

to concerns from Florida's Republican Governor.

That is completely arbitrary and not acceptable.

It is clear California also staunchly opposes this plan. According to the latest polling, nearly 70 percent of Californians oppose new drilling off our coast.

Senator HARRIS and I, together with our colleagues in the House of Representatives, have repeatedly shared our concerns with Secretary Zinke.

The Secretary has even received statements of opposition from California's Governor, senate, assembly, attorney general, coastal commission, fish and game commission, State lands commission, and more than two dozen counties and cities.

So why are we not being given the same deference as Florida?

Unlike this administration, California understands that offshore oil drilling belongs in the past. We are making smarter investments in clean energy and renewable sources. Our State is on target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 80 percent below 1990 levels by the year 2050.

The President's proposal would undermine that progress.

The Trump administration's proposed six new lease sales off the California coast would lead to new oil rigs that would continue to produce oil for decades to come.

That is well past the time we will need to have moved away from fossil fuels altogether.

Even though California has fought off new Federal drilling for three decades, there are still 43 leases that remain active from Federal lease sales prior to 1984.

In State waters, there are still nine active rigs that were built before the Santa Barbara oil spill.

We are still dealing with the legacy of last century's drilling, but it is our responsibility to leave a better legacy for the next century.

California won't allow new offshore oil rigs to create another generation of dirty carbon emissions and disastrous oil spills.

California, along with our coastal State friends, has rejected President Trump's offshore drilling proposal.

It is time to respect our local opposition and completely scrap this plan.

KARI'S LAW ACT

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I wish to recognize Senate passage of Kari's Law Act of 2017.

In December 2013, Kari Hunt Dunn was attacked by her estranged husband in a hotel room. In an attempt to help her mother, Kari's 9-year-old daughter tried to contact the police by dialing 9-1-1. Tragically, the call failed to go through because Kari's daughter did not dial "9" to reach an outside line before entering 9-1-1. Kari did not survive the attack.

Kari's murder brought a serious public safety problem to light. Whether

you are a worker at a big office building or a family staying in a hotel, dialing 9-1-1 should always connect you with people who can help.

By passing Kari's Law, we will enact a national standard to ensure that multiline telephone equipment must be capable of supporting the ability to directly reach emergency services by dialing 9-1-1 and that those responsible for installing, maintaining, and operating the system are required to ensure that simply dialing 9-1-1, a critically important capability, is available for use in emergency situations.

Ensuring multiline telephones are installed with the capability to contact emergency responders by dialing 9-1-1 will help prevent tragedies like the one that Kari Hunt Dunn endured.

RECOGNIZING THE COMMISSIONING OF THE USCGC "JOSEPH GERCZAK"

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the commissioning of the Coast Guard's 26th Sentinel-class Fast Response Cutter, FRC, the USCGC *Joseph Gerczak*. The commissioning ceremony for this impressive ship will take place in Honolulu, HI, on March 9. Although I regret not being able to attend the ceremony in person, I am deeply honored for the chance to speak about this cutter and the remarkable man for which it is named.

Joseph Gerczak, a son of Pennsylvania, valiantly died fighting for his country during World War II. He was born on February 10, 1922, in Philadelphia, PA. Soon after enlisting in the Coast Guard on September 26, 1942, he was assigned to a tank landing ship whose job it was to carry tanks, vehicles, cargo, and troops directly onto enemy shores. Gerczak was quickly promoted to signalman third class on this ship, which was called the USS *LST-66*.

On December 26, 1943, Gerczak and his crewmates participated in the initial Allied assault on the Japanese-held island of New Britain. During this operation, the USS *LST-66* came under sudden attack by seven Japanese dive bombers. Acting without hesitation, Gerczak was the first crewmember to man his battle station; he heroically shot down two Japanese planes before being mortally wounded from the shrapnel of a bomb blast. He was 21 years old.

For his valor in battle, Gerczak was posthumously awarded both the Silver Star and Purple Heart. The USS *LST-66*'s entire crew was also given the Presidential Unit Commendation. It is exceptionally fitting that Gerczak be honored for the sacrifice he gave during World War II by having his name live on in the service of the U.S. Coast Guard.

The USCGC *Joseph Gerczak* will be the second FRC based in Honolulu, HI, replacing the legacy Island-class patrol boats. As a Sentinel-class cutter, it will feature advanced command, con-

trol, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance—C4ISR—equipment. Furthermore, this ship will be fully interoperable with existing and future Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, and Department of Defense assets. These state-of-the-art capabilities will better enable the USCGC *Joseph Gerczak* to conduct missions that include port, waterways, and the coasts; fishery patrols; search and rescue; and national defense.

