

to these two markets. Therefore, I think it is safe to say that Utah-based exporters will benefit greatly from the expanded market access they will undoubtedly see if we can get both the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership over the finish line.

Of course, without TPA, these two important trade agreements, which are among the largest and most ambitious agreements in our Nation's history, don't stand a chance. TPA gives our negotiators the tools they need to get the best deals possible. TPA gives Congress and our constituents a strong voice in the negotiating process, and, of course, TPA assures that once an agreement is reached, our country will be able to deliver on the deal.

Utahns depend on international trade. Utah's job creators, like those throughout the country, need greater access to foreign markets in order to compete. Put simply, they are not going to get that access without TPA.

So for the sake of the thousands of Utah companies that export goods around the world and the tens of thousands of Utahns whose jobs depend on those exports—and for the hundreds of thousands of companies all over this country and more—I urge my colleagues to join me one more time in supporting our TPA legislation.

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. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

(The remarks of Mr. GRASSLEY pertaining to the introduction of S. 1648 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 5 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 4 p.m., recessed until 5 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. AYOTTE).

DEFENDING PUBLIC SAFETY EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT ACT—  
Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

#### JASON SIMCAKOSKI MEMORIAL OPIOID SAFETY ACT

Ms. BALDWIN. Madam President, I rise not to speak about an issue that divides this Chamber but rather one that unites us; that is, the care of those who have served and sacrificed for our Nation, America's veterans.

Today, I take great pride in the fact I have worked across the aisle to introduce bipartisan VA reform legislation, the Jason Simcakoski Memorial Opioid Safety Act. I am pleased to be joined in offering this legislation by my friend and colleague Senator CAPITO of West Virginia.

This legislation is aimed at addressing the problem of overprescribing practices at the VA and providing safer and more effective pain management services to our Nation's veterans. It is named in honor of a Wisconsin veteran, U.S. Marine veteran Jason Simcakoski.

On August 30, 2014, Jason tragically died at Wisconsin's Tomah Veterans Affairs Medical Center as a result of what was medically deemed mixed-drug toxicity. I call this a failure to serve someone who has faithfully served our country.

At the time of his death at the VA, Jason was on 14 different prescription drugs. Yet this Marine's heartbreaking story is just one example of the overprescribing problem at the VA.

After two, decade-long, wars, a large number of our servicemembers are coming home with the damage of combat, and our veterans and their families are facing the difficult challenge of physical injuries, PTSD, and other mental illnesses.

Unfortunately, I believe the VA's overreliance on powerful and highly addicting opioids has resulted in getting our veterans hooked rather than getting them help. Jason's story is a tragic example of the devastation caused by addiction—addiction whose roots are, regrettably, at the VA.

To me, overprescription of opioids at the VA is a root problem, and it is growing into a weed—a weed of addiction whose impact is being felt beyond the walls of VA facilities. The ripples are indeed being felt across America in the communities we work for every day in our Nation's Capital.

The families whom we have a responsibility to represent—families of those who have bravely served our country—are struggling with the loss of a son or a daughter, a father or a mother, a sister or a brother to addiction whose root is planted within the VA system. It is our job to make sure they do not feel alone, and I believe we have a shared responsibility to do everything we can to pull out this weed by its roots.

Jason's family is in Washington today, and I am so honored to have worked with them and others in putting these reforms together to provide the VA with the tools it needs to help prevent this type of tragedy from occurring to other veterans and their families.

I want to thank the Simcakoski family and let them know I have a tremendous amount of respect for the courage they have shown in telling theirs and Jason's story and working to make a difference in the lives of other veterans and their families.

Their story is one of a sacred trust we must have with our veterans and their families. It is a story of how that trust has been broken, and it is a tragic story of loss.

My message to my colleagues comes from Jason's widow Heather, who has said:

When I look back at the past, I want to know we made a difference. I want to believe we have leaders in our country who care. I want to inspire others to never give up because change is possible.

Her words have inspired me, and it is my hope they will inspire my colleagues to join us in taking action. I hope I speak for all of us when I say there is no room for politics when it comes to ensuring that our Nation's veterans receive the timely, safe, and highest quality care that they have earned.

Our legislation takes steps to give veterans and their families a stronger voice in their care by strengthening opioid prescribing guidelines and other measures. It also works to improve coordination and communication throughout the VA and puts in place stronger oversight and accountability for the quality of care we are providing our veterans.

Our goal is simple: put these bipartisan reforms in place to prevent tragedies like Jason's from occurring to other veterans and their families.

I wish to thank and recognize Senators BLUMENTHAL, BROWN, HIRONO, JOHNSON, KAINE, MANCHIN, MARKEY, MORAN, MURRAY, SANDERS, and TESTER for joining Senator CAPITO and me, signing on as original cosponsors of this bipartisan effort. I also wish to thank the many veterans service organizations and medical professionals for their invaluable support, insight, and input as we crafted this legislation.

Today, I ask the rest of my colleagues to join us in working to confront the problems of overprescribing practices at the VA and to provide more safe and effective pain management services to our Nation's veterans.

Let us work together to fix what has been broken and restore that sacred trust with our veterans and their families. Let us work together to give our veterans and their families a voice—a voice that is heard, respected, and recognized. Let us be inspired by that voice to take bipartisan action on solutions to prevent these problems and tragedies from ever happening again and to provide our veterans and their families with the care they have earned and the care they deserve.

Madam President, I yield time to my coauthor on this bill Senator CAPITO.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam President, I come here before you today, joined by