

government health plan to compete with work-sponsored health insurance. Don't be fooled—that public option would hurt patients across the country, especially people living in rural areas. It would disrupt insurance coverage, slash funding for doctors and hospitals, and would force local hospitals and clinics to close. Simply put, a public option is a pit stop on the road to 100 percent government-run healthcare in America.

Clearly, Democrats are ignoring their own voters. Union workers across the country are telling Democrats: Don't touch our hard-earned healthcare benefits. People don't want radical healthcare schemes, which is what the Democrats are proposing. People care more about their pocketbooks. They want their own healthcare, but they want it at a lower cost. That is what I hear every weekend at home in Wyoming.

Americans are struggling to pay for insurance premiums for doctors, for hospitals, and for prescription drugs. According to a new POLITICO-Harvard poll, 8 in 10 Americans—89 percent of Democrats and 76 percent of Republicans—want us to lower their healthcare costs. Seventy-five percent say we must lower the costs of prescription drugs. I agree. The Kaiser Family Foundation reports that nearly one in four people is having trouble paying for their prescriptions. But Socialist policies are the wrong medicine. They will only worsen the problems.

Republicans are listening to people's concerns. We have commonsense solutions to lower out-of-pocket costs without lowering standards. I am a doctor, the husband of a breast cancer survivor, and the son of a 97-year-old mother. Let me assure you, Republicans will always protect vulnerable Americans, especially people with pre-existing conditions. The Republican healthcare agenda is about giving patients more choices and better healthcare. It is about improving healthcare access and affordability.

Working with President Trump, we are already providing much needed relief from costly ObamaCare taxes. These unfair taxes hurt working families, they hurt small businesses, they hurt seniors, and we have ended them.

Now we are working to drive down drug costs. As part of this effort, in December, I joined six Republican Senators to introduce the Lower Costs, More Cures Act. This legislation would limit out-of-pocket drug costs for people with Medicare Part D plans. We also ended the drug price gag rule to help patients find more affordable drugs. We are working to end surprise medical billings. These unexpected, unreasonable, and unaffordable bills undermine families' finances. It is an intolerable practice, and it must stop.

Republicans are delivering better healthcare. Still, to make more progress, we need Democrats to work with us. It is time to come together. It is time to cooperate. It is time to find

common ground. I will tell you, taking away health insurance from 180 million Americans who get it through work is not common ground. There is no common ground. That is the direction of the Democratic Party. We need to find common ground. Taking insurance away from 180 million Americans who get it from work and then giving free health insurance to illegal immigrants and raising taxes from Americans to pay for it is not common ground.

Let's work together to give patients the high-quality care they need from a doctor they choose at lower costs.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call roll.

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

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

TRIBUTE TO PETTY OFFICER EVAN GRILLS

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, as expected, it is time for our "Alaskan of the Week" speech. One of the most fulfilling things I get to do as Alaska's U.S. Senator is to come down to the floor of the Senate and talk about the people in my State who are making a difference in their communities, in the State, and in the country. It is a great opportunity in which to do that.

I always encourage people who are watching and listening to come to the great State of Alaska for a visit. You will love it. It will be the best trip you ever take. I guarantee it.

I know the pages enjoy this speech each week because it is a story of what real people are doing and, in many cases, of humble heroes. Usually, these are happy stories that I get to talk about, but sometimes they aren't happy. The story I am going to tell today is, in fact, a very, very tragic one, but it contains the kind of heroism and selflessness that can spring from a tragedy and literally inspire a State or a nation.

If you are listening, I think you are going to be inspired.

I have said on the floor before that we are a State—an enormous State, a big State in the country, by far—but that we are also a family and that, when something happens to members of our families, we all grieve. This is particularly true of the town of Kodiak, AK, and of the fishing community, both of which suffered a tremendous loss on New Year's Eve in the Gulf of Alaska when a crabbing boat, the *Scandies Rose*, sank into the freezing waters, taking with it five fishermen.

Of the five fishermen—including Seth Rousseau-Gano, Brock Rainey, and Arthur Ganacias—Captain Gary Cobban, Jr., and David, his son, were both from Kodiak and perished with the crew. Blessedly and remarkably, there were two survivors—John Lawler, of Anchorage, and Dean Gribble, of Washington State. I mention that almost as

a miracle. They were saved because of the bravery and the heroism of our Coast Guard rescuers, who flew through gale force winds and 30-foot-high swells to rescue these survivors. Credit goes to all of the Coast Guard members throughout the country but particularly to those in Kodiak and specifically to those who were on the flight—the pilot, LT Christopher Clark, the copilot, LT Jonathan Ardan, and the mechanic, Jacob Dillon.

