

provider would be authorized to access the medical records of another employee of the Department.

(C) Steps that the Secretary will take to acquire new or implement existing technology to prevent an employee of the Department from accessing the medical records of another employee of the Department without a specific need to access such records.

(D) Steps the Secretary will take, including plans to issue new regulations, as necessary, to ensure that an employee of the Department may not access the medical records of another employee of the Department for the purpose of retrieving demographic information if that demographic information is available to the employee in another location or through another format.

(E) A proposed timetable for the implementation of such plan.

(F) An estimate of the costs associated with implementing such plan.

(b) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS DEFINED.—In this section, the term “appropriate committees of Congress” means—

(1) the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs and the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate; and

(2) the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the House of Representatives.

SEC. 202. OUTREACH ON AVAILABILITY OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AVAILABLE TO EMPLOYEES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall conduct a program of outreach to employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs to inform those employees of any mental health services, including telemedicine options, that are available to them.

SEC. 203. PROTOCOLS TO ADDRESS THREATS AGAINST EMPLOYEES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall ensure protocols are in effect to address threats from individuals receiving health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs directed towards employees of the Department who are providing such health care.

SEC. 204. COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES STUDY ON ACCOUNTABILITY OF CHIEFS OF POLICE OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTERS.

The Comptroller General of the United States shall conduct a study to assess the reporting, staffing, accountability, and chain of command structure of the Department of Veterans Affairs police officers at medical centers of the Department.

**UNANIMOUS CONSENT
AGREEMENT—S. 1094**

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following the disposition of the Elwood nomination, the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. 1094, the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability Act; that the committee-reported substitute be adopted, and that there then be 3 hours of debate, equally divided in the usual form; and that following the use or yielding back of time, the bill, as amended, be read a third time and the Senate proceed to vote on passage with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

TRIBUTE TO ALASKA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD SERVICE-MEMBERS

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, every week I have been coming down to the Senate floor to honor an individual who is serving in my great State of Alaska, who is helping to make our State, his or her local community, or even our country a better place. We call these individuals our Alaskan of the Week.

Alaska carries a mystique. We all know that. I am a little biased, but it does, rightfully so. It is a beautiful State. We all think it is the most beautiful State in the world. I encourage everybody who is watching from the Gallery or on TV to make sure they take at least one trip to Alaska sometime in their life. You will love it. It will be the trip of a lifetime.

But Alaska is much more than just a beautiful State. It is actually a State that is critically important to America—critically important to our country. We have abundant natural resources: fish, metals, minerals, and oil and gas. They are resources that help feed our country, help build our country, and help power our country.

Further, given today’s threats, we are also the most strategically located State in the country. In fact, General Billy Mitchell, father of the Air Force, said in testimony to the Congress in the 1930s that Alaska was “the most important strategic place in the world,” which could control Asia, North America, and Europe. He said that whoever controls Alaska controls the world.

In Alaska, we are the hub of combat airpower for the Asia-Pacific and the rest of the world. We are also a vital expeditionary platform, with some of the Army’s best trained troops, who can deploy anywhere in the world on a moment’s notice. Importantly, we are the cornerstone of our country’s missile defense system.

What makes this military triad truly exceptional is the Arctic-tough women and men in uniform supporting each of these pillars of America’s military might in Alaska, who work day and night to ensure that our country is safe.

Following Armed Forces Day a few days ago, where we honor all of those who currently serve in the military—and we are all going to be celebrating in a few days Memorial Day to honor those who gave their lives serving our country—I recognize a group of proud Alaskans who help protect our country. These individuals were recently awarded the 2017 Alaska Missile Defender of the Year award from the Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance. Today, they are our Alaskans of the Week.

These are National Guard service-members from the Alaska Army and Air National Guard who have dem-

onstrated leadership, excellence, and selfless commitment in their operation of the U.S. Ground-based Midcourse Defense system, at Fort Greely, and the Early Warning Radar system at Clear Air Force Station in Alaska, over the past year. Essentially, these are the men and women who keep our country safe with America’s most sophisticated missile defense system. So I would like to read their names on the Senate floor.

