

story, if you will, of how someone with mental illness issues can be returned to wholeness, so let me tell you about Mary. When you walk with Mary, you can't help but feel happy, happy, happy. That is because Mary radiates the joy of how Capital Area Human Services helped change her life.

Mary says:

I go out and help the community every day. I became successful in my life because of my faith in God and because of the wonderful people at Capital Area Human Services. Today I give back to the community what Capital Area has given to me.

It wasn't always this way. For nearly 20 years before being referred to Capital Area Human Services, Mary lived in group homes and was dependent upon others for basic needs.

I am now quoting Mary:

I weighed 340 pounds. I was sick all the time, was in and out of hospitals. I was barely able to function. I was on so many medicines I could not keep track.

When Mary came to Capital Area Human Services in 2006, she was first helped at the Margaret Dumas Center at the Government Street location. She eventually entered the total health program, and even more dramatic changes began.

Now, let me point out as a physician—I am a doctor—I have learned from folks such as the people I am quoting now that mental health is often associated with physical health problems. So someone who is seriously mentally ill is more likely to die in their 50s than they are in their 80s with untreated hypertension, diabetes, or perhaps, because they are homeless, subject to violence on the streets.

So let me now go back to Mary's story. When she entered the total health program, she lost nearly 100 pounds, no longer needed to take blood pressure medicine, changed her diet, participated in fitness programs, and continued to attend mental health therapy sessions.

Today Mary is a different person. She lives independently in her own apartment, attends Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church, walks 2 hours every day to volunteer for various duties at the St. Agnes Catholic Church soup kitchen, where she also sings for the attendees. Mary credits the nuns at St. Agnes for teaching her how to cook, prepare meals, and serve.

Also, Mary is a regular volunteer at the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and at the Baton Rouge General Hospital chapel, where she reads Scriptures for some of the services.

Mary said she loves Capital Area Human Services, tells everyone she knows about the people who helped her, particularly Keshia, John, the staff at Margaret Dumas, the staff at the Government Street location, and former total health employees Roy and Ricky.

She says:

I was motivated and didn't give up. It made me happy to do this for myself. I proved that I could do it, and I'm doing it. It's winter, but I'm out there anyway.

Now, I give that kind of personal story to give an example of someone with serious mental illness returned to wholeness. Now, I love that because I always tell folks when I speak that we in Washington, DC, can propose legislation, but unless there is local leadership, nothing good happens.

In 2016, I collaborated with CHRIS MURPHY, as well as EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON and Tim Murphy in the House, to pass the Mental Health Reform Act. It increased access to mental healthcare for adults and children, it strengthened leadership and accountability for Federal mental health and substance abuse programs, and it established new programs for early intervention. It was called by Senator ALEXANDER the largest reform to our mental health system in decades. I continue to work with President Trump's administration to implement these reforms.

Now, none of this Federal legislation makes a difference unless there is State and local leadership, as was demonstrated in the story which I gave. Last October, I held a mental health summit in Baton Rouge and brought together Federal, State, and local leaders, and the purpose was to discuss proven methods in how to work together to improve the provision of mental health services in both Louisiana and the United States.

There is still important work to do. If we are going to return these folks to wholeness, these folks—our family members, our neighbors, our fellow Americans.

The Mental Health Parity bill became law 10 years ago, but patients still have trouble accessing mental healthcare in the same way they access physical healthcare, caused by, among other things, the lack of mental health providers, prior authorization requirements, and reimbursement rate setting. I am committed to ensuring patients have access to the treatment so they return to wholeness.

We need the story of Mary not to be something so unusual that it is read upon the Senate floor, but something which is so common that we know it to be true. Instead of throwing up our hands—kind of, oh, my gosh, serious mental illness; there is nothing to do—instead we look to hope with a future for someone who could be returned to wholeness so that her first episode of mental illness is her last episode of mental illness.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

MILITARY APPRECIATION MONTH

Mr. PERDUE. Madam President, May is Military Appreciation Month. In light of that, I come to the Senate floor to remind us all just how important our military is to our way of life. One of the blessings of being a U.S. Senator and being on the Armed Services Committee and a past member of the Foreign Relations Committee, I have had the privilege to travel, as you have, around the world, visiting with our men and women in uniform.

I have concluded that the best—and I mean the very best—of what we produce here in America is in uniform around the world, worn by our women and men, protecting our interests and defending freedom around the world. There are only six reasons in the Declaration of Independence why 13 Colonies got together in the first place, and one of those was to provide for the common defense.

