

freedom. We have already been joined by scores of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle, and I know we will be joined by many more. The House of Representatives is slated to pass a similar measure later this week. In this way, the entire Congress of the United States will be able to speak, when the Burmese citizen, the Buddhist monk, the democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi herself are forced to be silent.

I urge all of my colleagues to join me and join Senator KERRY on this resolution.

I yield the floor.

TRIBUTE TO MAYER MITCHELL

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Mayer Mitchell, a great American and human being who passed away on Wednesday, September 26, 2007. A highly successful businessman and remarkable philanthropist, Mayer Mitchell was a personal friend, and along with the entire city of Mobile, I mourn his passing.

Mayer was born in New Orleans in 1933 and grew up in Mobile, AL. He earned his bachelor of science degree in economics at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Finance in 1953. He then served as an Army first lieutenant in Korea, earning a commendation ribbon with medal pendant for meritorious service.

Returning home to Mobile with his wife Arlene in 1958, Mayer founded, with his brother Abe, the Mitchell Company, a commercial and residential real estate development firm. He went on to serve as its chairman and chief executive officer for the next three decades, selling his interest in the Mitchell Company in 1986.

The company's final total under the oversight of the Mitchell brothers was remarkable, with 25,000 single family homes, 20,000 apartments and 175 shopping centers built throughout the Southeast.

In fact, the current Mitchell Company that descended from a partnership of Mayer and his brother remains the largest private firm in Mobile and is among the top 40 in Alabama. Mayer's business success earned him an induction into the Alabama Business Hall of Fame in 2006.

Mayer Mitchell leaves a legacy of tremendous philanthropy, touching the lives of many residents of south Alabama. Mayer was a tireless proponent of education and health care, serving more than 32 years on the University of South Alabama's Board of Trustees, including a term as chairman.

He was awarded the University of South Alabama's National Alumni Association Distinguished Service Award in 2005 and an honorary doctorate of humane letters in 2007.

The Mitchell family's philanthropy reached all aspects of the campus at the University of South Alabama, from business and medicine to athletics. Mayer will forever be remembered as a

legendary figure in the growth of the University. The Mitchell Cancer Institute, the Mitchell College of Business and the Mitchell Center sports and performance complex, proudly bear the family name.

To date, the Mitchell family holds the distinction of having contributed more than any other single family to a public university in Alabama State history.

The Mitchell Cancer Institute alone is a powerful legacy, providing state-of-the-art cancer care to people throughout the gulf coast region. Mayer always explained his deep commitment to cancer treatment through a personal connection. At the age of 36, he was diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease and was given 6 months to live. After 2 years of treatments, Mayer made an extraordinary recovery.

This victory not only shaped his life, but shaped the future of the Mobile region as well. He never forgot that he had to leave Mobile for his own cancer treatment in Rochester, NY, and he vowed to make certain Mobile had its own cancer center in the future.

This experience shaped his generosity and will to persevere in the form of improved quality of health care for every resident in south Alabama.

Although Mayer Mitchell and his family were critical to the tremendous growth of the University of South Alabama, this was not the only object of Mayer's patronage.

A strong friend to Israel, he served a term as president of the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee and served on the board of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and the Jewish Seminary of America, which awarded him an honorary doctorate.

Mayer supported several other schools and numerous social and religious organizations. His philanthropic service included work with Alabama Power Company, Wright School, Bishop State Community College, Leukemia Society of America, USA Foundation, AmSouth Bank, Altus Bank, Mobile Area United Way, Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce, Mobile Jewish Welfare Fund, Mobile Federation of Jewish Charities, Mobile County Real Estate Association, Archives of American Art, Anti-Defamation League and the Banc Corporation.

His honors include: Jewish Welfare Fund Man of the Year, Outstanding Young Men of America, Prichard Honorary Citizen of the Year, Mobile County Realtor of the Year, and numerous high honors from the Boy's Club of Mobile, Bishop State Community College, University of Rochester, New Orleans Chapter of Hadassah, Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind, Mobile Kiwanis Club and the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association.

Mayer is loved and will be missed by his wife of 54 years, Arlene; his son Richard; his three daughters, Melinda Wertheim, Joy Grodnick and Lisa Bukstein; and eight grandchildren.

