

gas emissions. I take this very personally. The Agency ended up deciding to do it itself, as Senator WHITEHOUSE is aware. But it was my first bill, and I decided that was a good first bill. It was bipartisan, and it got to the core of this issue that our country needs to take responsibility, that we need to work with the rest of the world. But most importantly, this is a long-term issue, shared by my businesses in Minnesota, shared by everyone from hunters to snowmobilers, to ice skaters in our State—the concern of our changing climate and the effect it will have on our way of life.

There are two specific issues that Mr. Wehrum will be involved in directing from the EPA that I wish to discuss: first, the renewable fuel standards and, then, circle back to this issue of climate change.

Minnesota's agriculture is very important to me. We are the fifth biggest ag State in the country. It is why I sought a seat on the Senate Agriculture Committee and why I have consistently pushed for a strong renewable standard. I believe we should be working in this body to help the farmers and the workers of the Midwest, not the oil sheiks of the Middle East.

Recently, I led a letter with Senator CHUCK GRASSLEY, which was signed by 38 Senators, calling on Administrator Pruitt to ensure that the final rule for 2018 and 2019 sets blending targets that promote growth in the biofuel sector and in our economy.

The final rule for 2017 followed congressional intent and required a record amount of biofuel to be mixed into our transportation fuel supply. The final rule this year should do the same. Reducing the blend targets of advanced biofuels could shortchange the growth of clean energy innovation and stifle the growth of the market for new biofuels.

So far the response from the administration in backing off these plans, thanks to Senator GRASSLEY's leadership, has been encouraging, but the proof will be in the pudding when the rule is released before the end of the month. I appreciate the work of Senator GRASSLEY, Senator ERNST, Senator THUNE, and Senator DURBIN—who is here with us right now in the Chamber—and others who have worked on this Renewable Fuel Standard, as well as my colleague Senator FRANKEN.

Renewable fuels have become a homegrown economic generator for our country. They reduce the environmental impact of our transportation and energy sectors and cut our reliance on foreign oil. Every time a new study is released on this subject, I become more and more convinced that investments in renewable fuels are investments in our economy and in the health of rural America.

Last year, a study conducted by ABF Economics showed that the ethanol industry generated \$7.37 billion in gross sales in 2015 for Minnesota businesses and \$1.6 billion in income for Min-

nesota households. Here is a big one: The ethanol industry also supports over 18,000 full-time jobs in Minnesota. I see the Presiding Officer is from the State of Alaska. Just as he knows that the oil industry is important in our State, the ethanol industry is important in the Midwest, and I believe they can both coexist.

Just last weekend, I visited the Green Plains ethanol plant in Minnesota to see one of the operations behind these impressive figures and meet firsthand with some of the 60 people who are employed there. One of the things I heard while in Fairmont was how policy instability and delays have chilled investment over the years. Delays in releasing the RFS rule in previous years has undercut the Green Plains' ability to acquire necessary investments and create new employment opportunities. The need for stable policy and the forward-looking administration of the RFS is key to providing certainty for producers, employees, and manufacturers, while unlocking billions of dollars of investment in the biofuel sector.

We have to continue to build on the progress we have made of expanding production capacity more than three-fold since 2005 with biodiesel, cellulosic ethanol, recycled waste, and other advanced biofuels. This is no longer some kind of a niche industry. This is 10 percent of our fuel supply. That is why I am concerned with some of the statements that Mr. Wehrum has made and some of the clients he has represented in lawsuits against the EPA, many of whom sought to undermine and weaken the RFS.

He was the counsel of record in several challenges to the RFS, including the E15 waiver, which allows for blends of up to 15 percent of ethanol in gasoline, something Senator THUNE and I have worked on. Yet most concerning was his role in a 2015 challenge to the requirement that diesel fuel sold in my State of Minnesota contain at least 10 percent of biodiesel, or B10.