Today, the world is more dangerous than any time in my lifetime. Today, the United States faces five threats across five domains. This is much more complicated than the world has ever seen. Today, we measure the threats in this manner: China, Russia, North Korea, Iran, and terrorism across five domains.

It used to be air, land, and sea. Unfortunately, today, it is air, land, sea, cyber, and now space. The tragedy, frankly, of our time is we have treated space as a scientific endeavor over the last 30 years, and others who we now consider potential threats have treated it as a military domain.

I grew up in a military town. My father served in Germany during World War II. When World War II was ended, he joined the Reserves and then was called up again in the Korean war. He spent a couple of years in Korea during the Korean war. I have his dog tags today in my office. They serve as a constant reminder of his commitment to defending our ideals and upholding our way of life here in America. It reminds me that every single woman and man in uniform in our services today do the same thing.

Today, I am humbled to represent our men and women in uniform in the United States Armed Services Committee. I take that very seriously, as I know every member does. One of my greatest honors as a member of this committee and a former member of the Foreign Relations Committee, as I said, is to travel overseas. The highlight in every one of those trips is not meeting with the head of state or the head of the military or the foreign minister; it was having dinner with people from my home State who were in uniform around the world.

When President Obama was in office, the No. 1 request I heard from heads of state around the world was: We need America to reengage.

At that time, America had withdrawn. We had created a vacuum. People weren't asking us to be the world's policeman. They were asking us to basically reengage and have a seat at the table and lead again. After a decade of withdrawal from the world stage under the prior administration, America is now leading again.

President Trump is reengaged with the rest of the world. He has made it clear that America's interest comes first. When we say America first, it doesn't mean America alone. Today, our allies trust us again, and our adversaries fear us again. President Trump has also taken action to rebuild

our military after it was gutted during the prior administration. Under President Obama, spending on the military was cut 25 percent, and we saw the resulting drop in our readiness.

In the last 2 years, we have updated defense spending by \$80 billion a year. As a result, in addition, we have avoided the use of continuing resolutions in each of the last 2 years, thanks to people on both sides of the aisle—Senator LEAHY and Senator SHELBY, who are the ranking member and the chair of the Appropriations Committee—who worked diligently last year and made sure that we got defense funding done before the end of the fiscal year and without a continuing resolution.

Because of that, readiness is on the rise again in the military. Modernization efforts and rebuilding our military are underway, and our men and women in uniform are safer around the world, No. 1, and have the resources they need to carry out their mission.

I am proud of the progress that we have made in just a very short period of time. Just in the last 2 years, our readiness has dramatically improved. However, a continuing resolution of any length for fiscal year 2020 will erode and undo a lot of progress we have made just in readiness over the last couple of years.

I am really very concerned that this is a primary responsibility of ours here in the Senate and, indeed, in Congress, and it is one we have not stood up to in the past. We have got to do better than that this year.

I believe that Secretary of the Navy, Richard Spencer, said it best when he described the impact of continuing resolutions. Since the 1974 Budget Act was put into place, Congress has used 187 continuing resolutions as a release valve to fund the government in a temporary manner.

Let me say that again, since 1974, 45 years, we have used 187 continuing resolutions. Each one of those continuing resolutions is devastating to our military in so many ways that I will get into in just a minute. Continuing resolutions are absolutely devastating to our military, both in readiness and the ability to rebuild our military. It is the most insidious thing Congress can do to our men and women in uniform. Many of us here don't even realize the damage that continuing resolutions do to our military.

I have questioned all three current service Secretaries and their chiefs of staff, both publicly and in private meetings, about the operational impacts of continuing resolutions and funding uncertainty.

Here are some of the responses:

A continuing resolution “would be like a punch in the gut,” according to ADM John Richardson, Chief of Naval Operations.

A continuing resolution “would stall our progress on readiness and modernization,” said Gen. Bob Neller, Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps.

Heather Wilson, Secretary of the Air Force, said that the defense budget se-

quester “did more damage to the United States Air Force and our ability to defend the nation than anything our adversaries have done in the last 10 years—and we did it to ourselves.”

Secretary of the Army Mark Esper said:

Fiscal uncertainty has done a great deal to erode our readiness and hamper our ability to modernize. . . . If we do not modernize the force right now, we risk losing a future conflict against Russia or China. It's just that simple.

Finally, Secretary of the Navy Richard Spencer said, and this is classic:

Continuing resolutions have cost the Department of the Navy roughly \$4 billion. . . . Since 2011, we have put \$4 billion in a trash can, put lighter fluid on top of it and burned it.

