

2013. He was only the second American inducted into this elite group.

Jim was also active with the Kentucky Distillers Association board of directors for 13 years, and served as chairman of the internationally attended Kentucky Bourbon Festival for 7 of the 9 years he was on the board. The Kentucky Bourbon Festival is a 6-day event that takes place in Bardstown, KY.

Jim graduated from the University of Louisville with a BSC in marketing and a minor in chemistry. Let me add that not only did Jim and I both attend the University of Louisville, we are also fraternity brothers.

In retirement, Jim hopes to stay involved with bourbon and the distilled spirits industry. I suspect he will also get to spend more time with his wife Beverly Anne, as well as his children Dennis, Deborah, Cynthia, and Doralee, and his grandchildren.

Jim will be missed as the face of Four Roses Bourbon but I know the entire distilled spirits industry in Kentucky joins me in recognizing his lifetime of accomplishment and wishing him the best in retirement. I want to wish congratulations again to Jim Rutledge for his many successes in the world of bourbon.

TRIBUTE TO DANIELLE BLAKENEY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise to pay tribute to an honored Kentuckian who is bringing home Olympic gold. Danielle Blakeney of Erlanger is a rhythmic gymnast who has won three gold medals at the 2015 Special Olympics World Games in Los Angeles.

Danielle won the gold medal in the ball routine competition. She also won gold in all-around rhythmic gymnastics, and was part of the gold medal-winning team in the group ball competition.

Danielle also won a silver medal in the ribbon competition, a bronze medal in the clubs competition, and placed fifth in the hoop competition.

Danielle is 24 years old and a graduate of Boone County High School. She is one of six Kentucky athletes competing in this year's Special Olympics, among 7,000 athletes representing 177 countries.

Danielle is no stranger to winning medals. She is competing in her second Special Olympics World Games. In addition to winning the all-around gold medal in rhythmic gymnastics at the 2011 Games in Athens, Greece, she won two golds, a silver and a bronze in individual events at that games as well.

The mission of the Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them the opportunity to see the power of sport change lives. The first Special Olympics Games was held in 1968 in Chicago, and saw a thousand people with intellectual disabilities from 26 States and Canada participate.

Today, Danielle Blakeney and her fellow athletes are the inheritors of that legacy. I want to congratulate Danielle for her many athletic achievements. She truly makes Kentucky proud and we are pleased she will be bringing her medals home to the Bluegrass State.

RECOGNIZING THE ANNIVERSARIES OF SOCIAL SECURITY, MEDICARE, AND MEDICAID

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the respective anniversaries of three of the most important programs for American seniors: Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid.

On August 14, 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Social Security Act into law. Among other things, this bill created the Social Security Program and made a promise to all Americans: that if you work hard, contribute, and play by the rules, you can retire and live in dignity.

Before Social Security, more than 50 percent of older Americans in this country lived in poverty. Many of these seniors worked hard their entire lives but became dependent on others and often had to beg for basic necessities, such as food, shelter, and medical care. "Poverty-ridden old age" was a pressing national concern both for seniors and younger Americans, who wondered if their years of hard work would provide enough for them to survive in their old age.

Today, less than 9 percent of seniors live in poverty. This significant decrease in poverty among seniors is a direct result of Social Security and the secure retirement it provides.

As we approach the program's 80th anniversary, Social Security is the most successful program in American history, and its trust fund contains sufficient assets to fully fund all promised benefits for almost 20 years. Yet, notwithstanding its success, Social Security remains deeply controversial among many Republicans and super-wealthy Americans, who are committed to weakening and ultimately destroying the program.

Just 10 years ago, President George W. Bush tried to privatize Social Security, which would have forced deep cuts to guaranteed benefits and a massive increase in debt. More recently, several leading Republicans have called for delaying the retirement age and cutting benefits. I have strongly opposed all these proposals to break our promises to seniors, and I will continue to do so.

On July 30, 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson expanded our Nation's commitment to seniors by signing into law the Social Security Amendments of 1965—the legislation that created Medicare. For 50 years, this program has helped millions of American seniors live longer, healthier lives and has also provided them with the peace-of-mind and economic security that comes with having comprehensive health coverage.

I remember what it was like for seniors who became sick or injured before

Medicare was enacted. In fact, Medicare was implemented during my tenure on the board of trustees for the Southern Nevada Memorial Hospital, now the University Medical Center of Southern Nevada. Prior to Medicare, 40 percent of seniors who came into that hospital were required to have a signature from a friend or relative who agreed to be responsible for their medical bill if they could not pay. If the patient could not produce a signature, they were turned away. Nationwide, nearly half of all seniors age 65 and older were uninsured, and if you were fortunate enough to have health insurance, you paid more than 50 percent of the cost out-of-pocket. That is how bad it was for seniors. Today, 98 percent of all seniors are insured and can go to the hospital or see their doctor when they need care. This program has truly been a lifeline for millions of seniors throughout the country.

And let us not forget about Medicaid, which was also created under the Social Security Amendments of 1965. Medicaid provides health care and long-term services to 16 million low-income seniors and individuals with disabilities. Medicaid pays for services that Medicare does not cover. It ensures that low-income seniors and individuals with disabilities have access to a wide variety of services. These options often allow them to remain in their communities rather than relocating to nursing homes.

I have long worked to protect and strengthen Medicare and Medicaid for the millions of seniors and younger Americans who depend on these benefits. In 2010, I proudly cast my vote in support of the Affordable Care Act, which is strengthening Medicare and working to keep seniors' hard-earned savings in their own pockets. Since this law was enacted, millions of seniors throughout the country have saved more than \$15 billion dollars on their prescription drug costs and the program's solvency has been extended for 13 years. The Affordable Care Act has also given States the option of expanding their Medicaid Programs so that more low-income Americans can access the care they need.

Sadly, Republicans have repeatedly attacked and tried to eliminate Medicare and Medicaid, just as they have done with Social Security. Throughout the last 50 years, they have tried to privatize Medicare, convert Medicaid into a block grant program, and cut benefits for both programs. Now, they have set their sights on the Affordable Care Act, with repeated challenges to the law before the courts, more than 50 votes to repeal or undermine the law, and Republican Governors turning back millions of Federal dollars to expand their Medicaid Programs and expand access to health care in their States. Republicans are determined to destroy effective health care programs in spite of all the good they have done, but my Democratic colleagues and I will continue to work to prevent this from happening.