

voucherizing Medicare will not hurt them.

Saving Medicare is going to be a daunting fight, but I am not going to shy away from it. I am going to do whatever I can, whenever I can, to protect Medicare for our seniors.

I yield the floor.

TRIBUTE TO HARRY REID

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I wish to take a moment to express my appreciation to the Democratic leader, Senator HARRY REID, who spoke earlier on the floor.

I was here with many of my colleagues and listened to his incredible story about his background from Searchlight, NV, to his ascension to the Senate and becoming the Democratic leader.

When I first came to the Senate, Senator REID asked to meet with me. I thought he was going to talk about my philosophy on different issues or what my interests would be or how I was going to try to move forward on particular bills, but what he really wanted to talk about was my family, what I thought was important in life. He was very interested in my family traditions and how that would be impacted by my life in the Senate.

I must tell you, it was very personal. I think many of us have seen many sides of HARRY REID, but one side of him is clear. He treats the Senate as his family, and he treats each one of us as his family.

I wish to express my appreciation for his service in the U.S. Senate and for his public service over so many years.

Myrna and I are friends of Landra and HARRY. We wish them only the best as he moves forward from his career in the Senate.

It has really been a pleasure to serve with him in the Senate. This is an incredible place to serve. Senator REID has certainly made this Senator's life in the Senate much more enjoyable and productive.

Mr. President, part of American culture is to celebrate our small towns. There are few American towns smaller than Searchlight in Clark County, NV. That is the hometown of our beloved Democratic Leader, Senator HARRY REID.

Senator REID epitomizes the American Dream. He grew up without indoor plumbing, in a small cabin built out of scavenged railroad ties, and attended a two-room elementary school. His father was a hard-rock miner. As a young boy, Senator REID would go deep into the mines with his father. Searchlight didn't have its own high school so Senator REID had to hitchhike each week to Henderson, 40 miles away, where he attended Basic High School and boarded with relatives and other families.

Local businessmen saw his potential and helped him attend Utah State University, a debt he repaid. He earned his law degree from George Washington

University and supported his young family by working as a U.S. Capitol Police Officer.

Senator REID started his career in public service as Henderson's city attorney. He revised the city charter and extended the city's boundaries by acquiring Federal land. In 1968, when he was just 28, he was elected to the Nevada State Assembly. As an assemblyman, he introduced the first air pollution legislation in Nevada's history. Two years later, Senator REID became the youngest lieutenant governor in Nevada history, winning election as Governor Mike O'Callaghan's running mate. Mike O'Callaghan had been Senator REID's mentor in high school as a teacher, boxing coach, and friend.

In 1977, Senator REID was appointed chairman of the Nevada Gaming Commission. For 5 years, he was engaged in an unrelenting fight with organized crime syndicates to clean up Nevada's gaming industry. In 1981, his wife—high school sweetheart Landra—found a bomb attached to the family station wagon.

In 1982, Senator REID won the first of two elections to serve in the House of Representatives and then he was elected to the Senate in 1986. In 2005 he became the Democratic Leader, two years later, he became the majority leader, a post he held until the Republicans gained control of the Senate last year. As the Las Vegas Sun put it, he went from being the underdog to the top dog.

I have talked about Senator REID's hardscrabble upbringing because it has made him one of the toughest people I have ever known. Yet he is also one of the kindest, and most compassionate.

Senator REID may be the top dog, but he has always fought for the underdog. I think that quality is best exemplified by his advocacy on behalf of Native Americans, which includes helping to build the Nation's first utility-scal solar project on tribal land in Nevada. I know how much he is respected in Indian country.

Senator REID was instrumental in passing the Affordable Care Act, ACA, which—along with the Medicaid expansion—has provided health care to more than 20 million Americans.

Senator REID's efforts to choose qualified Federal jurists for the U.S. District Court for the District of Nevada will be felt for decades after he leaves office. Senator REID has recommended and helped confirm five of the six judges currently serving on the court. As a result of Senator REID's commitment to diversity, there have been numerous "firsts" for the court.

In 1998, Senator REID recommended Johnnie Rawlinson to be the first woman to serve as a judge on the Nevada District Court. At his request, she was elevated to the Ninth Circuit in 2000.

