

Medical Emergencies. I applaud the President for this effort to ensure that every person enjoys the same right to have their loved ones with them in hospitals and to designate surrogate decision makers when they are hospitalized, often in their time of greatest need. No one should be forced to face important medical decisions or spend their last moments apart from their loved ones just because the person they love happens to be of the same sex.

The President has directed the Secretary of Health and Human Services to issue regulations prohibiting hospitals that participate in Medicare and Medicaid from denying visitation privileges on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability. The memorandum issued last week also calls for greater enforcement of existing regulations that ensure all patients' legal representatives have the right to make informed decisions regarding patients' care.

There is a tragic history of discrimination in health care, but fortunately, we are making progress to end it. Hospitals were racially segregated until the 1960s, when Congress passed legislation prohibiting that discrimination in hospitals that are recipients of Federal funding. The President's memorandum is a similarly important step toward equal treatment. For too long, some hospital patients have been denied the basic rights of receiving visitors and designating surrogate decision makers without a remedy in Federal law. In Vermont, many same-sex couples have sought to be recognized as committed couples by law to ensure that they and their families are entitled to these rights. Those families should not lose those rights when traveling out of State.

The fight for equal rights protections continues in Congress. I am a proud cosponsor of the bipartisan Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligations Act of 2009, which would provide domestic partners of Federal employees all of the protections and benefits afforded to spouses of Federal employees, including participation in applicable retirement programs, compensation for work injuries and health insurance benefits. I also support the Tax Equity for Health Plan Beneficiaries Act of 2009, which would end the taxation of health benefits provided to domestic partners in workplaces that provide domestic partner health benefits to their employees.

Respecting the rights of all hospital patients to have their loved ones near in times of crisis is something every American should support.

AMERICAN-ISRAELI PARTNERSHIP

Mr. BAUCUS. Madam President, I rise to reflect on the current state of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and the special role the United States must play in moving these talks forward.

Peace talks between the Israelis and Palestinians have been stalled for nearly a year. To restart these talks it is abundantly clear that it will require great courage amongst the negotiating parties to negotiate in good faith. Efforts to negotiate a lasting peace in the region have been interrupted by violent clashes and mistrust. When it comes to peace, no one should doubt the sincere yearning of the Israeli and Palestinian people. Their dream of peace will be best realized when our countries work together.

Ever since Israel declared independence in 1948, the United States and Israel have enjoyed a close friendship. And our support for Israel remains unwavering. For over a half-century Israel has been a pillar of freedom and democracy in the Middle East. In the face of countless threats and challenges it is this commitment to freedom that has kept our relationship strong. In the past Israel played an integral role in combating Soviet expansionism in the Middle East during the Cold War. Today it stands with the U.S. in confronting Iran in its dangerous pursuit of a nuclear program.

Israel is an important strategic partner of the United States. Our national interests are linked through our ongoing cooperation in trade, diplomacy, intelligence, weapons development and military exercises. Since 1985, the U.S. has provided nearly \$3 billion in grants to Israel annually. I am confident that we in Congress will continue to provide the assistance that befits such longstanding strategic allies.

While there are moments of disagreement between Israel and the U.S., they do not affect the mutual interests that we share in the Middle East. The cause of freedom unites our vision for a peaceful future. It is critical that we continue our longstanding relationship of trust and cooperation as we meet the common challenges we face today. During rare moments of disagreement, it is best for two allies to resolve them privately and amicably. We should not allow our occasional differences to be exploited by our adversaries.

Restoration of the peace process is a shared goal because its benefits are shared. For Israel, a lasting peace agreement brings assured peace to a land where peace has for too long been fleeting. For the U.S., the pursuit of a mid-east peace deal illustrates America's commitment to working for peace and security. Comprehensive peace in the Middle East is, and should remain, one of the U.S. highest foreign policy priorities.

RESERVE COMPONENT HEALTH CARE PROGRAMS

Mr. BURRIS. Madam President, it is with pride that I bring to the attention of my colleagues a recent series of programs conducted in Downing Grove, IL, relating to medical care for our servicemembers. The programs were sponsored by the Dupage Medical Group and

the Defense Education Forum of the Reserve Officers Association of the United States, ROA. They were part of an ongoing series of six programs held over the past 2 years by these entities and related to the Reserve Components and military medicine.

In November of last year, the topic was Mental Health Care Programs for the Reserve Components and their Families. As we all know, the signature injuries of the current overseas wars have been head injuries resulting in some degree of traumatic brain injury, TBI, and post traumatic stress syndrome, PTSD. Treatment for our wounded warriors with these injuries is paramount and has been correctly made a priority by the Secretary of Defense and Secretary of Veterans Affairs. The most recent of the programs was on the lessons in military medicine from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, which was conducted on April 9, 2010. It had a distinguished faculty and featured Dr. Paul DeFina, chairman of the International Brain Research Institute, who discussed brain trauma and its latest treatments.

I am especially proud of the efforts of several of my constituents, notably, COL Janet Kamer and the doctors of the DuPage Medical Group, in developing and hosting these programs together with the Defense Education Forum. Colonel Kamer is the command consultant for psychology to Air Force Reserve Headquarters and a psychologist with the DuPage Medical Group. She is also the president of the Illinois Department of the Reserve Officers Association.

MG Robert Kasulke also deserves recognition for his efforts in cohosting these programs. He is commander of the Army Reserve Medical Command and a vascular surgeon in his civilian career. RADM Paul Kaye (Retired), the national president of ROA, has also played a part in these medical care programs by introducing the April 9, 2010, program. Other faculty for these programs that deserve recognition includes: BG Margaret Wilmoth, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs; COL Nicole Keese, deputy surgeon in the Office of the Chief of the Army Reserve; Sergio Estrada, assistant director of the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs; Adermi Olodun, of the DOD Employer Partnership Program; and Bob Feidler, the director of the Defense Education Forum. Participants of the meetings included medical providers, local representatives of the Department of Veterans Affairs, other caregivers, medical and legal, and several of our wounded warriors.

It is through people such as Dr. Kamer, the DuPage Medical Group and the Defense Education Forum of ROA, and the distinguished faculty of these programs that the most up-to-date information is being provided to the medical community, Reservists and their families about the various programs and treatments available to