

office serves every corner of Ohio. She works directly in concert and coordination with Diana Baron in our Washington office. It is a tough job, but Pat makes it look easy.

One of our colleagues in our office wrote this week that Pat has been a true friend and wonderful coworker. What a loss we will feel come Monday when she is not sitting in her office hard at work. It is a loss to all of us.

We will miss you, Pat. You have had an incredible impact on your colleagues. You made such a difference serving Ohio for the people of Ohio, but after a quarter of a century, you have earned a long and happy retirement. Your family needs you, and your family loves you so.

Thank you, Pat.

(Mr. RUBIO assumed the Chair.)

TRIBUTE TO MARGARET MOLNAR

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I rise to honor the career of Margaret Molnar, a dedicated public servant who has made a difference in the lives of thousands of Ohioans and who is retiring soon after 12 years with my office.

She joined my Ohio staff the very first year I came to the Senate after a long career at Legal Aid. Her entire life has been dedicated to helping those people in need. In the past 12 years, Margaret has worked on more than 10,000 cases. Those are 10,000 Ohioans whose lives she has touched. Many of these were seniors trying to navigate bureaucracy and get the Social Security and Medicare benefits they have earned. Margaret went above and beyond the call of duty for them.

She worked on one case for 5 years. It was a complicated one, helping an Ohioan who was taken as a baby from Lithuania, brought to a displaced persons camp in Germany after World War II, and then finally brought to America.

They were having trouble finding the documents he needed to prove his eligibility for Social Security and Medicare, two Federal programs for which he had paid in. The case at times seemed hopeless, but Margaret never gave up. This year she was finally able to track down the documents this Ohioan needed to secure the benefits he earned. That was par for the course.

She worked on another case for a constituent who had been trying to get someone to intervene regarding her mother's Medicare coverage. The woman's daughter wrote that Margaret's "caring, expertise, and knowledge of the medical system and Federal programs cut through all the gobbledygook I was facing, and pointed us in the direction of help when not one other agency or politician would."

Our office has received so many letters of praise and thanks like that for Margaret.

One Ohioan wrote to Margaret:

You and Senator Brown have accomplished what I was beginning to believe was impossible—the Social Security backup was in-

deed transferred to my account yesterday. I cannot thank your office enough. I cannot even begin to explain what a Christmas gift this is. I truly was beginning to wonder and worry about how I was going to make ends meet for the next several months.

Again, it is par for the course for Margaret Molnar.

Another woman wrote after her brother passed away, who Margaret helped in the last years of his life:

I will never forget how much you have helped enrich Robert's life while he was with us. Forever, we will be grateful. You immediately responded to my email and got the ball rolling and never gave up on Robert. You are like family.

Another woman wrote:

I did not know how to fight this type of issue, it seemed bigger than life to me. You truly have done a wonderful job. I appreciate you stepping in for me . . . your office truly cares about people.

In a last note, another couple wrote: "I hope Senator Brown knows how fortunate he is to have you on his staff." I know that, and Ohio knows that.

TRIBUTE TO BETH THAMES

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I rise to honor the career of an indispensable member of my staff, Elizabeth Thames. Beth has been with my office for over 20 years—all 12 years in the Senate and about a decade in the House before that.

Now, after serving the people of Ohio for these 20-plus years, Beth retires at the end of the year. She joined our office after working as an editor at the Elyria Chronicle-Telegram. Far from being the enemy of the people, Beth knew what journalism was, knew how important it is, and knew to tell stories to help people, to afflict the comfortable, and to comfort the afflicted.

Beth brought that same spirit to our office. She helped our office to connect with the community in Northeast Ohio and around the State. She writes down the name of every single Ohioan we meet together so we can better serve them. Her work has had an amazing impact on the people of Ohio.

At meetings, at roundtables, and at community events, she listens and she learns about problems. She understands what Lincoln was talking about when he said: Go out and get your public opinion. She listens to people who don't often get listened to, and she is a voice for people whose voices are often not heard.

