

mental health clinicians for newly created positions and 800 Peer Specialists and Peer Apprentices.

Since 2009, Congress has increased the mental health care budget by 42 percent and VA has treated 1.4 million Veterans with specialty mental health services in fiscal year 2013 (FY13) alone. Under Secretary Shinseki's leadership, the VA has expanded access to mental health services with longer clinic hours, telehealth capability to deliver services, and standards that mandate rapid access to mental health services.

In July 2010, VA published a historic change to its rules, streamlining the process and paperwork needed by combat Veterans to pursue a claim for disability pay for PTSD.

After Secretary Shinseki made it easier for those claiming Agent Orange and PTSD injuries, the claims backlog had major increases. With his work to have overtime and sharing of records, the claims backlog has been reduced by more than 50% in the past 14 months. The VA has shown an unwavering commitment to improving the delivery of benefits to Veterans. With input from all of its veteran partners, the VA created and is implementing a comprehensive plan to end the Veterans disability benefits claims backlog.

When Secretary Shinseki took office, he set a goal of ending Veterans homelessness by 2015. The VA, along with local, state, and federal partners has decreased the number of homeless Veterans on a given night by 24 percent since 2010 and are continuing to work to keep bringing this number down.

The VA provides quality and timely healthcare and benefits to our veterans. We have a duty to make sure that all those who have defended this country when called upon receive the care they have earned through their service. The VA is better for Secretary Shinseki's service to our veterans.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE PEOPLE OF UKRAINE

(Ms. KAPTUR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the people of Ukraine on conducting free and fair elections that the world watched closely. As a beloved friend of mine from Ukraine wrote me:

These elections were amazing. People were standing in long lines with the purpose to vote. And we did it. We do hope that we will start to live in a new way. Ukrainians deserve much better in life and in leaders. Thank you.

With a nearly 60 percent turnout, and despite the fearful invasion by Russia of Ukraine's eastern provinces, the election proceeded on schedule and without major disruption. This is a living testament to the future and the hopes the Ukrainian people invested in their new government.

The people of our region send heartfelt congratulations to the incoming Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko. A successful businessman in his own Nation, he now holds a historic opportunity to lead Ukraine to write a new era of stability, prosperity, and democratic reform. It will be a major undertaking. May the hopes of the Ukrainian people for a better life be realized in our time.

Ukraine can rise to be one of the greatest nations on the European continent. Her time is now.

□ 1215

VETERANS TIMELY ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE ACT

(Mr. DENHAM asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DENHAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss a new bill that has just been introduced, the Veterans Timely Access to Health Care Act. Our veterans have waited too long.

If you have served our country and if you have gone to the VA center, we need to make sure you have got access to timely care. Whether it is primary care or urgent care, if it is beyond 7 days, you can go see a new doctor, and if it is beyond 14 days for specialty care, you can go see a new doctor at the VA's expense.

We owe our veterans nothing less than to make sure that they have got world-class health care and that they have it immediately.

MAYA ANGELOU

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor this afternoon to say a few words in tribute to the great Maya Angelou, who just this week died at 86 years of age. Mine will be one of, truly, millions of tributes that have begun.

President Obama said of Maya that she helped generations of Americans "find their rainbows amidst the clouds and that she inspired the rest of us to be our best selves." I think many would agree with that.

Attorney General Holder named one of his daughters "Maya" after Maya Angelou. We have a charter school here in the District of Columbia named for her. She visited that school. That is the kind of woman she was.

It is almost impossible to describe this life, all 86 years of it. She drew from it all that you can draw from one life.

Yes, we know her, perhaps, best as a poet and as a writer and as, some would say, an autobiographer because most of her writing comes from her own life in successive memoirs, in successive autobiographies, but much of her fame came when she was middle age and beyond.

Until that time, she embarked on a far-flung career wherever it would take her, dancer—yes, dancer—singer, composer, actress. She was Hollywood's first Black female director, but she was most devoted to the printed word as an essayist, as a playwright, as a poet; and that came out of her own love of books, of words.

