

In addition, the critic in this article points to declining exports as a factor in this, despite the fact that our trade deficit fell 4.7 percent in September.

The critics still refuse to admit the connection between increased consumer spending and Americans bringing home more in each paycheck. In other words, they are trying to cherry-pick the evidence and ignore any evidence that the American people have benefited from the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

In fact, the critics—who I think are more concerned about an agenda than they are the economy or the welfare of the working American family—continue to try to paint a picture of doom and gloom of our Nation's economy to further that political agenda.

It was not that long ago when some were even highlighting that tax refunds were reduced because of tax reform. It is a bogus measurement of tax relief. We know that at the end of the day, the data showed the average refund check was not that different from the previous year. Wouldn't you want your tax refund to be lower because you were simply paying less withholding each month? That is an interest-free loan to the Federal Government.

Well, while we seem to have moved beyond that argument, we are now on to the next one. Our Democratic colleagues point out that some companies are using their savings for stock buybacks and try to portray this as a corporate blood thirst, claiming it hurts workers in the economy. But by repurchasing their own shares, companies are reinvesting in themselves and their shareholders. Many times, this is teachers or police officers or other first responders. Interfering with stock buybacks, as some of our friends across the aisle have recommended, would not only hurt our economy, but would do serious damage to the pension and retirement accounts of many working Texans and other Americans.

The message of these partisan critics is: The government can spend your money better and more wisely than you can. But Washington cannot even manage its own books and uses “smoke-and-mirrors” accounting measures that would make even Bernie Madoff blush. But that is only the start of the concerning proposals that we have heard from the folks on the left. Our colleague from Massachusetts said if she wins the Presidency, she will soak the American taxpayer even more in an attempt to fund her completely unworkable healthcare proposal.

The differences are pretty stark in the approach: pro-growth, job-creating, economy-growing policies or Big Government, even socialist policies. Those seem to be the two most obvious choices. I know what camp I am in, and I know what camp that Texans are in on this topic.

This constant effort to belittle the progress we have made because of tax reform reminds me of when NANCY

PELOSI compared the savings of the American people under tax reform to “crumbs.” She called them “crumbs.”

One Texan named Mark told me that his take-home pay increased \$302 a month. That may be crumbs to NANCY PELOSI, but Mark said it would cover his cable, his internet, and his auto insurance bills. He doesn't consider that crumbs.

Another gentleman named Gilbert told me that he and his wife are retired and living on pensions. When they saw a decrease in their Federal tax deduction that allows them to bring home an additional \$400 a month, they said at first they thought it was a mistake, until they learned it was true and, good news, \$400 a month more.

A retired Air Force colonel from Brownsville named David told me that the benefit seems like more than “crumbs” to him.

But I have no doubt that here in this hyper-politicized environment of Washington, DC, that pundits and folks on the left will continue to try to criticize tax reform and belittle the progress that we have made, but those Texans who are reaping the benefits of this law every day are proof positive that they are wrong and that the law is working as we intended.

Despite what I hear from folks on the left, this is an incredible time for our economy. We have made taxes simpler, fairer, and lower for hard-working American families. And we will keep working to remove the regulatory burdens that will help unleash the power of the free market. For more than 150 years, we have been the world's largest economy, and because of pro-growth policies like tax reform, that will only continue to get better.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). The Senator from Iowa.

VETERANS DAY

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, having worn our great Nation's colors in Operation Iraqi Freedom, veterans hold a special place in my heart. Some of my favorite moments in Iowa are centered on honoring our veterans and their families with the medals and the recognition they have earned. Oftentimes, these humble heroes don't want to step forward and receive the honor they are due.

Glenn McDole is a great example of this. Glenn served in World War II and faced some very, very dark days, being only 1 of the 11, out of a total of 150, who survived the Palawan massacre. Glenn was captured in 1941, and he came home to Iowa in 1945. It wasn't until the early 1980s that he started speaking about his military experience.

When he returned home from the war, he didn't skip a beat in his service. Glenn quickly joined the Iowa State Patrol and then the Polk County Sheriff's Office. Glenn lived a very full

life of service. Yet his heroic actions in uniform would go unnoticed for so many years.

I am so grateful that his family got in touch with my office, and we were able to track down the more than 13 medals that he should have received for his service. Presenting the medals to his family earlier this year in my office in Des Moines was truly a beautiful moment.

The medals presented to Glenn's family—and the number of other veterans and families across Iowa who have received these well-deserved recognitions—represent duty, honor, and sacrifice. It is the heroic stories of these very veterans, like Glenn, that truly inspire me to keep fighting for our veterans day in and day out.

