

any direction now to be fighting out there—to have a cyber offense? That was about 5 months into the Trump administration.

The person said: No.

You would think that, somehow, the old cyber offense had been turned off. In fact, there had been no cyber offense.

Sometime in 2017, the cyber fighters were given what they needed, and they are out there helping. They are fighting back too. We had a report on that just recently of which all of the Senators are aware.

One of the chief State election officials in terms of that cyber war said that in their system there are about 100,000 attempts every day to scam the voter registration system and see if you could possibly get in.

I don't know how many thousands of those might be from foreign actors. I suspect a majority of them are from people who just say: Let's see if I can get into the system. But we should assume all 100,000 are from somebody who wants to do something wrong, and I think the States are getting the help they need to fight that back.

We have seen States use equipment that didn't have a backup so that when the election was over, you could count something individually and that the voter would have been able to look at and get their hands on and recount. As a matter of fact, if you ask me, the best proof you can have is a backup, a ballot that could be counted—a ballot where if I vote in Missouri, my voting machine generates something that I look at and then I put that in the ballot box and it is counted at the polling place. But if it ever had to be counted again, if there was any question about that precinct counter, they can go back and open that ballot box and count them again.

On election day in 2016, and even in 2018, there were still four States that didn't have that system anywhere in their States. There are a couple of other States that have a partial system and four States that didn't have it. Delaware has it in place for this year's election. Georgia announced just last week that they had awarded a contract to replace their equipment that will be in place for the 2020 elections and have an auditable ballot trail. South Carolina made a similar announcement last month. The fourth State, Louisiana, is working through a contracting bidding process right now. Whether they are in place by 2020 or not in Louisiana I don't know, but I know they will be in as soon as they can reasonably be in and not confuse voters.

Congress has to continue to move States to do that. We need to look and see what happened with the States that were given \$380 million. In 2018, 49 States took the money immediately. One State, Minnesota, has some glitch with their legislature so they don't have their money yet. But of the \$380 million that States have, they have only spent 25 percent of it. So there is

still \$285 million for which States have to do the kinds of things that the Congress thinks States should be doing.

Now, there may be some States that have already spent all of their money and need more. That is something that, in the appropriations process, I am sure we will look at again, just like that \$380 million came through the appropriations process.

As I recall, the Presiding Officer was pretty involved in that discussion at the time.

The Federal Government's role isn't to run elections for the State, but it certainly has a place in trying to be a valued partner, ensuring that the States have all the help they need.

In fact, I believe that a larger Federal role requiring a one-size-fits-all approach to the election would be a big mistake. I am not for federalizing the elections.

I spent 20 years as an elections official, either as the individual responsible for elections in the third-most populous county in our State or the chief elections official as the secretary of State. In 20 years of doing this, I guarantee you that the person on the ground, generally elected by the voters for whom he or she is trying to secure the election that day, is intensely interested in that election going well and people's having confidence in it.

There is very little kicking the buck up to some Federal official in a far-away place and saying: Well, we can't prepare for that because we haven't been told we could prepare for that.

Public confidence in elections is fundamental. It is the central thread in the fabric of democracy. Elected officials take it seriously when they are elected to do this job or supervise this job, just like appointed officials and boards of elections or election commissioners do.

That system would not be improved if it was directed from Washington, DC, in a one-size-fits-all world.

These public servants undertake an important job, and they understand it is an important job. We need to support them. We are supporting them.

We need to have oversight. There may be a time when that oversight has produced a system that is so finely honed that we are ready to make it permanent, but every time you put something in law permanently, you reduce a lot of your flexibility to insist that something be done differently that needs to be done right now.

Both the Intel Committee report—and both Senator WARNER and Senator BURR have done a good job at keeping our committee on a bipartisan, non-partisan track in this report—and former FBI Director Mueller focused on the insidious efforts to confuse voters. This is a much bigger question than what we could do at the government level about elections security.

Let's not confuse that certain fight about bad information that is out there with a fight about whether our elections are secure and what happens on election day.

