

more difficult for individuals with medical debt forced into bankruptcy to discharge their debt. In other words, at the end of this legal proceeding in bankruptcy, they are still in debt. They walk out the door with the debts all over again. The credit card debt and medical debt is still there.

So, of course, the financial institutions and credit card companies couldn't be happier. If you can't get out from under this debt, they will get more money from you, they will harass you for years and months to come. That is the idea of breakthrough legislation by the Republican leadership in the Senate.

From my point of view, it does not help the average person in America. It puts an unreasonable burden on people who are struggling to survive as each year we see fewer and fewer people with health insurance, as each year the Republicans resist efforts to increase the minimum wage in this country so people who get up and go to work every day can make enough money to get by. As the number of impoverished people in America continues to grow each year, we end up making it more difficult to go to bankruptcy court and get out from under that debt, even if that debt is caused by medical bills.

That, to me, is not the people's agenda, it is not America's agenda, and it does not reflect what I found when I returned to Illinois. The people I represent believe America can do better. We can do a lot better. We can have an energy policy that moves us toward independence and gives us some way to deal with these obscene profits by the oil companies that are dragging our economy down, as well as family budgets. We can do better in Iraq by establishing standards of accountability for this administration: How many Iraqi soldiers are going to be prepared to fight, and how soon can American soldiers come home? What is the progress on reconstructing Iraq? There is less electricity in Iraq now than when we invaded. There is less potable water available. There is a 50-percent unemployment rate and less oil production than at the time of the invasion.

We need to hold this administration and the Iraqi Government accountable so our American soldiers can come home successfully with their mission truly accomplished.

We also need to see accountability when it comes to health care in America. This is a topic that neither the President nor leaders in Congress are willing to talk about in public, and it is the No. 1 issue. When I sat down with the Chamber of Commerce in Elgin, IL, and asked the gathering of business leaders, if you had to rank the top three issues facing your business today as a challenge, how many of you would put the cost of health insurance in the top three? Every single hand went up.

What are we doing about that in Washington? The answer is absolutely nothing. While people are making a handsome profit as providers and insur-

ance companies and HMOs, we are doing nothing to help the average American.

We had a hearing on the Medicare prescription drug bill in Chicago with Congresswoman SCHAKOWSKY. I feel sorry for the seniors of this country. I am glad they have a benefit coming their way, but it couldn't have been more complicated. In an effort to protect the profits of pharmaceutical companies, we would not let Medicare offer—simply offer—one plan for all seniors across America, a plan that could compete by bulk purchases and discounts in lowering the price of drugs. No way. The pharmaceutical companies opposed it, and they, of course, rule the roost when it comes to Capitol Hill. They get what they want. As a result, we have the jumbled mess of bureaucracy and redtape that our seniors have to go through to try to figure out what this Medicare prescription drug benefit is all about.

We should have done a lot better for our seniors than this Medicare prescription drug bill. It is not as good as America can do. I think we have an obligation to do better.

In the weeks ahead, the 5 weeks when we are scheduled to adjourn, I hope we rise to the challenge on a bipartisan basis. I hope the Republican leadership looks to the real issues facing America: energy, dealing with the Katrina crisis with a truly independent nonpartisan commission, and making certain we have accountability with what is happening in the war in Iraq. That will move the Senate forward and move America forward.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CORNYN). The assistant majority leader.

#### HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

##### SERGEANT MICHAEL DUANE ACKLIN II

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask the Senate to pause for a moment today in loving memory and honor of Sergeant Michael Duane Acklin II.

Sergeant Acklin of Louisville, KY, served with the First Battalion, 320th Field Artillery, 101st Airborne Division. Nearly 2 years ago, he gave his life in defense of our country in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul. He was 25 years old and had served in the Army for 5 years.

On November 15, 2003, Sergeant Acklin was on an evening patrol over Mosul in a Blackhawk helicopter, and his team was responding to an ambush of a squad of American soldiers on the ground. As the helicopter hovered above the fight, a second helicopter, which had also come to help, was struck by a rocket-propelled grenade.