As someone who commanded men and women overseas during Operation Iraqi Freedom and then served as the battalion commander of the largest battalion in the Iowa Army National Guard, I have a deep connection and appreciation for our veterans.

Just this past weekend, as I was wrapping up my 99-county tour in Iowa, I was able to spend some time with more of those Iowa veterans at my veterans' resource fair. We were sharing stories about those hard times. We were laughing about the good times. We talked about concerns they have with the VA and making sure they are getting the quality of care they have earned. We talked about the work we have done in the Senate to improve their well-being.

In just the past few years, under the Trump administration, we have been able to expand access to services through legislation like the VA MISSION Act, a bipartisan bill that I proudly helped to get signed into law. This important bill included a number of my priorities, like allowing qualified VA health providers to practice telemedicine across State lines and veterans to receive their care through telemedicine, including vital mental healthcare treatment, and doing it from the comfort of their own home.

President Trump just signed another one of my bills into law, the HAVEN Act, which protects the economic security and well-being of veterans and their families who rely on disability benefits and may be experiencing financial hardship.

I continue to press the VA to take a hard look at their hiring practices and to make sure the people treating and providing care to our veterans have a record of quality care, specifically by introducing the bipartisan Ensuring Quality Care for Our Veterans Act.

The legislation ensures that the VA is absolutely held accountable for how they help care for their veterans, and I am continuing to press them on that issue. We must work tirelessly to restore hope in the institutions that have asked so much of our Nation's heroes, plain and simple. Veterans must have reliable, quality mental and physical healthcare. There is no other option.

Folks, as we take a moment to reflect on the work we have done and continue to do in Congress on behalf of these men and women, we should also pause, as we do every year on Veterans Day, to simply honor their service and the sacrifices they have made for our country and for our freedom.

Serving in the military provided me some of the best years, the best friends, the best experiences, and the best memories of my life.

Each year, Veterans Day serves as a stark reminder of the daily sacrifice made by those who have served this country bravely and selflessly.

Veterans in Iowa and across our Nation, you have my support and my deepest gratitude today and every day of the year.

When men and women sacrifice time with their families and give up holidays, comfort, and their livelihoods to protect our Nation and defend the freedoms we often take for granted, we must fulfill our commitment to caring for them when they return home.

To all of my fellow veterans, may God bless you and keep you.

To their families, I thank you so much for standing behind your loved ones in our country's time of need.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, first of all, I want to say how much I appreciate Senator ERNST. When she talks about veterans, she talks about her own experience but also the veterans she has served with and sees every day. This goes to the heart of her great dedication to the people who are currently serving.

Veterans Day is a day that we come to celebrate every year. It is a national holiday, but in so many ways, it is uniquely a local holiday. Events across Missouri and across all of our States are dramatically different based on where you are and the way that community, over time or maybe on a special occasion, has decided this is going to be the way they are uniquely going to celebrate Veterans Day. These ceremonies often include gestures of respect that are repeated over and over again, and that is exactly what you should do with respect. Respect doesn't wear out. We lay wreaths. We play music. We pledge to the flag, I think in many unique ways on Veterans Day, as we think about those who have been willing to defend that flag at all costs. There may be a 21-gun salute. There may be a parade.

There are lots of different ways we celebrate, and every community honors its own neighbors in a different way. If you grew up in that community and you look at the wall with the community members' names or you look at the register at the courthouse with the names of those who gave their lives in one of our wars, you recognize those names. They are the last names of the people you went to school with. They are the last names of the people you

grew up alongside of. They are often the names of families who still live in that community.

I was thinking about this, and I thought about a name that was given to one of my good friends. His middle name was after his uncle who had died in World War II, and he didn't particularly like his middle name. One day, he said to my dad: "I hate that name. I don't like my middle name. I wish it wasn't my middle name." What he didn't know was that my dad was on his uncle's basketball team. My dad quickly pointed that out. He said: "Your uncle was one of the finest young men I ever knew, and he never got to be an older man because he gave his life in World War II." When my friend was born 15 years later, his family wanted to remember the name of that person who served and made the ultimate sacrifice. Those are the kinds of things we think about in communities on Veterans Day.

I will be going to several events—one at Camdenton High School in Camdenton, MO. They will be recognizing 32 veterans at that event. They will also be recognizing the new Junior ROTC Program at the high school. When talking about local character, that is sort of what we are talking about. In Camdenton, they are honoring not only those who served and sacrificed previously but also a new generation that is stepping up and willing to serve among those being recognized on Veterans Day.

