

earn, by advancing the Paycheck Fairness Act, which I have proudly cosponsored twice now. Women shouldn't make 77 percent of what men earn for the same job. This hurts families who are just looking to take care of their kids, put food on their table, and keep a roof over their heads.

Just as Senator MIKULSKI has been an advocate for families, she also understands the critical role science, research, and innovation play in creating economic growth in the United States. Maryland is home to several great institutions, such as the Goddard Space Flight Center, which I had the pleasure of visiting last fall, that are at the forefront of their respective fields. When I was at Goddard, the Director showed me the fascinating work their researchers and engineers are engaged in and how NASA's various missions help us enhance crop production and be better stewards of our planet. Her work on the Senate Appropriations Committee has helped keep the United States at the forefront of scientific discovery and technological innovation.

Senator MIKULSKI is the best of American public service. She is smart, honest, empathetic, and outrageously funny. She has earned her reputation as a force to be reckoned with. And on her next chapter, I wish her Godspeed—and may the force be with her.

TRIBUTE TO KELLY AYOTTE

Ms. HEITKAMP. Mr. President, today I wish to honor my dear friend and colleague from New Hampshire, Senator KELLY AYOTTE, who is departing from the Senate at the end of this year. Over the last 4 years, I have been consistently impressed with KELLY's pragmatic approach to her role as a U.S. Senator. Time and time again, I have seen her be a strong advocate on behalf of her State and have admired her willingness to forge the tough, bipartisan compromises that our country needs.

Senator AYOTTE started her career clerking for an associate justice of the New Hampshire Supreme Court. After about a year of clerking, she started practicing law. She eventually moved on to be a prosecutor for the New Hampshire Attorney General's office, quickly gaining experience and know-how to become the first female attorney general of her State—something we have in common.

When I came to the Senate in 2013, KELLY and I were the only female former attorneys general in the Chamber at the time. She had been elected to her first term 2 years before me, so as new Senators, we bonded through our common experience that later pushed us to pass laws and create real change. Our shared knowledge of the issues, dedication, and common interests led us to become good friends. I am also proud to say that our relationship extended beyond the Senate Chamber, as we played together on the congressional women's softball team.

KELLY and I worked with each other to make real and substantial progress on many issues using common sense and our desire to do what is best for our States and the country. We both came to the Senate with an understanding of rural America. As the wife of a small business owner, KELLY understands the real life implications policy can have on small businesses, which she displayed as we worked together on the Small Business Committee. We also sat next to each other on the dais for 4 years as we served together on the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. Her commitment to keeping our Nation safe shined through time and time again as our committee worked on border security, cyber security, and improving our Federal Government's efficiency and effectiveness.

Together we passed two bills, one of which has been signed into law and the other which awaits the President's signature. The first was the Breast Cancer Awareness Commemorative Coin Act, which created a commemorative coin to help fund the Breast Cancer Research Foundation's efforts to fight breast cancer. Her dedication to help the one in eight women who will develop invasive breast cancer over the course of their lifetimes will not be forgotten. The second bill was the Northern Border Security Review Act to ensure that our Nation's northern border gets the attention and resources it needs to keep our communities safe. I am extremely proud to have worked with her on these issues.

Senator AYOTTE has been an outstanding public servant for the people of New Hampshire and this country. I know that she is proud of her accomplishments in her time as a Senator, and I am proud to be a part of some of those accomplishments. The women's softball team will definitely miss her because, let's face it, she is a better softball player than I am. I know KELLY will continue to be a champion for New Hampshire no matter what she does. And since we each have taken our turns in the batting cages, we never step down from the plate. I guess imitation truly is the best form of flattery. I truly wish her the best.

TRIBUTE TO VICE PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, in a political world getting more contentious by the day, with even greater divisions and an increasing lack of civility, JOE BIDEN has always stood out.

The reason so many Republicans and Democrats appreciate him is because he has touched us all in a special way. When it comes to JOE BIDEN, his word is his bond. He is a fierce competitor, but never takes the fight too far. If he can help you, he always will. He tries, as much as possible, to ensure every decision is a win-win.

As Vice President, he served President Obama extremely well with un-

questionable loyalty. He has proven to be one of the most successful negotiators for the President.

I have traveled the world with JOE and the private man is exactly what you see in public. JOE BIDEN is articulate, determined, kind, gracious, funny, and an eternal optimist. I am confident he will continue to serve the nation he loves so much.

Vice President JOE BIDEN stands out in all the right ways.

21ST CENTURY CURES BILL

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I wish to address the 21st Century Cures Act legislation, which the Senate passed yesterday with my support. I voted for this bill and support many of its provisions. However, I also have some serious concerns regarding the manner in which the bill is funded.

I would like to congratulate two of my Senate colleagues for their remarkable commitment to this bill: the senior Senator from Tennessee, LAMAR ALEXANDER, and the senior Senator from Washington, PATTY MURRAY, who worked long hours in good faith to forge a bipartisan compromise on both sides of the Capitol.

Washington State is a laboratory for health care innovation. From Spokane to Seattle, my State has a culture of collaboration and inventiveness in which the entire health care community—including researchers, providers, insurers, employers, policymakers, and others—come together to find better ways of preventing, managing, and treating disease. This collaboration makes my State unique and on the cutting edge of developing innovative health care delivery.

That is why Washington is the original home of the Basic Health Plan, a State-run option that gives working people without employer-sponsored health care the negotiating leverage to get a better deal on health insurance.

It is why the Boeing Company has partnered directly with health care providers like the Everett Clinic to reduce sick days and improve the health of its workers.

It is why community leaders in Yakima and Spokane have banded together to break ground on new medical schools to fill unmet primary care needs in their regions.

And it is why so many lifesaving medical discoveries and treatments, including immuno-oncology, dialysis, and the mapping of the brain have their roots in our State. Many of these discoveries started with NIH-supported basic research at public research universities like the University of Washington and Washington State University.

The 21st Century Cures legislation gives a big boost to Washington's health care innovators.

First, the bill's investment in President Obama's Precision Medicine Initiative will help get the right treatment into the hands of patients, building on the longtime work of renowned