

State and around the country celebrating this historic day.

Many people watching today may not know the history of what happened 150 years ago. Yesterday afternoon, Senator ENZI spoke on the Senate floor and outlined some of that history. I am so proud of my home State's amazing record in advancing this entire issue and concern and allowance of women's voting.

Women in Wyoming were the first in the Nation to use the right to vote. That is a fact. Wyoming women have been voting for 150 years. On December 10, 1869, Wyoming took a giant leap forward for women's equality. We are called the Equality State. This is a lot of the reason why.

Wyoming Governor Mark Gordon, in a ceremony this morning at our State capital in Cheyenne, is proclaiming today Wyoming Women's Suffrage Day. Wyoming is the first place in the country to pass a law securing women's right to vote, as well as the right not just to vote but to hold public office.

The people of Wyoming spoke loud and clear 150 years ago today. We stood with women 50 years ahead of the rest of the Nation. Wyoming was a territory back then. Our State had not yet joined the Union. That didn't happen until 1890. Still, that is when we earned the proud name of the Equality State.

Wyoming earned far more than the name. By leading the fight for women's rights, Wyoming has forever earned a hallowed place in the books of history. Nobody embodies that legacy more than Wyoming's Louisa Ann Swain. On September 6, 1870, Louisa Swain of Laramie, WY, became the first woman in the United States to vote in the general election. By casting her historic ballot, she claimed a great victory for women everywhere.

It is a tremendous heritage that we celebrate today. Wyoming truly is the Nation's trailblazer for women's equality. In fact, "Equal Rights" is our State motto.

On November 19, the Senate unanimously passed the Wyoming Women's Suffrage Day resolution. Senator ENZI and I cosponsored the resolution to commemorate today's 150th anniversary. Now the entire Nation can join in celebrating Wyoming's groundbreaking law.

Then, 20 years after the law's passage, Wyoming refused to enter the Union as a State unless we had equal voting rights, men and women. There was a big fight about it in Wyoming and in the Nation's Capital. When standing on principle became a major sticking point, Wyoming stuck to its guns on women's equality and actually ended up delaying becoming a State over this very issue.

On March 26 of 1890, Wyoming statehood legislation narrowly passed the U.S. House of Representatives. The measure passed the Senate a few months later, but part of the debate on the floor of the House of Representatives had to do with Wyoming women

actually voting in our then territory and now State.

President Benjamin Harrison signed Wyoming's statehood into law on July 10, 1890, upholding women's rights. Wyoming was technically the 44th State to enter the Union, but Wyoming really is the first State when it comes to women's equality. Wyoming put women first even before statehood.

Back home, 2019 is the "Year of Wyoming Women." Our State is paying tribute to our strong women leaders. We had the great honor of electing the first woman Governor, Wyoming's 14th Governor, Nellie Tayloe Ross. Wyoming boasts many more female firsts. These include the first woman to serve on a jury and the first female justice of the peace, Esther Hobart Morris. Wyoming also claims the first all-female city government. These pioneering women leaders were elected in 1920 in Jackson, WY. The Jackson press dubbed them "the petticoat government." So we celebrate 150 years of equal rights in Wyoming and 100 years for women nationwide.

In 1919, Congress passed the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, granting women's suffrage. This hard-fought legislative victory would ensure women's full participation in our democracy.

To mark this 100th anniversary, President Trump recently signed into law the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commemorative Coin Act. I had the privilege of cosponsoring this legislation that was introduced by Senator MARSHA BLACKBURN from Tennessee. The bill passed unanimously in the Senate. I made sure that Wyoming's Esther Hobart Morris was among the suffragettes honored in this legislation.

All Americans owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the Nation's extraordinary women leaders of the past, the present, and today as we pause to remember where it all started 150 years ago in the trailblazing State of Wyoming, the Equality State.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. President, now I would like to turn to a different topic. I come to the floor today as the Democrats in the House and in the Senate are obsessed with obstruction because they are obsessed over impeachment and are obstructing everything else.

We have only a week left to fund the government, to pass "America First" trade deals, and to support our military. Still, there is another priority issue that we need to address. We must provide relief, in my opinion, from costly ObamaCare taxes. There are several of those that are impacting our citizens around the country.

