

But I cannot tell you how many times, over the many years I have served as U.S. Senator and before that, Governor, that I heard families' desperate pleas for help because their medical needs could not be met.

It breaks my heart to think of what the Bords went through: not only the pain of watching their son fight a terrible disease but also the uncertainty of paying for his treatment when the coverage they counted on—and paid for—would run out. For anyone, especially a public figure, to aggressively question and attack a family's extraordinary personal anguish is deeply offensive and morally reprehensible.

No parents should have to spend the precious, fleeting time they have with their child, struggling to navigate a broken system, worrying how they are going to provide care. And no one, especially a child like Samuel, should be forced to walk such a dangerous tightrope between life and death because he or she lacks meaningful health insurance coverage, because of runaway costs, and caps, and exclusions. Yet that growing and deeply felt insecurity runs like a common thread through our entire health care system.

It is these stories—real stories of real people—and the unbelievable pain behind them and the battle of so many West Virginians that drive me to fight for comprehensive health reform every single day. We must listen to these stories, take them in, and never ever forget them.

DIFFICULT ECONOMIC TIMES

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, as I have traveled throughout Rhode Island, I have heard from countless constituents about the sacrifices they have made during these difficult economic times. Many of my constituents have adjusted to the economic climate by cutting back on extras and finding savings where they can.

For seniors living on a limited budget, however, simply cutting back is not an option. I have heard from seniors who have turned off the heat in their homes because oil prices are so high. I have heard from others who are splitting pills and skipping doses because they cannot afford to refill a prescription. These are seniors who have worked hard their whole lives, paid into the system, and believed that they would be able to grow old comfortably. Instead, many are barely scraping by on Social Security benefits that no longer cover their daily living expenses.

Last Wednesday, the Senate had the opportunity to provide some extra help for seniors, veterans, and individuals with disabilities who rely on Social Security. We voted on an amendment offered by Senator SANDERS, which I co-sponsored, that would have provided an extra \$250 payment to Social Security beneficiaries. The payment would have been an extension of the financial assistance I successfully fought for as

part of the economic recovery package last year, and these funds would plow right through into our economy to help further stimulate demand and economic recovery. Unfortunately, this year, the amendment failed to receive enough votes for passage.

Although a \$250 payment may not sound like much to some, for those on a limited budget the extra financial assistance provides peace of mind amid skyrocketing health care and prescription drug costs. The payment would provide added relief for the millions of older Americans who, for the first time since 1975, did not receive a cost-of-living adjustment in their Social Security benefits. Without some extra help, these beneficiaries are hard-pressed to make ends meet.

Just ask Jackie, a North Smithfield resident, who has seen her health insurance premiums increase by double digits this past year and the cost of her prescription drugs continue to rise. At a time when every penny counts, Jackie says the winter months are particularly hard for her. When Jackie hears the oil truck drive by, she cringes knowing that the cost of heating her home is another bill she simply cannot afford.

I also heard from Edward, a senior living in Warren, who is worried how he will make ends meet without the increase in his Social Security benefit. In recent months, he is seen his car and home insurance increase by \$200, and other daily living costs, such as heating oil, gas, and groceries, rise significantly. In these tough times, Edward could just use a little help. He writes, "I just don't understand why Congress cannot do something to help seniors at least maintain a status quo."

Linda, a Rhode Islander from Providence, survives on only \$500 a month. Like so many older Americans, Linda takes multiple prescriptions every day. The out-of-pocket costs for her prescriptions add up, even on Medicare. Between her medical costs, food, heating, and other daily expenses, she can barely make ends meet. Linda would welcome any financial assistance she can get, so that she can save for copayments for visits to the doctor which she knows she will soon need. Linda says she is disappointed that the Senate does not realize how desperately seniors need added financial help.

Like Linda, I am disappointed by the vote this past Wednesday. My colleagues failed to act on an opportunity to help our seniors when they need it the most; at a time when just a little help would go a long way.

For Jackie, Edward, Linda, and seniors across our country facing similar challenges, I will continue fighting to assist older Americans during these difficult economic times. I urge my colleagues join me in standing by our Nation's seniors.

NEW HAMPSHIRE OLYMPIANS

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I wish to congratulate the athletes from

New Hampshire who represented our country at the Olympic games in Vancouver.

As I watched the games over those 2 exciting weeks in February, I know I joined all Granite Staters in celebrating New Hampshire's enduring tradition of excellence in winter sports.

More than 125 years ago, in 1882, residents of Berlin, NH, formed the first modern ski club in America.

In 1927, the Dartmouth Outing Club organized the first downhill race in the United States at Mount Moosilauke in New Hampshire's White Mountains, where the Outing Club still hikes to this day. The next year, a Dartmouth professor organized the country's first slalom race.

In the 1930s and 1940s, as skiing grew in popularity, J-bars and chairlifts were added at mountains in Europe, in the West and across New England, but none could rival Cannon Mountain's Aerial Tramway in Franconia, which was built by the New Hampshire State Legislature and continues to be the platform from which millions of visitors first see our White Mountain range.

At the 1960 winter games in Squaw Valley, CA, 37 years after that first race in the White Mountains, a 22-year-old from Center Harbor named Penny Pitou became the first American to win an Olympic medal in downhill. The great "Skiing Cochran's" have roots on both sides of the Connecticut River, including Barbara Ann, who won a gold medal in 1972, her brother Bob, and Bob's son Jimmy, who competed in the slalom in Vancouver and grew up in Keene.

There were 12 athletes on the U.S. team in Vancouver who have strong New Hampshire ties. On the Alpine team, Jimmy Cochran was joined by Leanne Smith from Conway and Bode Miller from Franconia, along with Andrew Weibrecht, an environmental studies major at Dartmouth.

Hillary Knight from Hanover competed in her first Olympics as the youngest member of the U.S. Women's ice hockey team. And from just down the road in Lebanon, Nick Alexander competed in three ski jumping events including the normal hill event, known in the sport as the "NH Individual."

Kris Freeman from Andover competed in his third Olympic games in Nordic skiing. Kris trains at Waterville Valley, alongside Michelle Gorgone and Hannah Kearney, members of the famous Waterville Valley Black & Blue Trail Smashers Club. Snowboarder Scotty Lago from Seabrook went to his first Olympics in Vancouver after years of practice at Waterville and Loon. My husband Billy would want me to mention that he went to Dover High School with Jim Westcott, father of snowboarder Seth Westcott, who won back-to-back golds in snowboard cross.

The New Hampshire medalists at these Vancouver Games were really spectacular. Scotty Lago spoke with such pride about representing