

tours of duty with the 187 10th Mountain Division, where he was awarded the Purple Heart. Following his service in the Army, Sergeant Chesna became a police officer with the city of Weymouth, where he served until his untimely death at the age of 42.

Sergeant Chesna was a loving husband to his wife Cindy and father to his children Olivia and Jack. He was an avid Boston sports fan who enjoyed playing basketball, collecting sports memorabilia, and spending time with family and friends.

Patrolman Leon Moody of the Worcester Police Department died of an illness he sustained in the line of duty in 1932. He served the Worcester P.D. bravely for 15 years, before passing away at the age of 44.

Sergeants Gannon and Chesna and Patrolman Moody are among 371 law enforcement officers who died while protecting their communities and whose names were engraved this week on the walls of the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial here in Washington, DC.

This week and every day, we honor their service and their sacrifice. Most importantly, we honor the lives they lived and legacies they leave behind. May their memories continue to challenge and inspire us.

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. Reid Blackwelder is a family physician with three clinics in the Tri-Cities area of East Tennessee.

A few years ago, he talked to the New York Times about the electric health records that were supposed to make his life easier, saying, “We have electronic records at our clinic, but the hospital, which I can see from my window, has a separate system from a different vendor. The two don’t communicate. When I admit patients to the hospital, I have to print out my notes and send a copy to the hospital so they can be incorporated into the hospital’s electronic records.”

Dr. Blackwelder could pay for his patients’ hospital records to be electronically sent from his system to the hospital’s system—but it would cost him \$26,400 every month—or \$316,800 a year. For Dr. Blackwelder, and so many other doctors, record keeping is now more expensive and burdensome.

In 1991, the National Academy of Medicine released a report urging the “prompt development and implementation” of what were then called computer-based patient records. The report said these systems, “have a unique potential to improve the care of both individual patients and . . . to reduce waste through continuous quality improvement.” Electronic health records got a boost in 2009 when the federal government began the Meaningful Use program, spending over \$36 billion in grants to incentivize doctors and hospitals to use these systems.

As was the prediction in the 1991 report, the hope was electronic records would improve patient care and reduce unnecessary health care spending. This is important because, at a hearing last summer, Dr. Brent James, from the National Academies, testified that up to 50 percent of what we spend on health care is unnecessary.

There is a bipartisan focus both in Congress and in the Administration on reducing health care costs. One way to reduce what we spend on administrative tasks and unnecessary care is by having electronic health records that talk to one another—we call that interoperability.

But in 2015—six years after the Meaningful Use program started—as this Committee worked on the 21st Century Cures Act, we realized that, in many cases, electronic health records added to administrative burden and increased unnecessary health care spending.

A major reason for that is that the records are not interoperable. One barrier to interoperability is information blocking—which is when some obstacle is in the way of a patient’s information being sent from one doctor to another.

So, in 2015, this committee held six bipartisan hearings and formed a working group to find ways to fix the interoperability of electronic health records. These hearings led to a bipartisan group of HELP Committee members working together to include a provision in the 21st Century Cures Act to stop information blocking and encourage interoperability.

Today’s hearing is about two new rules the Department of Health and Human Services has proposed to implement this provision in the 21st Century Cures Act. These two rules are complicated, but I’d like to highlight a few ways that they lay out a path toward interoperability:

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:

Third, all electronic health records must adopt the same standards for data elements, known as an Application Programming Interface, or API, two years after these rules are completed.

Fourth, hospitals are required to send electronic notifications to a patient’s doctors, immediately, when that patient is admitted to, discharged from, or transferred from the hospital.

According to the Department of Health and Human Services, these two new rules should give more than 125 million patients easier access to their own records in an electronic format. This will be a huge relief to any of us who have spent hours tracking down paper copies of our records and carting them back and forth to different doctors’ offices.

The rules will reduce administrative burden on doctors so they can spend more time with patients. A recent study from Kaiser found that emergency room doctors, in order to use electronic health records systems, make up to 4,000 mouse clicks per shift. If electronic health records data was truly interoperable, it would greatly reduce how many clicks doctors have to make. According to HHS, spending less time on these administrative tasks will improve efficiency and therefore could save \$3.3 billion a year. And because doctors can see patients’ full medical history, they can avoid ordering unnecessary tests and procedures.

