

football program is nationally recognized and won two consecutive bowl games. The Hilltoppers—named because of the school's scenic location atop "the Hill"—are strong student-athletes both on the field and in the classroom, leading Conference USA in academic performance.

Gary is especially engaged in WKU's international outreach. He and his wife, Julie, herself a WKU alumna, have led students into new learning experience around the world in England, France, Italy, China, Ecuador, Iceland, Scandinavia, and Africa. The school is also home to Kentucky's first Confucius Institute and only Chinese language flagship program and has been recognized as a top producer of Fulbright scholars.

Gary has been at the center of each of these significant accomplishments. The growth in campus infrastructure, academic prestige, and community and alumni engagement at WKU have benefited Kentucky students and are in large part due to Gary's work. With his nearly 20 years of service, he is currently the longest serving university president in Kentucky.

I have enjoyed every opportunity to work with Gary over the years and support his vision for higher education in Kentucky. We have partnered together to secure Federal funding for worthwhile projects like WKU's mobile health unit and the agricultural research service Federal research lab. He is a dedicated public servant committed to student success. In addition to all of the work that Gary and I have collaborated on, I am proud to call him a friend. Along with the WKU community, I am sad to see Gary leave his alma mater at the end of this school year, but I am deeply grateful for his passion and leadership.

After a brief sabbatical, Gary will continue working to connect students with an international education. Starting next year, Gary and Julie begin their next adventure, as he becomes the president and CEO of Semester at Sea, a global study abroad program that uses a ship as a traveling campus around the world. I wish him the best of luck as he continues his passion for higher education in this next chapter, and I wish him and his family congratulations on a remarkably successful career at Western Kentucky University.

(At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

VOTE EXPLANATION

• Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for the votes on the motion to proceed and passage of a joint resolution disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of Labor known as the State Automatic IRAs Rule, H.J. Res. 66.

On vote No. 119, had I been present, I would have voted nay on the motion to proceed to H.J. Res. 66.

On vote No. 120, had I been present, I would have voted nay on passage of H.J. Res. 66.

A few weeks ago, after their failed attempt to dismantle our Nation's healthcare system, Republicans launched a full-scaled attack on retirement savings by rolling back an important rule that would have allowed local governments, as well as small businesses, to expand access to a retirement savings plan. Rolling back that rule will make it nearly impossible for working-class families to save for retirement.

Today Republicans voted to roll back a similar rule that allows States, including Illinois, to provide access to a retirement savings account to millions of working American families. Their actions here today are misguided and will hurt, not help, many working class families.

We are facing a crisis. Tens of millions of Americans have very little savings for retirement. Half of households age 55 and older have little to no retirement savings, and some 55 million working Americans, including 1.5 million in Illinois, work for an employer that does not offer a retirement plan.

There was a time when Americans were able to depend on the proverbial "three-legged stool" to support them in their retirement: their pension, Social Security, and their personal savings. However, with the decline of pension plans and the inability of working-class Americans to personally save for retirement, that three-legged stool is now a pogo stick. Pensions once provided a promise of security in retirement, but they are becoming a thing of the past. Of those that remain, many are struggling to pay the benefits they promised, creating uncertainty and fear for those who have worked hard their entire lives.

Decades of stagnant wages, increasing income inequality, and job losses from the recession have made it difficult for workers to keep up with everyday costs such as housing and food, let alone save for retirement. Social Security is the only guaranteed source of retirement income most Americans have, and, sadly, this is nowhere near enough. Since there is no simple solution to addressing this crisis, we have to consider every option that will make saving for retirement easier.

In Illinois, 1.5 million workers do not have access to a retirement plan through their employer. These employees are more likely to earn less money and work for a smaller employer. To make it easier for employers to offer access to retirement savings plans and help workers save more easily, States began developing State-based individual retirement accounts or IRAs. My home State of Illinois, under the leadership of Illinois State Treasurer Michael Frerichs, led the way by being the first State in the Nation to create a State-based IRA called the Secure Choice Savings Program, making retirement a financially viable option for Illinois families.

