

Cutting physician reimbursement will not make our nation stronger, healthier or safer. I believe that less physician time will mean less health and more healthcare cost.

Please take action to prevent further deterioration of the medical care for the elderly.

I couldn't agree more.

I have heard from so many people regarding this issue. I will read one more statement, from Dr. Thomas Watkins, a DO and family practice physician in Muskegon, MI:

It will be a travesty for many seniors if doctors stop accepting Medicare due to fund cutting. With our expenses going up 5-10 percent annually and Medicare cutting 5 percent next year it will be very difficult for many of my colleagues and myself to continue to practice medicine for Medicare recipients. Please at least vote to freeze the fee schedule to allow access for all seniors to the physician of their choice, just as you have that privilege.

I simply ask that we act now. We have no more time to wait. People are counting on us.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. VITTER). The Senator from Tennessee is recognized.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 10 minutes.

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

HONORING SENATORIAL SERVICE

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, we are coming to the end of the session and 10 of our colleagues are retiring. I want to say a word about them, especially one of them, my colleague, Senator BILL FRIST, from Tennessee.

BILL FRIST

I can still remember when BILL FRIST came to my office in Nashville in 1994 and said he wanted to run for the Senate. I didn't know what to think. BILL FRIST lived in the neighborhood where I lived in Nashville, but I didn't know him very well. Our ages are a little bit different and he had been away while I was Governor of Tennessee, practicing medicine and honing his skills.

What I did know about him was that he was extraordinary. He was one of the pioneers in our country of heart and lung transplants. He performed the first one in Tennessee, the first one in the Southeast. When he decided to run for the Senate, only a handful of physicians in the world had made as many heart transplants as Dr. BILL FRIST.

He had almost no chance of being elected to the Senate in 1994. However, he was elected. He had almost no chance, after having been elected, to help the Republicans gain the majority in 2002, but he did that. No one expected him to be the majority leader of the Senate, but he has been and he has done it very well.

As we look at the record of the accomplishments over the last 4 years, Senator FRIST can take credit for his leadership in creating an environment where we have had tax cuts that have benefited Americans, where we have confirmed judges who will interpret the

law rather than make it up as they go along. His hand was in the Medicare prescription drug benefit which benefits millions of seniors. We would not have had the \$15 billion for HIV/AIDS in Africa had it not been for BILL FRIST.

In Tennessee, we have had a sales tax deduction against our Federal income tax and a new governing board for the Tennessee Valley Authority, neither of which would have been accomplished were it not for BILL FRIST. When Lyndon Johnson was majority leader, he often said, having Lyndon Johnson as majority leader is good for the country and hasn't hurt Texas one bit. I would say, having BILL FRIST as majority leader has been good for the country and it hasn't hurt Tennessee one bit.

He has been the perfect colleague. His ego has been completely under control in a body where that is rare and difficult. And one thing is certain: Anyone who knows BILL FRIST won't underestimate him again. History has proven that is a dangerous thing to do. I don't know very many people who have ever been in public life who have as many interesting and important and viable options open to him as he does as he looks forward to the next step in his contributions to public service.

One of the joys of being a Senator is simply the privilege of serving with other Senators. Each one of the Senators has something remarkable and special. For example, Senator FRIST was president of the skydiving club at Princeton when he was there. He spends vacations in Sudan, doing surgery on poor people. He once got up at 4 in the morning and went to the National Zoo to operate on the heart of a gorilla—which I guess is a pretty good way of preparing for coming to the Senate floor and dealing with what he has to deal with here. He is not the only one who is a very special Senator.

CONRAD BURNS

My friend, CONRAD BURNS, who is retiring, was a marine, an auctioneer, had his own radio program and TV program in Montana. He would sometimes pick up hitchhikers on his way in to work in the Senate—a pretty good surprise for a Government employee to be picked up by a U.S. Senator.

MIKE DEWINE

Or MIKE DEWINE, with his eight children and ninth grandchild, whose heart is nearly as big as he is. He lost a child, and he and Fran have gone to Haiti time after time after time to help people there who need help.

GEORGE ALLEN

Or GEORGE ALLEN. I remember vividly the first time I met him, I campaigned for him in Virginia. He was 40 points behind. I went back to Tennessee and I said, I believe he will win, he is such a good candidate. We haven't heard the last of him in public life.

RICK SANTORUM

Or RICK SANTORUM, Karen, and their six children whom they home school, and his Italian heritage—which ex-

plains a lot about his enthusiasm and vigor for the things he believes in most strongly.

PAUL SARBANES

Or PAUL SARBANES, who was in the same Rhodes Scholar class with Senator DICK LUGAR.

JIM TALENT

Or JIM TALENT, who was the outstanding political science student at Washington University in St. Louis when he was there. No one would be surprised to learn that.

