

He always wanted to be the absolute best in whatever he did, be it a new sport, an honors student, a caring brother, or a marine. His parents John can take comfort in knowing that their son was successful in all of the above.

My wife Fran and I wish to express our deepest thanks to Christopher Dyer for giving his life for our freedom. We will keep his family—his parents John Dyer and Kathy Dyer, and his sisters Laura and Sarah—in our thoughts and prayers.

LANCE CORPORAL DANIEL MC VICKER

Mr. President, this afternoon I come to the Senate floor to pay tribute to a remarkable young man and a fellow Ohioan—Marine LCpl Daniel M. McVicker from Alliance, OH. Lance Corporal McVicker was killed in the city of Al Qaim, Iraq on October 6, 2005, while driving an armored vehicle that was hit by a roadside bomb. He was 20 years old.

Daniel is survived by his father and stepmother, Mark and Irma McVicker, and his mother and stepfather, Carey and Bill Meissner. He was also the loving brother of Mollie McVicker and Eddie Ricci. Daniel is also survived by his grandparents Chet and Nancy Wiley; his grandfather Morgan McVicker; and his great-grandmother Dorothy Bingham.

Danny—as he was known to family and friends—lived his life to the fullest. His mother, Carey, remembers him as “a wonderful son and a guy who always liked to have fun.” He had many interests, and was deeply involved in school extracurricular activities. As a freshman at West Branch High School in Beloit OH, he wrestled and played football until he injured his ankle. But this didn’t stop Danny, who quickly turned to a new love—music.

He joined the school’s concert choir and became a favorite participant in West Branch’s annual spring musicals, playing roles in “Guys and Dolls,” “The Wizard of Oz,” and “Grease.” During his junior and senior year, he joined the school’s highly competitive ensemble choir, Young and Alive, and also traveled to perform at Disneyland. And during his senior year, Danny earned the honor of being elected by his peers as “Assistant Warrior Chief,” one of three mascots for the school.

Danny was something we could all aspire to—a young man who simply had the confidence to be himself. This is what his father, Mark McVicker, had to say about him:

He had his own drum and people loved him for it. If you met him, you loved him. He was very strong, very friendly, very popular.

Dr. Scott Weingart, the superintendent of West Branch High School, expressed a similar sentiment. He said:

Our students remember Dan McVicker as a student who was nice to everyone, who had friends in many, many different circles.

And Mr. John Zamarelli, Danny’s music teacher, described Danny as “the rarest of teenagers—one so secure that he never worried about what anybody thought of him.”

Danny was indeed an individual with many interests. But his strongest passion was the desire to serve our Nation. Danny and his friends were only high school juniors when the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks occurred. And yet they were deeply moved by the events of that day. Inspired to serve his country, Danny joined the Marines Corp shortly after he graduated in 2003. Nine of his classmates joined along with him, all motivated by the same desire. Together, these young men gave new meaning to the mascot of West Branch—the Warriors.

Dr. Weingart was not surprised when he learned that Danny had decided to enlist. “He was just that kind of young man,” he said.

Once Danny made the decision to enlist in the Marines, he was surrounded by love and support. Eleven family members accompanied him to his enlistment ceremony in Cleveland. They were all very proud.

In Iraq, Danny served in the Combat Logistics Battalion Security Company, providing security for convoys as part of the II Marine Expeditionary Force. His fellow marines thought very highly of him. Joe Vickery of Mantua, Ohio, remembers that he saw Danny “transform into a great marine.” In Joe’s words, Danny “never gave up.”

Indeed, Danny was a great marine who “knew what he had to do.” While stationed at the Marine Corps Air Station in Cherry Point, NC, he volunteered to go to Iraq on several occasions. In the words of his father, Mark:

He truly felt like he wasn’t contributing unless he was over there.

This was just typical of Danny. He was always willing to help out—be it his country, community, or fellow man. He was a proud member of the First Brethren Church of North Georgetown, someone deeply rooted in his church and community. After joining the Marines, he corresponded on a regular basis with his pastor, Rev. Mitchell Funkhouser. Reverend Funkhouser particularly recalls one letter, the last that Danny sent. Referring to his duty to protect the other troops, Danny had written:

They called us the Guardians. It’s a humbling title.

