

he may appreciate most about this honor is the attention it brings to find solutions and cures for those with diseases such as ALS.

I would like to thank my colleagues, their staff, and everyone else who has helped build support for this legislation including Microsoft, the ALS Association, the NFL, and the New Orleans Saints.

I wish to encourage my colleagues in the House to cosponsor this legislation and to pass it as soon as possible.

I would like to thank Steve for continuing to be an example of commitment, perseverance, and inspiration.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs be discharged from further consideration of S. 2652 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The clerk will report the bill by title.  
The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2652) to award a Congressional Gold Medal to Stephen Michael Gleason.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The bill (S. 2652) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 2652

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Stephen Michael Gleason Congressional Gold Medal Act”.

#### SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

The Congress finds the following:

(1) Stephen “Steve” Gleason was born March 19, 1977, in Spokane, Washington to Mike and Gail Gleason.

(2) Steve attended Gonzaga Preparatory School for high school where he excelled as both a football and baseball player.

(3) In 1995, Steve enrolled at Washington State University where he was a 2-sport athlete for the baseball and football teams and helped the Cougars football team advance to the 1997 Rose Bowl.

(4) In 2000, Steve signed a professional football contract with the Indianapolis Colts of the National Football League as an undrafted free agent but later joined the New Orleans Saints in November of that same season.

(5) Steve would go on to play 7 more seasons as a member of the New Orleans Saints.

(6) Steve will always be remembered for his blocked punt on September 25, 2006, against the Atlanta Falcons, the night the Louisiana Superdome reopened for the first time after Hurricane Katrina in a game the Saints would win 23 to 3.

(7) In January, 2011 Steve was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis or ALS, considered a terminal neuro-muscular disease.

(8) Following his diagnosis, Steve, with the loving support of his wife, Michel, began a

mission to show that patients can not only live but thrive after a diagnosis of ALS and established The Gleason Initiative Foundation also known simply as “Team Gleason”.

(9) At the time of his diagnosis, however, Steve said there will be “No White Flags”, which has become the mantra of Team Gleason.

(10) The Gleason Initiative Foundation helps provide individuals with neuromuscular diseases or injuries with leading edge technology, equipment and services, raises global awareness about ALS to find solutions and an end to the disease, and has helped hundreds of people with ALS experience life adventures they never thought possible after their diagnosis.

(11) Steve’s story and mission have been told by the NFL Network, ESPN, HBO, ABC, CBS, CNN, and many local media outlets, as well as in a 2016 documentary titled “Gleason”, which was heralded at the Sundance Film Festival and premiered across the country with Variety calling the production “an emotional powerhouse”. The documentary won several awards, including the 2016 Washington, D.C. Area Film Critics Association Award for Best Documentary.

(12) Steve was named one of two Sports Illustrated’s Inspirations of the Year in 2014, has been a keynote speaker for Microsoft and at two United Nations sponsored Social Innovation Summits, and received the 2015 George S. Halas Courage Award, given to a NFL player, coach or staff member who overcomes the most adversity to succeed.

(13) Steve helped advocate for the Steve Gleason Act of 2015 (Public Law 114-40; 129 Stat. 441), and the Steve Gleason Enduring Voices Act of 2017, H.R. 2465, 115th Congress (2017), which permanently ensures people living with diseases such as ALS have access to speech generating devices regardless of their setting, whether at home or a healthcare institution.

(14) In 2014, Steve and Team Gleason hosted a global summit to bring together researchers, patients, caregivers, and all ALS stakeholders to create a plan to ultimately end ALS. That summit resulted in the single largest coordinated and collaborative ALS research project in the world, Answer ALS, which brings together nearly two dozen research institutions, 1,000 patients and 20,000,000,000 data points that are important to the project and that will define the unknown pathways that will lead to treatments or finally a cure.

(15) In 2015, Steve and Microsoft worked together to create a method for people who are completely paralyzed to navigate their power wheelchairs with their eyes. Today, Steve, Microsoft and all wheelchair manufacturers are working collaboratively to make it widely available to all who need this technology. In addition, Microsoft has also made eye tracking technology part of all Windows 10 products across the globe.

(16) In 2011, 10 months after his diagnosis, Steve and Michel made their most significant accomplishment, becoming parents to their son Rivers.

(17) Steve and Michel Gleason continue to fight to find a solution for ALS so they can share many years together and as parents to Rivers.

#### SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.

(a) AWARD AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President pro tempore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements for the award, on behalf of the Congress, of a single gold medal of appropriate design to Stephen Michael Gleason.

(b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For the purposes of the award referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary of the Treasury (hereafter

in this Act referred to as the “Secretary”) shall strike the gold medal with suitable emblems, devices, and inscriptions, to be determined by the Secretary.

