

base, a growing economy, and a more efficient tax system. That means that we will continue to be able to fund our priorities as we work to get our debt and deficit under control.

Ensuring U.S. competitiveness in the global marketplace and providing tax relief to middle-class families will benefit both current and future generations. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to work together to get tax reform done for the people of my State of North Dakota, for their respective States, and for Americans across this entire country.

With that, Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. PETERS. Madam President, in many ways, the Children's Health Insurance Program has been an outstanding example of what a bipartisan, democratic process can accomplish. Twenty years ago, President Bill Clinton worked with a Republican majority in both the Senate and the House of Representatives to successfully pass the Children's Health Insurance Program into law. That legislation passed with 85 votes in the Senate—an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote—to recognize the simple fact that all children born in this great country of ours should have healthcare coverage.

The Children's Health Insurance Program, along with our Nation's community health centers, has more often than not seen great bipartisan support. As Members of Congress, we have always come together and understood the importance of these programs, and we have done everything we can to ensure that quality, cost-effective care is available to millions of Americans. Unfortunately, as I stand here today, funding for both the Children's Health Insurance Program and community health centers has expired.

The Children's Health Insurance Program, or CHIP, provides healthcare coverage to over 100,000 children in my home State of Michigan and more than 9 million children nationally. In addition, community health centers serve as the primary medical home to over 600,000 Michiganders and more than 20 million individuals across our country. For people living in rural and underserved areas, their community health center is their doctor's office and often their only choice when it comes to care close to home.

We have already passed the deadline to extend the Children's Health Insurance Program and the Community Health Center Fund. We have passed the time to act. We should not wait any longer to provide certainty to the millions of children and their families who depend on CHIP and to the Americans who will lose access to care if their community health center is closed.

We are already seeing the impact of our inaction in the CHIP program. Several States have begun to warn that

they may be forced to end enrollment of new children, cut back services, or end their programs altogether if we do not act soon. Independent experts estimate that at least 10 States could completely run out of funding for their Children's Health Insurance Program before the end of the year, while funding for the remaining States' programs would not be very far behind.

This is not a responsible way to govern. I have heard from physicians in my State, especially in rural communities, who fear that this lack of action will mean great harm to the patients they serve. I have heard from pediatricians who know firsthand what the end of CHIP would mean for Michigan's children. As our country grapples with what we can do to expand mental health treatment and address the expanding opioid epidemic, letting these programs lapse would be a huge step in the wrong direction. This unnecessary uncertainty has already forced some community health centers to contemplate staff hiring freezes and layoffs. It is certainly harming their day-to-day operations. It has made it difficult for them to recruit new doctors, and it has made it harder for their offices to obtain loans to grow their practices and to serve more patients.

Luckily, this is a problem we know how to solve. I am proud to have cosponsored bipartisan legislation with Senators HATCH and WYDEN that would ensure funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program. I also support similarly bipartisan legislation by Senators BLUNT and STABENOW to extend funding for our Nation's community health centers.

I welcome the fact that the Senate Finance Committee held a markup yesterday and was able to advance the bipartisan bill to fund the Children's Health Insurance Program. Now the rest of us in Congress need to do our job. Let's bring both of these bills up for a vote because, quite frankly, we cannot afford to wait any longer. Our Nation's children and millions of Americans who use community health centers as their primary medical home cannot afford to wait any longer. Historically, these programs have not been controversial to reauthorize, and they should not be now.

I am urging my colleagues to prioritize the children of our rural and underserved communities who will be hurt if we do not act soon. Let's do what is right for our country's children and families and pass this vital legislation as soon as possible.

Madam President, 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.

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

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

(The remarks of Ms. HEITKAMP and Ms. MURKOWSKI pertaining to the introduction of S. 1942 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

TRIBUTE TO REVEREND DR. ALONZO B.

PATTERSON, JR., AND MRS. SHIRLEY PATTERSON

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I wish to recognize an extraordinary individual in my State, along with his wife. I would like to take a few minutes today to recognize Reverend Dr. Alonzo B. Patterson, Jr., and Mrs. Shirley Patterson.

During the first week of November, Anchorage is going to host 4 days of events to commemorate the service of two of our most beloved community leaders, the Reverend Dr. Alonzo B. Patterson and his wife, Shirley Patterson. Next month, Reverend Patterson leaves the pulpit of Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church. This is a pulpit he has held for some 47 years. Mrs. Patterson, his wife of six decades, is to be recognized for her service as well.