I also want to be aware of unintended consequences from these rules: Are these rules

moving too fast? In 2015, I urged the Obama Administration to slow down the Meaningful Use program, which they did not do, and looking back, the results would have been better if they had.

Are the standards for data elements too rigid? Is the door still open for bad actors to game the system and continue to information block? And how can we ensure patient privacy as patients gain more access and control over their personal health information. And how do we help them keep it secure?

I want to ensure these rules will make the problem of information blocking better, not worse. I look forward to any specific suggestions to improve these rules from those who use electronic health records systems.

Electronic health records that work can give patients better outcomes and better experiences at a lower cost.

STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY

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.

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STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. ALEXANDER. When I was president of the University of Tennessee, I asked David Gardner, who was then president of the University of California, why his university was considered one of the best in the world. He told me:

First, autonomy. We basically have four branches of government, he said, and one of them is the University of California.

Second, competition and choice—large amounts of state and federal money following students to the campus of their choice.

Third, a commitment to excellence by institutional leaders and faculty.

As a former university president, I am very much aware that despite that autonomy, our country’s 6000 colleges and universities report to a lot of bosses—they are accountable to a great many individuals, boards, governments and other entities.

First, they are accountable to the students who may take their federal and state grants and loans to any accredited institution that will admit them:

Next, to 44 federally recognized accrediting agencies whose certification of quality is necessary before institutions are allowed to accept students who bring \$30 billion in new Pell grants and \$100 billion in federal student loans each year;

To ensure that these billions of dollars are spent wisely, the federal government measures how many students default on their loans;

For the 80 percent of students who attend public colleges and universities, states have governors, state legislators, laws, and state higher education authorities;

Every institution, public or private, also has its own board of trustees or directors;

And in addition, there are specific federal rules for the for-profit institutions, which about five percent of students attend, in order to stop fraud against students and tax-payers;

And when making a list of bosses, no former university president should leave out the faculty—most faculty members I have known take great pride in maintaining institutional excellence.

So any president of an American higher education institution has a lot of bosses and

a lot of people to whom he or she is accountable. And that has been a mostly successful approach.

Most surveys show that the United States has most of the best colleges and universities in the world. The dream of many of the best students from around the world is to attend American colleges and universities.

Still, I hear often from students asking if college is worth their time and money.

I believe there are steps we can take to make our higher education institutions more accountable—to provide those students, and the taxpayers backing their loans, with a clear yes, college is worth it.

In March, at our first bipartisan hearing during this Congress on updating the Higher Education Act, we looked at how to simplify how 20 million families apply for federal student aid. Last week, we held a bipartisan hearing about how to create a safe environment for students attending college.

Today's hearing will be looking at ways to ensure that students are earning degrees worth their time and money and that taxpayers are paid back the hundreds of billions that they have loaned students to earn degrees.

To hold colleges accountable for the \$130 billion a year in grants and loans, in 1990, Congress created the Cohort Default Rate, which applies to all colleges and universities.

This measure makes a college ineligible to receive federal student aid if, for three consecutive years, more than 30 percent of its borrowers are in default or over 40 percent in any one year.

However this cohort default rate has proven to be a poor instrument of accountability, since it does not take into account the one third of borrowers who are not yet in default but don't make payments on time.

Over the last decade, only 20 schools have become ineligible for federal student aid under the Cohort Default Rate, according to the Congressional Research Service. And then there are two federal accountability rules that apply only to for-profit institutions.

One, the 90-10 rule, which requires that at least ten percent of a for-profit's revenue come from non-federal sources; and

Two, the Gainful Employment Rule, which looks at how much debt a graduate has compared to his or her salary.

This comparison of debt to salary has proved to be a confusing and ineffective measure of accountability because it is too complex and does not account for students who take out loans but do not complete their degrees.

So we need a more effective measure of accountability.

But I do not want the federal government acting as a sort of National School Board for Colleges—telling states and accrediting and boards of directors at institutions how to manage the 6,000 colleges and universities.

Four years ago, this Committee passed the Every Student Succeeds Act, which reversed the trend towards a national school board for elementary and secondary education.

For the same reasons, Washington should resist the urge to send thousands of federal bureaucrats to evaluate our colleges and universities, which would, in effect, create a national school board for colleges. Instead, Congress should create a new measure of accountability that looks at whether students are actually repaying their loans.