That helicopter lost control and hit Sergeant Acklin's aircraft, cutting off the tail rotor of Sergeant Acklin's helicopter. Both helicopters lost control and crashed, killing 17 soldiers. Sergeant Acklin was one of them. It was the largest loss of American lives during a single incident in Iraq at the time.

Sergeant Acklin was buried in Louisville at the Zachary Taylor National Cemetery, named for America's 12th President who is also laid to rest there. For his valor, Sergeant Acklin was awarded the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart. During his service, he also received the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal and the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal.

Michael attended Butler High School and then Western High School, where he graduated in 1996. After graduation, he worked as a bus boy, a cook, and at several other temporary jobs, but none gave Michael the challenge or the fulfillment that he was looking for. Then he began to see the Army as a way to focus his life and spirit.

Michael's family has a long and distinguished career of military service. His grandfather, Eugene Acklin, his great-grandfather, Fred Bible, and three of his cousins have all served in either the Army or Air Force. In fact, before making his decision to enlist, Michael spoke with one of those cousins, Curtis Luckett Jr., an Army veteran. Michael also sought the advice of his father's cousin, LTC Charles Mitchell, Jr., a career military officer who gave him a personal perspective on Army life. However, Michael made his decision to join the Army in his own way.

A devout Christian, Michael enlisted in the Army in the summer of 1998, after hearing, according to what he told his family later, what he could describe only as the voice of God. In hopes of following God's calling, Michael had a friend drive him to a nearby Army recruiting station, and he signed up. He felt this was to be his path into adulthood. His father applauded his decision, and his mother hoped it would provide him the direction he was seeking.

While he found basic training tough, Michael embraced the discipline the Army provided him, and he successfully completed his training and emerged with a greater awareness of his strengths and talents. Early-morning wake-up calls at 4:30 and ceaseless drills gave Michael a new sense of commitment and confidence. He was made a recruit leader, and after training to use large artillery pieces, he was assigned to the 101st Airborne Division based in Fort Campbell, KY, not too far from his home back in Louisville.

Sergeant Acklin was a part of the initial wave of forces sent to liberate Iraq in March 2003. The 101st Airborne took the lead, as it always does whenever our country calls, and Michael and his unit were charged with providing cover fire in support of our troops.

After the fall of Saddam Hussein's tyrannical regime, Michael's unit built schools, cleared streets, and tracked down suspected terrorists. He commanded five other men, and made sure they wrote their families back home often.

Michael Acklin, or "Mikey" as his mother Dorothy calls him, grew up as a bright young boy who enjoyed playing football or video games with the neighborhood kids, many of whom would remain lifelong friends. He played basketball with his dad, who first taught him how to dunk. He was a good kid with a big smile who was known at school to be a prankster, but also a good student.

"My son always had a jolly outlook everyday," said Sergeant Acklin's father, Michael Acklin Sr. "He was just always filled with joy."

Growing up, Mrs. Acklin recalls her son playing the drums, writing poems, and helping younger children at church, bringing a quiet thoughtfulness to everything he did. Michael listened to people, that was his style.

While stationed at Fort Campbell, Michael drove to the base everyday from his rented room in a servicemen's church. When not on duty, he taught Sunday school, attended Bible studies, and helped out around the church by cooking meals or cutting the grass. His fellow soldiers began calling him "Preacher" for his frequent praying before missions. Michael talked to his father about going to a Bible college and becoming a minister when he got back. He was able to find a direction for his life, before he was tragically taken from us.

We thank Michael's parents, Dorothy Acklin and Michael Acklin Sr., for sharing Michael's story with us. As Michael's father said, "I know my son has gone to be with the Lord. I do know my son certainly will be honored."

It is my hope that we have done our part to help honor Michael today, even if only a small part. Words cannot erase the grief and despair that hang over Michael's parents, family and beloved friends. But they can declare boldly to all that Michael was a hero. He gave his life to defend us, and our freedoms. His mission was to spread that freedom, like a light, into places that had only known darkness. Michael may have been taken from us. But the light he planted in people's hearts will never be extinguished.