I am going to go to a ceremony in Wright County, which is just a little bit down the road, just an hour and 15 minutes away from Camdenton. In that ceremony, they are dedicating a new Wright County Patriots Memorial in Hartville. The memorial honors people from the area who served and died in every conflict from the Civil War to the War on Terror. The organizers have made it clear that this is a day of celebration and honor, not of sorrow. It is a day to celebrate those who served. Some got their names on the wall. Others didn't give their lives in conflict but were willing to put on the uniform and go through the training and in many cases into dangerous situations. Maybe they didn't have to make the ultimate sacrifice, but on Veterans Day, we recognize veterans who were willing to serve. That is exactly what Veterans Day should be.

This will be the 100th anniversary of the first Veterans Day, which was originally called Armistice Day. It was Armistice Day because it commemorated the end of World War I. World War I was called The Great War, and it was called The War to End All Wars. That is not what happened, but that is what people thought, in the hours after World War I, might have happened. It was so horrible, so terrible, and so many lives were lost that they thought it might be the war to end all wars. It ended on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, 100 years ago.

The United States lost 116,000 people in the relatively short time we were in

that war. We got in the war late. We made a difference in the war, but 116,000 people were lost in that period of time, in that truly grueling battle in World War I. Another 200,000 U.S. troops were wounded in that war.

The first Veterans Day 1 year later was not about what was lost; it was a celebration of what was won. It began with the end of the war. It reaffirmed a commitment to democracy. On that first holiday 100 years ago, President Wilson said that "the reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for victory." We remember the heroism of those who were lost and all who were willing to serve, and, as on that first anniversary of the end of World War I, we remember the victory that was achieved. We use this occasion to honor and remember our veterans with pride and gratitude.

I am glad we are continuing to build new memorials, like the one in Wright County. I am glad we continue to honor people who are willing to serve, like the recognition of the new JROTC Program at Camdenton High School.

A lot of things have changed in the 100 years since the end of World War I, but the point is, Veterans Day hasn't changed. This is not something Americans used to do; this is something we continue to do, and, as Senator ERNST said so well, it is something we need to do every day.

Veterans Day is a special day of recognition, but we need to ensure that veterans have what they need while they are serving, and once they become veterans, we need to make sure they have everything they were promised and then some, including every access to healthcare that they were promised.

I think we have successfully expanded not only the kind of healthcare people can get but also the way they can get their healthcare, respect and appreciation, remembrance of what they did and how that might have led to a behavioral health challenge or a health challenge of some other kind, and a country willing to step up for those who were willing to step up for us.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. YOUNG. Mr. President, in August I had the honor of traveling to a tiny town, to a small diner in Auburn, IN. The purpose of my visit was to present a military service medal that was nearly 75 years in the making. Over the last few months, I have had a lot of opportunities to think about those moments in Sandra D's Cafe and what they have meant to me. As we approach Veterans Day, I would like to share a few of those lessons.

I served in the military for 10 years, and I saw firsthand the sacrifices made by our men and women in uniform. As an elected representative, I have had further opportunity to visit veterans who served in conflict zones and families who made incredible sacrifices to

keep us all free. I learned just how much a sacrifice we truly ask of our troops and their families.

In the Marine Corps, we have a motto: “Semper Fidelis.” Rarely do we tell folks what it means. It means “always faithful”—faithful to our Nation and faithful to all those who protect it, faithful to all those who serve in peacetime and are prepared to protect it. It is why I wear this memorial bracelet around my wrist. The folks back home know I wear it. I remind them of it often because it is important. This bracelet honors LCpl Alec Terwiske. He was a fellow U.S. marine from a small town in Dubois, IN, in southern Indiana. On September 3, 2012, he was tragically killed—for all of us—in Afghanistan.

His mom, Sandy, has become a close friend. She asked me to wear this bracelet to honor his memory, and I do so. I do so proudly every day to remember Alec and Sandy and the rest of their family and also to remember all those men and women who love our country and what it stands for so much that they are prepared, if necessary, when called to do so, to put their lives on the line for all of us. It takes a special person to take up arms in defense of our country. It takes a belief and cause much greater than ourselves. That cause is, in fact, what America is all about. It is that very belief that makes me think back to that cafe in Auburn.

Sandra D’s father, Robert Egli, was a World War II veteran who survived the war. He lived a long and happy life back home in Indiana and didn’t say much about his military service. In fact, when I showed up, Sandra didn’t know much about the story. I did a little personal internet research in the car on the way there to deliver her father’s missing Bronze Star, and what I found out was very interesting.

It was World War II, in the Philippines, the Pacific theater. Robert’s unit was involved in a battle that saved the lives of 511 American prisoners of war. His actions and those of the other American GIs with him allowed those Americans to return home, to marry their sweethearts, to start a family, and to pursue the American dream.