Frankly, much more attention on what we can do about information is out there. Put people on alert. You know, sometimes even your political opponent says things that aren't true, and they don't have to be Russian to do that. People need to be on alert about information that is out there, but they also don't need to be scared to death that somehow we are not taking seriously the important moment of democracy when people decide.

I believe we are doing that. I am committed to it. I believe the Senate is committed to it. I think this effort to make everything that might advantage one side on an election security issue is something that people need to be thoughtful about, and it needs to stop.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Ms. HASSAN. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the need to hold the pharmaceutical industry accountable for putting profits before the health and well-being of our people and our communities.

I know that my colleague, Senator BROWN from Ohio, came to the floor earlier this week to call out bad actors in the pharmaceutical industry who have fueled our country's substance misuse crisis, and I am grateful for Senator BROWN's leadership in calling attention to this issue, and I join him in the effort.

We are constantly learning more and more about the unconscionable ways that pharmaceutical companies fueled the substance misuse crisis—a crisis that is killing more than 100 people a day in the United States.

Recent data released by the Drug Enforcement Administration showed that between 2006 and 2012, just 6 years, companies distributed 76 billion pills of oxycodone and hydrocodone throughout the country, including 290 million pills that were sent to New Hampshire, a State with only 1.3 million people. That works out to about 30 pills per person per year in the Granite State.

As they distributed those unfathomable amounts of opioids, pharmaceutical companies pushed these drugs with deceptive marketing tactics, despite the known risks of addiction, to maximize their profits. One of these tactics even included pushing the unproven concept of pseudoaddiction. This false claim asserted that patients showing signs of addiction weren't actually addicted but instead needed even higher doses of opioids. The solution that these scam artists pushed to address addiction was to encourage the prescribing of even more opioids. So instead of providing actual addiction treatment to those suffering from substance use disorder, some patients just received more drugs.

That kind of strategy enabled the pharmaceutical industry to dole out those billions of doses of opioids and profit enormously from it, leaving in

their wake an opioid crisis that is devastating communities.

Outrageously, as they have aggressively pushed doctors to prescribe these opioids, a tax loophole has enabled Big Pharma to write off the cost of television ads that blanketed the airwaves, encouraging more and more people to seek opioids from their doctors for pain relief, oblivious to the harm that these drugs could do. I have joined with Senator BROWN, as well as Senator SHAHEEN, on legislation to close that loophole and end taxpayer subsidies for drug ads, and I am going to continue to push for transparency from these companies.

In addition to the devastating impact that Big Pharma has had in fueling the substance misuse crisis, the industry has also hurt patients by massively increasing the cost of prescription drugs.

One of the top issues I hear about from people in New Hampshire is that affording lifesaving medications is becoming more and more out of reach, and high drug costs are too often forcing seniors and families to make agonizing decisions.

No one should have to decide between buying their prescriptions and heating their home or putting food on the table, but these are the types of choices Americans are devastatingly having to make, all the while big pharmaceutical companies are reporting profits that are higher than ever. We need to change this system, bring down costs, and hold Big Pharma accountable.

Last week, the Finance Committee moved forward with bipartisan legislation to begin to take on Big Pharma and lower prescription drug prices. This bill would cap out-of-pocket costs for seniors on Medicaid Part D and crack down on pharmaceutical companies that raise drug prices higher than inflation.

It is a really big deal that a bill to take on the pharmaceutical industry in a meaningful way advanced out of committee on a strong bipartisan vote. Pharma did everything they could to try to kill and weaken this bill in committee, and they will keep trying. I am really encouraged that we have gotten this far. That is no small accomplishment. We will continue working with colleagues from both sides of the aisle to get it across the finish line.

At the heart of the issue with Big Pharma is the blind pursuit of profits at the expense of people's health and wellbeing. Representatives from the pharmaceutical industry have told us often how important innovation is and how much innovation costs because they say they want to save lives and innovation is critically important.

In my own family, like so many across our country, medical innovation has been critical not only for saving life but to improve the quality of life. Our son Ben regularly has a compression vest that helps clear his lungs without the incredibly labor intensive respiratory therapy that we used to

have to do. He is able to get nutrition through a feeding tube that runs smoothly, steadily through the night so that he can have the kind of nutrition he needs.