I don't know how to put it more clearly than that.

CRs have a direct and immediate impact across the entire Department of Defense—from training, to readiness, to maintenance, to personnel, and, yes, to contracting.

During a CR, training must be rescheduled, scaled back, or discontinued entirely, which means our warfighters are less prepared for battle and don't have the resources to defend themselves properly when in the heat of battle.

Depot maintenance and weapons development are delayed, resulting in costly delays, less lethality, and higher costs.

Hiring and recruitment are put on pause, leaving critical gaps in workforce skill sets.

We have the development of cyber capability and space capabilities now. We are just ginning up those capabilities, and CRs absolutely devastate these young, developing capabilities.

Change-of-station moves for service members and their families are halted, creating unnecessary turmoil for families. Can you imagine that you have kids, and you are going to be deployed overseas. The timing has to be right to get your kids in schools over there. Well, if a CR happens to occur—and guess what happens around September 30. The end of our fiscal year. If your family is moving around that period of time, it could be held up because of that CR. That is very disconcerting to families already stressed by increased deployments and rapid turnarounds.

The DOD cannot start new contracts or in many cases has to cancel existing ones. That devastates the supply chain. When we look at the supply chain in the military, after the devastating disinvestment of the last administration, one of the things that have to be rebuilt is the supply chain. The consistent funding of the supply chain is critical to the long-term defense of this country, and it is one we have taken for granted and have devastated over the last decade.

Additionally, the Department of Defense has outlined hundreds of critical projects that would be disrupted or even discontinued if a current CR is

used this year. I can think of one right now. A very much in demand helicopter has been under development for the last few years. It is ready to go. It is ready to be sent to the troops in the field. Yet, if we have a CR come September 30, it will be delayed 1 full year.

We cannot allow this any longer. Clearly, CRs create inefficiencies and uncertainty that hurt the bottom line and our ability to fight. These funding disruptions weaken our strategic capability and shake the confidence and foundation of our Nation's industrial base.

Until 2018, the Department of Defense started 13 of the last 17 years under a continuing resolution. Thirteen of the last 17 years, they started their fiscal year under a continuing resolution. Fortunately, for the last 2 years, despite other funding failures of Congress, we did not have to use a CR to fund the military. That has been a major factor in boosting readiness and our reinvestment and recap efforts.

I hate to say it, but I believe we are staring down the barrel of a potential CR on September 30 this year. As we sit here tonight, there are only 25 working days between now and July 31. Why is that important? Because in the month of August, this body, along with the House, goes back to their States, and it is a work period in those States. That means we will not be able to pass appropriations bills here because we will not be here.

If we don't move this appropriations bill and get it passed by the end, I believe, of July, when we come back in September, there will be only 10 working days, legislative working days, and there is no way we are going to get it all funded in that time.

Last year, on July 31, we had only appropriated about 12½ percent of the Federal discretionary budget. We stayed here in August, to the credit of the leadership, Senator MCCONNELL. I believe that because of that, we went from 12½ percent to 75 percent funding, including the Department of Defense, and therefore we were able to avoid a continuing resolution last year, as I have said.

Other people have said that the greatest threat to our national security is our own national debt—General Mattis, Admiral Mullen. There are various other people who have said that who are in a position where they should know. I would add one thing to that that is devastating to our ability to defend this country, and that is the use of continuing resolutions.

When we look at the domain threats and the natural threats that have evolved in the world right now—China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, and terrorism—I don't think any of that damages the military, potentially, as much as our inability here to provide consistent funding for our military.

During Military Appreciation Month, I can think of no higher calling than for Congress to work diligently on passing a defense appropriations bill.

First, we have to pass the National Defense Authorization Act, which we are working on this week. All the subcommittees are passing their markups this week. We hope to move on that immediately. I believe that will get passed here without much controversy.

I know that leadership right now is talking about moving in a very intense manner, with a critical sense of urgency, to get this Defense appropriations bill done. I applaud those efforts. I want to support it in any way I can.

I call on everybody in this body to be supportive of making sure that we can have, for the third year in a row—this is not a partisan issue; this is about our men and women in uniform. Given that this month is Military Appreciation Month, what better time to face up to this potential and make sure that we don't have a continuing resolution come September 30 of this year. That is the least we can do for our women and men in uniform. And we can fulfill the responsibility our Founders laid out in the Declaration of Independence when they outlined those six reasons why we were coming together, and the No. 1 reason we had at that time was to provide for the security of the United States of America.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. ROBERTS. Madam President, first, before my colleague from Georgia leaves, I want to thank him for his strong statement on the fact that we have to do defense appropriations.