Now, think about it. This is the beauty and the magic of the gift that so many of our men and women in uniform have given or are prepared to give. Because of the sacrifice of Robert Egli, there are hundreds of Americans who have had children and grandchildren who are now alive today. As a result of his beautiful act of courage, his selfless act of service on behalf of all of us, his patriotism, his sacrifice, maybe tens of thousands of people across America are alive.

For these reasons and many, many more, we must never stop working to ensure that our veterans receive the respect they deserve. That includes ensuring that our veterans receive the care they are due after they are back, safe and secure, at home.

The Senate has already taken up and passed many pieces of nonpartisan legislation—commonsense legislation which I cosponsored and was proud to see become law that will improve the lives of our veterans.

The VA MISSION Act is perhaps the most notable and ambitious effort where we have all come together to support our veterans. This law has already dramatically improved the way veterans receive their healthcare. We have also taken steps to speed up the appeals process for veterans through the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act. No one should ever have to wait years or, perhaps even in the worst instance, pass away, waiting on their benefits. We made significant improvement with respect to that process.

We improved the way our veterans are cared for in nursing homes, and we worked together to provide urgently needed support for veterans who may be contemplating suicide. This year, I have introduced another piece of legislation, working with TAMMY DUCKWORTH, a wounded warrior herself and distinguished Member on the other side of the aisle. We introduced the VETS Safe Travel Act to provide TSA Precheck benefits for those veterans who have been severely wounded on the battlefield. This VETS Safe Travel Act would help 70,000 amputees, 100,000 paralyzed veterans, and 130,000 blind veterans who are currently subjected to a rigorous and demeaning screening process when traveling. Unfortunately, the legislation has, at least so far, been languishing in the House of Representatives, and its delay, of course, means veterans in need will be left waiting. I would really hope that before the House takes another recess week, they can take up and pass this important legislation. I think our veterans have more than earned it.

Working together, we made significant strides for our veterans in recent years, but of course we must always keep striving to do more. It was George Washington, a veteran himself, of course, who once said:

The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional as to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their nation.

Let’s treat them well. Let’s appreciate them fully this Veterans Day and every day. I encourage you to remember your neighbors, the servicemembers in your State, and servicemembers around the country and deployed around the world. I encourage you to think of all those people before and those still with us who are proud to call themselves veterans of our military.

May God bless our veterans. May God continue to bless America.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, as you know, this coming Monday, November

11, is Veterans Day. I have heard my colleagues pay tribute to veterans in their own special way, and I wanted to be a part of that group today to offer a mighty thank-you to our men and women who serve.

I stand before you to honor the brave men and women of the U.S. armed services, past and present, who have stood up to protect us and our freedoms that we hold so dear.

Veterans Day, to me, is a day to reflect on the sacrifices made by all of those who served. It is a time to say thank you. It is a time to pause and think about the veterans themselves and their families. It is also a time for younger people, and I am talking elementary-aged students, to really see the pride and the commitment our veterans over time have had. Whether you are going to your hometown parade or going to a cemetery ceremony or just talking about it within your own home, throughout America’s history, our military has been regarded as the greatest in the world, and it sure is. Our military would not be what it is without the men and women of our All-Volunteer Force.

I am a daughter of a World War II veteran. I grew up hearing smidgeons of his stories off and on the battlefield, and I have always been in awe of those who served. He was very proud of his service in World War II. November 20, 1944, my father, SSG Arch A. Moore, Jr., from Moundsville, WV, was serving somewhere on the Belgium-German line when he was shot in the face, and he was left for dead on the battlefield for 2 days. He talked about it was in a beet field. I remember him saying it was in a beet field. I didn’t like beets, and now I knew why I really didn’t like beets. He also talked about how he was equipped with some painkiller that he could put on his leg to sort of ease the pain as he lay there hoping somebody would come and get him. That was the end of his service on the battlefield. He was taken and miraculously had a great recovery after probably a year of recovery over in England.

For his actions on the battlefield, he received the Purple Heart, Bronze Star, Combat Infantryman Badge, and the European Theater of Operations Ribbon with three battle stars. Like my father, so many of the veterans of World War II faced a harsh reality in this conflict. This year marks the 75th anniversary of two of World War II’s most notable battles: D-Day and Battle of the Bulge. Battle of the Bulge is going to be in December next month. Actually, my dad’s platoon went on to fight in the Battle of the Bulge, and only three of his platoon survived.

D-Day is known as the turning point in the war because those brave soldiers pushed their way through German forces to take back Normandy. If anybody wants to see what a sacrifice our country made in World War II, and more for young people to see, I would recommend going to the cemetery in Normandy and seeing those white

markers of a very young American force. While there were many casualties, the United States and our allies prevailed and managed to change the direction of the war at the same time.

