

healthcare, it doesn't mean they don't need healthcare. It just means they can't pay for healthcare.

So folks in Vermont who were depending on Medicaid are going to show up at our rural hospitals. Our hospitals are under a legal requirement to provide care.

By the way, they would provide care even without a legal requirement because that is what we do in rural America: We help folks who need help.

But those hospitals already on a thin margin are not going to be able to afford it. That is what threatens to have them go out of business.

And then, we know the spiral. This bill, in Vermont, is going to result in over \$200 million in uncompensated care in the next 10 years. In West Virginia, it is \$1.4 billion. In Tennessee, it is over \$3.5 billion.

These rural hospitals provide critical care to people in need. We have to protect the people first. If we take away their hospitals, they have no protection. We have to protect the struggles that communities in rural America have to keep a strong community sense against the enormous pressures that they face.

There is a cruelty in this bill. There is an irresponsibility in the Senate if we don't acknowledge explicitly what the impact of this bill will be on the people we represent, on the hospitals that are dependent on us, and on the future of community strength in all of our rural communities. Let's kill this bill.

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 the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MORENO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

TRIBUTE TO ELENA BURGWARD

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today I recognize Elena Burgward, an intern in my Washington, DC, office, for all of the hard work she has done for me, my staff, and the State of South Dakota over the past several weeks.

Elena is a graduate of O'Gorman High School in Sioux Falls, SD. Currently, she is attending the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in Lincoln, NE,

where she is pursuing a degree in criminal justice. She is a hard worker who has been dedicated to getting the most out of her internship experience.

I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to Elena for all of the fine work she has done and wish her continued success in the years to come.

TRIBUTE TO MADDIE CROSS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today I recognize Maddie Cross, an intern in my Rapid City, SD, office, for all of the hard work she has done for me, my staff, and the State of South Dakota over the past several weeks.

Maddie is a graduate of Spearfish High School in Spearfish, SD. Currently, she is attending the University of South Dakota in Vermillion, SD, where she is majoring in political science and minoring in business administration. She is a hard worker who has been dedicated to getting the most out of her internship experience.

I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to Maddie for all of the fine work she has done and wish her continued success in the years to come.

TRIBUTE TO ELLIOT HENDRIX

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today I recognize Elliot Hendrix, an intern in my Washington, DC, office, for all of the hard work he has done for me, my staff, and the State of South Dakota over the past several weeks.

Elliot is a graduate of Stevens High School in Rapid City, SD. Currently, he is attending Cornell University in Ithaca, NY, where he is pursuing a degree in agricultural science. He is a hard worker who has been dedicated to getting the most out of his internship experience.

I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to Elliot for all of the fine work he has done and wish him continued success in the years to come.

TRIBUTE TO TAYLOR QUINN

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today I recognize Taylor Quinn, an intern in my Washington, DC, office, for all of the hard work he has done for me, my staff, and the State of South Dakota over the past several weeks.

Taylor is a graduate of Lincoln High School in Sioux Falls, SD. Currently, he is attending Augustana University in Sioux Falls, SD, where he is pursuing degrees in government and economics. He is a hard worker who has been dedicated to getting the most out of his internship experience.

I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to Taylor for all of the fine work he has done and wish him continued success in the years to come.

TRIBUTE TO KADEN SCHMIDT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today I recognize Kaden Schmidt, an intern in

my Washington, DC, office, for all of the hard work he has done for me, my staff, and the State of South Dakota over the past several weeks.

Kaden is a graduate of Washington High School in Sioux Falls, SD. Currently, he is attending Iowa State University in Ames, IA, where he is pursuing a degree in aerospace engineering. He is a hard worker who has been dedicated to getting the most out of his internship experience.

I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to Kaden for all of the fine work he has done and wish him continued success in the years to come.

TRIBUTE TO MACY STEEN

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today I recognize Macy Steen, an intern in my Washington, DC, office, for all of the hard work she has done for me, my staff, and the State of South Dakota over the past several weeks.

