

meeting with the Cuban government on bilateral issues like fighting drugs and smuggling—the margin is more than 61 percent.

Challenging conventional wisdom that Floridians—and especially the state's large Cuban-American population—are in lockstep with the embargo, the poll finds stronger support for normalization in Florida (63 percent) than in the country overall (56 percent). A full 67 percent of Floridians support removing all restrictions for Americans to travel to Cuba, and 82 percent favor meetings with the Cuban government on issues of mutual concern.

Simply put: The state that reportedly once had the greatest reluctance to re-engage has reversed its position.

Having jailed political opponents, Cuba has a political climate that is far from free. The Cuban government continues to hold former USAID subcontractor Alan Gross in prison. The Cuban government has inched toward loosening its grip on the island's economy. Despite that, however, the Cuban people continue to live under a repressive regime.

However, it would appear that a standard of 100 percent political alignment with the United States before allowing freedom of travel or economic activity with another country is only applied to Cuba. For instance, U.S.-China trade topped \$500 billion in 2011, and we granted permanent normalized trade relations to Russia in 2012. American tourists visit both countries without restriction. It is easy to see why most Americans now oppose our frozen-in-time policies toward Cuba.

Trade with Latin America is the fastest growing part of our international commerce. In 2014, economic growth in Latin America is expected to continue to outpace U.S. growth. Rather than isolate Cuba with outdated policies, we have isolated ourselves.

For example, the presidents of our Latin American partners, including close allies such as Colombia and Mexico, recently traveled to Cuba alongside the U.N. secretary general. In January, Brazil joined Cuba in inaugurating a huge new shipping terminal on the island. And our European and Canadian friends engage with Cuba. Meanwhile, U.S. companies are prohibited from any economic activity on the island.

Just about the only beneficiary of our embargo has been Cuba's current regime. The embargo actually has helped the Castros maintain their grip on power by providing a reliable and convenient scapegoat for Cuba's failing economy. Change will come to Cuba. These counterproductive U.S. policies have delayed it.

President Obama has already relaxed some facets of our Cuba policy, lifting restrictions on Cuban-American travel and remittances, which have had positive effects. Anecdotally, U.S. remittances have been crucial in allowing Cuban entrepreneurs to take full advantage of economic openings that the Castro regime has been forced to allow. This not only improves Cubans' lives but will make future economic contractions by the Cuban government difficult for the regime to attempt. Current policy boxes U.S. entrepreneurs and companies out of taking part in any of this burgeoning Cuban private sector.

Further, there is simply no legitimate justification for restricting any American travel to Cuba. The travel ban, like the rest of the embargo, only bolsters the Cuban government's control over information and civil society. Instead of willingly restricting the liberty of our own citizens, we should be taking every opportunity to flood Cubans with American interaction, with our ideas, with our young people.

Americans want a change in our Cuba policy. The president should heed the majority of those across the country who recognize

that we have much to gain by jettisoning this Cold War relic.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

LITTLE COUNTRY THEATRE

• Ms. HEITKAMP. Madam President, I am pleased to honor and recognize the Little Country Theatre at North Dakota State University as it celebrates its 100th anniversary.

Founded in 1914 by a small group of drama students, the Little Country Theatre has inspired, challenged, and educated countless students, faculty, and community members across North Dakota. Today, the Little Country Theatre is well recognized and respected for its diverse programming and for bringing the gift of theater to the public.

Over the last 100 years, the Little Country Theatre has presented hundreds of plays throughout North Dakota. It is celebrating its 100th season with several special events, including the screening of a documentary on the rich history of the theater, its faculty, its leaders and its impact on the community. In addition, the group will be performing classic stories such as Oklahoma and Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* and hosting many thought-provoking discussions.

The Little Country Theatre is a fixture on the North Dakota State University campus and serves as an important hub for current students by helping them understand the great value of theater and performance art. But its impact can be felt well beyond the stage and campus. It has spread the joy of the theater to rural communities across the State, while inspiring the next generation of actors and actresses. I am proud to acknowledge and honor this significant milestone for the Little Country Theatre.