LINCOLN CHAFEE

Or Senator LINC CHAFEE, also retiring, was a wrestler in college. He spent several years in the United States and Canada as a professional blacksmith before he got into politics.

MARK DAYTON

Or MARK DAYTON, whose interest in the environment in Minnesota has been so exceptional.

JIM JEFFORDS

Or JIM JEFFORDS, a former Navy captain, who has had so much to do with offering legislation for clean air and children with disabilities.

When the most recent class of Senators was sworn into office nearly 2 years ago, in the gallery were three women. One was the grandmother of BARACK OBAMA. She was from Kenya. One was the mother of Senator SALAZAR, a 10th generation American. One was the mother of MEL MARTINEZ, the new Republican National Committee chairman, who, with her husband, put her son on an airplane when he was 14 years old and sent him from Cuba to the United States, not knowing if she would ever see him again.

In a way, each one of us who is here is an accident. None of us knew we would be here. Each of us is privileged to serve, and one of the greatest privileges is to serve with our colleagues. We will miss them and we are grateful for their service.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia is recognized.

REFLECTIONS ON SENATE SERVICE

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. President, as the time for my departure from the Senate draws near, on behalf of the greatest blessing in my life, my wife Susan, and on behalf of myself, I thank all of my colleagues for their many courtesies and friendships that have been forged during the past 6 years and offer a few concluding reflections about our time here together, as well as talk about the future of our Republic.

Our foremost statesman in Virginia, Harry Byrd, Jr., observed that with the exception of the Presidencies of Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt, no time in the history of our country has witnessed more problems and challenges of great magnitude than these past 6 years.

When I arrived here in January of 2001, America was at peace, or so it

seemed, and so we thought. And then on that bright blue sky morning of September 11, the skies suddenly darkened with clouds of smoke from the Pentagon and the horrific collapse of the World Trade Center towers in New York City, and our world changed forever.

A cascade of other great challenges soon followed in rapid succession, issues foreign and domestic, challenges locally and nationally, threats man-made and disasters decreed by nature.

Through all of these unprecedented storms, it was our responsibility to make careful decisions for the safety, security, and prosperity of the people of our country. I am particularly grateful to the people of the Commonwealth of Virginia for the opportunity to serve here, to give voice to their values, and fight for the future of this country, our commonwealth, while serving in this, the world's most distinguished body.

We all understand and respect the will of the people, whom I call the owners of the Government. They are the leaders of our representative democracy who bring us here and who may, at some point, take us away.

I have been honored by the people of Virginia, first as Governor and now as a Senator, to be a part of important initiatives that have borne fruit for the people of our Commonwealth and our country.

As Governor, we worked across party lines to accomplish honest change that Virginians desired and deserved. We abolished the lenient, dishonest parole system in Virginia, cracked down on violent criminals, and there are fewer victims of crime in Virginia. We reformed the welfare laws by promoting the work ethic, and now there are tens of thousands of Virginians who are leading more independent, self-reliant lives. In education, we established high academic standards and accountability in our schools, and our students are learning better, and we invested in higher education throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.

We sent a message to the world that Virginia was open for business, and cut taxes, and implemented prompter permitting in the Commonwealth, and were able to recruit in technology companies. In fact, the No. 1 manufactured export from Virginia now is computer memory chips, surpassing cigarettes. That is a great transformation from the Old Dominion to the "Silicon Dominion."

When I came to the Senate, my goal was to use this perspective and these experiences to continue and build on this work. I have been able to do that, and I am grateful to so many of my colleagues for working in partnership with me on so many issues that are vitally important for the lives, safety, and prosperity of our citizens.

Whether it is making sure that avaricious State and local tax commissars don't put an 18-percent tax on one's monthly Internet access bill, or whether it is the nanotechnology initiative,

working with my colleague across the aisle, Senator WYDEN, or whether it was increasing the paltry death gratuity that went to the next of kin of one of our fallen Armed Forces members, increasing it from \$12,000 to \$100,000, from a grateful nation, these are good successes, reflecting the values and virtues of our country.

I am particularly grateful to our State's senior Senator, JOHN WARNER, who at each step of the way has been by my side as a partner and even more as a gracious mentor, wise counsel, once in a while an encourager of various ideas, and once in a while, occasionally, a corrector, but, most of all, an unwavering friend. He is the epitome of the Virginia gentleman, and the model of an honest, hard-working Senator. I will leave here enriched immeasurably by this latest and best chapter of our partnership of several decades.

Now, next month, I will no longer have the privilege of serving with Senator WARNER and many of my colleagues here in the Senate, but I pledge to keep working and advancing and advocating ideals and values and shared principles that I think are important missions for the future of Virginia and our country.

