

help strengthen and to train and to retain nurses and EMTs and paramedics and X-ray technicians, essential healthcare workers.

You know, if we want them to stay local, we need to train them locally. And the Presiding Officer sees that in his home State, and I certainly see it in mine.

Well, now, hospitals and clinics and health centers in vulnerable rural communities will have the necessary resources that we need to allow us to treat patients closer to home.

More choices and better care is a direct result of the Republicans' Working Families Tax Cut bill. This Rural Health Transformation Program that we put in place for \$50 billion is the largest Federal investment in rural healthcare ever.

Now, Democrats talk constantly about access to healthcare. Yet when Republicans—when we proposed this fund to help in rural America, every single Democrat in the Senate voted against it. Every single one of them said: Nope. We are not interested in funding rural healthcare.

When Democrats shut down the government last fall—lots of pain for the American people—one of their demands to reopen the government was to slash all of the funding for rural healthcare. They say they are for rural healthcare. They say they are for healthcare. But when given the chance, they refused and actually voted to eliminate our efforts to provide healthcare for rural Americans. That tells you exactly how little these far-left Democrats value America. Democrats have a long history—and it continues today—of thumbing their noses and turning their backs on rural communities and rural America.

At the same time, last summer, what did they vote to do? They voted to provide taxpayer-funded healthcare to illegal immigrants. Democrats: Yes for illegal immigrant healthcare; no for rural American healthcare. And they did it as we continue to uncover massive amounts of fraud. We are seeing it now in Minnesota with government programs, scammers who stole billions of dollars from taxpayers.

Republicans are committed to ensuring Americans have the healthcare they deserve and that the money goes where it needs to go: to American citizens who are deserving and need the care and need the funding and need the support, not to people ripping off the system as the Democrats look the other way.

In September, I attended the grand opening of a hospital in Pinedale, WY. For years, the nearest hospital was 85 miles from Pinedale—and that 85 miles includes curvy roads and a mountain pass. And if the roads were closed due to weather, the next hospital, which was a different direction, was 100 miles away. So this new hospital in Sublette County is going to be saving lives.

Republicans want rural communities across America to have what Pinedale

has today: care they need, doctors they choose, closer to home. Regrettably, many other rural communities are not so fortunate.

And let me tell you what has happened since ObamaCare has become law. Since the Democrats passed ObamaCare on a party-line vote 15 years ago, over 100 rural hospitals have closed—over 100. It is yet another broken promise from the failure of ObamaCare.

Republicans are reversing the trajectory: we are strengthening hospitals; we are supporting providers; and we are keeping care closer to home. That is our commitment, and this is just the beginning. Hundreds of millions of dollars are flowing now, and more funding will continue for the next 5 years. More communities are going to be better served; more patients will receive care; and more lives will be served.

Rural America deserves this sort of treatment and respect and care from the Federal Government. These are the hard-working people that make this country great. High-quality care is necessary for them, and we need to make sure it is where they need it.

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

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

#### RECOGNIZING THE PLAINVILLE TIMES

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, my hometown is Plainville, KS. The population, according to Google just this morning, is 1,746. I rise this morning to recognize and pay tribute to my hometown newspaper, the Plainville Times.

Several months ago, the headline of the paper—the very top story was—“Newspaper for Sale.” Last month, the Times published its final edition as a standalone newspaper and announced it will merge with a neighboring town's newspaper, the Stockton Sentinel, to continue news coverage for local residents. So I take sadness in the demise, the departure of my hometown paper. I take pleasure and pride in its continuation with the news being covered by the Times Sentinel.

For more than a century, the Plainville Times has served the surrounding communities by providing information, education, and timely reporting. The paper first began in 1800, though it changed its names several times over the years, and it became known as the Plainville Times in 1904.

Growing up in this small town in western Kansas, I saw firsthand how the newspaper supported the community and brought neighbors, friends, and even strangers together. Community journalism pulls us together. National journalism has the habit of tearing us apart.