Macy is a recent graduate of the University of South Dakota in Vermillion, SD, having earned a degree in legal studies. This fall, she plans to attend the University of South Dakota Knudson School of Law. She is a hard worker who has been dedicated to getting the most out of her internship experience.

I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to Macy for all of the fine work she has done and wish her continued success in the years to come.

TRIBUTE TO SCOTT FITZWILLIAMS

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I rise to recognize Scott Fitzwilliams who recently retired after 15 years as forest supervisor of the White River National Forest and 34 years of service to the U.S. Forest Service.

Scott led the most visited national forest in the country, covering more than 2 million acres. While supervising the White River, Scott balanced enormous visitor demand with thoughtful stewardship, earning the trust of communities across Colorado's mountains.

Scott brought steady leadership to some of Colorado's most complex land management challenges. He managed the visitors at Hanging Lake and the Maroon Bells, navigated the first-ever partnership between the Forest Service and Colorado Parks and Wildlife at Sweetwater Lake, and helped communities recover from the Grizzly Creek and Lake Christine Fires.

Scott was a critical source of guidance and expertise for my work. He helped ensure the Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument was established with the care and coordination it deserved. On the Thompson Divide, he helped navigate intricate land-use and community concerns and oversaw the implementation of the 20-year mineral withdrawal.

He also helped shape practical solutions for the housing crisis affecting mountain towns. His work identifying Forest Service sites suitable for workforce housing informed legislation that

we passed in the 2018 farm bill and in the 2024 EXPLORE Act.

When we wrote the SHRED Act, a bill designed to keep ski area fees local, Scott made clear why the legislation mattered, pointing to the daily challenges of managing a forest that supports more than a dozen ski areas and sees tens of millions of visitors each year.

Throughout his career, Scott was a thoughtful partner and a trusted presence to a wide range of stakeholders, including ranchers, local governments, ski areas, conservation organizations, recreation advocates, and many others. He listened and brought them into the process. His collaborative approach made better outcomes possible across the forest.

Even in retirement, Scott has continued to advocate for the Forest Service and for Colorado's public lands. He has made sure the national conversation about conservation includes the people who manage these lands every day. At a time of historic staffing and budget shortfalls, Scott has been a clear and credible voice for the Agency he served for more than three decades.

We are grateful for Scott's years of service and leadership. His work leaves a lasting legacy for our State, and I wish him well in whatever comes next.

TRIBUTE TO ERIN MINKS

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize and honor the remarkable public service of Erin Minks, my senior advisor for rural affairs and regional director for the San Luis Valley. Erin dedicated two decades to Federal service—most of it in Congress—where she has been a tireless advocate for the San Luis Valley.

Erin's Congressional career began in the offices of Senator Ken Salazar, Congressman John Salazar, and Senator Mark Udall. Her public service continued with the U.S. Forest Service, where she helped craft a forest plan for the Rio Grande National Forest that will guide land management for decades to come. For the past 7 years, I have had the great privilege of working alongside Erin in my office, where she brought extraordinary knowledge, dedication, and compassion to her work.

There is hardly a person in the San Luis Valley who doesn't know Erin. Whether it is a veteran trying to access benefits, a water district applying for a grant, or a local official working on a new idea, Erin is the one they call. She picks up the phone. She shows up. And she gets results.

Erin played a central role in delivering real progress for the Valley and rural communities across our State. She led the successful reauthorization of Colorado's three National Heritage Areas—South Park, Cache la Poudre River, and Sangre de Cristo—helping preserve Colorado's history and culture. She developed major pieces of legislation, including the Groundwater

Conservation Easement Act—based on local requests to conserve the Rio Grande Basin's aquifer—and the RESILIENT Act to cut redtape for rural communities.

