

communities and our State a wonderful place to live.

Duchesne County captures the best of small town America. Its towns are charming and its people are dedicated and patriotic. I have always enjoyed visiting the many wonderful towns in Duchesne County and getting to know its citizens.

Again, I wish to congratulate Duchesne County on the marking of its centennial. This is a noteworthy time indeed, and I want to wish the many Utahns who call this place home many more years of happiness living and working in this beautiful county.

REMEMBERING ERMA ARVILLA RUPP FRITCHEN

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the life of Erma Arvilla Rupp Fritchen. Ms. Fritchen devoted her life to justice, notably as a Freedom Rider in the summer of 1963.

Ms. Fritchen was born and raised in Reno, NV. She strove to be the first in her family to graduate from high school, but nothing was handed to her. Erma worked to pay the rent and still managed to graduate from Reno High School in 1948. Following high school, she pursued adult education classes in psychology before moving to Fort Benning, GA, as a military wife. When she arrived in Fort Benning, she was shocked by the racial disparities in her new city.

After moving back to Nevada, Erma began attending college while also raising her two children on her own. Education and family were important to her, but she was never too busy to take a stand for the principles she believed in. When she had the opportunity to make a difference by joining a civil rights caravan headed for Washington, DC, in 1963, she jumped at the opportunity and added her voice to the Freedom Rider demonstrations that were taking place throughout the country.

Through her years of fighting for justice and equality, Ms. Fritchen proved that everyone can do their part if they work and fight hard enough. I appreciate her dedication to her five sons and contributions to making our country a better place.

RECOGNIZING NEVADA PEP

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize Nevada PEP for its more than 20 years of service to children with disabilities and their families.

Nevada PEP was founded more than two decades ago by a handful of families who wanted for their children what every parent wants for their child: the opportunity to learn, grow, and succeed in all areas of life, regardless of their ability. Since then, this organization has helped children with disabilities by increasing opportunities for home, community, and school success. Although Nevada PEP started as a small organization with meetings around a kitchen table, the organiza-

tion has now served more than 17,000 people throughout the State and has had a positive impact on many more Nevadans through its greater advocacy efforts.

The "PEP" in the organization's name has a number of meanings, including, "Parents Encouraging Parents," "Parents Educating Professionals," and "Professionals Empowering Parents." Nevada PEP truly embodies all of these meanings through the services it provides. The organization offers support groups, webinars, and other skill-building activities to help the families of children with disabilities become effective advocates for their child. Nevada PEP also works to connect families to essential community resources, including organizations and professionals in the fields of education, health care, housing, and employment. Additionally, the organization raises awareness and engages the community through events, such as the "Baldy Bash," the "Run, Walk, Roll Against Bullying," and an annual art show.

I applaud Nevada PEP for their years of dedicated service to children with disabilities and their families. Their work is truly appreciated and admired. I also commend Karen Taycher, a parent and passionate advocate, as well as founding member and the executive director of Nevada PEP, for her fine leadership throughout the past two decades. As Nevada PEP begins the next chapter, I wish them continued success for years to come.

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF MEDICARE AND MEDICAID

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, today we celebrate a true milestone in our Nation's history, and we mark this reminder that basic health insurance is not a privilege for the wealthy, but a right, for every American. On July 30, 1965, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Social Security Amendments of 1965 into law, establishing the Medicare and Medicaid programs. For 50 years, these two programs have offered health care and economic security to millions of Americans and their families.

The debate over the right to basic health insurance began in the 1940s with President Harry Truman. At a time when just one in eight seniors had health care and were earning less than \$1000 on average annually, President Truman sought to create a safety net to meet the needs of a growing population. It may be difficult for all of us in the generations of Americans born since that era to fully understand today, but before Medicaid and Medicare, when private health insurers could still discriminate against individuals based on their health, many seniors were either denied coverage entirely or priced out of health insurance. And for Americans living in poverty, health care was simply out of reach.

The Social Security Amendments of 1965 offered a path forward. Today,

Medicare and Medicaid cover a combined 110 million Americans, including seniors, persons with disabilities, and low-income Americans and their families. From cancer screenings to hospital coverage, yearly well-visits, flu vaccinations, pediatric dental care and caregiver support, Medicare and Medicaid provide access to the basic health care services that all Americans deserve. And what a dramatic and tangible difference that has made and continues to make in the lives of millions of people.

Through the Affordable Care Act, Medicare and Medicaid took a step further. States that expanded Medicaid under the law saved nearly \$2 billion in health care costs while extending coverage to many, many more Americans. Closing the coverage gap known as the "donut hole" saved seniors on Medicare \$15 billion in health care costs—a savings to seniors of \$28 million in my home State of Vermont alone. The Affordable Care Act strengthened Medicare for future generations, extending the trust fund an additional 13 years as a result of savings to the program.

It is worth remembering as well that in the early years of Medicare and Medicaid, as these programs were established and went through some growing pains, public opinion at first was tentative in supporting these major reforms. Over time, public support for and appreciation of the benefits of these programs has grown significantly. We can see some parallels in the way public opinion about the Affordable Care Act has continued to grow, as its benefits have become more widespread and more apparent in our daily lives.

As we celebrate this important anniversary, I hope we all will remember how far these programs have come and commit to keeping them strong for future generations. Strengthening Medicare and Medicaid is an economic investment in the well-being of our country, and I will fight for these programs for my children and my grandchildren.

I am proud to celebrate an anniversary marking the Federal Government's promise of providing reassurance and stability for our Nation's most vulnerable citizens. I look forward to celebrating the success of Medicare and Medicaid for generations to come.

DRIVE ACT

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I am pleased by Senate passage today of the DRIVE Act, a long-overdue, multiyear surface transportation bill to authorize and fund our Nation's highway, bridge, and transit programs. This bill would provide the certainty needed for State and local planning organizations to set transportation priorities and begin long-term investments to modernize our Nation's aging infrastructure.

This bill is also a win for the State of Arizona. Included in the DRIVE Act are critical measures, sponsored by