Let me say that this kind of principle and this policy were supported by Democratic, Republican, and Independent Governors in Minnesota—from Tim Pawlenty to Jesse Ventura to Mark Dayton. My State has been a leader when it comes to the use of renewable fuels. We were the first State in the Nation to pass a biodiesel blending law and the first State in the Nation to require gasoline to be blended with 10 percent of ethanol. We continue to be a national leader in the use of E85.

In 2008 the State legislature amended the Minnesota mandate—that is when Tim Pawlenty was Governor—to gradually step up the required biodiesel blend from 2 percent to 5 percent and eventually to 20 percent from 2012 to 2018. Now, according to the statute, the B10 mandate will double to B20 starting on May 1, 2018. With bipartisan support and individual State responsibility, it is something that our State did because we knew it could work.

Despite Mr. Wehrum's best efforts, the U.S. district court upheld Minnesota's mandate on renewable biodiesel, which has been in the best interest of rural economies and consumers. These advances are going to help ag producers and rural manufacturing plants do even more for the regional economy. The further ethanol and biodiesel take us the less dependent we will be on foreign oil and the less of an impact our transportation and energy sectors will have on the environment.

I have already discussed the climate change issue, and I see that Senator DURBIN is here.

Again, I will just reiterate that I am a former prosecutor. I believe in evidence, and every week seems to bring fresh evidence of the damage that climate change is already causing. Minnesota may be miles away from the rising oceans, but the impacts are no less of a real threat to my State. I did not like Mr. Wehrum's answers that he gave to these questions during his hearing before the Environment and Public Works Committee, especially when I asked if he believed that human activities were the main driver of climate change and his response was: "I believe that's an open question."

I do not think this nominee should be running this part of the Agency, and we cannot sit back and ignore the evidence. We need to wake up, take action, and turn the corner on the devastating effects of climate change before it is too late.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). The minority whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business until 11:15 a.m.

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

VETERANS DAY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I would like to speak for a moment about Veterans Day, which is just 2 days away.

On Saturday, November 11, Americans will pause to honor the courage and sacrifice of America's veterans. More than 40 million Americans have served our Nation in uniform, in battles from Bunker Hill to Baghdad, and beyond.

Mr. President, as this Veterans Day approaches, I have been thinking about the words of one of those brave patriots. He is the son and grandson of military leaders. When his time came, he too went to war and suffered horrific deprivation and excruciating injuries.

Years later, he said: "Few veterans cherish a romantic remembrance of war." When wars are fought, he said, "a million tragedies ensue."

"War is wretched beyond description," he added, "and only a fool or a fraud could sentimentalize its cruel reality."

Those are the words of a man whom I am privileged to call a colleague and a friend, the senior Senator from Arizona, JOHN McCAIN. We owe him and all of our Nation's veterans and their families our profound gratitude and respect for their courage, sacrifices, and

the hardships they endured for all of us.

Senator McCAIN endured more than 5½ years of torture as a prisoner of war during the Vietnam conflict. When he finally came home, JOHN McCAIN found another way to serve our Nation with honor. We thank him for that.

Mr. President, this week, the Congress dedicated a commemorative chair to honor all Americans ever held as prisoners of war and to honor the more than 83,000 servicemembers who remain missing in action.

The antique, empty chair will stand in Emancipation Hall in the Capitol as a solemn reminder of the servicemembers who were missing for years in captivity and those who remain missing today.

Mr. President, as we prepare to celebrate this Veterans Day, I want to tell you about another veteran, another patriot, who was also a prisoner of war. His war was World War II.

Like Senator McCAIN, he survived, came home, married, raised a family, and spent decades in public service. His name is Richard Lockhart. Everybody calls him Dick Lockhart. He is 93 years old, almost 94. He is a lobbyist in Springfield, IL, the capital of my State and my hometown.

Dick Lockhart does not represent the big, monied interests. He represents the little guys—the nonprofit groups, the public workers, the mental health providers and the families who need them, among others.

