

## ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORDS

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that a copy of my opening statement at the Senate Health Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

## ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORDS

Mr. ALEXANDER. In 1991, the National Academies urged the adoption of electronic health records to improve patients' care. However, for many patients and for many doctors, electronic health records have made care more complicated.

No one knows this better than Dr. Kelly Aldrich, who is the Chief Clinical Transformation Officer at the Center for Medical Interoperability in Nashville and whose husband, Eric, experienced a life-threatening emergency that could have been prevented if his electronic health records had been interoperable.

Eric woke up one morning with a splitting headache and went to see his primary care doctor, who sent Eric to the hospital for a CT scan, the results of which prompted an MRI. Usually, the hospital's electronic medical records system sends the results of the MRI directly to Eric's primary care doctor.

But in this case the results were never sent, so 12 hours after the test, Eric's doctor called the hospital and learned that Eric had a tumor so large it was causing his brain to swell and shift, putting him at risk of seizures, permanent brain damage, and possibly death.

Eric, however, assuming no news was good news, was already 500 miles away, on his way to a fishing trip in Louisiana. Eric went to Tulane Medical Center, which had to do another MRI because they could not obtain Eric's original test results because the two hospitals used different electronic medical records systems. Eric flew back to Nashville, where he had to have yet another MRI before entering surgery. Eric later spent several weeks recovering in the ICU.

At multiple points during this traumatic experience, a lack of interoperability between electronic health records caused a life threatening delay of care, redundant tests, higher costs, and additional pain.

This is the second hearing on the proposed rules implementing the electronic health information provisions in the 21st Century Cures Act. Improving electronic health records is important to this committee.

In 2015, while working on Cures, we realized that our electronic health records system was in a ditch.

This committee held six bipartisan hearings on how to improve interoperability, and formed a working group that recommended provisions in Cures to ban information blocking—which is when some obstacle is in the way of a patient's information being sent from one doctor to another.

And this year, this committee is working on legislation to lower the cost of health care.

50 percent of what we spend on health care is unnecessary, according to Dr. Brent James of the National Academies. Electronic health records that are interoperable can prevent duplicative tests—like Eric's repeated MRIs—and reduce what doctors and hospitals spend on administrative tasks.

In March, the Office of the National Coordinator and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services issued two rules to implement the electronic health records provisions in Cures:

First the rules define information blocking—so it is more precisely clear what we

mean when one system, hospital, doctor, vendor, or insurer is purposefully not sharing information with another;

Second, the rules require that by January 1, 2020, for the first time, insurers must share a patient's health care data with the patient so their health information follows them as they see different doctors; and

Third, all electronic health records must adopt publicly available standards for data elements, known as Application Programming Interfaces, or APIs, two years after these rules are completed.

Last month, we heard from those who use electronic health records, and here is what they have to say about the rules. First, I asked our witnesses if these were good rules—and all four said yes, the intent and the goal of the rules were correct.

Mary Grealy, president of the Healthcare Leadership Council said: "Interoperability is not simply desirable, it is absolutely necessary . . . These rules represent an important and perhaps groundbreaking first step for true national interoperability."

I also asked our witnesses what one change they would make to improve these rules. Mary cautioned about not rushing implementation, saying, "We don't want to prevent moving ahead, or progress, but I think we also have to be very cognizant of the challenges that providers and others are facing trying to do this complex work."

In 2015, I urged the Obama Administration to slow down Stage 3 of the Meaningful Use program, which incentivized doctors and hospitals to adopt electronic health records. The Obama Administration did not slow down implementation, and looking back, the results would have been better if they had.

The best way to get to where you want to go is not by going too far, too fast.

I want to make sure we learn lessons from implementing Meaningful Use Stage 3, which was, in the words of one major hospital, "terrifying."

I am especially interested in getting where we want to go with the involvement of doctors, hospitals, vendors, and insurers, with the fewest possible mistakes and the least confusion.

We don't need to set a record time to get there with an unrealistic timeline. Because these are complex rules, I asked CMS and ONC to extend the comment period, and I am glad to see they have done so and want to thank our witnesses for allowing more time for comment.

We also heard concerns about ensuring patient privacy. If the 21st Century Cures Act is successfully implemented, patients should be able to get their own health data more easily and send it to their health care providers.

Patients may also choose to send that data to third parties—like an exercise tracking app on their smart phone—but this raises new questions about privacy. Lucia Savage, Chief Privacy and Regulatory Officer at Omada Health said, "I think the committee . . . is rightfully concerned about privacy and security . . . None of this will matter if the consumers don't have confidence, and their doctors don't have confidence that the consumers have confidence."