#### SEC. 4. DUPLICATE MEDALS.

Under such regulations as the Secretary may prescribe, the Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in bronze of the gold medal struck under section 3, at a price sufficient to cover the costs of the medals, including labor, materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses.

#### SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.

Medals struck pursuant to this Act are national medals for purposes of chapter 51 of title 31, United States Code.

Mr. CASSIDY. I yield the floor.  
The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASSIDY). The Senator from Ohio.

#### OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, today I come back to the floor of the Senate to talk again about the opioid crisis that has gripped the country and my State of Ohio.

I want to focus on the issue of fentanyl. This is the most deadly of the drugs now. It is a drug that is causing the most overdoses at a time in which we have unprecedented numbers of overdoses.

Fentanyl is a synthetic form of heroin and opioids. It is coming through the mail. It is coming mostly from one country—China. It is the poison that has contributed more in the last few years to the rise in opioid use than anything else.

Over the past week, we have made some significant progress in pushing back against fentanyl, and I want to report on that today.

As I am talking today, the U.S. House of Representatives is going to take up legislation called the STOP Act, which we have been working on here in the Senate for a couple of years. I am very pleased about that. I suspect the vote today will be bipartisan. I suspect it will pass the House.

I also want to report that here in the Senate we have had a breakthrough in the last week. Not only have we negotiated something with the House that is, in my view, an improvement from the legislation that passed the House Ways and Means committee a couple of weeks ago, but also, in the Senate Finance Committee this week, we had a markup and got a commitment from the chairman and ranking member that the Finance Committee will also mark up the same legislation—identical legislation—as is likely to pass the House of Representatives today.

I thank Chairman ORRIN HATCH and Ranking Member RON WYDEN for working with us to ensure we could get this legislation marked up in committee and onto the floor of the U.S. Senate as part of whatever we do in terms of the opioid crisis here in the coming days and weeks.

Of course, I also commend my House colleagues for the vote today and for the work they have done on this, particularly the Ways and Means Committee chairman, KEVIN BRADY, Representatives MIKE BISHOP, DAVE

REICHERT, BILL PASCRELL, and JOHN FASO for their efforts on this bill to combat the opioid crisis. Again, my hope is the bill that passes the House today will be identical to the bill we will take up here on the floor of the U.S. Senate, so we can ensure we can get this bill to the President for his signature as soon as possible.

This is an urgent issue. This is not just an important issue; it is an urgent issue. We need to push back, and we need to push back hard.

The drug fentanyl is so dangerous that a couple milligrams of it, a few flecks of it, can kill you. Again, it is something that is causing the most overdoses right now. It is not just affecting those who are overdosing on it; it is affecting all of us, including our first responders, including young children who come in contact with it. The stories of kids exposed to fentanyl are really heartbreaking, perhaps because someone left it behind at a party, perhaps because their parents or other family members left it behind, and these young children are overdosing and dying. This is happening in my State. This is happening around the country.

First responders are being affected. I hear stories about it when I am home, whether it is a firefighter, someone in the healthcare industry, or someone who is in law enforcement. A story, which I have mentioned before, is about an East Liverpool, OH, police officer. He pulls over two suspects, notices they are spreading white powder inside the car, trying to hide it. Wisely, he puts on gloves and a mask. He makes the arrest. When he is back at the police station booking these individuals—not for the traffic violation so much as for the fentanyl—he looks at his shirt and notices a couple of flecks of something white on his shirt, and brushes it off like that. His fingers are exposed to the fentanyl. Immediately, he falls to the ground unconscious and has to be revived by Narcan, not once, not twice, but for Chris Green, a big guy—6 feet 2 inches, 200-some pounds, in great shape—four doses of Narcan were necessary to save his life and keep him alive.

As his police chief said, if they weren't right there with him, what would have happened? What would have happened if he had gone home, had those flecks on his shoulder, and hugged his kids? This is an incredibly dangerous substance, and we have to deal with it.

Last year, law enforcement officials in Massachusetts said that with two doses of Narcan, they revived a man who said he had been smoking only marijuana. How could this be? It was because fentanyl was mixed with that marijuana.

I was in Lorain, OH, last week for a meeting with folks involved in pushing back against this substance abuse problem—law enforcement, social workers, treatment providers. Law enforcement told us a story that was very

much the same—a young man who had to be revived by using Narcan. He said: I was just smoking dope.

It couldn't be. Sure enough, when they checked, they found out the marijuana had been laced with fentanyl. It is also going into cocaine. It is also going into crystal meth. In fact, crystal meth now is becoming a bigger problem in my home State of Ohio, and we know for a fact that this is a bigger problem in part because it is being mixed with fentanyl.

The Dayton area recently released its county overdose report. The Dayton area experienced three times as many crystal meth-related overdose deaths in 2017 as compared to 2016. Again, they believe fentanyl mixed into these drugs is the contributing factor.