I ask the Senate to join me in congratulating the Little Country Theatre on its first 100 years and in wishing continued success in the future.●

SOUTHERN WEST VIRGINIA MOBILE HEALTH CLINIC

• Mr. MANCHIN. Madam President, today I wish to celebrate an exciting and significant victory for local veterans in southern West Virginia and to recognize the unwavering dedication of the people who have worked tirelessly to bring the first-ever mobile veterans health clinic to Mercer County.

Today, the Beckley VA Medical Center will debut the long-awaited mobile health clinic in Bluefield, WV. This facility will improve access to primary and mental health-care to the growing number of veterans in the region.

This is wonderful news for our brave heroes who have been without accessible health care for far too long. Until now, our veterans' only option for receiving health care has been to drive over an hour to the closest clinic or

hospital. Expecting our veterans to commute this far after these courageous men and women have already risked their lives in the defense of this country is simply unacceptable.

I have always said that West Virginia is one of the most patriotic states in this great Nation, and we are so proud of the number of veterans and Active-Duty members who have served with honor and distinction. Upon returning home, they truly deserve the absolute best care and treatment that is available. That is why we have made it our top priority to bring this clinic to serve the veterans in Mercer County and the surrounding communities with quality care.

The mobile health clinic will be an extension of the Beckley VA Medical Center, and it will be initially stationed in Bluefield, WV. As long it is utilized by area veterans, we can count on this facility to stay in southern West Virginia for years to come.

I especially want to emphasize the efforts of one very special West Virginian who has dedicated the past 18 years to helping the veterans of southern West Virginia—Al Hancock. His leadership and commitment to the betterment of the veteran community is truly why this mobile clinic will open its doors today.

Throughout his life and still today, Al has answered the call of service—whether it was serving our great Nation or helping the people of West Virginia. He is a retired teacher and a retired Air Force veteran who served two tours in Vietnam.

A proud and passionate leader, he was the chairman of the retired military support group and he led discussions among over 250 veterans about the issues concerning them most. He talked with fellow veterans, their spouses, and their families regularly.

One issue that continued to arise was the need for more accessible health care. After more than 150 letters sent to the local newspaper and issuing a petition containing more than 3,000 resident signatures, he provided a voice to the veteran community. Despite the many obstacles and hurdles, Al never gave up—he worked passionately and tirelessly to bring this issue to light. And finally, that voice resonated loud and clear. Because of Al's perseverance and determined vision, I am proud to have worked closely with Al to help bring people together to make his vision a reality.

With the hard work and partnership of the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Beckley VA, and the West Virginia delegation, we have been able to make a difference for Al and for all of the veterans who reside throughout southern West Virginia.

We owe our veterans more than a debt of gratitude. Showing our appreciation to the brave men and women who have served is something we should do each and every day. By delivering this mobile health clinic, we are

paying tribute to those who have answered America's call of duty.

I thank Al, the VA, the Beckley VA Center, and all those who have worked to bring this much needed health care access to Mercer County.

This clinic will greatly benefit communities that have a need for health care resources, and it will help ensure all of our veterans and their families have access to the care they need and truly deserve.●

REMEMBERING J. SMITH LANIER II

● Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President. I would like to take a moment to recognize the passing of a great American patriot, J. Smith Lanier II. Smith Lanier was an entrepreneur, business leader, philanthropist, community leader, national leader, and friend.

He was a native of Georgia, attended Auburn University then transferred to the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy where he earned a degree in mechanical engineering and a commission into the U.S. Navy.

In 1950, he joined his aunt's insurance agency, Lanier Insurance Agency, based in West Point, GA. His career was interrupted by 2 years of active duty aboard the USS Ault DD698 during the Korean war. When he returned from that service, he purchased the agency under the name J. Smith Lanier & Co. He began with a single office and five employees and grew to have offices throughout Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, Florida, and Kentucky. Today the company is one of the oldest and largest insurance brokerage firms in the United States. He served as its chairman and CEO until 1998 and was chairman emeritus until his death.

During his life, he helped launch many other companies including Async, Inc.; SouthernNet; Interface, Inc.; NASDAQ; Valley Realty Company, Inc.; ITC Holding Co., Inc.; Avdata, Inc.; National Vision Associates, Inc.; Cookbook Brands, Inc., now Beverage House; Powertel, Inc., formerly Intercel, Inc. and now TMobile; and ITC DeltaCom, NASDAQ. A remarkably successful entrepreneurial career indeed.