In 2010, Gloria Navarro became the first Hispanic woman to serve as a judge on the Nevada District Court.

In 2012, Miranda Du became the first Asian-Pacific American to serve as a judge on the Nevada District Court.

In 2014, Richard Boulware became the first African-American man to serve as a judge on the Nevada District Court.

The Senate still has the opportunity to confirm Anne Traum, who would be the first Jewish person to serve on the Nevada District Court.

Senator REID has fought hard on behalf of his fellow Nevadans. He has prevented the Federal Government from building a nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain. He authored and passed legislation establishing Nevada's first national park, Great Basin National Park. He has led the fight to protect and restore Lake Tahoe. He prevented the removal of the Nevada Air National Guard's C-130 aircraft and the closure of the Hawthorne Army Depot, and he secured over \$600 million for the Southern Nevada Veterans Administration Medical Complex.

When it comes to combatting climate change and promoting the development and adoption of clean, sustainable, renewable energy, Senator REID has been a visionary. He has incentivized \$5.5 billion in investments in Nevada's clean energy resources through tax credits, grants, and loan guarantees. He helped to create a new fast-track permitting process for clean energy development on public lands. He facilitated the public-private partnership needed for the One Nevada Transmission Line, which connects northern and southern Nevada's electricity grids for the first time, helping to unlock the State's vast clean energy potential. While his interest in promoting clean energy—especially solar—may have a local origin, the benefits will accrue to all humanity for generations to come as we transition from our reliance on fossil fuels.

Serving as the Leader, whether in the majority or the minority, is a tough job. The leader has to fight the most intense partisan battles. The Leader has to say "no" on many occasions. The leader has to stand up for other members of the party. Senator REID has been tough enough to be an extraordinary leader. If I were in a fox-hole, I would want HARRY REID by my side. I know every other Democratic Senator feels the same way—and surely most Republicans. We are going to miss HARRY REID. I wish him, his wife Landra, their five children, and 19 grandchildren all the best.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HOEVEN). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

WORK BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, earlier today we moved the Defense authorization bill across the finish line. This legislation authorizes funding for things such as training our troops to counter the ever-evolving threats emanating from around the world. The Defense authorization bill will also give our men and women in uniform the most up-to-date weaponry and the other equipment they need, including advanced aircraft, ships, and ground vehicles.

Fortunately, the bill also authorizes needed improvements in military facilities such as those in Fort Hood, TX, Joint Base San Antonio, Red River Army Depot, and Ellington Field.

Finally, it provides a much needed pay raise for our troops. I am pleased we were able to finish our work on that to better serve our men and women in uniform.

I hope the President reconsiders his stated intention to veto this legislation. It makes absolutely no sense to me, and I think it would be an insult to the troops—whom we all claim to support—to deny them the resources and the pay raise that this bill provides for.

We still have more work ahead of us, including the continuing resolution. I know there are Members of this body who say: Well, we want to change that appropriations bill to add some other provisions. But I just came back from meeting with some of the Members of the Texas House delegation. They tell me the House is leaving. So even if changes are made, the House is not going to be here and in session to make changes to the continuing resolution.

Our friends across the aisle need to face up to the reality that if they somehow prevent us from passing this continuing resolution, it will be on their hands. I hope they will reconsider because they are not going to be able to achieve the goal they are seeking.

We are close to wrapping up the Water Resources Development Act as well. This bill has also experienced a little bit of a hiccup. It has been held up over questions about how to best address the drought in California, but the bottom line is that California needs this legislation to help deliver water to its people and to keep producing billions of dollars' worth of crops each year.

I know the folks in California consider themselves to be the breadbasket for America and literally the world because of all the food we export, but that is one reason why this legislation is so important and why the senior Senator from California, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, and Majority Leader MCCARTHY negotiated this package.

I know Senator BOXER is not pleased with it, but the fact is, under the current procedures, we are going to finish this legislation one way or another—perhaps as late as Monday, but we need to get it done.

This legislative package will make sure that California and the rest of the country get the resources we need

while complying with all environmental laws. Of course, with some cooperation we can get all of these moving parts done for the American people soon.