He was an inspiration to many and will be remembered for his dedication and many contributions to Mobile and the University of South Alabama.

I ask the entire Senate to join me in recognizing and honoring the life of Mayer Mitchell.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I ask the indulgence of the Senator from Vermont. I know Senator SESSIONS wishes to add a few words of tribute to Mr. Mitchell, and then Senator SANDERS will have his 10 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I thank my colleague Senator SHELBY for recalling the remarkable facts of the life of Mayer Bubba Mitchell, one of Mobile's great citizens, a national leader, as well as a local leader, someone who has friends throughout the country and the world. It is remarkable, the extent of his reach and impact. He had a clear vision. He wanted his life to be a life that made the world a better place. He worked at that. He had a strong will to do that. Senator SHELBY and I were talking about that this morning. It was remarkable. He had an ability to get things accomplished. To me, one of his most remarkable characteristics was the fact that he could have many different activities going on, but he always seemed to complete each one of them and get it done successfully.

At a final AIPAC banquet he attended, realizing it would be his last—it was recalled at his funeral service Friday—he asked these questions about himself but really applying to others. I think it would apply to all of us in the Senate. Knowing that he would not be back, he asked: Have I done enough? Have I done my best? Have I made a difference? All of us ought to ask those questions more and would probably be better performers when we do.

His wonderful partner Arlene is such a fabulous person, so well liked, a former Mobilian of the year. She is so gracious. His son Richard spoke so movingly at his memorial service. His son-in-law Jimmy Grodnick likewise, married to his wonderful daughter Joy, made remarks. His grandchildren read from the Talmud such wonderful passages that reflected his values. His brother Abe, who has been a partner in business and in so many of these activities, told me afterwards it wasn't over. He still had things he wanted to do and he would continue to work at them. I know that is exactly what Mayer would have liked.

The business school I visited at the University of South Alabama is so well endowed by the Mitchell family. The athletics center, the Mitchell Center, is where his memorial service was held, the sports complex. And perhaps in the long term, the greatest financial investment he and his family made is in the Mitchell Cancer Center that will be a place for research as well as treatment of those who have suffered with

cancer, because he felt so blessed, having been allowed to survive what many said at the time was a fatal disease.

So many people came from all over the country to that service, it was really remarkable, including the Republican leader in the Senate, MITCH MCCONNELL, who himself came down and was an honorary pallbearer. He was on a first-name basis with Presidents. Indeed, I am aware that President Bush called him twice in recent months. Foreign leaders, Senators, and Congressmen were on a first-name basis with him. His life is a testament to what can happen when a person focuses his life on making a positive difference in the world and living a good life. He accomplished those things. Probably outside of a public official, he was on a first-name basis with more Senators than maybe any other person in our country. There may be some others, but not many would know as many and be as well respected as he was over the years.

I appreciate the opportunity to make these remarks. Not only did he serve on the board, chairman of the board of the University of South Alabama for 32 years, he gave hours and hours of his time and attention and ideas and ability to making that the great university it is. So he not only gave money, he gave of his time and of himself to make it the great university it is. Gordon Moulton, the president, certainly reflected that in his remarks.

I thank the Chair and Senator SHELBY for his excellent remarks and yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, Mayer was a wonderful man who a lot of us got to know because of his leadership role in the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. This was a wonderful gentleman, the exemplification of the American dream. He worked extremely hard, made a great success of himself for his family, for his community, for his country. He loved America. He was devoted to Israel and devoted to the strength of the United States-Israel relationship. He was a great American patriot. I don't want to take the time to describe it now, but I am personally grateful for him for the ways in which he stuck with me at tough times in my own career. He didn't just stick with me, but he sort of worked at it to make sure everything came out all right. He was a good friend, a good man. God bless his soul.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

STAFF SERGEANT ZACHARY TOMCZAK

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I wish to pay tribute to SSG Zachary Tomczak and his heroic service to our country. As a member of the Army's 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment of the 82nd Airborne Division based in North Carolina, Staff Sergeant Tomczak was serving in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. On September

25, 2007, he was killed in action in Baghdad.