Base defenders of the year from the 213th Space Warning Squadron at Clear Air Force Station: SSgt Jonathan Rivera-Calderon and SSgt Stanislav Barilov.

Missile defenders of the year from the 213th Space Warning Squadron at Clear Air Force Station: Capt. Erik Haugen and TSgt Mark Lockwood.

Base defenders of the year from Fort Greely: SGT Nathan Williams and SGT Travis Hall.

Best crew winners from the 49th Missile Defense Battalion, Delta Crew: MAJ Michael Long, CPT Anthony Montoya, 1LT Rachel Simmons, SSG Caroline Domenech, and SGT Jose Aponte.

These Alaskan missile defenders continue to stand ready and excel as they protect our country and our citizens from an increasingly diverse set of national security threats. They are just a few of the 300 men and women missile defenders in interior Alaska who, every day, protect the entire United States. They like to call themselves the “300 protecting the 300 million.” I think of them as modern-day Spartans, the 300 Spartans who fought alongside King Leonidas to protect Greece in 480 BC. That is who they are, modern-day Spartans.

The mission of these men and women is to protect the entire country from a rogue missile threat—whether from North Korea, Iran, or another country—that could hit any city in America. This is what they do 365 days a year, 24/7. They are on call on Christmas, New Year’s, and Super Bowl Sunday. They are tough, well-trained, and they are committed patriots of America.

We face a dizzying array of threats across the globe. But the one that keeps not only me but many Members of the Senate and our military up at night right now is the threat from North Korea. There is no doubt that North Korea and the leader of that country are intent on obtaining and nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missile that can range our entire country. Recent unclassified briefings on this issue have said it is no longer a matter of if but when North Korea is going to have this capability.

To protect us from this impending threat, this advancing threat, a number of us introduced a bill this past week to enhance our missile defense system across the country. While Alaska’s missile defenders currently keep us safe, like many in our military they need more training and better technology so these brave men and women

can do their job and continue to keep America safe in the future.

Leading up to Memorial Day, I want to make sure to thank all who have served and continue to serve our Nation in uniform. I especially honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice, and, of course, their families. I also want to make sure I recognize Alaska's missile defenders. While millions of Americans will be outside this weekend, having a barbecue and celebrating Memorial Day, every American in this country can rest assured that these brave missile defenders in Alaska, men and women like the Spartans of old, stand watch to defend our freedoms. They are doing it today and they will do it on Memorial Day, just like they do every day of the year.

That is why all of them, in my view, merit the award of Alaskans of the Week.

TRIBUTE TO WADE QUIGLEY

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I wish to recognize another Alaskan, one who happens to be right here in the Senate Chamber, Senate Page Wade Quigley. I think we should call him the Junior Alaskan of the Week.

Wade is from Girdwood, AK. He is actually right here, getting a little red in the face. I think he is slightly embarrassed. Girdwood was originally called Glacier City, for the ice-capped mountains surrounding the town. About a 45-minute drive from Anchorage, it is a very, very special place. My wife Julie and I and our three daughters love Girdwood. We spend a lot of time there skiing and enjoying the outdoors.

Wade is now 16 years old. When I was told that this morning, I was a little surprised. He is much more mature than 16. He will be entering his senior year at South Anchorage High School, the school that my daughter Laurel attends, next fall.

Like a true Alaskan, Wade takes full advantage of our State's abundant natural resources, teaching skiing in the winter and commercial fishing for pink salmon during the summers in Kodiak, AK.

In DC, Wade has been doing a great job serving in the U.S. Senate as a page. According to those who supervise him, as well as his fellow pages, Wade is eager to take any opportunity to talk or learn about his State. The esteemed Laura Dove herself has referred to Wade as "Alaska's best ambassador." I thought that is what Senator MURKOWSKI and I were supposed to be. It is a grand compliment. Others say he has a heart for public service, humor, and kindness. He is extremely well-liked throughout this building.