Thanks to her advocacy, we have secured millions of dollars in critical Federal funding for community driven projects in the San Luis Valley. Whether through the congressionally directed spending process, grants, or other Federal funding opportunities, Erin knew how to navigate the intricacies of government to get her communities the resources they needed. She has been a relentless champion for the Rio Grande Basin, Rocky Flats workers, Adams State University, Colorado's potato farmers, and the communities that define the valley's identity.

Beyond the policy wins, Erin exemplified what it means to be a public servant. She showed younger staff how to lead with empathy, build lasting relationships, and fight for the people they serve. Her work helped ensure rural voices are heard in Washington, and her presence has left a lasting mark on our State.

As Erin moves on to her next chapter, I want to express my deepest gratitude and thank her family for sharing her with all of us these many years.

Erin, we will miss you. Thank you for your extraordinary service. We wish you the very best in whatever comes next.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN WHITNEY

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the extraordinary career and well-earned retirement of John Whitney, my senior adviser for Public Lands and Tribal Affairs and regional director for the Western Slope.

John spent two decades serving in the U.S. Congress, including the last 14 years in my office and previously in the office of Congressman John Salazar. Throughout his career, John has been one of the most effective advocates for rural communities and conservation efforts in Colorado and the American West.

There is no corner of the Western Slope that John doesn't know—and very few people west of the Continental Divide who don't know John. He built deep, lasting relationships with local elected leaders, State and Federal agencies, Tribal governments, and community members—regardless of party or background.

John never hesitated to jump in with both feet. Whether advancing landmark legislation or organizing a community meeting in a remote town, he always brought his full self to the work. He organized countless trips for me across our State, from camping on Kebler Pass, to rafting the Dolores River, to hiking the high country of the San Juans.

Over the years, John helped shape and deliver some of the most consequential conservation accomplishments in Colorado's recent history. He

played a central role in establishing three National Monuments in Colorado: Chimney Rock, Brown's Canyon, and Camp Hale-Continental Divide. He led our work to pass the Hermosa Creek Watershed Protection Act and secure a 20-year mineral withdrawal to protect the Thompson Divide. John also helped establish the Camp Amache National Historic Site and expand Rocky Mountain National Park, Mesa Verde National Park, and Yucca House National Monument.

John was also instrumental in developing the Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy (CORE) Act, the Gunnison Outdoor Resources Protection (GORP) Act, and the Dolores National Conservation Area and Special Management Area Act. Additionally, he led efforts to help Western Slope communities through the SHRED Act, the Flexible Partnerships Act, the Gold King Mine Compensation Act, and efforts to expand Tribal access to clean water.

But John's legacy is not just the legislation he shaped, it is the coalitions he built and the way he encouraged people across the State to find common ground. His work is a model for what is possible when democracy works as it should, when people listen to one another, stay at the table, and pursue progress without sacrificing principle.

John has also been a mentor, a counselor, and a constant source of good humor to our staff. He helped train a new generation of Western Slope leaders and public lands advocates. His influence will echo through their work, through our office, and throughout the State for years to come. I also want to thank John's family; his achievements would not have been possible without their support, generosity, and sacrifice.

As John sets off toward new horizons, he leaves behind a legacy that will stand the test of time. Colorado's lands, communities, and civic institutions are stronger because of his service. On behalf of a grateful State and an appreciative team: Thank you, John. You will be deeply missed—and we can't wait to see where your journey takes you next.

REMEMBERING JUNIOR BRIDGEMAN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on March 11, 2025, Kentucky lost a distinguished athlete, businessman, and mentor to many. Ulysses Lee Bridgeman, known to most as "Junior," wrote history on the basketball court, throughout Kentucky and beyond. His dedication for championing others' successes and imprinting a substantial difference on our community will not be forgotten. I ask my colleagues to please join me in honoring the life of Junior Bridgeman.

Junior was a renowned athlete who helped lead the University of Louisville men's basketball team to their third Final Four during his senior year in 1975. He then was selected eighth in the