

know of institutions and organizations that did that, and to learn they were disregarded causes me to have great concerns.

The Senator from Missouri, Mr. BLUNT, and I have probed Secretary Azar, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, on this subject, and we are eagerly awaiting his justification for what appears to be a major significant error. It appears that HRSA and OPTN making policy in such a reckless fashion has become the normal state of affairs. Additional oversight may be necessary to ensure that fairness in organ allocation policy is protected and some common sense prevails in future policy. I know there is a group of Senators who are working on legislation to do just that.

I am very disappointed in the actions of HRSA, OPTN, and UNOS. This process has been flawed from start to finish, guided not by what is best for the country but how to sidestep a single lawsuit.

Organ procurement and allocation policy is too important. It is about life and death and is too important to be simply decided by lawsuits and countersuits, which I fear now will become the way of addressing this issue.

I will continue to work to protect our hospitals, our doctors, and particularly our patients—Americans—from this policy that disregarded all input from those in the transplant community. This discussion cannot be seen as anything coming to a close. It is far from over. I remain committed to finding answers, changing the tide, and putting patients and providers first in these life-or-death scenarios.

I thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

TRIBUTE TO MARCIA FUDGE

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, 10 years ago this summer, we lost a longtime friend of mine and colleague, a remarkable public servant, Congresswoman Stephanie Tubbs Jones.

When MARCIA FUDGE, then the mayor of Warrensville Heights, a Cleveland suburb, won the special election to Stephanie's seat to represent the 11th Congressional District, including Cleveland and the home where Connie and I live, she had big shoes to fill, but MARCIA rose to the occasion. For the past decade, she has been a fighter for my hometown of Cleveland and the east side suburbs into Akron and all the Ohioans she serves.

On the Education and Workforce Committee, she has become a senior leader who knows how to get things done. She stands up for Ohio's teachers, students, and families.

MARCIA also joined the Agriculture Committee, perhaps not initially seen as a natural fit for someone with an urban district like hers, but she understands that farm bills are not just about crops. They are food bills, eco-

nomics development bills, conservation bills, research bills, and nutrition bills. She and I—and I am the first Senator in half a century to be on the Ag Committee for some of the same reasons Congressman FUDGE is on this committee. We have worked together to write two farm bills.

This year, we both served on the bill's conference committee, and we fought House Republican efforts to erect more bureaucracy to gut nutrition programs in Ohio that families rely on. These are programs for people making \$8, \$10, \$12 an hour who don't have quite enough income to feed their families. We won that fight.

Tomorrow the President is scheduled to sign the bipartisan farm bill we passed with overwhelming bipartisan support in both Houses. Congresswoman FUDGE and I worked to right a century-old wrong and get Central State University the 1890 land grant status they deserve. That designation isn't just a rhetorical honor; it means more opportunities for funding and research in partnerships with industry—the sort of results that Marcia delivers for her district.

She is a leader among her colleagues. As head of the Congressional Black Caucus, she led the fight on so many issues, including working to ensure that all Americans have a voice in their government.

A few years ago, we held a field hearing on barriers too many Ohioans face exercising their most fundamental right—the right to vote. MARCIA was a star in that hearing. It came in the wake of a despicable Ohio law and, frankly, years of attempts at voter suppression by Ohio Republicans—a despicable Ohio law that cut the number of early voting days in half.

We know exactly whom these laws are aimed at. MARCIA testified about how these suppression tactics hurt communities of color. Unfortunately, it has gotten worse—limiting absentee balloting, restricting provisional balloting—and the Supreme Court, a Court that puts its thumb on the scale of justice in support of corporations over workers, a Court that puts its thumb on the scale of justice to support Wall Street over consumers, and a Court that rubberstamps all these restrictions on voting.

I look forward to continuing our fight alongside MARCIA against these tactics straight out of the Jim Crow era. I know MARCIA will continue to be a leader. There is no doubt, even before her election to Congress, that MARCIA was a force to be reckoned with: a former mayor, a former congressional chief of staff, and former national president—as important as anything she has done, I think in her mind—of Delta Sigma Theta. She still helps lead efforts to bring Deltas from around the country to the Hill each year for Delta Days. Hundreds of driven, ambitious, smart, committed, empathetic talented Black women come to our Nation's Capitol to meet with Members of Con-

gress and make their voices heard. They have an incredible role model in MARCIA FUDGE.