He is the senior practicing lobbyist in Illinois, maybe in all of America. He will be giving up that title soon because, on December 31, Dick Lockhart is retiring at the age of 93 from the firm he founded 60 years ago. He is not stepping down because he is tired. He still works 7 days a week, most weeks. He is still physically strong and is as sharp as a tack mentally. No, Dick Lockhart is retiring because there are other things to do, he says. He wants to travel more and write the book that he has always wanted to write and explain to ordinary citizens how to make their government work better.

Dick's life would make a fascinating book, itself.

Born in Ohio in 1924 as an only child, his family moved to Indiana when he was young. The Great Depression hit the Lockhart family hard. Dick's dad lost his job. Sometimes the electricity was shut off at home for nonpayment. The family never owned a car, never took a vacation, and never ate a meal in a restaurant. Dick delivered newspapers and worked as a soda jerk during high school to help pay for expenses.

He was a student at Purdue University when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. Exactly 1 year later, on December 7, 1942, he enlisted in the U.S. Army infantry.

He was assigned to the Army's 106th Division, the Golden Lions. In October of 1944, the 106th shipped out to England. In early December they arrived in

a quiet area of southeastern Belgium, near the German border. Military higher-ups assured the men of the 106th to expect an uneventful few weeks and that Germany would probably surrender before Christmas.

History had another plan.

In the predawn hours of December 16, German forces launched their last major offensive of the war, the Battle of the Bulge. The U.S. forces were outnumbered. Lockhart's regiment, the 423rd, fought for days. Finally—out of food, out of water, and out of ammunition—they surrendered.

In all, some 8,000 U.S. soldiers were captured at the Battle of the Bulge.

They were packed into railroad boxcars, crammed in so tightly that soldiers had to take turns sitting and standing. After 2 days of being in those boxcars, they arrived at a prisoner-of-war camp in Germany, known as Stalag IX-B.

Camp life was brutal. Medical care was nonexistent. Men died every day. Meals consisted of only thin “grass soup.” On one bitterly cold day, Dick Lockhart was beaten savagely by a German prison guard. Decades later, he still experiences back pain from that beating.

One memory still haunts him.

One day, the prison guards demanded that any Jewish prisoners of war identify themselves. For several hours, no one stepped forward. After more threats, Jewish American soldiers began to step forward, apparently thinking that their U.S. citizenship would protect them. They were wrong. They were shipped off to a notorious hard-labor camp in another part of Germany.

On January 20, 1945, Dick Lockhart turned 21 while a prisoner of war in Stalag IX-B.

On April 2, 1945, American soldiers liberated the camp, Dick Lockhart, and the other prisoners. The Army sent Dick Lockhart home on a 60-day furlough with instructions to get some rest and to gain back some of the weight that he had lost in the prisoner-of-war camp.

He arrived home in Fort Wayne. He knocked at the door and was stunned to see a stranger open it. Months before, his parents had received a cable that read that their only child was missing in the war and was presumed dead. His mother, overcome with grief, went to Ohio to stay with her family. His father moved away to look for another factory job. Fortunately, they left forwarding addresses, and Dick found them soon and was reunited with his parents.

A month later, while Dick was still on leave, Germany surrendered. The war in Europe was finally over.

Dick had always loved Chicago. So he decided to use his GI bill to go to Northwestern University. He became involved in reform politics in Chicago—a battle of a different sort. He married and had two children, a son and a daughter.

In 1958 he founded his own lobbying firm to try to advance democracy through good policies and laws rather than through tanks and bombs.

He is honest, hard-working, modest, empathetic, and always an optimist. He has earned the respect of both sides of the aisle for decades of ethical and professional service in the Illinois General Assembly. Laws he has helped to pass have made life better for countless people in my home State. In recognition of that fact, the Illinois General Assembly recently voted to celebrate December 31, which will be Dick's last day on the job, as Richard “Dick” Lockhart Day in the State of Illinois—a well-deserved honor.

Five weeks after Dick Lockhart and others were captured, American forces won the Battle of the Bulge, liberated Belgium, and sent the German occupying troops back to Germany.

