

The weather has been problematic throughout. We had warm weather conditions at the outset of the race, and then to have the weather really be the No. 1 opposition at the end made it something we are going to be talking about for years.

The Presiding Officer has had the opportunity to attend the ceremonial start of the Iditarod and is familiar with the excitement when there are 60 to 70 dog teams, mushers, and all their supporters around handling the dogs. There were literally 1,000 dogs in the downtown area of Anchorage. It is really quite exciting. It is a fabulous way to come to understand the history of the Iditarod but, more importantly, to understand the mindset of some of these mushers and the dedication they have to this sport and the passion they have for their dogs.

This year I was in the chute, and I like to visit with each of the mushers as they are coming down. Dallas Seavey was in the chute, and I was talking to him. He was really excited about the course because he said: This is going to be fast. This is going to be the quickest course we have seen. It is just perfect for someone like me who is young and fit and can stand up on his sled and literally be running next to his sled the whole way.

Three mushers later is Jeff King, and Jeff is telling me: This race is the perfect race for us older guys.

Jeff is my age.

He said: It is perfect because it takes the maturity and the wisdom and having been through a series of Iditarods to know exactly how to handle a course like this.

I think both of them were right. We saw the energy and determination of young Dallas Seavey 2 years ago. When he won for the first time, he was the youngest musher to win. He demonstrated a level of energy and determination that truly knocks your socks off. But what Jeff King was able to do with his methodical planning and strategy that goes into that race is certainly something to be embraced. And then, of course, Aliy Zirkle, a 44-year-old woman demonstrating once again that tough, independent female spirit—my gosh, she was in there all the way. This is the second year now that she has come in—actually, it is not the second year she has come in second. She has come in second more times than any other musher out there.

Dallas Seavey broke the Iditarod record this morning at 4 a.m. He came in at 8 days, 13 hours, 4 minutes, 19 seconds. He shaved off almost 5 hours from John Baker's previous win back in 2011.

There were a lot of firsts and a lot to be celebrated. There are still more mushers out on the trail.

When I talked to Dallas about an hour ago to congratulate him, I said: You must be pooped and ready to go to sleep after the last 8 days.

He said: Well, I am going to wait up for my dad.

His dad, Mitch Seavey, is in third place at this point in time. We expect him to come across the finish line.

I said: Isn't it nice to know that after all the years your dad waited up for you, you get to wait up for your dad before you take a break?

Alaskans are pleased with the outcome. We are happy to celebrate amazing athletes—both human and canine—doing amazing things in an amazing State. I am pleased to be able to announce today's results.

I thank the indulgence of the Chair.

RECESS

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

Thereupon, the Senate, at 1 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. BALDWIN).

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 6 p.m. with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I want to take a moment to recognize our Republican colleagues in the House of Representatives who last week cast the 50th vote in their effort to dismantle the Affordable Care Act—their 50th. I know it is a tradition to give gold in celebration of a 50th milestone. I instead would like to gift my colleagues on the other side of the aisle with a reality check.

More specifically, today I would like to talk about a certain group of people who arguably stand to lose if their antics continue. So I have come to the floor this afternoon to set the record straight on the Affordable Care Act and how it is working for women in America. It is not much of a stretch for me to say the Affordable Care Act is probably one of the most significant pieces of legislation for women in my lifetime. Not because of the battles we fought to get it to the President's desk, not necessarily because of the size or scope of the law, but because of the tangible and positive impact it has had and will continue to have on the health and well being of women in America.

Four years ago health insurance companies could deny women care due to so-called preexisting conditions such as pregnancy or being a victim of domestic violence. Four years ago women were permitted to be legally discriminated against when it came to insurance premiums and were often paying more for coverage than men. Four years ago women did not have access to the full range of recommended preventive care, such as mammograms and prenatal screenings and more. Four

years ago the insurance companies had all the leverage. Four years ago too often women were the ones who were paying the price. That is why I am proud today to highlight just how far we have come for women in the past 4 years.

Since the Affordable Care Act became law, women have been treated fairly with increased access to affordable health insurance, benefits, and services. Deductibles and other expenses have been capped so a health care crisis does not cause a family to lose their home or their life savings.

Women can use the health care marketplaces to pick quality plans that work for them and their families. If they change jobs or have to move, they are able to keep their coverage. Starting in 2012, we saw these benefits for women expand even further. Additional types of maternity are now covered. Women are now armed with proper tools and resources in order to take the right steps to have a healthy pregnancy.

Women now have access to domestic partner violence screening and counseling, as well as screening for sexually transmitted infections. Now women finally have access to affordable birth control. As public servants here, it is our job to help our constituents access Federal benefits available to them, particularly when it comes to health care. Since 80 percent of women are not only making health care choices for themselves but also their families and loved ones, it is our responsibility to serve as a guide when it comes to understanding how to best access these benefits.

It might mean putting them in touch with a navigator to ensure they are getting the most affordable health insurance available or making them aware of an enrollment event where they can get information on available coverage options. But our responsibilities do not end there. It is our job to have an open, honest discussion about what the Affordable Care Act means for our constituents and to talk about ways to responsibly improve it.

Instead, as we saw in the House last week, others have spent the better part of the last 4 years trying to take away the critical benefits that I just talked about, trying to score cheap political points on an issue that can literally mean the difference between life and death. I can understand why some of our colleagues disagree with certain parts of this law or maybe how it was implemented, but what I cannot understand is why anyone elected to Congress would decide to simply ignore real life stories of their own constituents whose lives were changed the day this law took effect.

It is people like Susan Wellman. She lives in Bellingham in my home State of Washington. She is self employed. She has had to pay for individual insurance. Every year she has watched her health care costs rise higher and higher. It got to the point where she was