

4% more than Louisiana the next state on the list and Texas' refusal to participate in the Medicaid expansion created by the Affordable Care act puts the poor residents in my state in jeopardy.

So the 50th anniversary of Medicaid is bittersweet for Texans because while we celebrate a program that has saved lives, helped people live longer, expanded care to marginalized communities, and reduced disparities in access to healthcare, thousands of low income Texans still do not have the peace of mind that comes with access to affordable, quality health care enjoyed by low-income residents of states that have expanded their Medicaid program with funds made possible by the Affordable Care Act.

In the 18th Congressional District of Texas there are 195,400 persons with Medicaid and 74,704 with medical care provided by Medicare.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents favor the Affordable Care Act because they understand the insecurity and feeling of helplessness of being uninsured or underinsured.

Like Medicare and Medicaid, the Affordable Care Act, or "Obamacare," was vehemently opposed and derided by its adversaries, who said it was too costly, would not work, was unnecessary, or would change the character of America for the worse.

Like the critics of Social Security, Medicare, and the G.I. Bill, all of whom are silent now, they are wrong.

The Affordable Care Act has been an unqualified success.

This historic legislation has extended affordable health coverage to tens of millions of Americans, and has helped to bring peace of mind to many of those for whom relief seemed far out of reach.

The Affordable Care Act was driven by a simple premise: that citizens of the most prosperous nation on earth should not be forced to choose between their health and their financial security.

Since the passage of the ACA in 2010, the number of uninsured Americans has fallen by nearly one-third, or roughly 16 million people.

These Americans come from all walks of life.

They are women, who can no longer be denied coverage or be forced to pay exorbitant amounts for coverage simply because of their sex.

There are nine million seniors and persons with disabilities, who have saved an average of \$1,600 on expensive and lifesaving prescription medication.

And they are this country's most at risk citizens; people who are working hard and struggling to make ends meet while living in near-poverty, and who have been covered by Medicaid expansion in 27 states and the District of Columbia.

These benefits have been felt across the country, especially in my home state of Texas:

1. 10.7 million individuals with pre-existing conditions such as asthma, cancer, or diabetes—including up to 1,632,000 children—no longer have to worry about being denied coverage or charged higher prices because of their health status or history;

2. 4.9 million uninsured Texans have new health insurance options through Medicaid or private health plans in the ACA Marketplace; and

3. 5.2 million persons on private insurance have gained coverage for at least one free

preventive health care service such as a mammogram, birth control, or an immunization in 2011 and 2012.

In addition to the tangible healthcare benefits for millions of families, the ACA has had powerful effects on the financial state of our nation.

Since the passage of the Affordable Care Act, we have extended the solvency of the Medicare Trust fund by more than a decade, and helped save taxpayers \$116 billion through new Medicare efficiencies.

The Department of Health and Human Services has estimated that hospitals saved more than \$5.7 billion in costs that would have normally gone unpaid by patients without insurance.

Contrary to the claims of the law's critics, private insurance companies have leaped at the opportunity to compete for business among the newly insured, and the healthcare industry has boomed.

Through all of these successes, however, House Republicans remain obsessed with destroying this law, and with unraveling the security it provides to millions of Americans.

Medicare and Medicaid also continue to drive innovation and set the standard for coverage, quality, and innovation in American healthcare.

Mr. Speaker, Medicare and Medicaid continue to play crucial roles in providing equitable and affordable healthcare, leading innovation in payment and delivery reform, carrying out outreach to the most vulnerable communities, and reshaping the delivery of care for the future.

Because of these programs, more Americans have access to affordable, equitable health care today than at any point in our history.

And I am committed to making sure that number will continue to grow.

On this 50th anniversary of Medicare and Medicaid, we should remember that a healthy America is a prosperous America.

And as we look ahead to the next half century, we can celebrate that what was put in place in 1965 has given us the foundation for a healthy and prosperous future for all Americans.

HONORING BRIGADIER GENERAL DAVID T. BUCKALEW

HON. EVAN H. JENKINS

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 31, 2015

Mr. JENKINS of West Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the service of Brigadier General David T. Buckalew of the West Virginia National Guard. General Buckalew has served in the West Virginia Air National Guard for more than 40 years, having enlisted in the Guard's 130th Airlift Wing in Charleston, West Virginia in December 1971. After completing his education at West Virginia State University and the Academy of Military Science, General Buckalew returned to West Virginia in December 1983 to serve as a logistics plans officer for the 130th Airlift Wing.

General Buckalew continued to serve honorably and was promoted regularly, advancing to the position of Director of Joint Staff in 2011. He has received numerous awards and deco-

rations for his service to our country, including the distinguished Meritorious Service Medal with two Bronze Oak Leaf Clusters.

I know the servicemen and women of the West Virginia Air National Guard have been inspired by General Buckalew's character and his commitment to service, and they will miss General Buckalew's presence and tremendous leadership. However, I am certain that the lessons and inspiration that he has bestowed on Guardsmen will continue to have a positive impact on their service to our nation and West Virginia.

General Buckalew is one of West Virginia's finest Mountaineers, and I along with many others wish him well in his retirement. God-speed, General.

RECOGNIZING THE RETIREMENT OF TAWNY HAMMOND

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 31, 2015

Mr. CONNOLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the distinguished career of my constituent Tawny Hammond and to congratulate her on her retirement following 26 years of service to Fairfax County and our community.

Ms. Hammond began her career with the county at the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) in 1989 and served in a variety of roles including management of recreation centers, a large lakefront park and a historic farm park. Additionally, she was involved in strategic planning and accreditation, and was instrumental in FCPA being awarded multiple gold medals by the National Recreation and Park Association. During her tenure, she represented Fairfax County Park Authority at regional, state and national conferences, providing presentations on community building, revenue generation and innovative programming. In recognition of her extraordinary service to preserving and enhancing the county park system, she received numerous performance and achievement awards, most notably the A. Heath Onthank Award in 2002, which is Fairfax County's highest honor for its employees.

Ms. Hammond was named Director of the Fairfax County Animal Shelter in 2012. In just three years, she has turned the shelter into a national model for the humane treatment of animals and has made Fairfax one of the top life-saving communities in the nation. The CEO of the Humane Society of the United States proclaimed the shelter to be one of the top 1% of municipal shelters in the nation. Under Director Hammond's leadership, Fairfax County became the largest jurisdiction in the US with a live release rate of animals above 90%. On her watch, adoptions of shelter pets have nearly doubled, with 2014 seeing the highest number of dogs ever adopted in a single year (more than 1000).

Each year, approximately 5,000 animals come through the shelter's doors. Director Hammond implemented policies and programs so that no animals are euthanized for lack of space or other resources and so that all adoptable animals find loving permanent homes. She implemented new programs including shelter dog play groups and low income spay and neuter services, eliminated