The Secure Choice program allows Illinois businesses that do not offer a retirement plan and have been in business for 2 or more years to either offer their own retirement plan or automatically enroll their employees in the Secure Choice program. Contrary to the false narrative offered by Republicans that this imposes a burden on businesses, businesses in Illinois are largely supportive and the administrative burden is small. This program gives businesses the opportunity to help their employees save for retirement without being subject to additional Federal regulations under ERISA and without being subject to the costs that are preventing them from offering a retirement plan in the first place. Under the program, all employers have to do is share information about the program that is provided by the State with their employees. Employers do not have to find plans or investment vehicles, and employers make no investment decisions. These State programs provides businesses with a no-worries, low-cost way to enable retirement savings.

There are also claims that imply that States will manage these funds like their State pension assets or other State funds. This is simply not true. Funds under the Secure Choice program will not be comingled with other State funds. These funds, which are owned by the employee, will be managed by a private investment company, they will be separate from the State's budget and pension funds, and they cannot be used for any other purpose.

Once an employee is enrolled, 3 percent of their paycheck is automatically deducted and placed into an IRA. The employee has complete control over how the money is invested. The employee can take the plan with them should they change jobs and they may choose to opt out at any time.

The Department of Labor's rule under attack gives State and local governments' certainty to develop these programs that make it easier for employers to provide access to retirement savings plans. This rule has allowed the States to step in where the private market has failed. By voting to strike this rule, Republicans have created uncertainty for retirement savings programs that could help the 55 million Americans otherwise without access the means to secure their financial future.

In Illinois, the consequences are great as this will make it unnecessarily difficult for 1.5 million working-class Illinoisans to access one of the only viable means they may have to save for retirement. With the country facing a retirement savings crisis, the last thing we need to do is stymie States' efforts to explore innovative policy solutions.

These resolutions are just the latest chapter in Republicans' assault on working families. I am afraid this story will continue before there is a happy ending in sight. What we should be doing is working together to remove

the fear of retirement and give workers the tools they need to retire with dignity. I am willing to do that, and I hope my colleagues will join me.●

NATIONAL DRUG COURT MONTH

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, as part of National Drug Court Month, I want to honor a program that has directly and indirectly benefited so many Americans and American families.

In my hometown of Marietta, GA, we had the good fortune of having a driving under the influence, or DUI, court program, established nearly 10 years ago in 2008. Since that time, the Cobb County DUI court program has saved our Cobb County Sheriff's office more than an estimated \$3 million in incarceration costs alone.

However, these accountability courts have saved much more than just money. For example, there is the little girl who was living with parents in active addiction who now has a sober father who was able to gain custody of her and raise her in a stable home environment. We have seen parents, children, and entire families saved through recovery and restored through the healing work of counseling.

More than 300 individuals have been saved from addiction, crime, recidivism, unemployment, and incarceration by the structure, accountability, and tough love approach of the DUI court program. These individuals have been able to move forward with their lives as productive, tax-paying citizens. Through drug and DUI court programs, the cycle of probation and addiction is broken and history rewritten. The number we can't count is the number of lives potentially saved from fatal accidents and other tragic events that were prevented through participants' recovery.

It is such a special opportunity for me to write to many of the graduates of the drug and DUI court programs in our State and think of the strength of these individuals who are turning their lives around to live free of drug and alcohol addiction. I applaud their efforts, and I always remind them that, while getting off drugs or alcohol may be the hardest thing they will ever do, it is also the most important thing they will ever do for themselves and their families.

On May 2, 2017, the Cobb DUI court program hosted its 30th graduation ceremony. Graduation day is such a special one not only for these graduates, but for the staff who work tirelessly in trying to save lives. That is the day where they see the long hours, the countless emails, the midnight phone calls, and the reams of paperwork pay off. They can look at where a defendant used to be and see how that man or woman's life has changed. On graduation day, lives are reformed and new ones begin.

I applaud all those fighting to change lives for the betterment of all.

REMEMBERING AMEDEO "ARMIE" C. MEROLLA

Mr. REED. Mr. President, today I pay tribute to a great Rhode Islander and patriot, BG Amedeo "Armie" C. Merolla, Rhode Island Army National Guard, RIARNG, retired, who passed away last week at the age of 88.