As I said, next month we will remember the 75th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge. Many Americans lost their lives fending off the German offensive, but we were eventually victorious, which paved the way to the end of the war 5 months later.

West Virginia is also home to one of the last remaining Medal of Honor recipients from World War II, and that is our own Hershel "Woody" Williams. He turned 96 last month. He travels the country talking about veterans and love of country. I ran the Marine Marathon 2 weeks ago in honor of all marines, but I thought about Woody as a marine. I say I ran my first marathon—probably my last—but I thought about Woody as he valiantly fought in the battle of Iwo Jima and rightfully earned the military's most prestigious medals for his actions during the war. Anecdotally, I think he will be leading the parade in New York City on Veterans Day.

With the growing age of this Nation's World War II veterans, I encourage our youth to take the time to listen to the stories of heroism from our "greatest generation." Without their valiant actions and dedication to preserving our freedoms, this country would not be what it is today.

We also must honor all of our veterans from all our eras. Whether it is World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, the selfless actions of our U.S. soldiers must not go unrecognized. They put their lives on the line to afford us the opportunity to live in the greatest country on Earth. We can have our own religious freedom, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, but all the freedoms we enjoy are because of the folks who went before us who were dedicated and willing to serve.

On Capitol Hill, as we know, there are many divisive issues, but ensuring that our veterans receive the support they have earned through their dedicated service to our country is something we all agree on. Like the gentleman here today, the Senator from North Dakota, I happen to serve on the Appropriations Committee. I am on the Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies. It has been our priority to make sure veterans programs receive the funding necessary to best assist our men and women who have served the country.

In recent years, Congress has made great strides in trying to improve the VA system, which can always be improved even more, but the legislation we put forward, the VA MISSION Act, I think, will help and has helped. It improved the VA healthcare system by establishing a permanent veterans community care program and expanding our VA caregiving benefits to veterans

from all eras. When they say it is 10 miles as the crow flies in mountainous States like West Virginia, if you are driving in West Virginia, that is not going to take you 10 minutes. That could take you an hour, and that is not because of the traffic. Providing community care to our veterans is important because it allows them to receive the care they need without having to travel these long and sometimes arduous routes.

Our work must not stop here. We must continue to work on legislation that will benefit our veteran community. As a Senator, one of my greatest privileges is to make sure our veterans receive the respect and admiration they have earned throughout their service. This is especially true given that West Virginia has one of the largest per capita populations of veterans in this country. The pride West Virginia veterans have is truly remarkable. After service, these men and women are the bedrock of our communities and make significant contributions to making them better.

Rightfully so, Virginians have a great amount of admiration for those who have served, and it is reflected in our communities. We have a lot of statues, a lot of parks, a lot of commemorative highways, a lot of moments of silence in West Virginia to honor our veterans we have lost and those who have gone before us.

I was marching in the Ripley Veterans Day parade last Veterans Day, and I was overwhelmed by the support a small town would show its veterans. Whether someone has served in combat or assisted with the daily operations of the military, their dedication to defending this country must not be unnoticed.

On Monday, I urge everyone to take a moment to thank a veteran. At the same time, this shouldn't be limited to just Veterans Day. We should thank our veterans each and every day. It is important that we pay them the respect when the opportunity arises. I really feel good when I am getting on a plane and the announcement is made that our military in uniform are allowed to enter the plane. You know how those crowds get up when it is time to get on the plane. Many times, the crowd will part and, in admiration of our military, welcome that little bit of a head start they get to board the plane. Without great sacrifices and dedication to defending this flag, this country would not be what it is.

I say God bless our veterans. God bless our country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I rise to recognize and thank our veterans and their families. I commend the good Senator from the State of West Virginia. I appreciate her remarks and her incredible support for our veterans. Frankly, I want to mention my admiration for her having just completed

the Marine Corps Marathon. I think that is absolutely remarkable. I know she is an avid runner, but to complete a marathon is no small achievement. Of course, to do it as part of the Marine Marathon is another great way to honor our marvelous and wonderful veterans. My father was in the Marine Corps, so I have a special affinity, of course, because of that as well. I appreciate all of our amazing, wonderful veterans.

I am really honored to join my colleagues. I know the good Senator from Kansas is next. As he chairs our Ag Committee, he and I have had a lot of opportunity to work on agricultural issues. He is also another member of the Marine Corps, and I know he has served with great distinction.

Again, it is a great honor to be here today and to join my colleagues in honoring our phenomenal veterans.