I ask my colleagues to join me in recognition of the commissioning of the USCGC *Joseph Gerczak* into military service as a Coast Guard ship.

TRIBUTE TO KERRY SUTTEN

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the dedicated career and service to the Congress and the intelligence community of Kerry Suttten, who is retiring at the end of this month after more than 20 years of service in both the executive and legislative branches of our government. Kerry dedicated his professional career to help keep our Nation safe and to improve our government and intelligence community. We thank him for his dedication.

Kerry is leaving the Senate as the deputy minority staff director of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, a post he has held for the last 2½ years. He first joined the committee as the head of the committee's collection review, a study looking at the intelligence activities of all the IC. During his time on the committee, Kerry has worked tirelessly to help the committee rigorously oversee the 17 intelligence agencies that make up our national intelligence community and has especially dedicated himself to improving the oversight of the IC's inspectors general and to the protection of IC whistleblowers. His efforts in these subjects have been invaluable.

Prior to joining the committee, Kerry served in a variety of roles in the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), including spending almost 5 years as the lead for intelligence community strategic planning in the Office of Systems and Resource Analysis, (SRA). In that capacity, Kerry was responsible for helping provide resource direction for the entirety of the IC, developing integrated planning guidance for the various intelligence programs, and managing the development of strategic priorities.

In addition to his time in SRA, Kerry held important roles in the Business Transformation Office at ODNI and the Office of the Chief Financial Officer. Kerry was also instrumental in helping to create the national counterterrorism budget, a key accomplishment in his time at the National Counterterrorism Center, (NCTC), where he served for almost 2 years as a Senior Program and Resource Officer. Prior to joining the IC, Mr. Suttten spent almost 5 years supporting the Director of the Bureau

of Economic Analysis at the U.S. Department of Commerce, was the Director for Congressional and Intragovernmental Affairs at the Economics and Statistics Administration, and worked for 2 years at the Bureau of the Census. Kerry began his governmental career as a Senior Economist at the Joint Economic Committee in July 1997.

During his time in the government, Kerry won a wide variety of performance awards for his work. However, I am sure that he feels his most important award is his forthcoming and well-deserved retirement. Kerry plans to relocate full-time to the Sperryville, VA, area, where he owns and runs a popular coffee shop. Kerry's plans include expanding the services offered by his shop to include a wine bar, and he has expressed an interest in raising chickens and miniature goats. While these subjects are far from the expertise he has shown in his time in and around the intelligence community, I am sure he will excel at them just as he has in his time with SSCI.

Kerry Suttan, we wish you great success and great happiness in your retirement. Thank you for your years of service.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

STATE OF THE UNION ESSAY FINALISTS

● Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I would like to congratulate more finalists in this year's State of the Union Essay Contest and, as I did with the finalists I recognized yesterday, I ask that their essays be printed in the RECORD.

The material follows:

MAISIE NEWBURY, MIDDLEBURY UNION HIGH SCHOOL, JUNIOR

"Whenever you feel like criticizing anyone, just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had." The Great Gatsby, page 1. This was one of my father's favorite quotes when I was growing up. He always cautioned me to think before I spoke or better yet, "think before you think." While some might call this inauthentic, my father called it sensible.

I am not blind to the privilege I possess. Though, living in the big house atop the hill with my two healthy, living parents in the sheltered town of Weybridge, Vermont, it would be an easy thing to forget—if it weren't for my brother, Robbie.

Robbie does not talk much. He cannot read. He cannot write. He has "Severe, Regressive Autism," a developmental disorder that inhibits his literacy and communication skills. When I was younger, my parents explained to me that the world looked different to Robbie. It was louder, brighter and so much bigger. Living with Robbie, I am constantly reminded of my privilege. Every time I speak, run, ski, read, write . . . I'm doing something that he cannot. All the things I do on a daily basis are insurmountable obstacles to him. Yet, even without these luxuries, my brother smiles and laughs—he enjoys his life and his experience because he owns it. No one should be allowed to take that from him.

Yet, my brother's access to the care he needs has decreased immensely in the last year. His weekly appointments with his occupational therapist, which used to be covered by insurance, are now unaffordable as my parents must continue supporting him in their retirement. Learning this, I was upset. How could something so fundamental be removed from our insurance policy without a second thought?

In our society, mental health challenges are often dismissed as illegitimate and fixable. Words like psycho, idiot and lunatic, are thrown around as diminutive insults rather than seen as impactful and potentially harmful. Because of this, mental healthcare is considered a luxury rather than a necessity, and therefore not something that should be covered by insurance.