Anchorage is one of America's great communities, and it is not uncommon to celebrate the retirement of a figure of Patterson's stature, but 4 separate days of events—that is huge, and it is a testament to the respect our community has for the Patterson family.

Think about this: Alaska has been a State for just 58 years. Reverend Patterson has had his pulpit for 47 years. And Shiloh is not Reverend Patterson's first pulpit in Alaska; it is his second. He came to Anchorage after founding the Corinthian Baptist Church in Fairbanks. Reverend Patterson grew up with Alaska, and Alaska grew up with Reverend Patterson.

Corinthian and Shiloh could appropriately be characterized as African-American churches. But for the African-American community in Alaska, they are far more than churches; they are centers of Black history in Alaska.

Zakiya McCummings interviewed Reverend Patterson earlier this year for an article published in the Anchorage Press, and in that interview, Reverend Patterson explained:

The church was, and always has been, the sanctuary in the Black community. It is the meeting place, the community center, the focus for support and help, the place you come to be important, the psychologist for your particular problem, the time to shout out your frustrations and the only place to be significant. You could be a Deacon or something in the church where in the rest of the community, you were just another Black person. The church was for us a panacea for many of the social ills that existed then and still have relevance.

Given the central role Reverend Patterson has played in Alaska's African-American community for most of our State's existence, it is no surprise that he is regarded as a historian of Black culture in Alaska. Ms. McCummings observed that it is a responsibility that he doesn't take lightly. Reverend Patterson told her:

I feel like I have to be the keeper of our historical plight and to speak to each generation in my time. It is a powerful responsibility because if I go to sleep on my watch,

then the next watch will have nothing to build on. . . . We're responsible that the gate remains open for the next generation.

Under Reverend Patterson's watch, there was much progress. In the 1960s and 1970s, Reverend Patterson recalled, "much of Alaska was small family businesses, including the banks. If you were not part of that family or their friends, you had a hard time getting a job.

Many of the jobs for African Americans were either construction or government jobs."

Reverend Patterson proudly recalls the first Black principal of a State elementary school, an African-American banker who was elected to the school board and subsequently to the Alaska Legislature, an African-American activist in the Fairview section of Anchorage who is regarded as the grandfather of the city's public transportation system. Today's African-American community is built on the foundation of these pioneers who endured.

Make no mistake about this, Alonzo Patterson was no mere spectator to all of this progress. He was an agent of change, rooted in his observation, and he stated: "In ministry there are no limits except the ones we set for ourselves." Under his leadership, Shiloh grew spiritually, physically, and fiscally, and would include a church school, a television ministry, and a jail outreach ministry.

On Shiloh's 29th anniversary, the mortgage note for the original structure was burned under the theme, "Burning to Build," and groundbreaking for a new educational wing commenced. There was more building to come. The Martin Luther King Jr. Family Life Center was dedicated on May 23, 1993. In 2001, Reverend Patterson spun off a new nonprofit organization, Shiloh Community Development, Inc., to serve youth, minorities, and the disadvantaged. Today Shiloh Community Development is well known for its youth mentoring program called Young Lions of Alaska.

He is a founder of Bridge Builders of Alaska, which celebrates the diversity of our communities and a powerful voice in Alaska's annual celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King Day. In 2015, Reverend Patterson was the keynote speaker at the King Day ceremonies on JBER. At that ceremony, he warned his audience that Dr. King's dream is at risk of dying. He said:

This dream is at risk if nothing is done, and nothing is holding us back but ourselves. Stop waiting for miracles; believe in yourself to make society better. Each of us can do our part, by loving and respecting others.

This is just one example of his powerful voice. Reverend Patterson's sermons were always inspiring, many legendary, and it explains why he is regarded as a pastor's pastor, growing not only his congregants but the generations of ministers who will follow in his footsteps. As one who has joined in the congregation there at Shiloh on numerous occasions, I can attest that

there was never a Sunday that I did not leave feeling inspired by the words of Dr. Patterson.

They aren't calling the appreciation festivities for Reverend Patterson a retirement ceremony. They are calling it a transition, probably because nobody believes Rev. Alonzo Patterson has any intentions of pursuing a future of leisure. Leadership and inspiration runs in Alonzo Patterson's DNA.