I would like to share a story that his father Mark relates about Danny, who had wanted to get a tattoo since he was 18, but waited until he joined the Marines to do so. Danny had waited until after his 18th birthday to enlist because he wanted to sign up on his own—he didn’t want his dad to do it for him. Well, Danny talked over the tattoo decision with his father Mark and his stepmother Irma. A Bible verse was what he wanted, he said, thinking that because it was religious they would agree to it quicker. As his father, Mark, says:

So one Sunday the three of us sat down in the living room and researched the Bible. He said I want something that describes strength and it must be in the Book of Daniel.

Mark and Irma—but mostly Danny—agreed after a couple hours of Bible study that Daniel 10:6 was going to be his first tattoo once he was a Marine. Danny unveiled the new tattoo that Thanksgiving. It was on his left shoulder and read:

His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.

Danny was proud of the chosen verse, and Mark himself even agreed that it was a nice-looking tattoo. And 10/6—the number of the Bible verse that Danny chose—also became the month and day that he died a hero serving his Nation, a symbol of strength and dedication.

Danny McVicker was dearly loved and respected by all who knew him. Over 400 friends, neighbors, and strangers came to his funeral to pay their respects. At the funeral, Danny’s old roommate, Marine Corporal Ben Fiddler, said that “having Daniel as a friend was a blessing.”

Danny’s schoolmates at West Branch felt the same way. After his death, they honored him with a makeshift memorial in front of the school. The school has also formalized a tribute by naming a senior award in his honor, and a moment of silence was observed in his honor before a West End versus Alliance High School football game, a game which Danny’s Warriors won with a thrilling, last minute field goal.

Indeed, his family, friends, and neighbors will never forget Danny McVicker. He lived life to the fullest, and was model of what we all hope our children will become. His heart was big, and he had a tremendous sense of dedication to his family, community, and country. His parents should be applauded for having raised such a wonderful son and patriot.

My wife Fran and I will continue to keep the family of Daniel McVicker in our thoughts and prayers.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate now proceed to a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

Mr. DEWINE. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 15 minutes.

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

MEDICARE ENHANCEMENTS FOR NEEDED DRUGS ACT

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, a new public opinion poll shows that Americans are particularly concerned about the restriction that keeps Medicare from bargaining to hold down the costs of the medicine older people purchase.

In fact, a new poll yesterday indicated 93 percent of the American people want this restriction lifted—and for obvious reasons. The fact of the matter is, millions of older people simply cannot pay their skyrocketing prescription drug bills and they want to know why the Government isn't doing more to contain these costs.

Fortunately, we have been able to make a little bit of headway on this issue in the Senate. Senator SNOWE and I, in particular, earlier this year, got the support of 54 Senators, a majority of the Senate, to lift this restriction and take stronger action to hold down the cost of medicine.

Medicare is sort of like the guy going to Costco buying toilet paper one roll at a time. The Government is not acting like a smart shopper. The Government is not taking practical steps like everyone in Tennessee, Oregon, Iowa, or anywhere else, to use bargaining power to hold down the cost of this essential for older people, prescription drugs.

We have made a bit of headway. I have been particularly pleased the distinguished Senator from Nevada, Mr. REID, made it clear this would be a top priority for the Senate to take up when we begin our work early next year.

Given that and in hopes that the Senate can come together on a bipartisan basis—and I believe the approach Senator SNOWE and I have been taking for the past 3 years can now get over 60 votes in the Senate—I take a few minutes tonight to outline a bit as to how it would work if this restriction was lifted and Medicare could genuinely act to hold down the cost of medicine.

So let's start with the example of a new drug coming out on the market for cancer, and it is an expensive drug. Let's say this drug that many seniors will need will cost \$100,000. At present, each of the plans that offers the prescription drug benefit has to negotiate for the few people in each of those plans who might need the new drug.