The county coroner from Cincinnati said that she has now seen fentanyl mixed with cocaine and marijuana, as well as a number of street drugs. Fentanyl and its variants are now the deadliest drugs of the opioid epidemic.

One of the takeaways I have had from my meetings around the State, talking to people about how we push back on fentanyl, is a growing consensus that we need to make much more progress in keeping the fentanyl from coming into our communities in the first place. Again, we know this is what is causing the big increase in overdoses and deaths at a time when we are doing more at home to address the opioid crisis. If not for fentanyl, I strongly believe we would be making progress. We would be seeing a reduction in overdoses.

This body has passed the CARA legislation—the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act; it has also passed the 21st Century Cures Act. I have been at different places in the State in the last few weeks where they have been using that funding well, to do things like quick response teams—when somebody is revived with Narcan, the miracle drug that reverses the effects of the overdose, then, be sure you are getting that person treatment by working with law enforcement, treatment providers, and social workers together. It is working.

In one case where they are using funding from the CARA legislation, 80 percent of the people whom they are coming into contact with are going into treatment. That is a tremendous improvement from, unfortunately, what is generally happening, which is that very few people are actually going from the Narcan overdose saving the person's life into treatment. We have to deal with that gap.

So we are making progress, yet the fentanyl is overwhelming the system. So it is time for us to figure this out, and push back harder.

In 2013, in my home city of Cincinnati, we experienced a 1,000-percent increase in fentanyl deaths. In the first 5 months of this year, more than 90 percent of the drugs seized by the Hamilton County crime lab contained fentanyl—more than 90 percent.

Most of the drugs we talk about pushing back against—think of cocaine, heroin, even crystal meth—come in overland, mostly across the southern border from Mexico. What law enforcement tells us and what the intelligence community tells us is that fentanyl comes in primarily by the U.S. mail system. So instead of coming overland—and the need for helping to secure our southern border is clear partly because of that—here we have a situation where this drug is coming in through our own Federal agency, the U.S. mail service. They tell us it comes primarily from one country—China. It is made in a laboratory in China, and it is shipped over here.

We spent about 18 months studying this issue. We went undercover and contacted a lot of different websites, and they all told us the same thing, which is this: If you are going to buy from us, ship it by U.S. mail. If it comes by U.S. mail, we guarantee delivery. If you don't send it by U.S. mail, we are not so sure we can guarantee it.

Why is that? Because 16 years ago, this body and the U.S. House of Representatives, after the tragic incidents of 9/11, decided we were going to tighten up on packages coming into our country and the law enforcement screening of those packages. So we required all the private carriers—FedEx, UPS, DHL, and others—to provide law enforcement data about those packages, where they were from, what was in them, where they were going. They had to provide that data electronically and in advance so that law enforcement could use big data and use analytics to determine what packages were suspect to be able to pull them offline.

I have been to those facilities where this happens. It is very impressive. It is also very dangerous. These packages, once identified, have to be taken into a room where there is adequate ventilation and other precautions taken—gloves and masks and so on—because of the danger of fentanyl.

But the U.S. Post Office was not required 16 years ago to provide that information. Instead, the legislation said that the post office needed to study the issue, leaving it clear in legislative history that Congress considered it a problem but wanted to give the post office time to look into it. Specifically, they asked the Postmaster General and Department of Homeland Security to come up with a report. It never happened.

So here we are, 16 years later. The post office doesn't have that requirement, and these other ways you can send packages mailed into the United States do have that requirement. So guess where the traffickers go.

The post office in the last year or so has begun to step up its efforts, and I am happy about that. I believe they did it because of our hearings and because of the pressure from Congress and because of this legislation called the

STOP Act. They now say that they are screening about 36 percent of their packages. Again, that is a big improvement. However, there are about 900 million packages a year. That means about 315 million packages are being looked at, and this is a big improvement, but we still have so many hundreds of millions of packages not receiving that kind of screening.

In addition, we learned through our hearings and investigation that 20 percent of the time, when law enforcement had identified a Postal Service package that was suspect, it was not presented to law enforcement. In other words, it went into the community anyway.

Clearly, we have a big problem. We are not screening adequately, we are not providing the information for enough packages, and we are not giving law enforcement the tools they need to do their job. By the way, with regard to the private carriers, it is 100 percent required.

So the legislation we are proposing is to tell the post office: This poison has to be stopped in every way we possibly can. This is a crisis. This is not just important; it is urgent. It is something we want you to address.

So it says that by 2020 we have to have 100 percent of packages screened, and we have to give law enforcement the tools they need. Law enforcement, of course, is desperate to get this information. If they have the information, they can help. They can help to keep these packages out of our country. They can also help to raise the price.