He was a strong advocate for education at all levels, both public and private, founding Springwood School in Lanett, AL and serving on the boards of trustees of several colleges and universities. He was a strong advocate for fair treatment for hospitals in the area, an issue that I worked with him to address.

Mr. Lanier was very close to Auburn University. He served on many boards for the university and in 2010 was presented the Auburn University Alumni Association Lifetime Achievement Award.

Smith was also active in local, regional and national politics serving the Republican Party in many ways, including being a delegate to two Republican National Conventions. He was al-

ways a strong supporter of policies that he believed served the long term interests of the United States.

Smith Lanier was, in the end, what he prepared to become in the beginning. An Eagle Scout, he credited the Boy Scout Oath and the twelve Boy Scout laws as foundations for his personal and business life.

Mr. Lanier leaves behind his wonderful wife, Elizabeth "Betty" Walker, daughters Mary Ellen (Mrs. Anthony Lee Collins, Sr.) of Lanett, AL, Elizabeth Lanier Lester of West Point, GA, and Edith Carroll (Mrs. Joseph Wiley Hodges, Jr.) of McDonough, GA, eight grandchildren, as well many other family members, friends and colleagues. They have been given a great legacy indeed.

Smith Lanier was a great patriot reflecting the highest and best values of American citizenship, and I am honored to be able to pay tribute to his many contributions to business, education, health, and his community.●

REMEMBERING YETTA GLENN SAMFORD, JR.

● Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, I note the passing at age 90 of a truly outstanding American citizen, Yetta Glenn Samford, Jr., a lifelong resident of Opelika, AL. Opelika Mayor Gary Fuller rightly called him an icon. The product of a distinguished Alabama family, he was successful in law and business, all the while giving of himself for his Nation and community.

That such characteristics, such cast of mind and heart, have provided the unique values that have made America great is without doubt. The deeply held concept of neighbor helping neighbor has been the glory of the Republic. A member of the "greatest generation", Yetta Samford served his country and was consistently successful in his undertakings. He flourished in law and business. But, he was focused on giving back. He loved his country, State and community and was a strong believer in education. During World War II, he piloted B-17 bombers being stationed in England in 1944 and 1945—a calling that placed his very life at risk. Returning from the war, grateful for his survival, he declared, "I thank the Lord for letting me come back." Then he married his wonderful lifetime partner, Mary Austill, got his degree at Auburn University and his law degree at the University of Alabama.

From then on success followed him and he lived a life of generosity. How many today will reach his level of service? Are we still producing such people? Perhaps so, but in the same numbers?

Yetta Samford was supportive of a host of positive activities. He was active in many local organizations, donated the land for the Opelika Sportsplex and Aquatics Center, and was a member of the board of deacons for the First Baptist Church of Opelika for 60 years. He served on the prestigious board of trustees of the Univer-

sity of Alabama, serving a 3-year-term as president pro tempore. He was, in addition, a founding trustee for the University of Mobile, a fine Baptist affiliated liberal arts college.

Mr. Samford was respected and loved throughout the Opelika area. He set a high standard for a life well lived. I was honored to have his friendship. Professionally accomplished, a man of high character and generous with his time, talents and resources, Yetta Samford's life reflected the highest qualities of American citizenship. It is fitting that this Senate take note of such a life.

He took great joy in his exceptional wife, Mary Austill Samford, and daughters Mary Austill Samford Lott and Katherine Park Samford Alford, five grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. They reflect these same qualities and can take solace in the heritage that he has left them.●

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 12:22 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 2431. An act to reauthorize the National Integrated Drought Information System.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bill was read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and placed on the calendar:

H.R. 2431. An act to reauthorize the National Integrated Drought Information System.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-4633. A communication from the Acting Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness), transmitting a report on the approved retirement of Lieutenant General William N. Phillips, United States Army, and his advancement to the grade of lieutenant general on the retired list; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-4634. A communication from the Acting Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness), transmitting a report on the approved retirement of General Keith B. Alexander, United States Army, and his advancement to the grade of general on the retired list; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-4635. A communication from the Chairman and President of the Export-Import Bank, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to transactions involving U.S. exports to Kenya; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-4636. A communication from the Chairman and President of the Export-Import Bank, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to transactions involving U.S. exports to Canada; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.