

many of us today in a totally different way, with a multitude of options we never had. If, in fact, we don't begin to change this, the system will reflect one choice, one doctor, one hospital, one delivery port.

I challenge my colleagues today that is universal control, control where one entity—the Federal Government—dictates where we go, who we see, what they are reimbursed for delivering the service, and the outcome will be the lack of innovation, the lack of breakthroughs, and no reason for the American people to make healthy choices and to engage in prevention and wellness.

That is where we are. I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will engage and encourage our leadership to have a healthy debate on health care. I haven't locked in to any prescribed legislation tonight. It is the principles of the Republican Conference that I am here to present and will continue to come back to the Senate floor to present. I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle: let's come to the floor. Bring your legislation. Let's examine it, let's debate it, let's let America see it. Let them be the judge. At the end of the day, it is the American people who will influence where this debate goes, and that is exactly who should influence it. They are the patients of the future health care system.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado is recognized.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period for the transaction of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

#### 5TH ANNIVERSARY OF NEVADA STATE COLLEGE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to commemorate the 5th anniversary of Nevada State College, the newest institution in the Nevada System of Higher Education

Nevada State College was born out of a dire need. In recent years, southern Nevada has been growing at a break-neck pace. In 1990, Clark County's population was just over 740,000 people; today, it is over 2 million. With such tremendous growth came considerable growing pains. Enrollment in Nevada's two universities and four community colleges swelled 16 percent from 1994 to 2000. Clark County was facing both teacher and nursing shortages. Nevada needed another place to train the next generation of nurses, teachers, and business professionals. That place is Nevada State College.

In many ways, Nevada State College is representative of our State. In 2002,

Nevada State opened its doors with 177 students; 5 years later, NSC's enrollment has swelled to over 1,900. In true pioneer fashion, Nevada State's students tend to focus on professions that are needed most in the community. NSC's two largest majors, nursing and teaching, are two areas of critical need in Nevada. But Nevada State is more than simply a nursing and teaching college.

Nevada State students also practice civic responsibility. Before they graduate, NSC students are required to take a course called Community Based Learning, CBL, 400. In this course, students work with different organizations to improve their community. For example, Nevada State graduates have worked at their local libraries, volunteered at nonprofits, and tutored public school students in the areas of math, science, and engineering. This service-oriented program has been such a success, it was named to the Presidential Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll for 2007.

Nevada State College has experienced rapid growth in its first 5 years, and I am sure it will continue to grow in both students and stature. Soon, NSC will begin expanding into its 500-acre parcel situated in the beautiful foothills of Henderson. I look forward to the completion of the new campus. Nevada State College is only 5 years old, but it has already made its mark as one of Nevada's shining academic gems.

#### IN HONOR OF JOHNNIE ALBERTSON

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the life and accomplishments of Ms. Johnnie Albertson. Johnnie, a valued employee of the Small Business Administration for 32 years, succumbed to illnesses resulting from pneumonia. A native North Carolinian, Ms. Albertson was able, through her own perseverance, to overcome poverty and the loss of her parents to establish herself as a champion of equal rights.

Ms. Albertson will be remembered for her dedication to her work with the Small Business Administration. Johnnie was a modern pioneer who overcame gender and class restrictions and went on to hold numerous senior positions at the SBA. She served as the first Associate Administrator for the Small Business Development Center Program and was the first woman to achieve the rank of senior executive within the SBA—the highest rank possible without a congressional appointment.

Through the many programs she initiated at the SBA, Johnnie was instrumental in guaranteeing the rights of minority and female small business owners across the country. Thousands of business owners owe their success, in part, to Ms. Albertson's resolve to ensure equal opportunities for all entrepreneurial Americans.

For her achievements, Ms. Albertson was awarded the SBA's Silver Medal for Meritorious Service and the inaugural SBA Lifetime Achievement Award. She was also the first female to sell advertising space for the Washington Post, New York Times, and the New York Tribune. These awards, coupled with her work in the private sector, forged a path for others to follow.

Johnnie Albertson will be remembered by those closest to her for her enthusiasm for reading, her wonderful sense of humor, and her love of jazz music. Those who benefited personally by knowing Ms. Albertson, along with those who profited by her good works, will forever be indebted to her generosity, devotion, and diligence in promoting equal opportunities for all. Mr. President, I extend my deepest sympathies to the friends and family of Ms. Albertson and express my gratitude for the passion with which she served our country.

#### INDIAN HEALTH CARE IMPROVEMENT ACT

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I welcome the Senate passage of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act. The bill is a long overdue response to a health crisis for our country's American Indians and would at last strengthen and expand health services to those who need it most and those to whom promises were made but far too few promises have been kept. The last comprehensive reauthorization of IHCA took place in 1992—and since then, progress has been ground to a halt in the Senate while health disparities for American Indians have dramatically widened.

The situation is dire. Today, American Indians suffer from disproportionately higher rates of diabetes, heart disease, suicide, and several types of cancer than all other groups in the United States: 2.6 times more likely to be diagnosed with diabetes; 630 percent more likely to die from alcoholism; and a life expectancy nearly 6 years shorter than the rest of the U.S. population. The gap between the needs of this community and the resources dedicated to addressing them is stark: fewer mental health professionals available to treat Indians than the rest of the U.S. population; health care expenditures for Indians less than half of what America spends for Federal prisoners.

It goes without saying that we should invest the necessary funds in improving health coverage and care for American Indians, which is why it is so important that the Indian Health Care Improvement Act modernizes Indian health care services and helps ensure at least that money is no longer the biggest impediment to quality health care in Indian Country.

In my home State, the status of Indian health care is particularly daunting: inadequate health facilities, mental health services and assisted living care for the elderly; the percentage