

not against Mr. Jenkins, and the investigation should be terminated now and stop any waste of taxpayers dollars.

#### TRIBUTE TO JESSE BROWN

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to a dynamic leader, very capable public servant, tenacious veteran's advocate, and a good friend—Veterans' Affairs Secretary Jesse Brown.

I am saddened by the news that Secretary Brown is leaving after four productive and hard working years at the helm of the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs. Under his leadership, the VA and veterans have made tremendous progress.

Jesse Brown fought battle after battle to protect, reform, and fully fund veterans' health care. Jesse Brown won most of those battles.

Jesse Brown fought to strengthen benefits for Vietnam veterans exposed to Agent Orange. He fought for their children suffering from Spina Bifida. Jesse Brown won those battles.

Jesse Brown fought to improve the veterans' benefits claims process. He better than anyone knew the importance of timely, accurate, and fair decisions.

Jesse Brown worked hard for veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder, Persian Gulf war veterans, women veterans, homeless veterans, and many others.

Most importantly, Jesse Brown cares about people. I've seen him on many occasions stop what he's doing to visit one-on-one with a veteran in need or a grieving loved one. In an airport, on the street, in a hospital, at VFW post, Jesse always took the time to listen to people and to try to help them. That is what leadership is all about. That is what being an effective public servant is all about. That is what being a veterans' advocate is all about.

Jesse was never afraid to speak his mind and fight for veterans and their families—no matter the strength of the opposition or political risk to him. He did what he thought was right. He was proud to be their advocate and it should come as no surprise when said that being Secretary had been the high point of his life. Jesse Brown, a former Marine wounded in Vietnam, can feel good about his accomplishments and he can feel proud that his place in history is secure. He will be known forever as the Secretary for Veterans' Affairs. He will be known as one of the best veterans' advocates the country has ever seen.

Here are some of the comments that veterans, their families, and veterans' advocates have shared with me since learning the news that Jesse is leaving the VA.

Jesse brought to the VA real experience, knowledge, and wisdom to prepare the VA for the 21st Century. We'll miss him."—Bernie Melter, Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Veterans' Affairs.

Jesse Brown's commitment to veterans will never be questioned and his tenure as

Secretary for Veterans Affairs will go down in history as the greatest advocate for veterans we'll ever see.—Duane Krueger, Vietnam veteran and Anoka County Veterans Service Officer.

Secretary Brown's departure is a major loss for all veterans. His advocacy for veterans was without regard to political affiliation and was based upon the fact that as a veteran you had earned your entitlement.—Wayne Sletten, Vietnam era veteran and Lake County Veterans' Service officer.

In my personal opinion Secretary Jesse Brown was the best leader of the VA we've ever had.—Chuck Milbrandt, Director, Minneapolis VA Medical Center.

At a time when my family was struggling to obtain my late husband's benefits for Agent Orange, Jesse took the time to personally review the case and ensure that we received all the benefits to which we were entitled. We owe a great debt of gratitude to Jesse Brown and his commitment to helping people.—Leesa Gilmore, widow of Vietnam Veteran Tim Gillmore.

Secretary Jesse Brown will be sorely missed by all of us at the St. Paul VA Regional Office and Insurance Center. He was a strong and fair leader and served as an excellent role model on how we ought to serve veterans and their dependents. We will miss his guidance, candor, and wit. We wish him the best of luck in future endeavors and know that he will continue to be a strong advocate for all veterans.—Ron Henke, Director, St. Paul VA Regional Office and Insurance Center.

These are some of the many people who have expressed their admiration and respect for Jesse Brown and who want to recognize his many achievements during his tenure in office.

For me, I will dearly miss working side-by-side with Jesse fighting for veterans and their families. Like veterans in Minnesota, he has been my teacher and today here in the U.S. Senate I am proud to honor him and thank him for his incredible service and wonderful friendship.

Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to VA Secretary Brown and properly recognize him for his many years of service and commitment to the Nation and her veterans.

#### MEDICARE PROVISIONS VIOLATE BIPARTISAN BUDGET AGREEMENT

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, as a Member of the Senate Budget Committee, I have spent the last four months in ongoing negotiations working towards the enactment of a real, balanced budget plan. I was part of the bipartisan negotiations that resulted in the historic balanced budget agreement. Getting to this agreement was not an easy task, but I realized that the need to get to balance was critical. I negotiated in good faith and believed that the final product was an equitable, fiscally sound agreement that did balance the budget without jeopardizing vital programs.

The agreement ensured the continued solvency of Medicare. It guaranteed that Medicare would remain an affordable health insurance program that provided quality health care for millions of senior citizens. The agreement

also allowed for an expansion of health insurance for 10 million children that have no health insurance. It called for the largest investment in education in over 30 years and it would provide real tax relief for working families. While I still had some reservations about the agreement, I supported the package because I knew that in any good faith negotiation one can never expect to win on all points. It was not a perfect agreement and as I have said in the past, it is not the one that I would have produced. But, it was a bipartisan, fiscally sound balanced budget agreement.

The agreement called for \$204 billion in net deficit reduction. This would be in addition to the over \$200 billion in deficit reduction already accomplished as a result of the 1993 deficit reduction package. The agreement built on this successful deficit reduction package which resulted in 4 straight years of declining deficits. In 1993, the annual Federal deficit was close to \$300 billion, for 1997 the Congressional Budget Office estimates that the deficit could fall to \$70 billion. I was proud to be part of this deficit reduction effort and believed that we could get our fiscal house in order.

Following passage of S. Con. Res. 27, the FY98 Budget Resolution, which incorporated the balanced budget agreement, I was hopeful that a fair, equitable and fiscally sound balanced budget would be in place by the end of the year. I negotiated in good faith; I agreed to adhere to the agreement; and I was of the belief that my colleagues would do the same.

Unfortunately, the reconciliation spending measure adopted by the Senate, violates this bipartisan agreement. But, more importantly, it violates the commitment I made to my constituents when I was elected to the U.S. Senate.

One of the commitments I made to the people of Washington State was to work to expand affordable health care for all Americans. I am proud of the steps we have taken to improve access to health care for more Americans. Unfortunately, included in this reconciliation legislation is a provision that will deny affordable, quality health insurance for those Americans age 65 to 67. Increasing the Medicare eligibility age from 65 to 67 will deny affordable, quality health insurance for millions of Americans. I cannot in all good conscience support legislation that increases the number of uninsured Americans. We should be looking to reduce the numbers of Americans with no health security, not adding to it.

I did not come to this decision without a great deal of thought. I have listened to the debate on both sides of these issues. I cannot help but think about the impact that these provisions will have on senior citizens who have worked hard all of their lives and are now facing escalating health care costs and limited retirement income. I only need to think about my own parents to