Dr. Christopher Rehm, Chief Medical Informatics Officer at Lifepoint Health in Brentwood, Tennessee reminded us at the hearing that these rules are "not about the technology, it's about the patient, their care and their outcomes."

I am looking forward to hearing from the Administration today about how they plan to implement these rules.

WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS  
POSTAGE STAMP

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, on May 21, 2019, the U.S. Postal Service will release a series of postage stamps commemorating America's Wild and Scenic River system. These are America's remarkable rivers and streams unique for their free-flowing beauty, along with their contribution to recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, and countless other important benefits.

As we recognize the 50th anniversary of this landmark conservation law, I want to make a point that Oregon has always been a leader in protecting rivers and just this year added more than 250 miles of Wild and Scenic Rivers designations, increasing our miles of protected rivers from 1,916 to a grand total of over 2,170 miles. That gives Oregon the State with the most miles of Wild and Scenic River designations in the contiguous United States.

Three Oregon rivers are being recognized by the U.S. Postal Service in this commemorative stamp edition: the Deschutes, the Owyhee, and the Snake Rivers. Each is remarkable and unique in its own way, and together, these rivers embody Oregon's tradition of providing habitat for endangered salmon and steelhead, clean drinking water, and recreation opportunities for countless outdoor enthusiasts from all over the United States and the world.

One of these rivers, the Owyhee, carves its way through some of the harshest and most arid and remote landscape of Oregon's high desert in the easternmost parts of our State. The Owyhee River flows through a steep, eroded canyon with cliffs towering hundreds of feet above. Added to the Wild and Scenic Rivers system in 1984, this river is revered for its remarkable cultural, geologic, recreational, and scenic values. It is of particular historical significance to Tribes across Oregon, Idaho, and Nevada. Beyond its significance as a Wild and Scenic River, the Owyhee region is a critical lifeline to the rural economy of eastern Oregon and the local ranching community.

Moving westward to central Oregon, the Deschutes River is an oasis that winds through sandy, pumice-filled soils and sloping plateaus. A Wild and Scenic River since 1988, the Deschutes is world renowned for its fly fishing, rafting, and hiking opportunities. For centuries, Native Americans have honored the cultural and fishing uses of the river and venerated its historical value.

The final Oregon river honored in this series is back to the east in Oregon but north of the Owyhee: the mighty Snake River. It flows through Hells Canyon—the deepest gorge in North America—on the border between Idaho and Oregon. First designated a Wild and Scenic River in 1975, the Snake River holds significant cultural value for the people of the Shoshone and Nez

Perce Tribes. It also holds an important part of our State's history; emigrant pioneers risked their lives crossing the Snake in search of their future in Oregon. Pristine sections of this river and its stunning landscapes provide bountiful opportunities for salmon fishing, rafting, and exploration.

These Oregon rivers and others recognized by the U.S. Postal Service in these stamps contribute to the most stunning landscapes in the country and protect the very qualities that make America's and Oregon's natural treasures so incredible.

#### TRIBUTE TO COLONEL CAROLINE M. MILLER

Ms. ERNST. Madam President, today I wish to recognize Col. Caroline M. Miller, upon her departure as chief, Air Force legislative liaison to the U.S. Senate.

In this role, Colonel Miller managed Air Force senior leader strategic engagement with Senators and their staffs in support of Air Force programs and congressional oversight travel. She served as the Air Force's senior escort for staff and congressional delegation travel to more than 20 countries supporting leadership, Member, and committee offices. Prior to her current position, she served as the 633rd Air Base Wing commander at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, VA, providing installation support to 18,000 Air Force and Army personnel, including Headquarters Air Combat Command, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, four operational wings, eight brigades, and more than 20 major associate units.

Colonel Miller received her commission in 1994 from Officer Training School, Maxwell Air Force Base, AL. During her illustrious career, she has served as a protocol officer, special actions officer, and executive officer for several senior Air Force leadership offices, as well as the Director of Manpower and Personnel for United States Strategic Command. Colonel Miller has commanded at the squadron, group, and wing levels, spending 1 year as the commander, 379th Expeditionary Mission Support Group, Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar, in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. She was also hand-selected to participate in the elite Air Force Internship program, as well as competed to attend the Naval Command and Staff College and Air Force's Air War College.

Colonel Miller is married to Colonel (Retired) Rich Miller who, along with their son Ryan, have given her unwavering support throughout her career in the Air Force during multiple moves and combat deployments.