I ask my colleagues to keep the family of SGT Michael Acklin II in their thoughts and prayers. I know they will be in mine.

I yield the floor.

STAFF SERGEANT MATT KIMMELL

Mr. BAYH. Mr. President, I rise today with a heavy heart and deep sense of gratitude to honor the life of a brave soldier from Paxton. Matt Kimmell, 30 years old, died on October 11 in Muqadiyah, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device exploded near the military vehicle in which he was riding. With so much of his life before him, Matt risked everything to fight for the values Americans hold close to our hearts, in a land halfway around the world.

A man remembered for kindness, compassion, and deep faith, Matt joined the National Guard just 1 year

after graduating from Faith Christian School in Carlisle. Soon committed to military life, he signed up for a tour of duty and was chosen to be an Army airborne ranger. When his training was over, he returned home, studied law enforcement at Vincennes University and joined the Vanderburgh County Sheriff's Department as a road patrol deputy, where he worked 3 years before re-enlisting in the Army. Universally liked and admired, his friends and colleagues recounted that Matt had not joined the military for glory but rather because of his deep sense of right and wrong.

Matt served as the newspaper carrier for the Sullivan Daily Times during his childhood in Paxton. Even as a young boy, customers remember him as prompt and diligent. All of his actions were underscored by his Christian faith. Three years ago, he married Mylissa Hall, a nurse from Worthington. He loved children and the couple planned to start a family when he returned from Iraq. A friend of Matt's told the Terre Haute Tribune Star, "He broke the mold when they made him." Matt's small hometown has been hit hard by the death of one of their own. This week, townsfolk planted 542 small American flags down a half mile stretch in Matt's honor and they have started a fund to build a monument to him.

Matt was killed while serving his country in Operation Iraqi Freedom. He was assigned to the 5th Special Forces Group, based at Fort Campbell, KY. This brave young soldier leaves behind his wife Mylissa; his father Pastor Larry Kimmell and his mother Jeanne; his brother Matt; and his sister Suzanne.

Today, I join Matt's family and friends in mourning his death. While we struggle to bear our sorrow over this loss, we can also take pride in the example he set, bravely fighting to make the world a safer place. It is his courage and strength of character that people will remember when they think of Matt, a memory that will burn brightly during these continuing days of conflict and grief.

Matt was known for his dedication to his family, his faith, and his love of country. Today and always, Matt will be remembered by family members, friends, and fellow Hoosiers as a true American hero and we honor the sacrifice he made while dutifully serving his country.

As I search for words to do justice in honoring Matt's sacrifice, I am reminded of President Lincoln's remarks as he addressed the families of the fallen soldiers in Gettysburg: We cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here.

This statement is just as true today as it was nearly 150 years ago, as I am

certain that the impact of Matt's actions will live on far longer than any record of these words.

It is my sad duty to enter the name of Matt Kimmell in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of the U.S. Senate for his service to this country and for his profound commitment to freedom, democracy, and peace. When I think about this just cause in which we are engaged, and the unfortunate pain that comes with the loss of our heroes, I hope that families like Matt's can find comfort in the words of the prophet Isaiah who said, "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces."

May God grant strength and peace to those who mourn, and may God be with all of you, as I know He is with Matt.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

#### ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following the remarks of the Senator from Texas I be allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes as in morning business.

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

Mr. ALEXANDER. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ALEXANDER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CORNYN. I ask unanimous consent to speak for 10 minutes as in morning business.

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

#### IRAQ ELECTION

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, this past weekend, the people of Iraq voted on their new constitution. Soon they will participate in parliamentary elections that will provide for a fully constitutional government. By any measure of history, the nation of Iraq has made remarkable progress in the past 2 years despite the criticism of naysayers who seem, in some instances, intent on scoring political points more than encouraging our brave comrades to win the war in Iraq and assist us in winning the larger global war on terror.

Iraqi participation in this election yesterday was strong, including Sunnis who boycotted the January election. The election was also more peaceful than the previous election, in large measure due to the determination and professionalism of the new Iraqi security services. If 3 short years ago someone would have predicted the Iraqis would vote on a constitution in the near future, the same critics who are