The union we live in does not value mental healthcare simply because society does not. This issue starts with us. I cannot stay silent and watch my parents sacrifice my brother's future stability and independence in order to be able to support him in the long run; nor can I do this alone. I know that until society begins placing value on the lives of people like Robbie, no one will—especially not large-scale insurance providers. However, I believe that there are other people like me who, if we band together, can create a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens ready to take on the world. For, unlike my brother, my privilege has given me a voice, and it is my duty to use it to fight for him. I owe him that much.

JACKSON NOEL, MILTON HIGH SCHOOL, SENIOR

With a nation as large as the United States there is a constant stream of issues and problems that require addressing. This means that the most important issues are those that involve the largest portion of the United States population. In that way, the biggest issue that the United States should currently focus on is making sure that every American can afford and has access to health care.

Every American should have the right to health care, as wealth should not determine quality of life. Health care is an incredibly important aspect of everyone's lives as it allows them to live without worrying about not having access to critical care and treatment to thrive. In this way, the solution to this problem is the maintaining and constant adjusting of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, "ACA", to best suit and assist the American people. The benefit of the Affordable Care Act is deceptively simple in that more Americans would be able to afford and hold onto healthcare. This means that they would be able to live a better life and be better functioning members of society. The Affordable Care Act has proven to be a legitimate solution since it has been enacted under the Obama administration. According to the New York Times, the number of Americans without healthcare is "down by 25 percent." This shows that the Affordable Care Act is effective at achieving its goals.

There are many people who believe that the United States government should play no role in health care; this is a flawed perspective. The goal is insure as many American citizens as possible it makes the most sense to have defined government regulation. One belief is that there should be a free market for health insurance, allowing companies to compete to provide the best system to benefit the people. There are many problems with a free market health care system that stops it from being helpful and most useful for the American people. A free market is not designed to allow for everyone to have insurance, but rather people who can afford it having better access. This is not

beneficial on the national scale and leads to a large imbalance of power. There are also numerous flaws in the current American approach to health care. For one, even when someone is insured there are upfront fees and payments before insurance kicks in. This means that someone who is insured might not be able to pay these fees causing them to be financially burdened by bills even with insurance.

Universal government health care has proven to be a sufficient solution to the problem of health care. For example, Switzerland has universal health care and a per capita health expenditures of \$1,879, compared to America's \$4,160. Meaning that the United States is spending more money on less.

Making sure that this is available and maintained under the Trump administration is important in the path towards accessible health insurance. No one should ever die because they cannot afford treatment.

HOPE PETRARO, MONTEPELIER HIGH SCHOOL,
SOPHOMORE

Commitment to democracy is the founding principal of the United States of America—embedded in the fabric of our Nation, the crown jewel of our proverbial crown. A constitutional federal republic, with a system of checks and balances, is an assurance to constituents that they each have a seat at the table. Yet in practice, this has proven to be nothing but a promising facade. Gerrymandering, voter suppression, and "money in politics" are not a threat to our democracy—they define American democracy. The disproportionate influence of wealthy individuals and corporations in elections and in the legislative process has muddled an honest definition of democracy in our Nation while simultaneously becoming it. However, America's commitment to tried-and-true methods does not necessitate lack of reception to positive change.

Campaigns will always include campaign financing, as the distribution of information to voters is dependent upon systems that require funding. In addition, campaign contributions, whether by individuals or corporations, can rightfully be considered an exercise of the First Amendment right to free speech. However, refusal to set donation limits violates the grounds of equality upon which such freedom of speech is conducted, and can arguably censor and repress the speech of the less wealthy as it greatly diminishes their relative influence. Unfortunately, Citizens United and the subsequent SpeechNow allow donors to make unlimited donations to super PACS. This includes money donated by foreign entities, possibly anonymously as "dark money". Moreover, these expenditures aren't verifiably independent from candidates. Collusion between super PACs, often created by associates of candidates and candidates themselves, is rarely, if ever, regulated. In addition, it is hypocritical to argue, in the name of free speech, that donors can contribute an unlimited amount to expenditures but that those expenditures must remain independent. Citizens United, SpeechNow, and the additional McCutcheon rulings have nearly neutralized the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act, adding a somewhat plutocratic influence upon the electoral process and American democracy as a whole.

This issue is multi-partisan. According to Gallup Poll, the greatest majority of Americans cite dissatisfaction with the government and poor leadership as our Nation's most important issue. A September 2015 Bloomberg poll found that about 80 percent of Republicans and Democrats alike oppose Citizens United. This overarching dissatisfaction can be ameliorated by working