Some packages that are stopped, of course, would otherwise have gone to a post office box or someone's home or an abandoned house and been distributed. Packages that could have poisoned hundreds of thousands of people and killed hundreds of thousands of people have been seized in the State of Ohio. There was a package found recently in Nebraska that could have killed millions of people. In a relatively small quantity, this is incredibly powerful, dangerous stuff.

Now, with this legislation, we will be able to identify more of these packages and get them offline and, again, at a minimum, be able to raise the cost.

One of the reasons fentanyl has taken over and pushed out other drugs—by the way, it is 50 times more powerful than heroin. One reason is that it is relatively inexpensive. This will raise the price and reduce the volume and help to save lives.

We now have over one-third of the U.S. Senate as cosponsors of this legislation, including Senator HATCH and Senator WYDEN. Again, I appreciate their support and their work on this. We also have about half of the House of Representatives who have supported the STOP Act in the other Chamber.

It is time for us to take the next step: pass this legislation, get it in place, and immediately tell countries like China, if you want to send packages to us, you have to provide this information.

We have done everything we can in other ways to encourage China to crack down on these labs, the evil scientists who are continuing to make this product. We are taking other steps, of course, to do that. We are taking other steps to deal with this issue in terms of increased prevention and education efforts. That is in the CARA legislation. There is \$10 million right now available for the administration to come up with a national media campaign that I would strongly support. They have already started a smaller media campaign with the private sector. I support that as well. We need to push back every way we can, letting people know the dangers, including the fact that any street drugs you take now potentially can have deadly consequences, including fentanyl.

We need to do more in terms of getting people into treatment. This is a disease, and it needs to be treated as such. We are not going to be able to make progress unless we take people who are already addicted and get them into the treatment and longer term recovery they need. Longer term recovery is funded by CARA and Cures. This is the first time Congress has done this. It is very important because if you get people into longer term recovery programs—sober housing and group discussions, helping to support them—you have a much higher likelihood of somebody getting clean, being successful, being able to get back on track, getting back with their family, getting back to their job.

Finally, we have to do more in terms of helping law enforcement. Again, that is partly what we are doing here, giving them the tools to be able to stop some of this poison from coming in, in the first place.

I am encouraged with the progress we made just in the last week. We now have a House bill that is being voted on, as I speak. We now have a Senate bill that has been agreed to be reported out of committee coming onto the floor. They are identical. They both do the job. They both tell the post office we have to change behavior.

By the way, in terms of the post office, someone told me today that the postal union was concerned about this legislation. I encourage you to talk to rank-and-file mail carriers, postal carriers, and ask them what they think. They don't want to be carrying this poison into our communities. They don't want to be potentially exposed to this poison, should a package leak, because of the danger of it.

The people I talk to agree, we absolutely have to crack down on this. We are not asking the post office to do it alone. We are providing funding to Customs and Border Protection to be there with them. The postal inspectors, the folks who are actually local law enforcement, are desperate to ensure that we can do this because they are tired of it. They are tired of seeing this stuff come in, like an avalanche coming into our country, and creating all these

problems across the board in our communities, every sector of our community being affected. People are desperate for solutions because they acknowledge the problem.

I had a tele-townhall meeting last week in Washington where I called in and spoke to thousands of Ohioans at once. We do this on a monthly basis. For the last few years, we have been asking questions about opioids in our survey. It is a very simple question. It says: Have you been directly affected? Has anybody you know been directly affected by this opioid crisis?

Unbelievably, we have gotten typically about 50 percent of the people who called—again, these are thousands of people randomly selected—saying: Yes, my family or someone I know has been directly affected by opioids.

At the call last week, two-thirds of the people on the call said they have been directly affected or someone they know has been directly affected. That is why people are desperate for a solution because it is affecting them. It is affecting their lives. It is affecting their families. It is affecting our communities. It is affecting every single aspect of our community—the healthcare system, the foster care system, the prison system, the court system. It is time for us to step up and do more. Yes, prevention, treatment, longer term recovery but also helping law enforcement to be able to push back and stop some of this poison from coming into our communities in the first place.

Let's pass the STOP Act to give law enforcement the tools they need against this new scourge of this epidemic, and by doing so, we will save lives.

I yield the floor.

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.

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

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

#### REMEMBERING PHILO T. FARNSWORTH

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to a remarkable Utahn whose impact has been felt by generations of Americans every day: the "Father of Television," Mr. Philo T. Farnsworth. A true American inventor, Farnsworth's image has graced Statuary Hall in the U.S. Capitol Building since 1990 in larger-than-life fashion, as one of two statue contributions by Utah.

Just a few months ago, the Utah State Legislature voted to replace the Farnsworth statue with that of Martha Hughes Cannon, the first woman State senator in Utah and the Nation. Her influence as a Mormon pioneer, a Utah women's rights advocate, and early female physician opened doors and paved