Over the years, the Plainville Times has kept the community informed on

important local issues like a new business coming to town, a city council meeting, or the score of a high school football game. Rural papers bring community residents together for special moments. It is where we see when we have a new birth. It is where we see when we lose a fellow citizen. It is where we celebrate with others about a 50th wedding anniversary. It is the joys of graduation and holiday celebrations. It is about ribbon cuttings. It is the pain of funeral services and natural disasters and really everything in between.

Community journalism is important to the future of communities across Kansas and the Nation. Today, community journalism faces growing challenges with a rapidly changing media environment, as well as workforce struggles and financial strains. Many rural newspapers have very limited staffs, and it is not uncommon for one person to fill the role of reporter, photographer, and editor.

Those who dedicate their lives to this profession, in so many instances in newspapers across Kansas, I find the person that is just doing the job because nobody else would do it. Despite these challenges, that newspaper, including the Plainville Times, leaves lasting marks on the rural towns they cover.

As a kid growing up in Plainville, then representing my hometown as a Member of Congress, and now as a U.S. Senator, I had the opportunity to know and speak with, get acquainted with the Times editors during my lifetime, including Harlan Lill, who was the editor when I was a kid; Carol Van Dyke, who then replaced him; and the current editor Candace Rachel, whom I grew up with in my hometown. She is a longtime native of Plainville, and Candace is deeply committed to our community and has devoted her life to providing news and information to Kansans.

Whether I am attending a Lions Club meeting or visiting the local high school, Candace is always there with her pen and pad and a camera slung over her shoulder. She is one of those editors who does it all. Candace is always there at everything. She loves supporting local sports, the athletes, their parents, their families. She loves to celebrate the victories and bemoan the losses. She always can be spotted on the sidelines of a local football field, the basketball courts, and at baseball games. I appreciate her. I appreciate her love for our community, and I appreciate the way she treats every citizen of my hometown—with the greatest of respect.

I want to thank the Times' publisher, Frank Mercer of Main Street Media, as well as its staff, Bret Greenwood and Tonia Goertz, for their commitment to local journalism.

Over the years, the Plainville Times has been dedicated to pursuing the truth in informing local communities and providing a critical service to rural America. The paper has gained a reputation for informative, fair reporting,

and it has earned recognition from the Kansas Press Association for its work.

With the merging of the Plainville Times with the Stockton Sentinel—Stockton, incidentally, being our cross-county rival—the unified paper will continue to cover Plainville and Rooks County. That is the good news.

I want to congratulate the owners of the Stockton Sentinel, Bart Hamilton and Susan Hamilton Schneider. I am grateful for their investment in local journalism and their support for Stockton, for Plainville, for Palco, for Damar and Zurich, for Codell—for the communities that make up our small county.

I look forward to staying informed on local news. I receive the Plainville Times every week. When I get home, it is in the stack of newspapers that I have yet to read. It is the very first one. My wife would say my first comment is: Oh, the Plainville Times is here.

I look forward every week to seeing what is going on in my hometown, and I appreciate the publication that has provided me and so many others with that information. The Plainville Times and now the Stockton Sentinel Times will be important to every resident who lives in the area.

I again thank those who made this newspaper what it is, and I congratulate and wish the best for those who will make what this newspaper will become.

I yield the floor.

#### VOTE ON SIMMONS NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Simmons nomination?

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 53, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 2 Ex.]

#### YEAS—53

Banks	Graham	Moreno
Barrasso	Grassley	Mullin
Blackburn	Hagerty	Murkowski
Boozman	Hawley	Paul
Britt	Hoeven	Ricketts
Budd	Husted	Risch
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Cassidy	Johnson	Schmitt
Collins	Justice	Scott (FL)
Cornyn	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cotton	Lankford	Sheehy
Cramer	Lee	Sullivan
Crapo	Lummis	Thune
Cruz	Marshall	Tillis
Curtis	McConnell	Tuberville
Daines	McCormick	Wicker
Ernst	Moody	Young
Fischer	Moran	

#### NAYS—47

Alsobrooks	Cantwell	Gallego
Baldwin	Coons	Gillibrand
Bennet	Cortez Masto	Hassan
Blumenthal	Duckworth	Heinrich
Blunt Rochester	Durbin	Hickenlooper
Booker	Fetterman	Hirono

Kaine	Ossoff	Slotkin
Kelly	Padilla	Smith
Kim	Peters	Van Hollen
King	Reed	Warner
Klobuchar	Rosen	Warnock
Lujan	Sanders	Warren
Markey	Schatz	Welch
Merkley	Schiff	Whitehouse
Murphy	Schumer	Wyden
Murray	Shaheen	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CURTIS). Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

#### RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:36 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. BRITT).