Two years ago, as part of the 70th anniversary of that event, Dick Lockhart returned to Belgium. The children and grandchildren of the Belgians who had been liberated from Nazi occupation greeted him like a hero. He was honored by the nation's King and Queen in a castle—royal treatment that he and all of the American soldiers richly deserved.

When Dick speaks about his experience as a soldier, he is never the hero of any story. He reserves that role for the young men who didn't come home.

He says: “There is an inscription in a World War II cemetery that reads, ‘When you go home, tell them of us and say that for your tomorrow, we gave our today.’”

At the risk of contradicting my old friend, I have to say that Dick Lockhart is, indeed, an American hero.

This Veterans Day, we say to him and to all of the American veterans: Thank you for your service. Thank you for our freedom. Thank you for all of the tomorrows you purchased for us with your courage and sacrifice.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. President, in 2010, Congress passed the Affordable Care Act with one main goal in mind—to help more Americans get quality, affordable health insurance. And it worked.

Since the law took effect, more than 20 million previously uninsured Americans have gained health coverage, including 1 million in Illinois.

For the first time ever, our Nation's uninsured rate is below 10 percent. Insurers can no longer deny coverage due to a preexisting condition, charge sky-high premiums for being a woman or having a health history, or impose annual or lifetime caps on your benefits.

Young people can stay on their parents' plans until age 26, and we extended the life of Medicare by a decade. These are real improvements that are saving lives.

Was the law perfect? No. But did it accomplish its primary goal of ensuring that more Americans could obtain healthcare—regardless of their income, gender, or medical history? Yes, it did.

None of that has mattered to President Trump, who has spent the past 10 months orchestrating a deliberate campaign to sabotage healthcare for tens of millions of American families.

From his first day in office, President Trump directed Federal agencies not to enforce the law. He cut the open enrollment sign-up period in half. He yanked advertisements and slashed outreach and enrollment assistance funding.

And he terminated the cost-sharing reduction subsidies that keep costs down for 7 million Americans. As a result, individual market premiums will increase 20 percent next year alone.

President Trump has done everything within his power to sabotage and undermine this law.

Despite President Trump's repeated attempts at repeal and sabotage, the Affordable Care Act is still the law of the land, and that means that quality, affordable healthcare options are available.

And we are right in the midst of Open Enrollment. Starting last week—on November 1—Americans who purchased their health plans in the individual marketplace began signing up for health insurance that covers them next year, in 2018. But you only have 6 weeks to sign up. Open enrollment began November 1, and ends on December 15.

This is your opportunity to buy insurance that covers important health benefits—hospitalizations, prescription drugs, doctor visits, maternity/newborn care, mental health and substance abuse treatment.

And there is financial assistance to help you buy these plans. In fact, 8 out of 10 people who purchase health insurance in the individual market are eligible to receive tax credits that help make that insurance more affordable.

In Illinois, about 350,000 people purchase their health insurance in the individual market, and nearly 300,000 of them are eligible for tax credits that will ensure their health plan premiums are below \$100 per month.

So, despite the frenzy in Washington over healthcare: health insurance under the ACA is open for business, and the time to sign up is now. Visit www.healthcare.gov or call 1-800-318-2596. I would encourage everyone to sign up early. Don't wait until the last minute.

Speaking of waiting until the last minute, I remain dismayed that this Republican-controlled Congress has failed to reauthorize two incredibly important Federal healthcare programs—the Children's Health Insurance Program and the community health centers program.

Nationwide, 27 million people receive care from community health centers. And 9 million children and pregnant women get their healthcare through the CHIP program, including more than 330,000 kids in Illinois.

Because of congressional inaction, funding for these two programs expired

over a month ago, on October 1. And what have Republican leaders in the Senate done over the past month, while funding has lapsed for children, pregnant women, and our Nation's health clinics?

Well, they passed a budget resolution making it easier to give huge tax cuts to wealthy individuals and big businesses. That is right. While States and health centers are struggling to figure out how to keep their programs operating, while families are worrying about when their health coverage may run out, congressional Republicans are focused on tax breaks for the rich.

