

TRIBUTE TO JESSE MAHAN

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, there are many days that I come to this floor to talk about a lot of different policy issues and things we need to get done—and there are a lot of things needing to get done. Our list is long here in the Senate.

I did just want to take a moment of personal privilege to not talk about policy for just a moment but to talk about some people.

I have got two staff members that are leaving my team that my State and the Nation may or may not know their name, but they have been exceptionally impactful in what they have done.

Jesse Mahan has been on my team, as he reminds me, so long that when he first came on the team, he was issued a BlackBerry when he first came on the team.

He came on writing letters and doing background work. He led Indian Affairs. He is a Tribal member. He was a terrific hand in a lot of different areas, and he ended up leading a lot of my budget work and then eventually tax work.

He has led through a lot of really complicated issues over the years, and every single time—whether it is Tribal law or whether it is tax law, which both of them are very complicated—he thrived. He did his homework, and he helped this Nation.

There were significant areas of the Working Families Tax Cut last year that we got over the finish line because of his work with some of the staff behind the scenes to be able to explain some of the complexity and to be able to convince some people this is actually good for the economy. He did a terrific job through that process.

Unfortunately, we are losing him in the next week, and he will be dearly missed on our team.

TRIBUTE TO MONA TAYLOR

There is a lady on our team that is not just a member of our team—she is an Oklahoma institution. Her name is Ramona Taylor. She was born in Oklahoma City, but if you ask her, she is going to claim Burns Flat, OK. You have got to be from Oklahoma to know where Burns Flat is—or use Google Maps. But Burns Flat is a small town in Western Oklahoma. She brought those small-town, Western Oklahoma values to our team as well.

She has served the Nation for 41 years—41 years of Federal service. And, unfortunately, she is retiring, and my State has no idea what is about to happen in the loss of Mona Taylor.

She graduated from Burns Flat in 1979 and then she went to Central State University—which is now called the University of Central Oklahoma—got a bachelor's degree in business administration and then began her Federal career serving with Congressman Mickey Edwards.

Now, this will tell you how long ago that was. At the time, Mickey Edwards was the only Republican Member of Congress from Oklahoma. We had one,

and it was Mickey. She served with Mickey Edwards there.

She met her husband in 1992—Andy—who was an air traffic controller who has been a terrific leader. They have now been married for 34 years.

I have to tell you, she has done remarkable work in ways that people will never know, but just the story of her life is also significant as well: Being the girl from Burns Flat and then finding ways to be able to serve that the country will never forget.

She and Andy, when they were married in 1992, they ended up, with his career in air traffic control, moving up to Washington, DC. They just had their first son Clay in 1994, and they moved up to DC to have this job up here to be able to work alongside Andy.

It was a painful day on April 19, 1995, when the Murrah Building bombing happened in Oklahoma City. It was a painful day for the entire country, but especially for those of us from Oklahoma. But she realized that day that if she had not been with her husband here in Washington, DC, that their young son Clay would have actually been in the Murrah Building bombing in that daycare that day. It never leaves you.

She, in her constituent work, did a remarkable amount of constituent work to be able to walk alongside families during that time period because, as you can imagine, there was a lot to do.

At the time, she had come up to be able to work with FRANK LUCAS and was serving alongside him in his office here. She returned to work with a guy named J.C. Watts and to be able to serve with J.C. Watts and then with the person after him, TOM COLE. Along the way, her second son Sam was born in 1996, and they continued to be able to build their family.

Mona really sunk into what some people call constituent services. She just calls it ministry to people. She wants to help in every way she possibly can. Mona was the one—when people want to call and to be able to yell on the phone, and they are just angry at whatever is going on in government, Mona was always the calming voice to be able to listen. In fact, our team calls it “getting Monaed” because this angry person would rage, and she would listen and listen and calm them and calm them, would take notes. And I will tell you, if she couldn't calm them down and they just wanted to be able to continue to scream and cuss at her endlessly, she would just say, “God loves you. Thank you. Goodbye” and just hang up because she wants to be able to help people just to be able to see that things can get better. And she has helped make it that way over and over again.

She had a short stint working with the FAA. In her leadership role at the FAA is when I was actually elected into the House of Representatives. I will never forget how I met her. I knew her husband Andy before I knew Mona. We were planning to go on a mission trip together, and I had to sit down

with Andy and say: Hey, I can't go on this mission trip. You don't know it; I have not announced it yet, but I am going to be running for Congress, and so I am not going to be able to leave with you and go on this mission trip because that is going to be a distraction to what is going on.