This would be a more effective and simpler way to ensure that taxpayers aren't financing degrees that are priced so high and worth so little that students are never able to pay back their loans.

This proposal is much like the Gainful Employment Rule—but it would apply to every

program at every college—public, private, and for-profit and would include students who took out loans but dropped out before graduating.

For some programs, this new measure should provide colleges with an incentive to lower tuition and help their students stay in school to finish their degrees and find a job so they can repay their loans.

A second step to improve accountability would be for the federal government to make the data it collects from colleges more useful to students and families. The Department has struggled for years under all administrations to make such information easily accessible to students and families.

As we work on updating the Higher Education Act, we first need to identify what information schools actually need to report, and second to provide direction to the Department on how to make that information accessible and useful to students.

And third, we should strengthen the 44 federally recognized accrediting agencies upon which we rely for certifying that students are receiving a quality education.

For example, instead of requiring that accreditors have a standard of "student achievement," Congress could more clearly require that accreditors measure whether students are both learning and succeeding, but leave the specific ways of measuring those to accreditors and institutions.

Our goal needs to be to help students know that their degrees are going to be worth their time and money and to help taxpayers know that the federal government isn't financing programs that do not provide students with a valuable education.

TRIBUTE TO J. MICHAEL KEELING

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, I wish to pay tribute to J. Michael Keeling, a lifelong advocate for employee retirement benefits who believed in creating engaged workforces through Employee Stock Ownership Plans, or ESOPs.

A proud graduate of Harvard and the University of Texas School of Law, and a lifelong student of history, Mr. Keeling's support of ESOPs began in the 1970s when he served as chief of staff for former Congressman J.J. "Jake" Pickle, an ardent supporter of these plans.

When Mr. Keeling joined the ESOP Association, he distinguished himself as an outstanding advocate and lawyer on behalf of employees and their companies seeking to establish Employee Stock Ownership Plans during the 1980s.

In 1991, after serving as general counsel to the organization, Mr. Keeling was chosen by the ESOP Association's board of directors to lead its operations as president and chief staff officer. It was during his distinguished 28-year tenure in this position that many important achievements benefitting thousands of businesses and millions of employee owners took place.

Thanks to his efforts, the ESOP Association developed a nationwide network of chapters facilitating education, training, and networking among employee owners. These local groups help hundreds of companies better engage their employee owners and successfully navigate the often complex regulations guiding ESOPs.

Recognizing that good policy is predicated on good data, Mr. Keeling worked with the ESOP Association to establish the Employee Ownership Foundation to fund research on the economic and personal effects of ESOPs and broad-based employee ownership. Since its inception in 1997, the foundation has donated millions of dollars to fund academic research. Its support was the key factor in establishing the first academic center devoted specifically to employee ownership: the Institute for the Study of Employee Ownership and Profit Sharing, at Rutgers University.

Thanks to foundation-funded research, as a nation we now have clear evidence that companies with employee stock ownership are much more likely to withstand difficult economic times, more likely to invest in employee training, and are far less likely than conventionally owned firms to lay off employees. The foundation also has funded the academic study of dozens of fellows and researchers interested in employee ownership and its role in the U.S. economy.

During his tenure at the ESOP Association, Mr. Keeling visited nearly 600 ESOP companies. The breadth of insight he gained, coupled with his deep understanding of ERISA and tax law, made him a uniquely credible voice in the retirement plan community.

Mr. Keeling is retiring from his role as head of the ESOP Association this year, and I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing his longterm, passionate efforts to preserve and advance the retirement benefits of millions of working Americans.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL L. HOPKINS

• Mrs. SHAHEEN. Madam President, today I wish to salute Michael L. Hopkins for his decades of tireless work and devoted service to the schools of Rochester, NH. Mike is retiring this year as superintendent of the Rochester School District after spending the entirety of his career in the city's school system. He leaves a legacy worthy of our praise and our gratitude.

We all know the value of a quality education. It plays a critical role in the development of young minds everywhere, and enthusiastic teachers and administrators make it possible for so many students to take part in experiences that shape a lifelong appreciation for learning. As a former teacher myself, I know the commitment and understanding required to engage students, encourage curiosity and critical thinking, ultimately prepare them to find success after school and outside of the classroom.

Mike is also a former teacher, and he has brought that perspective to every move he makes as his district's top decision-maker. After graduating from his hometown school, Grinnell College