Innovation in pharmaceuticals have also helped Ben improve his quality of life, and the combination of pharmaceutical innovation and medical device innovation means that a baclofen pump inserted in Ben's abdominal cavity helps his muscles to relax.

But if innovation is about saving lives, then, how did we get to a point of crisis that started from the drugs that they produced? How did we get to a point where many patients can't even afford the lifesaving prescription that pharma promotes?

It seems that, at least for some pharmaceutical companies, they only want to save lives when it makes them money or when it gives them an excuse not to restrict their profits.

From the substance misuse crisis to the skyrocketing costs of prescription drugs, this body has failed to hold Big Pharma accountable for far too long. That must change, and I am committed to working with anyone who is serious about finally acting to put patients first.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROMNEY). The Senator from Alaska.

TRIBUTE TO CHERYL VENECHUK

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, it is the time of week again when I come to the floor to recognize a very special person in my State—someone who I believe helps to make Alaska the best State in the country. We refer to this person as our Alaskan of the Week. It is one of my favorite times of the week because I get to brag about my State and brag about my fellow Alaskans and constituents. I think the pages enjoy these stories about Alaska and what we are doing up there.

This week, that person is Cheryl Venchuk. She is our Alaskan of the Week. She is a wife, a mom, a grandmother, an active member of her community in Healy, AK, which is in the interior of Alaska, and a woman who is very active not just in her community but in her chosen profession. She is a proud member of Laborers Union Local 942 in Fairbanks. That is part of the construction union, Laborers' International Union, LIUNA.

Many people know it for its great men and women across our country—one of the biggest construction building trades in North America. These are men and women who like to go out and build stuff—roads, pipelines, mines, build things. These are the type of Americans who made our country great.

Let me talk about Cheryl's life—about raising her five children in Healy, about her job, and about all she does for her community, which is a lot. I certainly think she personifies the kind of self-sufficiency, toughness, kindness, and independent spirit that Alaska and Alaskans are known for,

not just in Alaska but really throughout the country and the world. She personifies it.

Let me tell you a little bit about Cheryl's life. She was originally from the Midwest—Michigan. When she was about 23 years old, a friend of hers, Tom Bodett—who was a high school friend and eventually became the voice of Motel 6's motto, "We'll leave the lights on for you"—told her that Alaska was a good place to make a living and raise a family. So Cheryl and her husband Tim, with a child on the way, moved to a beautiful part of Southeast Alaska, a community called Petersburg, which is a beautiful fishing community in the southeast part of our State.

They settled there. They made friends. They began to raise a family. She worked at the local cannery, at the daycare, at the grocery store. She loved Petersburg. We all love Petersburg. I encourage people watching or watching on TV, when you visit Alaska, make sure to make that part of your stops.

Eventually, three kids later, Cheryl and her husband Tim moved north for Tim's work as a surveyor for Usibelli Coal Mine in Healy, AK. That is about 100 miles southwest of Fairbanks in the interior.

Usibelli is another great story in Alaska. Several generations of Usibelli family members have been producing coal for Alaska and the world, and they are still doing it—a great company, great families.

What did Cheryl find in Healy? Certainly another welcoming community, but a lot smaller, with a lot fewer amenities than she found in Petersburg.

So as she does, Cheryl rolled up her sleeves, and along with other young mothers in the area, she got to work to create a community that her children—eventually five children—and all the other children and families could enjoy in interior Alaska.

"We made stuff happen," Cheryl said. They started a daycare. They started Boy Scout and Brownie troops. They made sure hungry children got a hot lunch. They went around town picking up cans and started a recycling effort before recycling was even the rage. They helped build an ice rink for the kids to play hockey on. They even went so far as to haul the water for the rink in a truck and then spread it out to form ice. She mentored countless kids and always had time for her five kids.

This is what one of her children said about her: You have a hockey team that needs a hot meal? Call Cheryl. You need food for a wedding? Call Cheryl. Your kid is in trouble? Call Cheryl. You need something built? Call Cheryl.

Every community has a Cheryl—the backbone, the go-to person—who is usually unsung. We all know someone like that, and they make our communities so strong and caring, and in