Iditarod is happening, it is 40 to 50 below zero.

That original race, the Great Race of Mercy, began to be reenacted, with some twists, in 1973 and continues today. In fact, it is going on right now, the Iditarod, the Last Great Race, in my great State. People from all across the world come to participate in it and come to watch it. It is the quintessential Alaskan event that involves the work of hundreds of Alaskans, lodge owners, veterinarians, dogs, dog handlers, volunteers, pilots—hundreds, thousands.

Alaska, as you might know, is home to more veterans per capita than any other State, but we are also home to more pilots per capita than any other State. Our pilots are a vital part of our economy and transportation, and they are a vital part of the Iditarod. In fact, the race couldn't exist without them.

Every year, more than a dozen volunteer pilots load their planes for the Iditarod race with more than 100,000 pounds of dog food, hundreds of bales of hay, and lumber for tents. They fly the veterinarians, the judges, the dog handlers, and so many of the volunteers out to the checkpoints hundreds of miles away. We call them the Iditarod Air Force, and every one of them deserves recognition.

That gets me back to Anchorage resident Glen Hanson, who is our Alaskan of the Week. Glen, along with his brother Bert, is tied among this year's pilots as the longest serving volunteer in the Iditarod Air Force. He began volunteering for the Last Great Race—the Iditarod Air Force—in 1984. Glen has since put in roughly 1,500 hours of volunteer time, making sure that the Last Great Race continues and that the dogs and the mushers are taken care of—taken care of right now in 40 to 50 below zero, as this race is going on.

This year, Glen won the Alaska Air Carriers Association Iditarod Humanitarian Service Award. Upon receiving it, the Air Carriers Association wrote to Glen:

You are obviously an accomplished pilot held in high regard by your peers. While there are many volunteers working to make the race possible, you consistently go above and beyond the call of duty. You are always quietly willing to take every assignment, no matter how unglamorous or uncomfortable. You step up time after time to fly in the challenging air strips to ensure that the musher supplies and race personnel are available to keep the race safe.

Thank you, Glen, for all you do to keep our great Alaska history alive. And thanks to all the pilots in the Iditarod Air Force this year and so many of the other volunteers who keep everybody safe—and are doing it right now during this year's Iditarod. And to all the mushers and these great dogs, good luck. Everyone involved makes this truly the last great race in America.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

#### TRIBUTE TO MASTER SERGEANT KEARY MILLER

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, today it is my honor to congratulate retired MSgt Keary Miller of the Kentucky Air National Guard's 123 Special

Tactics Squadron. On January 17, 2017, the U.S. Air Force awarded Master Sergeant Miller, of Goshen, KY, its highest honor, the Air Force Cross. This award is presented “for extraordinary heroism while engaged in military operations against an opposing foreign force.” It is second only to the Congressional Medal of Honor.

In March 2002, Miller served in the Battle of Takur Ghar as part of Operation Anaconda in the Paktia province of Afghanistan. Their mission was to defeat Taliban forces hiding in on the Takur Ghar Mountain.

During the mission, two MH-47E Chinook helicopters took enemy fire as they attempted to land. The helicopter lurched in an attempt to evade taking damage. The quick maneuvering caused PO1 Neil C. Roberts to fall from the rear ramp out of the vehicle. Miller, a pararescuman, was in a third helicopter to rescue Roberts. However, his vehicle was hit with automatic weapons fire and rocket propelled grenades when it was 20 feet above the ground.

The enemy fire damaged Miller's helicopter and forced them to touch down on Takur Ghar. After a hard landing, Miller and his team formed a defensive posture despite five critical casualties. Through rocket propelled grenade, mortar, and small arms fire, Miller dragged the wounded helicopter pilot to safety. For the next 17 hours, Miller and his team engaged the enemy in intense fighting, and he displayed astonishing bravery as he helped the wounded and resupplied his comrades.

Through his heroic actions, Miller successfully brought 10 seriously wounded soldiers to medical treatment and recovered seven Americans killed in action.

For his service, the Air Force awarded Miller the Silver Star on November 1, 2003. However, as part of the Department of Defense's review of combat medals, the Secretary of the Air Force Deborah Lee James upgraded the award to the Air Force Cross.

In a statement, James said “These are people whose lifestyle includes going above and beyond the call of duty and exemplifying the Air Force core values of integrity first, service before self and excellence in all we do.”

To further commemorate Miller's extraordinary service, the National Museum of the United States Air Force at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base has included his actions in the Battle of Takur Ghar in a permanent exhibition on battlefield airmen.