In 2012 and 2013, she began hearing more and more about infant mortality—a huge problem in our State, particularly for African-American babies. Frankly, State government didn't seem to give a damn. Constituents would bring up this issue over and over, but no one was doing anything about it. She started calling around. She met with anyone who would talk to her about what the State and Federal Government could do.

She called Arthur James, a doctor on the faculty at Ohio State and at the Nationwide Children's Hospital. He was

sounding that alarm. He met with Beth and told her how bad things were. A crisis at the time, Ohio—a generally wealthy State, which could do so much better were it not for corrupt State government—had the third highest infant mortality rate in the country, and ranked last for African-American babies.

Beth started this conversation before many people were paying attention. She pushed every level of government to take this seriously. She talked with public health departments, with home visiting programs, with hospitals, with nurses, with doctors. She started conversations with legislators and legislative staff about what we could do on the Federal level, the State level, and the local level.

It is because of her that we passed and President Obama signed the bipartisan Sudden Unexpected Death Data Enhancement and Awareness Act. It is because of Beth that we wrote to the Consumer Product Safety Commission and got them to add warnings to crib bumpers to promote safe sleep.

It is because of Beth's hard work that then-Secretary of HHS Sylvia Mathews Burwell visited my hometown of Mansfield, OH, to see the great work that the Doctors Redding—husband and wife, two doctors in Mansfield, OH, my hometown—were doing and to see the great work they and community health workers were doing to help moms have healthy pregnancies and deliver healthy babies. The change was dramatic in the number of healthy babies who were born as a result of the work of all of them.

We have more to do, but all of Beth's efforts have given our State important tools to pay attention to monitor this problem and to figure out how to solve it.

For Beth, of course, it wasn't just infant mortality. Any time she heard about an issue in a meeting or roundtable, any time she heard about how our office could look and search for and find problems and find ways to be helpful, she was. She called agencies and offices. She talked with legislative staff. She always tried to find a solution.

She heard from veterans about the challenges using GI education benefits. This year she spearheaded our first student veterans conference. We spread around the State to help student veterans, soldiers, sailors, air men and women, and marines who come back after serving to integrate into classrooms in a difficult situation, where they are around college students who are usually younger than they and didn't have their life experience. She connects those student veterans with resources that allow them to get the most out of the benefits.

For all of her efforts, Beth never sought recognition. She is generally quiet as a person. I can imagine her right now telling me to stop. She doesn't need all this fuss.

This fall, the Elyria NAACP gave her an award—something she probably

hoped I wasn't going to talk about—called the “Unsung Hero Award.”

That is Beth. By the end of a long career that touched so many lives, I can't let her go without giving her the recognition she reserves.

Beth Thames, thank you for what you have done for our State. Thank you for what you have done for our country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). The Senator from Idaho.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—
H.R. 1677

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, I come here today to talk about an issue that has been talked about quite a bit here on the floor today, and that is the situation in Syria. I know there has been a lot of debate today about what is happening there and what happened today in Syria.

But I bring to the floor today something that I think should get the unanimous consent of everyone. The House passed this resolution some time ago. It was by voice vote—no recorded “no” votes. It was essentially a unanimous consent bill.

When I am through with this, I am hoping everyone here will agree with me that this is the right thing to do and something that will actually address the situation that is taking place in Syria.

This bill declares that it is U.S. policy to use all diplomatic and economic means to compel the government of Bashar al-Assad to stop the slaughter of the Syrian people and work toward a democratic government. The use of sanctions are a critical tool of U.S. foreign policy, and that is what we are talking about here today—the implementation of additional sanctions. They often allow the United States to have a strong impact on a country and serve the U.S. national security interests without having to implement military measures and put U.S. troops in harm's way.

I believe—and most of us believe—that H.R. 1677 helps meet those interests. How does it work? Here is how it works. First of all, it imposes fresh sanctions on entities conducting business with the Assad regime and its military and intelligence agencies. A number of regime-controlled industries—including in the airline, telecommunications, and energy sectors—will also be targeted.