As I said, they are all heroes in this story, but I want to specifically highlight the role of the rescue swimmer that evening of New Year's Eve—25-year-old PO Evan Grills. Now, Evan is a relative newcomer to the great State of Alaska, but his heroism in saving two lives more than qualifies him to be our Alaskan of the Week.

Before I get into the story of this perilous mission, let me tell you a little bit about the fishing community in Alaska and why our Coast Guard is so very valuable.

Alaska's seas are the most productive in the world and, by the way, the most sustainably managed in the world. More than 60 percent of all seafood harvested in the United States of America comes from Alaska's waters—6-0. I like to refer to our State as the superpower of seafood, which we clearly are, and our fishermen are probably the hardest working small business men and women around the world. They work hard. They take huge risks. And they produce a product that is second to none anywhere on the planet. They face brutal conditions at sea and sometimes very tough conditions in the market, but they love their work. They love the vital role they play in supplying the best tasting, most sustainable wild fish products to America and the globe—literally, the best.

The industry used to be incredibly dangerous, and it is still the Nation's second-most dangerous profession. I am sure a lot of the viewers have seen the show the "Deadliest Catch," but unlike in previous decades, the culture has trended more toward safety. Most Alaskan fishermen you will meet, though, will have a harrowing story of a time at sea, and, of course, they will have harrowing stories of rescues.

Kodiak, AK, where the *Scandies Rose* is home-ported, is at the center of our fishing community. Kodiak is one of the largest fishing ports in the entire United States, both in terms of value and in terms of quantity. For those who have never been there, they have to go to Kodiak, AK. It is a magical, beautiful place. It is an island—one of the biggest islands in America. It is about the size of New Jersey—with beautiful, wonderful people, with tough people. By the way, the biggest brown bears on the planet all reside in Kodiak. The heart of Kodiak beats fish, and when one of its own perishes at sea, the whole community mourns, as it is still doing for Gary, Jr., and David Cobban—two hard-working, fine fishermen from a great family.

Kodiak is also home to the largest Coast Guard base in the United States—the 17th District. By the way, we are making that base bigger, with more assets and more aircraft coming to Alaska, because we need it. As the chairman of the subcommittee in charge of the Coast Guard, I am going to continue to make that happen, for sure. In an average month in Alaska—get this—the Coast Guard saves 22 lives, performs 53 assists, and conducts 13 security boardings and 22 security patrols. This is in 1 month. Think about that. That is daily heroism for Alaska and for America. They do this all in the largest geographic area of any Coast Guard district in the country—nearly 4 million square miles—in some of the most challenging weather environments on the planet. That is what the men and women of the Coast Guard do in my great State every single day.

Now, being a rescue swimmer in the Coast Guard is an elite assignment. Being a rescuer in the Coast Guard station in Alaska is, according to our Alaskan of the Week, PO Evan Grills, the “tip of the spear” of this elite assignment. So let me tell you a little bit about Evan.

Raised in Stuart, FL—the home of our Presiding Officer, Florida—the military had always appealed to Evan. His grandparents and uncles were marines. As a Marine colonel myself, I say “Semper Paratus” to them. Some of his older friends and mentors went on to the academies, but going overseas didn’t really appeal to Evan. Serving in the United States and saving American citizens at home did, as did the tough training required to be a Coast Guard rescue swimmer. “It’s the most elite [assignment],” he said, “and that’s what appealed to me, [so I joined].”

Evan had been in Alaska for less than a year when, on New Year’s Eve—just 2 months ago—the call came in that a boat that was about 170 miles southwest of Kodiak was in trouble.

Having trained mostly in swimming pools, this rescue—the one he was being called upon—was going to be his first. Think about that. Your first rescue—and I am going to describe conditions that would terrify anyone. Nothing prepared him for what he would soon be undertaking.

Mr. President, let me transport you now to this crabbing boat, the *Scandies Rose*, in the Gulf of Alaska on New Year’s Eve. The winds are 40 knots. The seas are 30 feet. The boat is listing to the starboard side. It is 10 degrees out. Everything is freezing. It is nighttime. It is very dark.

It was clear the boat was going down, but the captain, heroically, with minutes to spare, was able to get off a mayday call and in doing so let the Coast Guard know exactly where to find them and, as a result of the captain’s heroic actions, save two lives.