A Huron native, Zachary joined the Army in June 2002 and took great pride in serving his country. His graduation from Ranger School at Fort Benning, GA, in May is described by his father as "one of the proudest moments for him and for me." His captain remembers him as "a leader, mentor, warrior, Ranger, hero." Zachary was on his fourth tour of duty in Iraq and had earned the Purple Heart and Bronze Star Medal, among other awards.

A hard worker, Zachary enjoyed hands-on projects and worked for a construction company during high school. He also enjoyed spending time four-wheeling, pheasant hunting, and deer hunting. Friends and family will remember Zachary's love for life and easygoing personality.

Sergeant Tomczak gave his all for his soldiers and his country. Our Nation owes him a debt of gratitude, and the best way to honor his life is to emulate his commitment to our country. Mr. President, I join with all South Dakotans in expressing my deepest sympathy to the family of Staff Sergeant Tomczak. He will be missed, but his service to our Nation will never be forgotten.

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS CHRISTOPHER PFEIFER

Mr. HAGEL. Mr. President, I rise to express my sympathy over the loss of United States Army PFC Christopher Pfeifer of Nebraska. Private First Class Pfeifer died on September 25 from injuries he sustained near Kamu, Afghanistan, when insurgents attacked his unit on August 17. He was 21 years old.

Private First Class Pfeifer grew up in the small town of Spalding, NE, where he played eight-man football at Spalding Academy, as well as the drums in the band. He was assigned to the 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team based in Schweinfurt, Germany. All the flags in Spalding, a town of about 600 people, are at half-mast in honor of Private First Class Pfeifer.

Private First Class Pfeifer is remembered as a devoted husband, son, and brother. Sadly, he was denied the chance to become a proud father; his wife Karen gave birth to a baby girl the day after his death.

All of Nebraska is proud of Private First Class Pfeifer's service to our country, as well as the thousands of other brave Americans serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In addition to his wife and newborn daughter, he is survived by his parents, Mike and Dar, his brother Aaron, and his sister Nicki.

I ask my colleagues to join me and all Americans in honoring PFC Christopher Pfeifer.

HEALTH INSURANCE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I am here today to talk about health insurance. Congress is well aware of the ever increasing number of the uninsured.

Not to mention the fact that health costs continue to rise at an alarming rate. Make no mistake, the numbers are sobering.

But I am not here to dwell on the past and present. I stand here today to talk about the future. I stand here to discuss ways to expand access to health insurance and to change the inequities in the tax treatment of health insurance.

During the debate on SCHIP, I engaged in a colloquy with Senators BURR, COBURN, MARTINEZ, CORKER, and BENNETT. During that exchange, I explained that, currently, a taxpayer who receives health insurance through his or her employer is not taxed on the cost of the health coverage. I also explained that individuals who do not receive health coverage through their employer generally do not receive a tax benefit. Similarly, a tax benefit is not afforded to people who are not employed and purchase health insurance on the individual market.

I noted that Republicans and Democrats alike agree that Congress should "level the playing field" and expand access to health insurance. The question is how. Senators BURR, COBURN, MARTINEZ, CORKER, and DOLE have introduced a proposal that would eliminate the exclusion for employer-provided health coverage. It would provide a flat tax credit to all Americans who purchase "qualifying health insurance." I commend the Senators for their leadership, and I intend to work with them on ways to expand access to health insurance.

Senators WYDEN and BENNETT have also introduced a proposal that would expand access to health insurance. Senators GREGG, BILL NELSON, and ALEXANDER have cosponsored the proposal. Most recently, Senators STABENOW, LANDRIEU, and COLEMAN cosponsored the legislation. This bipartisan legislation is a "patient-driven" approach to reforming our health care system. I want to stress, a "patient-driven" approach to reforming health care.

A "patient-driven" approach means the patient can shop for their own health care in a competitive marketplace, which will allow them to choose the type of health insurance that meets their needs. Many in the Democratic Party, including several of the Democratic Presidential candidates, want a government-run single-payer health care system that is not "patient-centered." This is a nonstarter and is bad policy. Recent polling shows that the American public thinks so. That is, the majority of Americans do not want a government-run system.

I want to reform the health care system through the Tax Code. I want to cap or eliminate the exclusion for employer-provided health coverage and offer Americans a choice between a tax credit and a deduction for health insurance. I want to condition these tax subsidies on States undertaking certain insurance reforms. I want to give the States the flexibility to decide what