I am grateful, Congresswoman FUDGE, to have you as my Congresswoman. I am proud to call you a colleague and a friend.

ECONOMY

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I noticed today news reports from Bloomberg that the year 2017 is shaping up to be or likely was the most profitable year in Wall Street history. So what is Congress's reaction to that? What happens in the majority leader's office? More special interest legislation, more breaks for Wall Street, more tax cuts. So this Congress—this Congress has decided that Wall Street never quite has enough; that the richest people in this country are never rich enough; that the most powerful people in this country are not powerful enough.

So what happens down the hall in the majority leader's office? What happens way down the hall in the Speaker's office, although voters this year decided this year to eject him and his staff and his cohorts and his fellow travelers—if I can use a phrase like that—from that office and elect a whole different group of people.

What they have done is meet behind closed doors to help the oil companies, the drug companies, the gun lobby, and help especially Wall Street. In fact, not only are there all kinds of Wall Street lobbyists day in and day out—tobacco lobbyists, gun lobbyists, and others, but the White House itself looks like a retreat for Wall Street executives.

We know that. That is why, I guess, Wall Street had such a great year in 2017.

TRIBUTE TO PAT ROGALA

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I want to honor the career of Patricia Rogala, who has been with my office our entire 12 years in the Senate and my 14 years in the House before that. Pat is the model of a dedicated public servant. After more than 25 years serving the people of Ohio, Pat is retiring at the end of the year.

Her first day on the job in Cleveland, Congress was in the middle of a fight—sounds familiar—over healthcare. Some local activists sent an Elvis impersonator to the office singing a healthcare song to the tune of "It's Now or Never." Pat said at the time, "What am I getting myself into?"

Fortunately, she stayed. As our Ohio scheduler, she has sent me all over my State. She has helped me put more road miles on our made-in-Toledo Jeep Cherokee than any travel agent ever could.

She has made sure I am able to serve Ohioans through meetings and roundtables and plant visits. She juggles a Senate schedule that changes—as we see tonight—always at the last minute. She ensures that this

office serves every corner of Ohio. She works directly in concert and coordination with Diana Baron in our Washington office. It is a tough job, but Pat makes it look easy.

One of our colleagues in our office wrote this week that Pat has been a true friend and wonderful coworker. What a loss we will feel come Monday when she is not sitting in her office hard at work. It is a loss to all of us.

We will miss you, Pat. You have had an incredible impact on your colleagues. You made such a difference serving Ohio for the people of Ohio, but after a quarter of a century, you have earned a long and happy retirement. Your family needs you, and your family loves you so.

Thank you, Pat.

(Mr. RUBIO assumed the Chair.)

TRIBUTE TO MARGARET MOLNAR

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I rise to honor the career of Margaret Molnar, a dedicated public servant who has made a difference in the lives of thousands of Ohioans and who is retiring soon after 12 years with my office.

She joined my Ohio staff the very first year I came to the Senate after a long career at Legal Aid. Her entire life has been dedicated to helping those people in need. In the past 12 years, Margaret has worked on more than 10,000 cases. Those are 10,000 Ohioans whose lives she has touched. Many of these were seniors trying to navigate bureaucracy and get the Social Security and Medicare benefits they have earned. Margaret went above and beyond the call of duty for them.

She worked on one case for 5 years. It was a complicated one, helping an Ohioan who was taken as a baby from Lithuania, brought to a displaced persons camp in Germany after World War II, and then finally brought to America.

They were having trouble finding the documents he needed to prove his eligibility for Social Security and Medicare, two Federal programs for which he had paid in. The case at times seemed hopeless, but Margaret never gave up. This year she was finally able to track down the documents this Ohioan needed to secure the benefits he earned. That was par for the course.

She worked on another case for a constituent who had been trying to get someone to intervene regarding her mother's Medicare coverage. The woman's daughter wrote that Margaret's "caring, expertise, and knowledge of the medical system and Federal programs cut through all the gobbledygook I was facing, and pointed us in the direction of help when not one other agency or politician would."

Our office has received so many letters of praise and thanks like that for Margaret.