On behalf of the U.S. Congress and a grateful Nation, I extend our deepest appreciation to Col. Caroline M. Miller for her dedicated service to the Senate and to our Nation. We wish her the best on her promotion to brigadier general and her next role as chief of Air Force manpower at the Pentagon. There is no

question that the Air Force, Department of Defense, and the United States will continue to benefit greatly from Colonel Miller's leadership.

#### REMEMBERING DR. JAMES BILLINGTON

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, Dr. James Billington was the 13th person to hold the position of Librarian of Congress since the Library was established in 1800. He was nominated by President Ronald Reagan and served under Presidents George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama.

As Librarian of Congress Dr. Billington managed the Library of Congress, which according to LOC, is the largest library in the world, containing millions of books, recordings, photographs, newspapers, maps, and manuscripts in its collections. It is the main research arm of the U.S. Congress.

Dr. Billington doubled the size of the Library's collections during his tenure from 85.5 million items in 1987 to more than 160 million items. He created the Library of Congress online, which helped bring the Library into the digital age.

In 2003, Dr. Billington testified before the Senate education committee at a hearing I chaired called "Putting the Teaching of American History and Civics Back in the Classroom."

In his testimony that day, Dr. Billington said: "During Alex Haley's 12 years researching his groundbreaking novel, *Roots*, he traveled the globe to uncover his family's story, even taking a slow Atlantic crossing to get some feel for what his ancestors went through on the Middle Passage. He also spent many hours in the reading rooms of the Library of Congress, poring over American Missionary Society files from our Manuscript Collection."

"For the first 190 years of the Library's existence, people could access our vast collections only by traveling to Washington, D.C., and by working in our beautiful reading rooms as Mr. Haley did, or by tapping into our rich holdings secondhand, through books that made use of our collections . . .

"The technology revolution of the past decade has made it possible for the Library to reach far beyond its buildings in Washington. We now deliver 8 million interesting and educational multimedia documents, maps, and images of American history and culture free of charge to stimulate curiosity and humanize the study of history."

"By exploiting the power of the internet and the incomparable resources of our collections, the Library of Congress has emerged as the leading provider of free noncommercial educational content on the Web. Millions of educators, librarians, students, and lifelong learners visit our Web sites daily for materials that once were available only through our reading rooms on Capitol Hill."

Dr. Billington's nearly three decades of distinguished service and his efforts to bring the Library of Congress into the digital age will help ensure that the Library will better preserve our Nation's history and enlighten its people for many generations to come. His legacy will be one of innovation and diligence.

After his passing in 2018, his successor at the Library of Congress, Carla Hayden, said "Dr. Billington has left an indelible legacy on the institution he led passionately for 28 years. With his vigor for philanthropy and tireless efforts to expand the reach and impact of the Library, he achieved so much to advance the Library of Congress as an enduring place for scholars and learners. He will be remembered as a visionary leader, distinguished academic and, most of all, a great American."

At a recent Senate committee hearing, I spoke with Ms. Hayden about Alex Haley and the importance of what he did: writing two bestselling books on the African-American experience, the autobiography of Malcolm X and his book, *Roots*, which tell the story of the African-American experience in America. As Dr. Billington said, Alex did a lot of his research at the Library of Congress, and he found the name and the date of the slave ship that actually brought that ancestor to Annapolis in the Library. I think Alex's example will help people understand how the Library of Congress can be so useful to people who are trying to tell the story of our country.

Ms. Hayden agreed saying, "many notable films and books have started with research at the Library of Congress. We want to emphasize the fact that Alex Haley did research here, and also have his quotes about what it felt like for him to be in that reading room."

Alex Haley used to say, we should "find the good and praise it." Dr. Billington's life's work will help countless Americans "find the good and praise it," when it comes to the history of our country.

#### REMEMBERING LIEUTENANT COLONEL RICHARD "DICK" COLE

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, today I wish to honor Lieutenant Colonel Richard "Dick" Cole, of the United States Air Force, who was the last living link of the Doolittle Raiders and passed away on April 9 at the age of 103. The Doolittle Raiders were comprised of 80 heroic U.S. Army Air Forces airmen who flew 16 modified B-25 Mitchell bombers off the USS *Hornet* aircraft carrier on the first Allied retaliatory strike on the Japanese Home Islands, just a few months after Pearl Harbor.

In an age before midair refueling and GPS, the USS *Hornet* weighed less than a quarter of today's fortress-like aircraft carriers. With then-Lt. Cole as the copilot to then-Lt. Col. Jimmy