

trouble with the law often face unique issues, such as PTSD.

My office recently visited the first Federal Veterans Court in the Southern District of Ohio, in Dayton. We saw the difference it made in the lives of men and women who served this country. The court was created by my friend, Judge Michael Newman, with the support of Chief Judge Edmund Sargus. It works with the VA to help address the issues veterans are struggling with. My staff met with Page Layman, a veterans justice outreach coordinator who helps the participants in the program. He talked about how one of the participants in the court had limited transportation options and lived in a rural area, so Mr. Layman drove to meet him at the local library. Judge Newman reports that 49 veterans have graduated from the program with their charges dropped and are now leading healthier lives.

We have the same opportunity with drug courts. The Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services studies these courts. They found that drug courts enhance treatment, increase collaboration in the community, and save taxpayers money.

My staff and I met with judges across Ohio who are helping people break the cycle of drug use and crime. Earlier this year, we talked with Hocking County Municipal Court Judge Fred Moses while he was in town as a State of the Union guest of Representative STEVE STIVERS of Ohio. He started an innovative drug court program just outside Chillicothe, OH, in 2012. As a judge, he saw the opioid epidemic coming years before most folks in Washington saw it. He started the first medication-assisted drug court program certified in my State. Five years later, his programs are reuniting families, cutting down on repeat offenses, and helping participants get jobs.

He and his staff are improving the lives of people in Southeast Ohio and serving as a model for other drug courts around the State and country. Since the program began, more than 30 other judges have visited Hocking County to learn about its success. Now we are seeing similar success all over Ohio.

Tuscarawas County has two drug courts—COBRA, in the Common Pleas Court, and the New Philadelphia Municipal Recovery Court. Judge Elizabeth Lehigh Thomakos runs the COBRA court, which held its 125th graduation. One graduate said:

When I couldn't get clean, you helped me get clean. You guys believed in me when I couldn't believe in myself.

Another:

My daughter has her mamma back. A healthy mom, hard-working, motivated, goal-oriented mom, who smiles again and is grateful in all she does. By this program shaping my future, it has also shaped hers.

The Recovery Court in New Philadelphia is run by Judge Nanette DeGarmo VonAllman. She hears so many stories like that one. She told the Times Re-

porter—the newspaper in Tuscarawas County—“We try to give them and their families hope: that treatment works and people do recover.” Programs all over Ohio and all over the country are offering families that hope.

In Cleveland, the Cuyahoga County Drug Court, under Judge David Matia, has graduated more than 300 people. Both that court and the Cleveland Municipal Drug Court operate under the Stephanie Tubbs Jones Greater Drug Court umbrella, named for my former colleague.

In Marion, OH, Common Pleas Court Judge Jim Slagle, a longtime friend of mine, held a graduation ceremony for eight graduates at the end of last month. Jennifer, one of the women who spoke, talked about her granddaughter. She said:

The most challenging part was admitting I needed this.

When she found out her granddaughter was going to be placed in foster care:

I knew I had to do something. I needed to get myself together. I had to do it for her.

She has now been clean for 2 years. She has custody over her 18-month-old granddaughter.

These are the kinds of success stories we hear all over the State and all over the country. If we are successful in this fight, hundreds of thousands of fewer Americans will use opioids, but we will also have hundreds of thousands more who have used opioids but whose lives are not lost or ruined. They are going to be living with and managing their addiction. That is why we need to expand and build on these approaches.

I am also working with my Republican colleague, Senator CAPITO of West Virginia, on bipartisan legislation—the CARE Act—to combine existing resources from the Departments of Labor and Health and Human Services to fund combined addiction treatment and workforce training efforts.

I hear the same thing from mayors from New Philadelphia, Middletown, Chillicothe, and Piqua: Employers can't fill openings because workers can't pass drug tests. Ohioans struggling with addiction—even those who have completed successful programs like these drug courts—can't find jobs. Our bill will help those Americans continue their recovery with good jobs that provide stability.

The government is spending money on drug treatment, mostly through Medicaid, and the government, through the Department of Labor, is spending money on job retraining. Why not put them together so that people, while they get clean and get whole, are ready to go to work because they have had that job training?

I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting the CARE Act and finding ways to support successful drug court programs around the country.

NOMINATION OF MICHAEL BRENNAN

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, tomorrow the Senate will vote to move forward with the President's nominee to join the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals. It is a new law that sets a dangerous standard for judges who have the power to make critical decisions that impact the everyday lives of the people we serve.

Take a look at Judge Michael Brennan's record. At his hearing, he refused to acknowledge the ways our criminal justice system is biased against Americans of color. He made statements condoning judicial activism. He argued that judges are justified in not following precedent if they feel it was incorrectly decided. Think about that for a minute.

I am not a lawyer, but I understand this about our courts: A judge who feels no obligation to follow precedent laid out by higher courts is not a judge; that is someone who has ceased to be bound by any standards guiding a judge. Precedent is the backbone of our legal system. Saying that judges can disregard it if they feel it is incorrect would be a radical departure. Think about how this could work. In a Brennan court, it could be OK for a judge not to follow a Supreme Court decision like *Brown v. Board of Education*, which desegregated schools, as long as that judge—in this case, I guess, Judge Brennan—believes the case was incorrect. If you disregard precedent, decades of legal progress could be rolled back. The well-established rights of so many Americans would be at risk.

During his hearing, Brennan claimed he was only talking about precedent from the same circuit, but the article where he originally made these arguments made no such distinction then, and Brennan even admitted that at the hearing.

We cannot entrust the people we serve to a judge who can't be trusted to follow settled law.

Brennan would also be the first judge in more than 35 years to be confirmed over the objection of a Senator from his home State. Think about that. That doesn't even account for the backstory that I am going to mention. He would be the first judge in 35 years to be confirmed over the objections of a Senator from his home State. Senator BALDWIN from Wisconsin has not returned her blue slip on Brennan. In departure from Senate tradition, Republicans had a hearing and are now allowing a vote on Brennan's nomination despite not having a blue slip from Senator BALDWIN.

The seat Brennan is nominated for has been vacant since 2010. Why? Because Senator JOHNSON, now the senior Senator from Wisconsin, did not return a blue slip on President Obama's first nominee to fill this seat. This body honored Senator JOHNSON's blue slip and was not going to confirm that nominee because the blue slip had not been returned. That was following the

precedent of this Senate—decades of precedent. The nominee therefore did not receive a hearing, let alone a vote. Now Republicans are refusing to show Senator BALDWIN the same level of courtesy and respect.

We have a blue-slip procedure in place not out of courtesy to Senators personally but to the Americans we serve. Senator BALDWIN represents the people who will be most affected by

Judge Brennan's decisions. She opposes his nomination. Her blue slip should be respected.

The people served by the Seventh Circuit and Americans all over the country need judges who will follow the law. To be sure, Judge Brennan is not that judge. We can do better. We should do better. I ask my colleagues to oppose his nomination.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M.
TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 6:38 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, May 9, 2018, at 10 a.m.