Last week, the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare released a report on healthcare spending. The report finds that health insurance costs grew in 2018 by a larger number than they had the year before.

Why does CMS believe that the rates of insurance actually have gone up additionally? Well, it is because of a couple of taxes.

One is the health insurance tax, or the HIT tax. It is in the Obama healthcare law. It is an unfair tax that has increased insurance premiums for small business owners and for seniors. That is why I have been a longtime opponent of this health insurance tax. Democrats need to help us get rid of the tax. They need to end it.

The second ObamaCare tax we must repeal is the so-called Cadillac health plan tax. The Cadillac tax affects millions of Americans who are covered through work, especially union workers. On December 5, a broad group of unions and employers wrote the Senate leaders urging a repeal.

This is what they said. The union leaders and supporters urged the repeal, and this is what they wrote to the Senate leaders:

The consequences of inaction are serious. Many millions of working Americans will pay more out of pocket . . . or face reduced health coverage.

We need to end this Cadillac tax now.

The third tax we need to repeal is the medical device tax. Really, it is a tax on innovation. The medical device tax is going to restrict patients' access to new lifesaving technologies.

Without congressional action, the health insurance tax and the medical device tax are going to take effect again in 2020 and the Cadillac tax in 2022. It is time to repeal these punishing taxes. We need to do this to protect patients and working families all across the country.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AGRICULTURE

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I come before the Senate today to recognize a historic milestone in the Colorado agricultural community. The Colorado farm bureau is celebrating 100 years of representing farmers, ranchers, rural communities, and every aspect of agriculture in Colorado.

I grew up in the Eastern Plains, the very heart of agriculture. In fact, the county I grew up in is one of the largest corn-producing counties in the country and, certainly, economically speaking, one of the top agricultural communities in the State.

Our livelihood, our neighbors—everything—depend on agriculture. In fact, when there is a downturn in agriculture, it is not just the next day that our community feels that. It is that next hour that the community feels the impact. It is the same with a good agriculture economy. It is not just tomorrow that we will feel the impact, but immediately we will feel the impact.

I grew up working in a family farm equipment dealership where you got to

know everybody in the community, not because of the kind of operation they had but because of the kind of person they were, the kind of relationships you built, and then, of course, the opportunities to do business in those communities.

There are ebbs and flows, good times and bad times, times of prosperity and times of difficult predicaments in rural America, in agriculture. In the 1980s, I grew up watching one of the hardest times agriculture faced—watching a number of banks face foreclosures, a number of farmers face foreclosures. I watched as people I knew my whole life sold their farms, gave up farming, and closed their businesses.

It wasn't that long ago—in fact, just a few years ago—that we saw some of the highest priced commodities this country had ever seen for a very long time. The golden years of agriculture occurred just a couple of years ago because of all-time high prices. That is not the situation we are facing today.

Once you have worked in the agriculture industry, I think you develop a very deep understanding and appreciation for the men and women who have our farmers' backs through the good times and the bad times, like the Colorado Farm Bureau. The Farm Bureau plays a vital role in the wellbeing of all aspects of agriculture. It gives rural communities a prominent voice when the government is debating policies that impact their farms, their finances, and their families.

The Colorado Farm Bureau began in 1919, when a group of farmers, ranchers, veterinarians, rural doctors, shopkeepers, and tradesmen in 10 local counties met to form what was termed a "Farm Bureau." Their goal was to make the business of farming more profitable and the community a better place to live. The organization struggled through the years and almost died out in the 1930s.

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, a group of people across Colorado organized to breathe new life into that Farm Bureau in Colorado. Ezra Alishouse, C.J. Phillips, Arthur Andersen, and others sold memberships to rebuild the organization.

As a group of farmers naturally would, the Farm Bureau persisted and grew. They grew the Farm Bureau to become the largest farm organization in the State of Colorado and expanded the support they provided to ag communities throughout the State.

In the 1940s, farmers and ranchers were having a difficult time insuring their operations. So the Colorado Farm Bureau created a farm insurance casualty company. They began offering farm insurance in 1948. Later in the 1950s, they began offering life insurance for those in the agriculture community.

Today, the Colorado Farm Bureau represents 23,000 member families, 45 local county Farm Bureaus, and is one of the largest farmer-led organizations in the State of Colorado. The Colorado

Farm Bureau has a simple mission: to promote and protect the future of agriculture and rural values.