The two survivors, Dean Gribble, Jr., and John Lawler, managed to get into their survival suits and a life raft and

waited to be rescued in these heavy, rough seas. It was a 4-hour wait. It was very, very cold. They were covered in ice. The seas were pitching their raft. They were hypothermic, it was pitch black, and they had no idea if anyone was coming.

Gribble told a reporter that during the wait, he talked to John.

We’re not going to die today, John. This isn’t our time. We’re not dying today.

Even though, in his head, he knew they would die if a rescue didn’t come soon. Then they saw the lights from the helicopter, with Evan Grills aboard, hovering above like an angel coming to save them. But it wasn’t a given that in those conditions, they could even conduct a rescue; that it would be safe for the rescuer to jump in 30-foot swells to save them. To even try in these huge waves, in 40-knot winds, in icy conditions, was a danger to the crew and the pilots. The flight from Kodiak in those conditions had taken 2 hours, and the helicopter was short on fuel. They only had minutes left to make the decision whether to try to rescue them or turn around and go back to Kodiak. That, combined with the extreme winds and seas and freezing temperatures, made any attempt at deploying a rescue swimmer very, very risky.

The pilots conferred with our Alaskan of the week, Evan. They were nervous for his safety. They were hovering. They had to hover high because they didn’t want to be hit by waves.

“Are you good with the plan?” they asked.

“I guess so,” Evan said.

This was the first rescue of his career. I don’t think there was much of an option not to do it. A thousand different thoughts went through Evan’s head when he leapt into the frigid waters in a gale-force storm in pitch darkness, risking his life to save others.

When he reached the first survivor, he said:

I knew exactly what to do and how to do it. It was almost second nature.

His training kicked in. His great Coast Guard training kicked in. He explained the hoist he had come down with—that came down from the helicopter to the first survivor and how it worked to be hoisted up into the helicopter. And then to the second survivor, he said, “We’re going to go up in this hoist together. Relax. I’ve got you covered.” Calm. Courage. Heroic. And he did. He had them covered.

These are the actions of a hero, a true American hero, a true Alaskan hero. These are actions that need to be celebrated and known in our country. How many Americans or Alaskans, even, read about what this young man did to save lives on New Year’s Eve when the rest of America was celebrating and having fun? Well, now they know.

But there are five, as I mentioned, who tragically couldn’t be saved. We know their memories live on. And in

Kodiak, the community, the family, and the loved ones of the Cobbans are beginning the long, slow process of healing.

As for Evan, our Alaskan of the week, he thinks a lot about those who were lost, wishing he could have done more, but he is grateful he was able to save two lives. He is also grateful for his training and what the Coast Guard does and how what he had trained for as a rescue swimmer worked. So he knows and now has the confidence that he can save others when they are in trouble.

“That’s the core of it,” Evan said. “Obviously, we don’t ever want anybody to get in trouble on the seas”—particularly the rough seas of Alaska—“but they do. And I’m happy I have the skills and training to save them.” Spoken like a true, humble hero, which this young man is.

We are also glad you have the skills and training to save others, Evan, and we want to thank you.

Petty Officer Grills. *Semper Paratus*. Thanks for all you are doing. Thanks for your courage, your example, your inspiration, and thank you for being our Alaskan of the week.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

TRIBUTE TO LAURA DOVE

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I would like to start this morning by talking about a friend of ours who has chosen to move on and leave the Senate and spend more time with her wonderful family. I certainly understand that because the job she has, which is Secretary for the Majority, is more than a full-time job; it is living, breathing, sleeping this place, and she does a great job at it.

Her name is Laura Dove. She has been doing this particular job for 7 years. Prior to that, she actually was here on three different occasions, as I understand it, working for the Senate. She grew up with it. Her dad was the Parliamentarian here for 36 years.

Laura is a consummate professional. I work with her a lot on legislation. She helps me to get things through the process here, which is not always easy, but as significant, she works very closely with her counterpart on the Democratic side of the aisle and figures out how to get stuff done, how to keep this place operating so that the world’s greatest deliberative body, as they call the U.S. Senate, can meet its great potential and expectation.

So, to Laura Dove, we are going to miss you. As much as we understand why you need some time with your family right now and your great, great kids, we are going to miss you a lot.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Mr. President, I am here on the floor today to talk about how this strong American economy has led to historic workforce needs and how, if we do the right things to respond to that problem, it can become an opportunity—an opportunity to bring Americans off the