In June, I had the opportunity to join a Senate delegation in Normandy for the 75th anniversary of D-Day. We had the honor of meeting with some of the veterans who had landed on the beaches of Normandy and were again reminded of the tremendous sacrifices that our Nation's veterans have made to preserve our way of life and keep our Nation free. It really was an honor to meet with some of those veterans and to be there in Normandy on the 75th anniversary. To see where they had landed and then to talk with them about it was an incredible way to relive history and, of course, to honor their incredible sacrifice.

We also recognize that those who serve do not serve alone. We appreciate, too, the sacrifices of their families and their loved ones, who have supported them and our Nation's veterans in their service, who have done so throughout the history of our country, and who serve today, along with their veteran family members—their husbands or wives or sons or daughters, whoever they may be—who have donned the uniform to serve this great Nation. We honor their service and the service of all those who are in harm's way today.

While we set aside a day each year to express our gratitude, every day, we are reminded of the dedication of those who have served to protect our freedom and our liberties. Our veterans cannot be thanked enough. Given their service and sacrifice, the least our Nation can do is to uphold its commitment to provide our veterans with the healthcare, benefits, and recognition they have so richly earned.

In the Senate, we have passed landmark legislation, including the VA MISSION Act, to support our veterans and provide them with the care and services they have earned. The VA MISSION Act strengthens the VA's ability to provide care for our veterans, and when the VA is unable to do so, it gives our veterans more options by allowing them to seek care in their home communities. This has been a top priority for veterans in my State, in the

rural State of North Dakota. Giving veterans more options closer to home for healthcare and long-term care is and must continue to be an absolute priority.

We are also continuing to work with the VA and long-term care providers to ensure that the providers who want to treat veterans are able to do so without undertaking unnecessary burdens. We are helping veterans access long-term care—nursing home care, home-based care—closer to home and near their loved ones.

In the course of their dedicated service, our military members make sacrifices in many ways. This includes injuries both seen and unseen. We owe our veterans the best possible care in treating these wounds. That is why we have been working to improve and strengthen the VA's mental healthcare and suicide prevention programs. This includes expanding access to alternative treatment options, like hyperbaric oxygen therapy, HBOT, for veterans who have not benefited from traditional therapies for post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD.

Additionally, I am a cosponsor of the Improve Well-Being for Veterans Act—legislation introduced by Senator BOOZMAN—that would expand and better coordinate services that are aimed at preventing veteran suicide.

As chairman of Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, I recognize that Native Americans serve in our Nation's Armed Forces in higher numbers than does any other ethnic group. That is why I continue to advance legislation, like our bipartisan Tribal HUD-VASH Act, that supports Native American veterans.

Additionally, we are working to provide our veterans with resources and opportunities to help them continue to utilize the skills they learned in the military as they transition back to civilian life. One example is our effort to help veterans receive training to be commercial pilots.

Last week, the Senate passed its fiscal year 2020 Transportation funding bill with provisions from the American Aviator Act. I introduced the bipartisan legislation with Senator BALDWIN so as to expand commercial pilot training opportunities for our veterans. Our country needs commercial pilots, so it only makes sense that we leverage the skills our veterans learned in the military to help them meet this need. It is good for our country, and it is good for our veterans.

These are just a few examples of our efforts to support our veterans.

Our freedom has been secured by the sweat and sacrifice of the courageous men and women who throughout our history have bravely done what has been needed in order to protect our Nation and our way of life. We honor the courage and sacrifice of this Nation's veterans by ensuring they have the resources and support they need and have earned.

To veterans in my home State of North Dakota and to veterans across

the country, we say thank you, not only on Veterans Day but every day.

May God bless these brave Americans and this great country they serve.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, at the end of World War I—the supposed war to end all wars; we all wish that it did—in the 11th hour, in the 11th month on the 11th day, we declared armistice. The war was over. Armistice Day is still recognized, but it is now called Veterans Day.

This coming Monday, on 11/11, as we always do on the 11th day of the 11th month, we will pause as a nation and say thank you to the men and women who serve us in the U.S. military. It is the most moral and the most lethal fighting force the world has ever known, and we are grateful. To the men and women who make up our veterans, those serving Actively, those serving in the Reserves, those serving in our National Guard, and those who have served both at home and abroad, we are grateful for their service.

It has been an absolute privilege to serve our veterans in Oklahoma. There are members of my own family, like my Uncle Robby, who is a marine, and my next-door neighbor, who is in the National Guard. Scattered throughout my family and throughout my own neighborhood, I have a chance to smile and say thank you to folks on a regular basis for what they have done in the past and what they continue to do right now.