I know that the Presiding Officer certainly knows all about this, given her Active-Duty service on behalf of our Nation.

As he has pointed out, every service has been affected by this. Speaking for the U.S. Marine Corps, part of the Marine Caucus that we have here, and talking with Bob Neller, who is our retiring Commandant—he has pointed out specifically that they don't have enough to do—I mean, we are proud of the Marine Corps. I always say we do more with less, but this time, you can't do more with less and then less and then less, and that is precisely where we are.

I thank the Senator for making an outstanding statement. I join him in this plea on a bipartisan basis to get these appropriations bills done.

Thank you.

NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

Madam President, I rise today, along with many of my colleagues, in recognition of National Mental Health Awareness Month.

We on the Senate Agriculture Committee have worked extensively on mental health issues, fighting for improved mental health services and mental health parity, especially in our rural and smalltown areas. We have made great strides over the years in improving access to mental health services and eliminating the stigma of seeking treatment. However, as we

continue to see violent tragedies around the country resulting from individuals with mental illness, or even solely looking at suicide rates, which continue to increase—let me point out that in Kansas, there were over 500 suicides in 2016 alone. If the figures were available, I am sure that would be increased, especially with the problems we have in farm country, where we are going through a very rough patch—a fifth year of prices below the cost of production. There is a lot of stress out there in farm country. All of this shows me that more can certainly be done to address the deficiencies in our current system.

Kansas has one suicide prevention lifeline crisis center, located in Lawrence, KS. That is to assist people experiencing mental health crises from the entire State. In many of our rural areas, we continue to struggle with providing adequate access to mental health services.

Those facts apply just for those patients who seek out care. Too many times, people struggling with mental health are either unaware that they can seek help, or they are simply unwilling to do so because of the stigma that is often associated with mental illness. That is why we need to take the opportunity not just this month but every day going forward to improve awareness and understanding about mental health.

The same can be said for addiction. On the Agriculture Committee, we are all proud to have played a role in the passage of the SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act last year to help address the opioid crisis. However, Kansas is still facing significant challenges with meth addiction. We fought the good fight to eliminate meth labs in many of our States, and now the cartels in Mexico have much more virulence—if I can use that term—with regard to meth.

I am currently working on legislation to help extend the reach of important, often lifesaving treatments for addiction to folks in our rural areas. We can improve mental and behavioral well-being while continuing to reduce the stigma associated with seeking out mental health and addiction treatment.

Additionally, having the privilege of being the chairman of the Agriculture Committee and speaking for my ranking member, Senator STABENOW, as well, you have probably heard me say that we have been in a rough patch in farm country over the past several years. That is certainly true. However, those of us who represent farm country can be more reticent to discuss the toll these troubled times take on farmers, ranchers, growers, and their families, who work tirelessly each day to produce the food and fiber for the United States and a troubled and hungry world.

Farmers, ranchers, and growers face highly demanding working conditions on a good day but more especially dur-

ing a time of lower prices. As I have indicated, it is the fifth year of prices being below the cost of production. So we see mitigation payments coming out of the Department of Agriculture.

Historically, there have been efforts made by Congress to address these concerns, including the programs that took place during the 1980s farm crisis—I was in the House of Representatives at that particular time; those were very tough times—and recognition of this issue in the 2008 farm bill.

As we began the 2018 farm bill process, we looked for opportunities to address this pressing issue, and it led to renewal of the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network. Members on both sides of the aisle in the Capitol recognize the importance of a nationwide Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network. It provides support for all producers, farmers, ranchers, and their families through partnerships with organizations in their local communities. Local communities are stepping up, but in terms of getting that network applied, that is another story.

This network recognizes the State and local organizations that have been addressing behavioral health concerns for farmers and ranchers and authorizes grants to support the programs that assist those who are in crisis, especially during this month when we are addressing this topic.

We have just heard from the distinguished Senator from Georgia about the need to avoid a CR in terms of a national defense, and that is true, but in this particular case, it is authorized, but it is subject to appropriations.

On this particular issue, to prevent suicides and mental health illness from resulting in a tragedy, not only in our cities, not only in other States, but across our rural and smalltown areas, it is exceedingly important that we fund this so that we can get the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network up and running and provide the help they really need.

Thank you.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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