 TRIBUTES TO DEPARTING SENATORS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I know it is always difficult to come to the floor and talk about the departure of our good friends and valued colleagues. The word I have heard mentioned the most this week is “bittersweet”—people looking forward to the next chapter of their lives but regretting the fact that good friends and valued colleagues are moving on to the next chapter of their lives. But every other December, we find ourselves bidding farewell to some of our most admired and respected Members. Today I wish to speak briefly about four of them, starting with our good friend from New Hampshire, Senator AYOTTE.

KELLY AYOTTE

Mr. President, Senator AYOTTE and I have more in common than may meet the eye, so let me explain. Our hometowns are 2,000 miles away, so it doesn't seem obvious. She served as attorney general of the State of New Hampshire and holds the distinction of being New Hampshire's first and only female attorney general. She was first appointed to that position by a Republican Governor, and she did such an outstanding job serving the people that she was reappointed to that position by a Democratic Governor.

Everybody who knows KELLY AYOTTE knows that she epitomizes the spirit of bipartisanship and comradery that makes a good public servant a great one. That has been evident in her work she has done here in the U.S. Senate. From the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act to multiple national security issues, Senator AYOTTE has been eager to work with Members on both sides of the aisle when it comes down to doing what is best for the people of her State and for the United States.

Senator AYOTTE and I both come from military families. My dad flew in the Army Air Corps in World War II, with the 303rd Bomb Group of the Air Force. Her grandfather also served in World War II. And, as many of us know, Joe, her husband, served in the Air Force and the Air National Guard, and he flew combat missions in Bosnia and Iraq. Senator AYOTTE's firsthand knowledge of the military has been a great help to us, particularly in her role on the Armed Services Committee.

KELLY will tell us that she does her best to listen first, to take in the concerns and priorities of her fellow Granite Staters, discuss the merits of each side's policy position, and only then carefully and methodically reach a well-considered decision. That patience and willingness to listen and consider all views has served her well during her tenure in the U.S. Senate. It is a lesson

we all should take to heart and learn from by her good example.

I want to add my thanks to our friend, Senator KELLY AYOTTE, for her years of service on behalf of the people of New Hampshire. I also thank her husband Joe Daley and their two children, Katherine and Jacob, for their steadfast support of Joe's wife and their children's mom over these past years.

I don't know in what capacity Kelly will continue to serve her community and her State and her Nation, but I know we will be hearing and seeing her more in some capacity of service, and I look forward to seeing where and in what capacity she finally decides to serve next.

DAN COATS

Mr. President, next I wish to recognize our friend, Senator DAN COATS. Senator COATS is a well-known commodity not just in Hoosier country but across the United States. He has earned the reputation of a distinguished statesman who genuinely doesn't need an introduction because his sterling reputation precedes him.

We know his impressive resume. After serving the country as a soldier in the Army, he decided he wanted to continue in public service, so he worked as a congressional staffer for then-Congressman Dan Quayle. When his boss decided to run for the Senate and won, Senator COATS took his boss's congressional seat to serve in the House of Representatives. And when Senator Quayle became Vice President Quayle, Representative Coats became Senator COATS, following on in his example.

He broke that pattern of following in the footsteps of the former Vice President when he was appointed Ambassador to Germany. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, he was an instrumental diplomat, working with our allies in Europe as we responded and as the world responded to the worst terror attack on our country in our history.

I know I speak for every Member here when I say that we are grateful Senator COATS came out of retirement and came back to the Senate in 2010. We have come to know that he is a warrior when it comes to wasteful Washington spending, and every week he comes to the floor to talk about his waste of the week. It is a service to all of us, really, to remind us that we have a lot of work to do in that area but also to point out how we can save taxpayers' dollars and use them more efficiently.

Many folks wouldn't know that he regularly attends the weekly Prayer Breakfast we have here in the Senate as well, which is a great time for Senators to come together and to support one another. It reflects Dan's commitment to faithfully encourage his colleagues day in and day out.

My colleagues know that Senator COATS is also a big fan of getting things done during votes, and he knows how to work a room. He has been on