Mr. Merolla was born in Providence and graduated from Mount Pleasant High School before attending Brown University and Harvard Law School. At Brown, he enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, beginning what would become a 36-year career in service to our country marked by distinction and numerous decorations.

In 1955, Mr. Merolla enlisted in the RIARNG and was later commissioned as a first lieutenant in the Judge Advocate General Corps. The U.S. Senate approved Mr. Merolla's appointment to the rank of brigadier general in 1984, making him the first Italian American to become a general officer in the RIARNG. Indeed, he was part of a generation of Italian Americans who served with distinction, bringing great pride to this community while becoming an integral part of the fabric of our State. He was subsequently appointed assistant adjutant general and deputy commanding general—Army of the RIARNG. Even after his retirement in 1987, Mr. Merolla continued to serve. He was appointed commander of the Rhode Island State Defense Force, where he served until 1997, and to the honorary rank of major general in the Rhode Island Militia in 2005.

Mr. Merolla's military service was considerable and noteworthy, as was his legal career and contributions to his community and our State. He held numerous positions, including as legal counsel to several Rhode Island officials and agencies. He was also a former president of the Rhode Island Trial Lawyers Association, chairman of the Warwick School Committee, president of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Warwick, and trustee of St. Gregory the Great Church, among many other leadership roles.

I offer my heartfelt condolences to Mr. Merolla's wife, Norma, and their four children: Katherine Merolla, Julie Merolla, Major Sandra Merolla, USARNG, retired, and Warwick City councilman Steve Merolla, as well as to the rest of his family and friends.

TRIBUTE TO EDWARD GNEHM, JR.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I greatly appreciate having this opportunity to share with my colleagues the presentation of an award that means a great deal to me for a number of reasons. It is the president's medal that will be presented by Steven Knapp, the president of The George Washington University, GW. Its recipient, Edward Gnehm, has been a friend of mine ever since we were college freshmen at GW.

When Edward Gnehm, Jr., or "Skip" as everyone came to know him, came

to Washington, DC, from rural Georgia and I left rural Wyoming to tackle the challenge of my own college education at GW, I don't think either one of us knew what a great impact those 4 years would have on us and how our college experience would change our lives forever. It was a purely random thing, but when the administration of George Washington University decided which rooms we would use as freshman, they assigned Skip and me to the same dorm. We became friends pretty quickly. Then, when we pledged the same fraternity, we became brothers as well. Skip is the only real brother I have ever had, and I have relied on him and enjoyed that same kind of friendship and relationship ever since.

Our room was a pretty interesting place to be. I was a night person, studying accounting and business issues that would become my first major career. Skip, on the other hand, was a morning person, interested in reading whatever he could to sharpen his knowledge and understanding of foreign relations. He had a dream even back then that he would someday be an ambassador for the United States.

As I watched him pursue his dream, I learned that Skip was an interesting guy, very smart, dedicated, and determined to be the best he could possibly be at his chosen field. He helped me learn to expect the same of myself.

Soon, our college years were over, and we each went our separate ways, keeping in contact, pursuing our life's dreams and taking advantage of every opportunity that presented itself. Soon Skip was making his way through our Nation's diplomatic and foreign service system. For my part, what began as a small business soon had me working my way through Wyoming's political system on the local, State, and national levels.

As the years went quickly past, Skip and I continued to follow a similar path in life as we both met and married our special wives. Our kids were even born about the same times. Skip found in his wife, Peggy, and I found in my wife, Diana, the kind of support and assistance it was going to take if we were to achieve the kind of success we were both hoping for. For Skip, Peggy's encouragement and guidance has helped him to be a force for the United States and to serve our country all over the world. For my part, Diana has been exactly what I needed to serve the people of Wyoming at every opportunity.

For Skip, one of the greatest moments of his career had to be his service as our Ambassador to Kuwait. He was nominated to that post when Saddam Hussein came calling with his army and attempted to set up shop there. Fortunately, Skip had what it takes to face up to a challenge like that with great courage, bravery, and determination. Those who knew him weren't surprised. We knew he had it in him, and when our Nation emerged from that challenge, our President,