One Ohioan wrote to Margaret:

You and Senator Brown have accomplished what I was beginning to believe was impossible—the Social Security backup was in-

deed transferred to my account yesterday. I cannot thank your office enough. I cannot even begin to explain what a Christmas gift this is. I truly was beginning to wonder and worry about how I was going to make ends meet for the next several months.

Again, it is par for the course for Margaret Molnar.

Another woman wrote after her brother passed away, who Margaret helped in the last years of his life:

I will never forget how much you have helped enrich Robert's life while he was with us. Forever, we will be grateful. You immediately responded to my email and got the ball rolling and never gave up on Robert. You are like family.

Another woman wrote:

I did not know how to fight this type of issue, it seemed bigger than life to me. You truly have done a wonderful job. I appreciate you stepping in for me . . . your office truly cares about people.

In a last note, another couple wrote: "I hope Senator Brown knows how fortunate he is to have you on his staff." I know that, and Ohio knows that.

TRIBUTE TO BETH THAMES

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I rise to honor the career of an indispensable member of my staff, Elizabeth Thames. Beth has been with my office for over 20 years—all 12 years in the Senate and about a decade in the House before that.

Now, after serving the people of Ohio for these 20-plus years, Beth retires at the end of the year. She joined our office after working as an editor at the Elyria Chronicle-Telegram. Far from being the enemy of the people, Beth knew what journalism was, knew how important it is, and knew to tell stories to help people, to afflict the comfortable, and to comfort the afflicted.

Beth brought that same spirit to our office. She helped our office to connect with the community in Northeast Ohio and around the State. She writes down the name of every single Ohioan we meet together so we can better serve them. Her work has had an amazing impact on the people of Ohio.

At meetings, at roundtables, and at community events, she listens and she learns about problems. She understands what Lincoln was talking about when he said: Go out and get your public opinion. She listens to people who don't often get listened to, and she is a voice for people whose voices are often not heard.

In 2012 and 2013, she began hearing more and more about infant mortality—a huge problem in our State, particularly for African-American babies. Frankly, State government didn't seem to give a damn. Constituents would bring up this issue over and over, but no one was doing anything about it. She started calling around. She met with anyone who would talk to her about what the State and Federal Government could do.

She called Arthur James, a doctor on the faculty at Ohio State and at the Nationwide Children's Hospital. He was

sounding that alarm. He met with Beth and told her how bad things were. A crisis at the time, Ohio—a generally wealthy State, which could do so much better were it not for corrupt State government—had the third highest infant mortality rate in the country, and ranked last for African-American babies.

Beth started this conversation before many people were paying attention. She pushed every level of government to take this seriously. She talked with public health departments, with home visiting programs, with hospitals, with nurses, with doctors. She started conversations with legislators and legislative staff about what we could do on the Federal level, the State level, and the local level.

It is because of her that we passed and President Obama signed the bipartisan Sudden Unexpected Death Data Enhancement and Awareness Act. It is because of Beth that we wrote to the Consumer Product Safety Commission and got them to add warnings to crib bumpers to promote safe sleep.

It is because of Beth's hard work that then-Secretary of HHS Sylvia Mathews Burwell visited my hometown of Mansfield, OH, to see the great work that the Doctors Redding—husband and wife, two doctors in Mansfield, OH, my hometown—were doing and to see the great work they and community health workers were doing to help moms have healthy pregnancies and deliver healthy babies. The change was dramatic in the number of healthy babies who were born as a result of the work of all of them.

We have more to do, but all of Beth's efforts have given our State important tools to pay attention to monitor this problem and to figure out how to solve it.

For Beth, of course, it wasn't just infant mortality. Any time she heard about an issue in a meeting or roundtable, any time she heard about how our office could look and search for and find problems and find ways to be helpful, she was. She called agencies and offices. She talked with legislative staff. She always tried to find a solution.

She heard from veterans about the challenges using GI education benefits. This year she spearheaded our first student veterans conference. We spread around the State to help student veterans, soldiers, sailors, air men and women, and marines who come back after serving to integrate into classrooms in a difficult situation, where they are around college students who are usually younger than they and didn't have their life experience. She connects those student veterans with resources that allow them to get the most out of the benefits.

For all of her efforts, Beth never sought recognition. She is generally quiet as a person. I can imagine her right now telling me to stop. She doesn't need all this fuss.

This fall, the Elyria NAACP gave her an award—something she probably