

10 years, we need to have more options for veterans, and I am here today to say that I think he has been right. Even though defenders and advocates of veterans hospitals and veterans systems want to make it better, we have been slow to embrace the idea that they want more options, but they, along with Congress, are now willing to accept more options, and this system will be better because veterans will have more choices.

There are some issues that the Veterans' Administration is clearly better at than other facilities, and if they are not better than anybody else in dealing with those issues, we need to ask why. They are better at dealing with injuries that result from IEDs and explosive attacks, and so they should be better at dealing with eye injuries, loss of limb, and rehabilitation than anybody else in America. They should also be better at dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder than anybody else in America. But there is no reason they would be better at dealing with cancer or a heart problem or a lung issue. There is no reason to believe that at all.

This is the time to really rethink not what is best for the Veterans' Administration but what is best for the veterans. Our goal should be doing what is best for veterans, not what is best for the Veterans' Administration.

We have all seen the list, and too many Missouri facilities are high on that list with veterans waiting to get service. We have all heard about the lists and heard the stories about supervisors from one facility after another. And I am sure not every facility is telling the people they supervise: Here is how we are going to manage the people who want to be here so that it appears we are doing a better job than we are doing.

We have had enough of that. We have had enough with appearing to be doing a better job than they are doing. Now is the time to insist that they do a better job. I think we took a big step in that direction yesterday.

I look forward to this bill improving as the House and Senate work together to bring the two bills to a final vote so it can get on the President's desk to be signed into law and ultimately change the way we deal with veterans.

While I am on the floor, I have a few additional items to mention. My office continues to get more letters about the unintended consequences when government thinks it can better manage people's health care than they can themselves. I have three examples with me today that have come into my office over the last few days.

Brandon from St. James, MO, said:

I purchased a separate health insurance policy for my college-aged son because it was cheaper than continuing to carry a family policy. It was a good policy with a decent deductible through Blue Cross Blue Shield. We received a notice that his insurance was going to be cancelled. This was alarming to us and just plain wrong. The goal of Obamacare was supposed to get more people

insured. Instead it was doing the opposite, it was cancelling his insurance.

Brandon goes on to say:

Then we got another notice later saying that he could keep his current insurance after the President decided to extend the mandate for another year.

Brandon says now he is concerned about what will happen—as many people are—at the end of that year.

The more we postpone and delay and say the law doesn't mean what the law says, the more we are confused. When you have a bad law, postponing and delaying it has some merit.

Jerry from Jefferson City says he has a plan with really good benefits. Under the President's health care plan, his plan will now and in the future be subject to an additional tax because he was fortunate enough to have a really good plan.

If they are really trying to get people the insurance they want—and hopefully as good an insurance plan as they could have—that is not something you would expect them to do.

The third example is from Earl, who resides in Palmyra, MO. He said he is a senior citizen and found that his long-time preferred doctor is no longer in the network, so he has to pay to see the doctor he has always seen. His doctor visits have gone from \$20 a visit to \$45 a visit. So much for the pledge that if you like your health insurance, you can keep it or if you like your doctor, you can keep him.

I hope we can find a way to rally around the health care challenge for everybody the way we figured out a way to rally around the health care challenge for veterans. We need a system that doesn't create all kinds of unintended consequences but just makes it easier for people to have access to the insurance they want, not the insurance the government says they should have.

I see my colleagues are joining me, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WALSH). The Senator from Maine.

TRIBUTE TO PRESIDENT GEORGE H.W. BUSH

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise today to honor a great American, President George Herbert Walker Bush, on the occasion of his 90th birthday. As I reflect upon his remarkable life, I am amazed that he has managed to pack so many accomplishments into just 90 short years. In fact, today President Bush will mark this milestone by doing what he has done on other birthdays so many times: He will jump out of an airplane—or as Barbara Bush once put it, he will jump out of a perfectly good airplane.

President Bush has spent every summer of his life—except during the war years—at the family home in Kennebunkport, ME. A few years ago his neighbors in Kennebunkport came together to acquire a Navy ship's anchor in his honor. It is a fitting tribute

to President Bush, who so often describes Walker's Point in Maine as his anchor to the windward. It is fitting in another way. As a Navy aviator in World War II, as a Member of Congress, as U.N. Ambassador, as an envoy to China, as Director of the CIA, as Vice President, and as President, George Bush embodies the values that are the anchor of American society. Courage, duty, honor, and compassion define our Nation and his life.

I am sure it is a great joy for him to share this special day with his First Lady Barbara Bush, who also recently celebrated a birthday and who has done so much to promote family literacy in this country.

Last night our Senate colleagues unanimously passed a resolution that I submitted with dozens of our colleagues, including Maine Senator ANGUS KING, the two Senators from Texas, and our two leaders, wishing both President and Mrs. Bush the happiest of birthdays and honoring them. The love within this extraordinary family anchors their commitment to one another, to their community, to their two home States, and to their Nation.

Another great President, Abraham Lincoln, spoke a great many eternal truths that still inspire us today. Nothing he said was ever truer than this:

It's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years.

President George H.W. Bush has filled his years with a lifetime of service and contributions marked by integrity and humility. I wish him and his family many more years of celebration, and I thank him for his extraordinary service and dedication to the country he loves so much.

I thank the Presiding Officer and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. WYDEN. Last night the Senate passed the Intelligence authorization bill, and it contains some very important provisions relating to whistleblowers. While Senator COLLINS is on the floor, I wish to commend her for her extraordinary work on this issue. She has been at this for years, and it is a pleasure to be able to team up with her in this effort. I think it is fair to say both of us are very appreciative of the work done by our chair, Senator FEINSTEIN, who did so much to make this possible.

I am going to be very brief. Chairman HARKIN has some important remarks to make this morning. He graciously allowed me to go ahead of him.

I wish to reflect a little bit on where we are with respect to whistleblowers and the ability of intelligence agency employees to speak out on matters that do not affect national security but are important to the debate about how to ensure our country resolutely fights terror and protects the public's right to know.