They show people the agriculture industry up close, why it is important to all of us, and the success of our rural communities.

The Farm Bureau offers leadership training for young professionals, scholarships, college programs, health and safety trainings, helpful resources to farmers, and support when it is needed the most. Through the Colorado Farm Bureau Foundation, the Farm Bureau has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to support victims of natural disasters in Colorado, whether that is a drought or whether that is severe blizzards.

They represent, improve, and promote all aspects of agriculture in Colorado and have helped to develop the industry into the economic powerhouse it is and one of the strongest drivers of Colorado's economy.

Every year I have been honored to join the Colorado Farm Bureau and have the Colorado Farm Bureau join me on our annual farm tour. That is a tradition I first started when I came to the House of Representatives. Every fall we would go to the Eastern Plains of Colorado and the Western Slope of Colorado and talk to everyone from peach growers in Palisade to corn growers in Kiowa and beyond, and we had opportunities to learn how we can help every nook and cranny of the State when it comes to agriculture.

This year, we have traveled to 15 different counties across Colorado, visiting family farms, ranches, and agricultural businesses. We held roundtables with locally elected officials. We went to a wind farm and talked about the impact that renewable energy is having in positive aspects for our farmers and ranchers.

This farm tour wouldn't be possible without the Farm Bureau and the others who helped put it together and make sure we see these important issues that we are facing. In the past, we have turned to them for their expertise in policy, their insights, experience, and their partnerships as we champion efforts that will help and benefit rural Colorado. They have been a great partner in providing agricultural producers with the resources and certainty they need to protect private property rights, to protect our waterways, to ensure that farmers are treated fairly in the Tax Code, and, recently, in helping to relocate the headquarters of the Bureau of Land Management to Grand Junction.

The Farm Bureau is a regular presence in Washington. I think all of us know that. Colorado Farm Bureau members have played an important role in developing policy. They are not afraid to get their hands dirty and of the hard work it takes to get good legislation passed.

The Colorado Farm Bureau takes on difficult issues and has a real impact on people's lives. Their dedicated work

and their willingness to take on difficult issues has also earned them national recognition. In 2005, the Colorado Farm Bureau was recognized by the Department of the Interior in Washington for their work at the Colorado Department of Natural Resources to protect the mountain plover.

This created a win-win partnership that the government and the private sector could work together to preemptively protect the species without listing it on the Endangered Species Act.

The Colorado Farm Bureau was instrumental in opening up 300,000 acres of land for data collection and research on the mountain plover's nesting and population status. Through that effort, they were able to avoid listing, develop better management practices, and help to grow the mountain plover population.

I look forward to continuing to hear from Colorado Farm Bureau members and farmers and ranchers across our State, as this Chamber—this body—debates new trade opportunities, new agricultural policies, and anything that could impact farmers back home.

Their contributions will be especially valuable as we continue to open up new markets for Colorado producers, invest in rural communities, and manage our public lands.

Last month, the Senate passed a resolution I introduced with my colleague, Senator BENNET, celebrating this historic 100th anniversary, recognizing all of the Colorado Farm Bureau's past, present, and future efforts to promote and advocate farm and ranch interests.

I ask my colleagues in the Senate to join me today in celebrating the Colorado Farm Bureau's rich history and contributions to the ag industry, not just in Colorado but across the United States. Congratulations to the Colorado Farm Bureau for your 100 years of being a strong voice for farmers, ranchers, and our rural communities in the "Centennial State" and for all your work to protect the Colorado way of life. I look forward to continuing our work together with the Farm Bureau in seeing what we can accomplish for the next 100 years of agriculture in Colorado.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

NOMINATION OF LAWRENCE VANDYKE

MR. TESTER. Mr. President, it is no secret that the Senate doesn't do much around here, except for confirming judges. But looking at the records of the folks we are confirming to the Federal bench, it is clear we have forgotten even how to do that.

The Founding Fathers were incredibly visionary. When they set up the Federal judiciary, they hoped to insulate it from political influence. How? By giving them lifetime appointments, with the advice and consent of the Senate. In doing so, they gave the Senators the most solemn of responsibilities we have in this body: evaluating