There are three key missions that I think are important for our country's future. First is to protect our freedom, and that starts with making sure our great men and women in our Armed Forces have the equipment, the training, and the armaments for their safety. We need to support their families as well. We need to work with other countries and allies in coordinated efforts to adapt and adjust our tactics, our operations, and our strategies to face the evolving threat of these vile, radical terrorist organizations and threats.

Our second mission is to preserve our values, and that starts with making sure that nominated and confirmed are judges who understand their role is to apply the law, not invent the law, not legislate from the bench.

My very first speech as a Senator on the floor was asking my colleagues to treat the nomination—first, asking the President to renominate Roger Gregory, and then asking my colleagues here on the floor, in my first speech, to treat Roger Gregory fairly, consider him fairly. I asked my colleagues to rise above partisanship and rise above the worshiping of process, to treat this gentleman fairly.

The President renominated him, and my colleagues did treat Roger Gregory fairly, and accorded him a vote, and now he is serving with great distinction on the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals as the first African American serving on that distinguished court.

Now through the years, we have seen obstruction of judges, which I thought was very unfair, for example, in the treatment of Miguel Estrada. We even have the nomination of John Bolton. Although a majority of Members are for him, he will not be accorded the fairness of an up-or-down vote.

I urge my colleagues to treat nominees, judicial nominees and others, fairly, according them the fairness of an up-or-down vote. It is part of representative democracy. And let's have John Bolton be the last casualty of the unfortunate partisan obstructionism. If you want to vote against a nominee, vote against him, but have the Senate vote, and treat people with consideration; but vote. That is what the Constitution instructs us to do.

Now, our third mission for Virginia and, in fact, our whole country is to make sure America is a land of opportunity for all, a place where every American is only limited by their imagination, hard work, and ingenuity. Looking ahead, we need to recharge our competitiveness by making sure taxes are not increased on families and small business owners. We need to keep taxes off of access to the Internet. We need to create a climate where the entrepreneurial spirit can flourish. We need to also achieve energy independence from the Middle East and other hostile parts of the world, and foreign energy. This is not just an economic necessity, this is also a national security imperative.

We need more of our energy explored here in America, produced and grown in America, so hundreds of billions of energy dollars stay here in America for American jobs, American competitiveness, and American national security, rather than having to worry about the whims of some dictator in a hostile part of the world.

Finally, we need to strive to make sure that the United States is the world capital of innovation. To achieve this goal, we need more young people, no matter their gender, no matter their race, no matter their ethnicity, interested in science, technology, and engineering. If we are going to be the world capital of innovation, that needs to be done with investment, encouragement, motivation, incentives, and even scholarships to make sure young people are encouraged to get into these key fields of the future of our country, which must be the world capital of innovation.

So, my friends, as I prepare to take leave, I am humbled and I am grateful for the tremendous honor and privilege that has been accorded to me by the good people of the Commonwealth of Virginia. I leave here with many new and enduring friendships, with valuable lessons learned, with an unrestrained optimism about the potential of America, about our Nation's future, and with pride in our accomplishments together.

My friends, do not let these challenging times along our national journey divert your focus from what truly matters. The tree of American liberty is as strong as ever. Our roots run deep into a wellspring of values that are as old as our Republic and, indeed, much older still.

Four hundred years after our Nation's beginning at Jamestown, we are

still—we are still—in the springtime of life as a nation. We are still planting seeds and bearing fruit. We are still growing and creating, still inspiring and innovating, still providing life and hope for people around the world seeking to escape the chains of tyranny, and to embrace the blessings of liberty.

Indeed, the sun is still rising on a bright American morning. And if we will keep the faith, no matter the challenges or the choices we face, generations to come will remember and think well of us for this: We never gave up. We never backed down. And we always stood strong for freedom.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida is recognized.

HONORING SENATORIAL SERVICE

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I see others who wish to speak, and I will make a couple of brief comments.

In the comments of the Senator from Virginia, his final couple of comments recalled for me a statement made in the closing of the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, when on the back of the chair of the presiding officer was a sunburst. Someone opined in that Constitutional Convention: Dr. Franklin, is that a rising sun or is it a setting sun? And Franklin ventured to say that with the birth of the new Nation, with the creation of the new Constitution, that he thought it was a rising sun.

Indeed, it is that hope, that optimism of which the Senator from Virginia has just spoken—uplifting words—that are the feelings that generate this Senator from Florida to get up and go to work every day, and to look at this Nation's challenges, not as a Democratic problem or a Republican problem, but as an American problem, that need to be solved in an American way instead of a partisan way.