I remember him saying to me: Do you know who my wife is?

I said: No.

He said: My wife is Mona Taylor.

I remember distinctly saying to him: The Mona Taylor is your wife?

I said: I would love to be able to pick her brain.

Everybody wants to know Mona Taylor because she knows so much of behind the scenes about how Federal offices work from working with so many different Federal offices and actually finding ways to not just do the job but to actually serve people in that role, to set an atmosphere on this.

I was honored in 2011, when I came into the House of Representatives, that Mona agreed to leave FAA, come back into congressional service, and to be able to serve as my district director. Then, when I was elected into the Senate, she then took the role as the State director for me. I will never regret that.

She has an absolute heart of gold and loves people. She has often said that she wants our office to be known for our casework, how we take care of people, and it is. Mona has also mentored countless staff from all over the Federal delegation in our State. Literally, there is no caseworker in any of the seven Federal offices in our State that Mona has not impacted in some way.

Mona was the congressional staffer when the Edmond Post Office shooting happened in 1986. She was the one working with all of those families and trying to be able to help them through years ago. She was the one doing a lot of the casework, as I mentioned before, in 1995, with all the victims and families around the Murrah Building bombing. She was the one that was actually taking care of a lot of these issues and coordinating the work behind the scenes to make sure we helped each person.

Mona even, notoriously in her family, as she drives into work, prays for the task and what she is going to do that day. We have never forgotten the day that Mona, on the way in to work, saw two French bulldogs just on the side of the road and determined those French bulldogs were probably somebody's. So she just picked them up, put them in her car, and then started working to try to figure out—because they had to be a constituent—try to figure out how to be able to take care of a constituent that lost two French bulldogs. You know what. She figured it out and got the dogs back to them. So apparently Mona not only loves people, but she loves dogs as well because she knows they are attached to people.

I will tell you, Mona was also that person, always, that you don't ever tell

her you like something she has because if you tell her—if one of the staff members would say to her, “I really like that jacket that you are wearing,” she would just take it off and give it to them. If she brought something for lunch one day and they would say, “That smells delicious,” well, guess what, she would actually bring it to them the next day to be able to make sure they had it because Mona’s mission was always to take care of people. It has always been that way.

That is why I think Oklahomans have no idea how hard this is going to be for our State because the person in the middle of our Federal delegation has had that heart for four decades and has impacted the way we take care of people.

I don’t fault Mona for retiring. Her best job is her job of being “Momo” to her granddaughter Georgia Marie. She is the biggest cheerleader for her two boys, and she loves taking care of Andy. She dedicated early on, according to their agreement, that their house will never ever, ever run out of ketchup—ever—because Andy loves ketchup. And she, early on in their marriage, said: Our house will never ever run out of ketchup.

Mona is also the person that keeps the “mom” drawer in her desk. She is the one in our office—if you need a bandaid or if you need something else, Mona has got it. And she is going to take care of everybody else.

Her recordkeeping is a gift to us because we are going to be able to go through and see the cases and the things—and the people—that she has done, but, really, her heart for service will be the legacy for Mona Taylor.

I know, again, we talk about a lot of policy issues here, but I just didn’t want to miss a moment for us to remember that our policy issues are all connected to people. Mona never forgot that—ever—and I have been honored to be able to serve with her this decade and a half. I am grateful for the gift of her time to our State and her mentorship to so many different staff across our State.

So, to Mona, I would just say to this body, we owe a lot to her, and she will be missed.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, this has nothing to do with why I am speaking, but I was sitting there thinking, listening to Senator LANKFORD talk about Miss Mona.

Miss Mona, we are going to miss you. And I was thinking—you know, I know it is a sin to covet, but I wish God had given me a voice like Senator LANKFORD’s. You know, he gave me a voice that scares small children and sets off car alarms. I would love to have a voice like Senator LANKFORD’s. I would also like to have his big brain too.

That was really nice of you, James.

And thank you, Mona, for your service.

TRIBUTE TO KAILYN SHEEHAN

Mr. President, with me today are two of my colleagues—Mr. John Lowery, my executive assistant. You have met John before. But the star of the show today—for me, anyway—is Ms. Kailyn Sheehan.