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

FERNANDO MENDOZA

Mr. BANKS. Madam President, as we begin the new year, there are a lot of things that Members of Congress and the American people are paying attention to. But something really extraordinary is going on in my home State of Indiana. It is not just Hoosiers who are paying attention; the whole country is following Indiana football.

I am the first in my family to go to college, and it was a no-brainer for me to attend Indiana University in Bloomington.

Everyone knows that IU is a basketball school. IU basketball won five national championships. We had the legendary 1976 undefeated team in the NCAA—the only undefeated team in college basketball history.

When I got to college in the 1990s, one of the reasons I attended IU was to watch Bobby Knight-coached basketball games. We had great players over the years: Isaiah Thomas, Damon Bailey, Steve Alford, and so many others who played on the floor at Assembly Hall and made Indiana very proud. Assembly Hall is the mecca of college basketball. Again, it is one of the reasons that I wanted to go to college there in the first place. When I go back to IU and attend basketball games, I still get choked up in the pregame show at Assembly Hall each and every time.

But IU was never known as a football school. Sure, we had some great talent over the years—Antwaan Randle El was the star player when I attended IU—but IU football always had a lot more downs than it had ups. In fact, when I was a student at Indiana University, the football program was so bad that they gave free season tickets to all of the students who lived in the dorms, and at every game, the stadium

was hardly ever even half full except for those occasions when the Ohio State Buckeyes came over the State line to play in Bloomington.

As IU fans, we were trained to never get our hopes up about Indiana football, but now, my, how the tides have turned. Now, the entire country is watching one of the greatest turnarounds in sports history. From being college football's alltime leader in losses to now having an undefeated season, wherein we won the Rose Bowl, the Big Ten Championship, and had a Heisman Trophy winner, IU football has captured the country's attention. In fact, the great Dick Vitale said, "Hoosier football is the greatest turn around" that he has ever seen.

When IU President Pam Whitten and athletic director Scott Dolson brought on coach Curt Cignetti, IU's football program turned around overnight. And when my wife and I attended the IU game earlier this season against Wisconsin, the stadium was absolutely packed—a real change from what past games used to look like. Coach Cignetti has brought great pride to the State of Indiana.

I want to highlight the incredible young man who has led IU's team to glory this season, the great Fernando Mendoza.

Just 3 weeks ago, Fernando became the first Heisman Trophy winner in Indiana University's history. When I was in college, I have got to tell you that it would have been impossible to imagine having had a Heisman Trophy winner at Indiana University. What makes this man truly exceptional is not simply his award-winning career on the field. What makes Fernando so incredible is that he represents the very best of what we hope to see in our Nation's young people—a combination of excellence, character, faith, and service to others.

In fact, a few days ago, Fernando led the Hoosiers to an incredible 38-to-3 victory over Alabama in the Rose Bowl, winning the first ever Rose Bowl in IU's history and the first win in the modern playoff era for the Indiana Hoosiers.

Right after the game, Fernando was asked about the big win. And do you know what he said? Before saying anything else, he said:

My team and I want to give all the glory to God.

In all of his interviews, Fernando always makes sure to thank God first. That is a man who has his priorities straight. That is a man who is proud to live out his faith, who honors God in everything that he does.

But there is more.

With Fernando Mendoza, there is really no "I" in "team." When he received his Heisman trophy, Fernando made it clear that it wasn't his trophy alone. Instead he said that it was "our trophy." That is why he has made the gracious decision to keep the Heisman Trophy in Bloomington, IN. It is because the Trophy belongs to the university and to the fans, he said.