Facing this funding uncertainty, States and community health centers are trying to figure out how to keep their programs and clinics operating. Ten States—plus the District of Columbia—will run out of CHIP funding in the next month or so.

For example, later this month, the State of Colorado is planning to send health coverage termination letters to lower income families. The letter reads, in part: "You are receiving this letter because members of your household are enrolled in the [Children's Health Insurance Program] . . . If Congress does not renew federal funding, CHIP in Colorado will end on January 31, 2018 . . . there is no guarantee that they will."

Imagine how terrifying it would be to receive this letter, to learn that your child is about to lose their health insurance coverage because Congress is preoccupied with tax breaks for the rich.

It is beyond unacceptable that congressional Republicans abdicated their responsibility to reauthorize these critical health programs.

If we truly want to help the communities and people we serve, let's quickly reauthorize funding for children's health care and for community health centers.

And remember, if you need health insurance next year, you have until December 15 to sign up. Don't miss your chance.

PROTECTING OUR STUDENTS AND TAXPAYERS ACT

Mr. President, last week, I reintroduced the Protecting Our Students and Taxpayers, or POST, Act. I was pleased to be joined by Senators REED, BLUMENTHAL, CARPER, MURPHY, and WARREN in the Senate and by Representative STEVE COHEN in the House.

Since 1992, Federal law has required for-profit schools to derive a portion of revenue from non-Federal sources. This was meant to keep for-profit schools, which in general rely much more heavily on Federal dollars than traditional schools, from being completely dependent on Federal taxpayers to keep their doors open.

Originally, these schools had to receive at least 15 percent of their revenue from non-Federal sources. In 1998, the threshold was lowered to only 10 percent, creating today's so-called 90/10 rule. Think about that. Mr. President,

\$9 out of every \$10 these schools take in can come from U.S. taxpayers. But it gets worse.

Only Department of Education Federal student aid dollars are counted as Federal funds. A loophole in the law excludes billions in Department of Veterans Affairs GI bill education benefits and Department of Defense Tuition Assistance, (TA), funds from being counted as Federal revenue. It means, by recruiting veterans and servicemembers, for-profit colleges can actually receive more than 90 percent of their revenue from Federal funds and still comply with the law. This powerful incentive makes our men and women in uniform targets for predatory for-profit colleges.

I have told these stories before, but I think they bear repeating. I have told the story of two former military recruiters at a for-profit college in Illinois. They were told their job was above all to put "butts in classes," that they should dig deep into the personal lives of their recruits to find their "pain point." If a prospective student was out of work, recruiters were encouraged to say things like, "How do you think your wife feels about being married to someone unemployed?"

Entrance requirements were low—it didn't matter how long a student stayed as long as it was long enough for the school to receive the GI bill dollars.

There is Paul Fajardo, a marine veteran who served in Afghanistan. He used his GI bill benefits to enroll at the now-defunct Corinthian Colleges and had to live out of his car when his school lost its eligibility to receive GI bill benefits. He told the LA Times that Corinthian recruited him and other veterans because "they knew it was a guaranteed paycheck."

There is James Long, who suffered a brain injury when an artillery shell hit his Humvee in Iraq. He used military benefits to enroll at Ashford University after being heavily recruited. He told Bloomberg News that he knows he is enrolled at Ashford, but can't remember what courses he is enrolled in.

These veterans were nothing more than ATMs for these for-profit colleges intent on pocketing their hard-earned education benefits.

And in 2016, for-profit colleges pocketed 34 percent of all GI bill benefits—\$1.7 billion—and 44 percent of all Department of Defense Tuition Assistance funds—\$220 million. Mr. President, \$2 billion that these for-profit colleges were able to count as non-Federal revenue. Non-Federal?

The last time I checked, the Department of Veterans Affairs was part of the Federal Government, and the money it spends—whether on veterans' healthcare or housing or education—comes from U.S. taxpayers.

When asked in writing during his confirmation process whether GI bill funds are Federal funds, VA Secretary David Shulkin answered simply, "Yes."

And the last time I checked, the Department of Defense was part of the