It aims to encourage negotiations by allowing the President to waive sanctions if the parties are engaged in meaningful negotiations and the violence against civilians has ceased.

The bill also authorizes the Secretary of State to support entities that are collecting and preserving evidence for the eventual prosecution of those who committed war crimes and crimes against humanity in Syria from March 2011 to the present and requires the President to report to Congress on the

identity of those who are responsible for or complicit with gross violations of human rights of the Syrian people.

There is no doubt that we are going to get to that point. It is not going to happen tomorrow, and it is not going to happen the next day, but no one on Earth can do the kinds of things that Assad has done to his own people.

We all know that there have been poisonous substances used and weapons of mass destruction used by Assad against his people. Eventually, those who are responsible are going to have to face the music for that, and they are going to have to be prosecuted for that.

This bill helps to preserve the evidence and the identity of those who are involved in that. As I noted, the House passed this some time ago, and virtually without resistance. On November 30, the administration issued a White House statement supporting H.R. 1677. The administration said:

The bill would add to a robust set of tools at the Administration's disposal to help bring to an end the heartbreaking ongoing tragedy in Syria and to hold Syrian officials accountable for the slaughter of civilians and other atrocities. This bill will help provide additional leverage to achieve the United States government's objective to de-escalate the military conflict and support the United Nations-led peace process and a transition to a government in Syria that honors the will of the Syrian people, respects the rule of law and human rights, and peacefully co-exists with its neighbors in the region.

The bill effectively targets the Assad regime and its supporters with additional financial sanctions and some crippling economic tools. We have all seen some very recent examples of how well our sanctions have worked because of the United States' position in the banking industry and, indeed, in the world economic structure.

In order for us to get the Iranians out of Syria and help bring a permanent defeat of ISIS, we must pursue a politically negotiated solution that will have a major change in the current Syrian regime structure. The Syrian people are a noble people. Their culture has been an organization that has existed since Biblical times. These are a noble people, a good people as a population, and they do not deserve this. From a humanitarian perspective, this legislation expresses the long overdue outrage for the 500,000 Syrians killed by the Syrian dictator, Iranian forces, and their allies.

Dictators are evil. Whether they are religious or secular, royals or oligarchs, they are evil.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 620, H.R. 1677; that the committee-reported amendment be agreed to, the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed, and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Reserving the right to object, today President Trump announced that we have won the war against ISIS in Syria. Our troops are coming home. Thank you, Mr. President.

The Syrian civil war is largely over, but Syria is a mess and desperately needs reconstruction. These sanctions will delay—and possibly prevent—the reconstruction of Syria and the beginning of a healing time. Now is the time for diplomacy.

There are many actors—including Russia, Iran, Turkey, the United States, and others—but this is the time for diplomacy, not for new sanctions. So I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, to respond briefly, with all due respect to my friend and colleague, the Senator from Kentucky, I respectfully urge that this is exactly what is needed to encourage the diplomacy that he wants, that I want, that all of us want.

As far as discouraging that, this resolution actually gives the President the authority to grant waivers when and if they finally get to the diplomatic track.

So with all due respect, I disagree with that. I understand he has the right to object to this. It is unfortunate. We had the 435 members of the House hotline this here. There are 99 Members here who signed off on this legislation. It is very unfortunate.

The Syrian people do not deserve the treatment they are getting from Assad, and this resolution is aimed directly at stopping it.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

JOHNSON-O'MALLEY SUPPLEMENTAL INDIAN EDUCATION PROGRAM MODERNIZATION ACT

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I ask the Chair lay before the Senate the House message to accompany S. 943.

The Presiding Officer laid before the Senate the following message from the House of Representatives:

Resolved, That the bill from the Senate (S. 943) entitled “An Act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct an accurate comprehensive student count for the purposes of calculating formula allocations for programs under the Johnson-O'Malley Act, and for other purposes.”, do pass with an amendment.

MOTION TO CONCUR

Mr. LANKFORD. I move to concur in the House amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion is pending.