On behalf of a grateful nation, I want to extend my sincerest thanks to Master Sergeant Keary Miller for his service to the United States and the Kentucky Air National Guard. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring this distinguished Kentuckian. He has earned this prestigious award, and he is a true American hero.

#### TRIBUTE TO GEORGE FLYNN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, today it is my honor to celebrate

former Pulaski County circuit clerk George Flynn. Although he began his retirement last year, his community is still recognizing him for his three decades of public service. The Somerset-Pulaski County Chamber of Commerce presented the “Distinguished Community Service Award”—its top honor—to Flynn in recognition of his dedicated work to the people of Pulaski County.

In both his personal life and professional work, Flynn tirelessly tried to make his community a better place. He was first elected in 1987 because he “is [the] personification of a ‘one of us’ attitude necessary to attract votes in Pulaski County.” Because of his exemplary work as circuit clerk, the people reelected him four times. In his tenure, he worked with five circuit court judges and oversaw the modernization of all court records.

After a proud career of public service, Flynn said he is ready to spend his days sleeping in, enjoying time with his wife, Resa, his grandchildren, and his dogs. He has earned a relaxing retirement. I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to George Flynn for a notable career of public service and this much deserved award.

#### REMEMBERING WILLIAM “BILL” HOLEMAN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, today I wish to honor the life of William Holeman. Preacher Bill, as he was known, came to eastern Kentucky in 1953 and almost immediately made a lasting impact.

For over 60 years, Bill travelled throughout eastern Kentucky, teaching around 40,000 schoolchildren each year about bullying, drug abuse, and his Christian faith with the Youth Haven Bible Camp. Although his family described him as a humble man, Bill had a real passion for his vocation.

To help teach the kids, Bill employed ventriloquist dummies named Henry and Homer. He developed their personalities and spread his message with laughter and fun.

Bill dearly loved eastern Kentucky and its people. He devoted his life to them, and many children were forever changed by his work.

Preacher Bill will surely be missed, and Elaine and I send our condolences to his wife, Joyce, and their children Susan, Gail, Gary, and Eddie.

#### REMEMBERING SHERIFF CHARLES EDWARD “FUZZY” KEESEE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, today I wish to remember the life of the longest serving county sheriff in the history of Kentucky, Pike County Sheriff Charles Edward Keese. After more than 40 years of hard work, “Fuzzy,” as he was affectionately known, passed away at the age of 89.

A veteran of the Second World War, Fuzzy became a lasting icon in Pike County. Deputy Judge/Executive Brian Morris said “You can't serve for more

than four decades and not personally touch every household in Pike County.” He was a compassionate public servant, a dedicated law enforcement officer, and a good man. The community will surely remember Fuzzy's impact and miss him deeply.

Elaine and I send our condolences to Sheriff Keese's wife, Easter, his brother, Alben, and his sister, Nancy Jo.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### TRIBUTE TO LYLE BURGESS

• Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, this week, I have the distinct honor of recognizing Lyle Burgess of Ryegate. Lyle has been a dependable leader for the people of Golden Valley County for over a generation. He has contributed to the community in the fields of education and emergency services. Golden Valley County is located in the middle of Montana, and Lyle has been in the middle of events in the county for many years.

After graduating from Eastern Montana College, now known as Montana State University-Billings, Lyle began a 30-year career as a school teacher at Ryegate High School. A few years after he started teaching, Lyle began serving as a first responder with the Golden Valley County Emergency Medical Services. Although he is now retired from teaching, Lyle continues to serve his community: he went on to become the director of EMS. Today he still serves in that role. As director, Lyle is responsible for training new first responders and getting them ready to be Emergency Medical Technicians. The familiar saying “once a teacher, always a teacher” rings true for Mr. Burgess. Golden Valley County Sheriff Robert Pallas referred to Lyle and his colleague at EMS, Mary Ann Schladweiler, as the “staples” of the program.

Golden Valley County is home to just about 800 residents. The rural setting magnifies the necessity of having great folks like Lyle and Mary Ann offer their time and talent in the service of others. Montana is a State blessed with many treasures, and the greatest treasure of all is the people. Thank you, Lyle, for going above and beyond in the community and teaching others by your example. •

##### TRIBUTE TO EVELYN FRANCES STEARNS

• Ms. HASSAN. Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Evelyn Frances Stearns, who celebrates her 100th birthday on March 31, 2017. Evelyn was born in South Berwick, ME, the daughter of Perley and Helen Marshall.

She was a resident nurse graduate of Nashua Memorial Hospital in Nashua, NH, and was later a 3 and a half year veteran in the Army Nurse Corps, working as an operating room nurse in