We have had far too much partisanship over the last several years across this land, and, indeed, in this Chamber itself. And of the Senators who are leaving this Chamber, I think they represent the very best of America, and on occasion have risen in a bipartisan way. It has been this Senator's great privilege to work with these Senators: ALLEN of Virginia, BURNS of Montana, CHAFEE of Rhode Island, DAYTON of Minnesota, DEWINE of Ohio, FRIST of Tennessee, JEFFORDS of Vermont, SANTORUM of Pennsylvania, SARBANES of Maryland, TALENT of Missouri.

As the Good Book in Ecclesiastes says: There is a time to be born and a time to die. There is a time to get up, and a time to go to bed. There is a time for a beginning, and there is a time of ending.

For these Senators who are leaving, it is clearly not an ending. It is an ending of this chapter in their lives, but this Senator from Florida wanted to come and express his appreciation for

their public service, to admonish those where admonishment is needed when this Chamber, indeed, this Government, has gotten too partisan, but to express this Senator's appreciation for the quiet moments of friendship and reflection and respect in working together, which is the glue that makes this Government run.

Whether you call it bipartisanship, whether you call it friendship, whether you call it mutual respect, whatever you call it, the way you govern a nation as large and as complicated and as diverse as our Nation is—as the Good Book says: Come, let us reason together—that is what this Senator tries to be about. And that is what this Senator will try to continue to do in the new dawn of a new Congress. So I wanted to come and express my appreciation for those Senators, who will not be here, for the great public service they have rendered.

Mr. President, I am truly grateful for their personal friendship and for their public service.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana is recognized.

FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I appreciate the words of my friend from Florida as I rise today and say my farewell to this body. I do it with some sadness, but I also do it with some great pride. I also do it with a great appreciation for the Senate and for the people who serve here.

It has always been one of my personal honors and privileges to serve the State of Montana and the country for the last 18 years, and with such distinguished and honorable men and women.

We have seen a lot of changes. I want to answer my good friend from Florida, before he leaves the floor: We have seen some changes come over the body, and I would suggest that we turn off that eye that surrounds this body, turn it off and turn the Senate back into the debating body it was once known for, with collegiality, because the best I have ever seen the Senate operate is in executive session. When you turn off the television and we get to the issues—and we have some marvelous people, dedicated, on both sides of an issue, who can argue the issue—some of us who may not be as disciplined in that particular issue as others could learn and vote more intelligently. I suggest that, but I doubt that will ever happen, being that that is out in the public today. I thank the Senator for his observation. We need to get back to the great debates that were held on the floor of the Senate many years ago.

It was back on January 3, 1989, when I was sworn in the Senate. It was a proud day in my life and, of course, for my wife and our family. I got to thinking during that day that only in America could something like this happen. I was fortunate and, of course, we had both my wife's family, who are Ne-

braska folks, and my family, who are Missouri folks, in attendance that day. They are just folks, but they are emblematic of those people who were born of the land and in the heart of America—ranchers and farmers.

It was on the prairies of Missouri where I was born and raised on a little old bitty farm of 160 acres—what I call “2 rocks and 1 dirt”—not a very good farm. But I have fond memories of that place. I give thanks every day that I was born to that family and in that old house that still stands on that 160 acres. Of course, in my younger years I gained most of my philosophy in life. I was born of folks who weren't very wealthy, as you would define wealthy. They were a product of the Great Depression and the terrible droughts of the 1930s. They survived by hard work and great pride. The values they passed on to most of us in my generation were the love of this country first, community pride and loyalty to that community, and honesty to the core. Russell and Mary Francis were married 59 years on that day when I was sworn in. And I will tell you, when they witnessed proudly their son sworn into the most prestigious body in the world, only in America can that happen. It is truly the miracle of our country. It was also a proud day for all of our family.

I will say right now that we could not do well in this body without the true support of a wife and family because it is from that source that we draw our strength and, yes, our wisdom, as long as they are by our side. Phyllis, of course, and Keely and Garrett were all here. What blessings God has bestowed upon me personally. One was missing and that was Kate. God called her home back in 1985, but she remains in our memories and hearts forever. Again, one cannot do this job without the support and sacrifice of our family.

We have seen a lot of positive things happen in Montana. Montana has just begun to grow in new directions. Montana is a resource State, with timber, mining, oil, and agriculture. But we have new opportunities now, and they have opened. I am proud to say that it was me and my office that led the way on most of those changes. It is said that it is not bragging if you have done it. I was fortunate enough to attract a staff that shared the same vision of change, and change we did. Montana is not short of visionaries. It was my privilege to know them, work with them, and to move our State forward.

There is one thing about Montanans: They are not afraid to dream. As you know, dreams never die; dreamers do. Our colleges and universities now are national leaders in research and development, agriculture, engineering, and communications. We have telemedicine and distance learning where none existed before. We have seen a real leap forward in our infrastructure and transportation and rural utilities. We have watched an elevated vocational educational system grow. Tribal colleges on our seven reservations are