Kailyn is also an executive assistant to me. Her job includes scheduling. It is the worst job in America. All scheduling jobs are tough because you have to tell a small percentage of people yes but a whole lot of people no, and some people don’t take no well.

Kailyn is leaving me. I say that with joy and sadness. As I said before, I try to hire the best people I can, and when you do that, as the Presiding Officer knows, you hire good people, and they are ambitious and they want to move up. And so it is just the price you pay.

Kailyn is very, very smart. She has an undergraduate degree and an M.B.A. degree. In college, she really was a good student, but she was also a student athlete. She played soccer in college and was very good at it.

Kailyn never loses her composure. She is steady. She never panics. That doesn’t sound like a big deal, I suppose, but being a scheduler up here is hard. It is really, really, really hard.

Kailyn is going to work for Congressman RILEY MOORE in West Virginia. She has gotten a fancy title there: “director of operations.”

Congratulations, Congressman. You are getting a good one in Kailyn.

I hate to lose her, but it is a step up for her, and she will be not just doing scheduling but doing other things in the office.

So, Kailyn, I wanted to ask you to come down and to say thank you. Thank you for your good work.

MEDICAID

Mr. President, I just want to talk for a few minutes about what I think should be obvious. I know the cost of living is a problem in America today. We all know that. I like to say, when moms and dads go to sleep at night and can’t, one of the things they are worried about is the cost of living. I get that.

What could we do to help? Well, obviously, one thing we could do would be to lower taxes. We have to be careful how we do that because we don’t want to increase the deficit. We don’t want to just borrow money to do that. Another thing we could do to help would be to lower interest rates. If we lower interest rates, people would pay less interest on their credit cards and on their car loans and on their house notes.

Well, what can we do—and the Presiding Officer knows this—to spend less so we can cut taxes and also lower interest rates? One of the things we could do is stop fraud. One of the things we can do is stop the outrageous fraud in our Medicaid Program.

Now, look—I want to be very clear here—I am proud of Medicaid. I am proud of the fact that in our country, if you are too poor to be sick, we will pay

for your doctor. That is not true in every country, as the Presiding Officer knows. In some countries, they will just let you die in a ditch. We don’t do that in America. We will pay for your medical care. But that is outrageously expensive. That is OK. Money well spent, but it is very, very expensive.

One of the ways we pay for people’s care—particularly for low-income Americans but also, now even more so, for middle-class Americans since ObamaCare passed—is through Medicaid. We spend almost \$1 trillion on Medicaid every year.

Once again, I am not speaking against the concept of Medicaid. We don’t want people to die in America. That is one of the things that separate us from other people. But we spend almost \$1 trillion a year. And the Federal Government—some people don’t know this—pays for 67 percent of all Medicaid spending. Some people refer to Medicaid as a Federal-State program, and it is. The State puts up some of the money, but the Federal Government puts up most of the money. We pay for about 67 percent of all the spending in Medicaid.

Medicaid keeps going up. I have seen studies that show it is going up anywhere, consistently, between 6 and 8 percent every single year. When you are spending \$1 trillion and it goes up 6 to 8 percent, you are talking about real money.

What we also know is that there is an enormous amount of fraud in Medicaid. We know that. There are a lot of studies out there. And not everyone can agree on how much, but I have seen studies from reputable think tanks that show that Medicaid fraud—stealing in the Medicaid Program—runs between \$1.1 trillion and \$1.2 trillion over a 10-year period. Can you imagine what we could do to lower interest rates or to reduce taxes if we could save \$1.2 trillion in our budget?

Now, how does this happen? Well, first of all, why don’t States do a better job of controlling the fraud? You say, why am I blaming the States? Well, because it is a Federal-State program, and the Feds put up 67 percent of the money, but States administer that program. And some States do a pretty good job. Some States do a very good job. Some States are terrible at it.

I don’t know exactly why that is, but every State—I want to make this clear—has fraud.

I saw an audit done by our inspector general in Louisiana, a few years ago, and he talked about the incidents of fraud in the Medicaid Program in Louisiana, the people who were getting Medicaid that didn’t qualify.

And I said, can you send me a list of all the people you found in the Medicaid Program who didn’t qualify or were making too much money? I don’t want names. I just want the amounts of money that they were making and how they have been on Medicaid.

He sent me the list. And if I stacked it up here, I could stand on it and paint