In just 2 weeks, Wade and all the pages will complete their service as Senate pages. By the way, it is very, very hard work. They are up at 5 o'clock a.m., studying at 6 o'clock a.m., classes until 9 o'clock, and then working in the Senate until the wee hours. I thank Wade and all the Senate

pages for their service to the Senate, to their States, to their country.

Wade's energy and upbeat outlook will be missed in this body. Even though he is leaving us in the Senate, Wade hopes to continue his service to his country by attending the U.S. Air Force Academy.

Whatever his final path is, I am sure he will bring to it the same work ethic and the same love for his country and for Alaska and, I believe now, after 6 months, for the U.S. Senate.

Wade, to you and all the pages who have done such a great job, thank you, and, yes, thank you for being the Junior Alaskan of the Week.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Ms. HASSAN. Mr. President, I rise today to join my colleagues to discuss the heroin, fentanyl, and opioid crisis that has devastated communities across our Nation. I want to thank the Senator from West Virginia for giving us the floor today and for his continued leadership in working to combat this crisis. It is going to take an all-hands-on-deck approach, with Members of both parties and at all levels of government working with those on the frontlines to find solutions.

We recently received near final information on the number of lives lost last year and the specific substances involved in New Hampshire as a result of this crisis. What is clear is that the threat continues to evolve and grow. In 2016 alone, there were 477 confirmed overdose deaths in New Hampshire. That is an increase from 439 deaths in 2015 and 326 in 2014. Already this year, there have been 73 confirmed overdose deaths in my State, with another 86 suspected cases awaiting final toxicology results.

In recent months, we have seen new deadly challenges that are emerging. A few weeks ago, I met with members of the Drug Enforcement Agency in New Hampshire. Among the topics we discussed was the spread of a dangerous synthetic drug, carfentanil. Carfentanil is 100 times stronger than even fentanyl. It is killing people faster, and we are seeing its deadly use rising in New Hampshire. We have seen six confirmed deaths from carfentanil in the past few weeks.

During my meeting with the DEA, I heard from those on the frontlines about the dangerous impacts it has on their lives as well. Carfentanil and other fentanyl compounds are so dangerous that they can put first responders at risk if they are exposed.

It is clear that we must do more to support those struggling and those on the frontlines to stem and ultimately reverse the tide of this crisis. We need more resources to address this problem because people are dying. What we cannot do is institute policies that would make matters worse.

I am encouraged that the Trump administration has discussed the severity of this crisis, but their actions so far don't match their words. The President's budget that was announced this week would have devastating consequences on efforts to combat this crisis. This budget includes hundreds of millions of dollars in cuts to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. It also cuts the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas Program. This is a program that provides key support to law enforcement officials on the frontlines.

I am particularly disturbed by this administration's continued attacks on Medicaid. Medicaid has been critical to ensuring that Granite Staters struggling with addiction have access to treatment and recovery services. The drastic cuts to Medicaid in the President's budget proposal go above and beyond even the devastating cuts included in the dangerous TrumpCare bill that passed through the House of Representatives. This budget proposes cutting \$610 billion to Medicaid, which is on top of the \$839 billion cut in TrumpCare. TrumpCare also ends Medicaid expansion, which experts have said is the No. 1 tool we have in combating this crisis.

TrumpCare undermines the requirement that insurance companies must cover mental health and substance use disorder services. According to yesterday's CBO report, this could lead to out-of-pocket costs totaling thousands of dollars for people seeking these services. In the midst of this crisis, we need to be strengthening prevention, treatment, and recovery efforts and giving stronger support to those on the frontlines, but these recent actions by this administration show that President Trump is failing to live up to his own words on this deadly epidemic. And cuts to programs that help people in the throes of addiction are irresponsible, unacceptable, and unconscionable.

I am grateful to many of my colleagues for reaching across the aisle to propose policies to address this epidemic. This is an issue that rises above partisanship, and this is work we need to be doing because the lives of the people of our States depend upon it. I am going to continue to work with my colleagues on solutions, while standing firm against proposals that would pull us backward.

I again thank Senator MANCHIN for his leadership on this issue.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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