Over the past several sessions of Congress, we have worked to help our veterans and to help those who are serving currently. We have passed legislation like the VA MISSION Act, which dramatically increases veterans' care and gives veterans the opportunity to go to different places in order to get care. Now they don't have to drive across my great State to get to a VA center. They can go somewhere closer to home, where it is more convenient for them, rather than go to a VA center. That is a great asset to them and to their families, who have sacrificed over and over again so that their loved ones can serve. They shouldn't have to sacrifice even more now.

This Congress has made major improvements to and has expanded the GI bill. We have improved the onerous disability compensation and appeals process for the VA, which has long been an issue. We have increased the quality of care at the VA, and we have made sure that staff members who work at our VA centers are held to account. By far, the majority of people who serve in our VA centers serve on behalf of our veterans and are passionate and grateful to do that. Yet, for some who cannot get the job done, we shouldn't give our veterans lesser care because of those individuals.

Those are all of the things that have been done just to say thank you. Yet it is interesting to me, the number of

times I have talked to veterans and have said "thank you for your service," and they have responded with something like "it is the least I could do" or "absolutely" or "no thanks necessary" or "it was my honor to do it." This is a group of individuals who knows what it means to serve. We will continue to say thanks to them.

On this Veterans Day, I will pause with a family at a bridge in Oklahoma as the name of the bridge transitions to the Damon Leehan Bridge in remembrance of an Oklahoman who, in 2011, died in Afghanistan while protecting our freedom.

Our veterans don't ask for our thanks, but we can't give them thanks enough for what they and their families have done to keep this great Nation secure.

Thank you to our veterans.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, for generations, America has been a beacon of hope and freedom around the world. When confronted with tyranny and evil, America has always overcome. In every generation, patriots have answered the call to service in defense of our country and in defense of freedom and democracy. Their bravery and willingness to serve is a testament to the American and Montanan spirit.

It is my highest honor to serve as a voice for Montana's veterans in the Halls of Congress. You see, Montana has one of the highest veteran populations per capita in the United States. Montana's veterans are what make living in Big Sky Country all the more special.

I know I speak for most Montanans when I say, while growing up, we learned very early on about the importance of service to our country. For me, that lesson was taught by my father. My dad is a marine who served in the 58th Rifle Company out of Billings, MT. He instilled in me the values of hard work, of sacrifice, of service to others, and of humility. I am grateful for his service to our country, and I am proud to live every day with the values that he taught me when I was so young. Those same values that my dad taught me are held by veterans all across Montana.

I am grateful for Montana's veterans. I am grateful to have several veterans serve on my staff both in Montana and in Washington, DC. I thank Denny in Helena, Robin in Great Falls, Jim in Bozeman, and Christy in Washington, DC. They are all Montanans who are also veterans who serve on my team and serve the people of Montana.

We have an extraordinary legacy of service in Montana. We are home to heroes like Medal of Honor recipient Army SSG Travis Atkins, who was honored by President Trump at the White House this year for his ultimate sacrifice in defense of our country. Right now, in Congress, I am working to rename the Bozeman VA healthcare

facility after this great, fallen, Montana hero. Travis and I attended the same high school in Bozeman.

I make it my top priority to hear from all of our veterans across all corners of our State and to learn about the issues they face, such as access to rural healthcare, or to ensure they receive the recognition they deserve. In fact, just last month, I was in Great Falls to help honor veteran Alfred E. Shryer with the Bronze Star Medal for his service in Vietnam. It was recognition that was long overdue—nearly 50 years in the making.

After all our veterans and their families have given to our Nation, it is due time that our country gives them the care, the treatment, and the recognition they have earned. That is why I am taking action. I have introduced a number of bipartisan solutions to help resolve issues that plague our vets, like my bipartisan bill to protect veterans' pensions from scam artists. I have also led a bipartisan effort to ensure that our Blue Water veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange while they served in Vietnam receive the healthcare they deserve. Those who risk it all—those who put their lives on the line in defense of our freedom—deserve the utmost honor, thanks, and care.

To all of our veterans, thank you for your service. Our country is freer and our country is safer because of you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, thank you to my colleagues from West Virginia, North Dakota, Oklahoma, and now the great State of Montana.

The distinguished Senator from Montana is sitting at the desk that was occupied by Conrad Burns, a Senator from Montana who was a private in the U.S. Marine Corps.

I thank the Senator from Montana for his remarks and for his service in this body.

I rise today to speak in support of our Nation's veterans, Veterans Day, which is coming up on Monday, and the 244th—244th—birthday Sunday of our Nation's force in readiness, the U.S. Marine Corps.

I am a marine—the senior marine in the Congress—and my dad was a marine serving in Guam, Kenya, Okinawa, and Iwo Jima. Tough duty.