If the legislation Senator SNOWE and I have been advocating became law, the Secretary could negotiate on behalf of all the people in the Medicare private plans who need the drug. That way, there would be new leverage for older

people in the private marketplace to hold down the cost of medicine. If you had a small number of people in a private plan, say, in Tennessee, and a small number of people in a private plan in Oregon, and a small number of people in a private plan in Iowa, the Secretary could negotiate on behalf of all of those people in Medicare's private plans. That could mean real savings to folks in Tennessee and folks in Oregon and folks elsewhere who right now do not have a lot of leverage in the private marketplace.

Now, think about the implications of this proposal. Nobody is talking about price controls. Nobody is talking about a one-size-fits-all run-from-Washington, DC, approach that would freeze innovation.

I know the distinguished Senator from Tennessee has been particularly interested, as I have, in taking approaches that promote innovation in the science and biomedical fields. What I have just described, which is something that could be done under the approach Senator SNOWE and I have been advocating, will not freeze research, will not freeze innovation, but will make darn sure the senior citizens of this country and the taxpayers of this country have a new opportunity to hold down the cost of medicine and also protect the wallets of our taxpayers.

Let me give another example of how this approach can contain the costs of medicine. Let's say we have an older person in Portland, OR, or Miami or New York. They are in a metropolitan area, and in the metropolitan area they may have a choice of major plans because a lot of folks are vying to get a part of the "big city" market with a lot of older people. So let's say one of the seniors is in an HMO, a health maintenance organization, or they are in something called a PPO, a preferred provider organization, or maybe they are in a drug-only private plan. All of those private entities may be looking for ways to hold down the costs, but if one of those private plans does not get the same deal the other big private buyers get, then one of those plans can ask Medicare to step in at that point. In effect, one of those private plans that is not getting a fair shake in the marketplace can say to Medicare: Hey, look, we are not getting a very good deal when it comes to negotiating for our seniors. At that point, Medicare could step in and say: We are going to assist in that kind of bargaining process.

I happen to think just the fact Medicare is in a position to have that leverage—if the private marketplace is not willing to bargain seriously, is not willing to negotiate seriously—just the fact there would be that kind of leverage for Medicare can help to be a force to contain the cost of medicine for older people.

So here again I have cited an example of how you can hold down the cost of medicine without price controls,

without national formularies and approaches that could constrain innovation, just by using plain old common sense and bargaining power, the way every business does in North Carolina, Tennessee, and across the country.

Now, finally, it seems to me we ought to be thinking about the fact that with many older people, they will have a private retirement package as well. So a lot of those seniors are concerned about their overall health care bill, knowing they are going to get some help from Medicare and some help from a private health package as well. But if you hold down the costs of the Medicare plan, then you are going to have more money in the pockets of older people as they try to cope with their extra out-of-pocket costs.

So when the Medicare plans save seniors money on medicine, that is simply less cost the retiree plan has to make up. Seniors are going to be looking at their overall bill, and they want to know that every step possible is being taken to hold down their Medicare expenses, as Senator SNOWE and I have been advocating for the last 3 years, because if that is done, there is simply less cost for the retiree plan to make up.

Containing the costs on the Medicare side has the potential to help keep costs down for employers insuring their retirees. So if you do that, you are also going to provide some relief to the taxpayers of this country because included in the original Medicare bill are a lot of subsidies designed to help employers keep insuring their retirees so a lot of older people do not just get pushed back entirely into Medicare when their employers ought to be helping them. By containing drug costs through Medicare and containing some of the costs for those employers, then the need for taxpayer dollars to shore up those employer plans goes down.

What is the bottom line? We are going to be able to help seniors not through a Government cost-containment approach but by empowering those who are supposed to advocate for them in the private marketplace. That is what 54 Members of the U.S. Senate have voted for. It is a comprehensive, market-based, cost-containment approach. It will help older people in the marketplace if they are part of a small plan. And the Secretary is in a position to negotiate on behalf of all of those in those small plans, say, for an expensive cancer drug. It could help the older person in a big city where some plans are getting a good deal but one senior is not. At that point, the senior wants somebody to make sure there is some extra clout in the marketplace.

Finally, I think what Senator SNOWE and I have been advocating over these last 3 years will help employers and taxpayers as well. If you hold down the costs on the Medicare side, that is going to mean the employers—the employers—of this country are not going to have to come up with as much