We wish him and Shirley well in their next calling, and we take comfort in the fact that their contributions to our community are far from over. November marks a transition, not a retirement—and certainly not a eulogy—for this extraordinary Alaska family.

On behalf of my Senate colleagues, I thank Dr. Patterson and his lovely wife Shirley for their good works, and thank them in advance for their continued leadership.

ALASKA AIRLINES "COMBI" PLANES

Mr. President, I know I have occupied a little bit of time on the floor this afternoon with a wide range of topics—from the tragedies that face many of our indigenous women to recognizing a prominent leader of the Alaska community. Now I wish to share a little bit of Alaska's history as we see a transition in aviation and transportation.

It is really the end of an era in my home State. On October 18, just a few days from now, Alaska Airlines will fly the final run of the uniquely Alaskan combi plane before retiring them and updating the fleet.

OK. She is going to make a floor speech about an airplane. Yes, I am going to make a floor speech about an airplane because this combi plane is a special Boeing 737-400, designed to carry up to 14,000 pounds of cargo and 72 passengers. It is called a combi because it is a dual-use plane, a combination of passengers and cargo. Alaska Airlines is the only major airline in the country to have these combi planes, and they were specifically designed for the special challenges of a very large State. Over their lifespan, they have delivered every imaginable thing via airplane in Alaska.

You have all heard me talk about the size of our State. The sheer size of this State presents logistical hurdles unlike anyplace else. I keep saying we are one-fifth the size of the country, and 80 percent of our communities are not connected by road. When we think about how we move around in our State, a postage stamp placed in the middle of an average sheet of paper represents the area a person can reach in Alaska by coastline, river, road, or railroad. The rest is only reachable by plane. You just have to fly everywhere. This being the case, it only makes sense to try to efficiently deliver people and goods to hub communities in Alaska. Alaska Airlines is looking to serve. This is not a promotion for them; it is a recognition that they needed to figure out how to move people and freight, and they reconfigured the aircraft to do this.

What makes these planes so special is, they can carry up to four large cargo containers. We call them igloos. These igloos load into the front portion of the aircraft, right behind the pilots. There is a simple divider between the cargo and the passengers. So they load the cargo up front, and the passengers come up the back on a set of steps, just like we used to do in the prejetway times. You load from the back, but your first 17 rows of a traditional aircraft would be occupied by cargo. If you have more cargo—if you are flying fish out from Cordova south or if you are flying your Iditarod dogs that have been dropped in Nome and need to get back to Anchorage and you need a lot of space for the animals, you have flexibility to move back and forth.

These have flown all over the State, up to Nome, on the Bering Sea coast, along the Arctic Ocean, to the oilfields in Prudhoe, and, most famously, in the "milk run" area. The milk run got its name because Alaska Airlines literally delivered the milk to the communities along the way, as well as other food stuff—all manner of goods and passenger. It is something that if you are from the southeast, we all know about the milk run. We all complain about the fact that it takes about 5 hours to get from Anchorage down to Juneau, if you have to go through Yakutat and Cordova and stop at each one. That is just the way it is. You bounce down from Cordova, Yakutat, Juneau, Ketchikan. Finally, you hit Seattle. You run into your sports teams, families are coming and going. These are the workhorses that are not only moving the passengers, they are moving the groceries, they are moving the mail, they are moving the medicine. They are moving it all.

When I say it moves everything, we have built up a little bit of history about how things move around. We have moved cows. We have moved cars. The picture I like best is moving the herd of Santa's reindeer. I think Santa was actually posed in this, but the reindeer were not. They needed to be able to move the reindeer so they hauled them in the front, situated them, and closed it off, and you have the passengers in the back. Whether you are moving reindeer, whether you are transporting an injured eagle to the Raptor Center in Sitka or letting the sled dogs hitch a ride back to Anchorage after they have made the thousand-mile trip to Nome, this is what we do.

The invention of the combi plane really highlights the unique needs and the parameters of daily life in the State. We are a long way from the lower 48. You can barely drive to any of the communities. If you are going to move goods, if you are going to move passengers, you are on an airplane. Whether it is Essential Air Services, bypass mail, air freight, these are the backbones of commerce in Alaska. This is our interstate. It is the interstate in the air.