On this holiday, we remember those who have sacrificed for our freedoms, especially the more than 1 million who have given their lives for our country. Every American should remember these heroes.

As a nation, we are also home to more than 18 million living heroes who have served with distinction in our armed services.

On this Veterans Day, I would especially like to single out a great veteran who has also served with honor and respect in this body—Senator JOHNNY ISAKSON.

JOHN HARDY ISAKSON, born December 28, 1944, just 3 short years after the at-

tack on Pearl Harbor, began his service to our country in the Georgia Air National Guard from 1966 to 1972, leaving the service at the rank of staff sergeant.

He then continued to serve as a member in both the Georgia State Senate and House, as well as the U.S. House of Representatives, before his fellow Georgians sent him to the U.S. Senate.

In 2005, he came back full circle to his military roots, joining the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and in 2015, he took over the chairmanship.

Let the record reflect that, as chairman, he has worked tirelessly—tirelessly—to reform veterans' healthcare and benefits, as well as to bring oversight and accountability to the Department.

Under his leadership, the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs has passed 57 pieces of legislation that were signed into law—57. You heard that correctly; 57 bills became law.

I think I have had the gavel in four different committees—57? I don't think I have gotten to that yet.

Let me just go through some of the most significant reforms that JOHNNY ISAKSON steered through the Senate that became law: the VA MISSION Act, which puts veterans in charge of their own healthcare; the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act, which holds the VA accountable to the veterans it serves; the Harvey W. Colmery—happens to be a Kansan—Veterans Educational Assistance Act, which improves veterans' GI bill benefits; the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act, which modernizes the VA's appeal process; and one of the most important, the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act, which helps get mental health services to our warfighters who need them the most.

This is only a small portion of his long list of accomplishments, and his committee is not resting on their laurels. As of this morning, they have held 110 hearings, conducted more than 80 oversight visits, and have confirmed 23 Presidential nominations.

In my experience as chairman of a Senate committee—I think three of them, maybe four—you simply can't get this type of work done without help from those across the aisle.

This is just another example of who JOHNNY is as a person and a legislator. He doesn't make promises he can't keep, and he is willing to put partisanship aside in order to get the absolute best care for our Nation's men and women who have served.

In this body, there are those who choose ideology—I understand that—and partisan issues—I understand that as well. But JOHNNY ISAKSON is someone who works with his colleagues to pass legislation benefiting not only our Nation's veterans but every American's pocketbook and daily life.

I have a lot of personal memories when JOHNNY would rope me in to com-

ing to a meeting, a bipartisan meeting, to try to get what we thought was a very important bill done. Sometimes I had some concerns about joining those outfits that he seemed to put together when nobody else could, but I learned pretty quickly that I better go, first, to find out what was going on and then, second, to watch this man carefully craft a bipartisan agreement, working with colleagues, listening to them. When JOHNNY spoke, people usually got to the edge of their chairs and listened. That is how he got it done.

On behalf of the more than 18 million veterans and their families this Veterans Day, we celebrate his leadership and sense of duty to country.

JOHNNY—JOHNNY ISAKSON—thank you for your service. Senators eventually come and go. I do not think we will see the likeness of Senator JOHNNY ISAKSON for years to come.

Semper fi, my dear friend. I love you. We love you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

WHISTLEBLOWERS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, before I get into the substance of my remarks on a very serious subject, I want to thank my dear friend from Kansas for his nice words about JOHNNY ISAKSON.

There is no word short of “beloved” that you would affix before JOHNNY ISAKSON's name in terms of this Chamber, and I think that would probably be true for every single Member—certainly the Senator from Kansas and certainly the Senator from New York.

On July 30, 1778, the Continental Congress passed unanimously the following resolution: “Resolved, that it is the duty of all persons in the service of the United States . . . to give the earliest information to Congress or other proper authority of any misconduct, frauds or misdemeanors committed by any officers or persons in the service of these states.”

That was in the Continental Congress before our Nation was even formed—a duty of citizens to protect the American people from those in government who might conduct misconduct, fraud, or misdemeanors.

From the earliest days of our Republic, our government has acknowledged the vital role that whistleblowers play in ensuring good governance and rooting out corruption, malfeasance, and self-dealing.

Two nights ago, appallingly, at a political rally, President Trump and a Member of this Chamber, the junior Senator from Kentucky, publicly and explicitly urged the press to disclose the identity of the Federal whistleblower whose complaint triggered an impeachment inquiry in the House of Representatives.

A few days later, the same junior Senator threatened to reveal the identity of the whistleblower himself.

I cannot stress enough how wrong and dangerous—dangerous—these efforts are.