Maya Angelou was active until the end of those 86 years. When she died, she was the Reynolds Professor of American Studies at Wake Forest University in North Carolina.

I will have some words later in these remarks to say about that, since I visited her there, and it was a most memorable time for me.

Carol Neubauer of Southern Women Writers writes, I think, intelligently, of Maya, saying:

Angelou has been recognized not only as a spokesperson for Blacks and women, but also for all people who are committed to raising the moral standards of living in the United States.

That is just how broad was Maya's mission. I am very grateful that she was recognized as I believe she should have been.

Well before she died, President Clinton gave Maya Angelou the National Medal of Arts, and then, President Obama gave her the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Some of us in the House are trying to give her, posthumously, the Congressional Gold Medal.

It seems as if there are not enough honors that one can come forward with for a woman with so many talents and with so great a love for humanity, who kept pouring it out, so that we could partake as well, but I think we learn most from her life by understanding how hard was her early life and how she rose.

It is interesting that, at President Clinton's inauguration, those lines "And Still I Rise," which are from the poem she wrote for his inauguration, are best remembered—perhaps most remembered—than President Clinton's words themselves at his own inauguration.

Yes, she rose. She rose from the bottom of society. She worked in places many of us couldn't conceive of. She was a shake dancer in nightclubs. She was a fry cook. She worked in hamburger joints. She worked as a dinner cook in a creole restaurant.

Let me say, as someone who tasted Maya Angelou's cooking, she was a master cook. She once worked in a mechanic's shop, taking the paint off of cars with her hands, not with an instrument.

She was married, and she had a son. Through all of the traditional phases of a woman's life, she managed to do many things.

In San Francisco, she sang at the Purple Onion Cabaret. She toured with "Porgy and Bess." In the 1950s, Maya Angelou was in the Harlem Writers Guild. That is where she first met Jimmy Baldwin, the great African American writer.

That friendship was very important for the inspiration it gave her to write her own first autobiography. Don't think there could have been a civil rights struggle without Maya Angelou.

Indeed, she worked directly with Dr. King, and she was the northern coordinator for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

This woman who wrote about Black people, even as she wrote about all people, would, of course, find her way to Africa, to Cairo—with her son—and to Ghana and, indeed, to working in Africa as a freelance writer, but it all began, perhaps, out of the experience at that time in her life that she had a life to write about.

It took her a long time to decide to put all of these first memories into an autobiography, but when she did, it became the most memorable of her books. "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" is one of six memoirs. It was very controversial.

Even though it is read to this very day and taught in schools, it was controversial because she told the truth about her early life when she was raped by her mother's boyfriend when she was about 7 years of age, about the trauma that that induced, about the 5 years when she was mute and couldn't speak—wouldn't speak—perhaps could speak, but wouldn't speak.

During that time, she immersed herself in books of every variety—in the great classics and Black authors. She read. She did not speak. She took words in from great authors. She did not give her own words until she was ready to speak. A teacher brought words out of her, and not until then did she speak.

"I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings." That is the memoir that is most remembered and most praised. "Gather Together in My Name" is a memoir that begins when she is 17 and, at 17, a new mother.

"Singin' and Swingin' and Gettin' Merry Like Christmas" is another of her memoirs, which tells of her tour in Europe and in Africa with "Porgy and Bess."

Then there was "The Heart of a Woman." That was the description of Maya's acting and writing career in New York and of her work in civil rights.

Then there was her book "All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes," which told of her travels to west Africa and of her decision to return, this time, without the son who had gone with her to Africa.

Do you notice the theme in these books? The material, every bit of it, is taken from Maya's own life and personal experiences. It has been said that a writer writes best when she writes what she knows, and Maya Angelou knew she knew best about her own rich life.

This woman, who as a child spent years mute, unable to speak, became prolific and widely read. Her poetry, much of it, was substantive and about social justice. There were poems about love. There were poems about Black people. There were poems about rebellions and about the 1960s—the modern civil rights rebellion.

She was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize for a book of poems titled "Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water 'fore I Die."

She was the first Black woman to have a screenplay. It was called "Georgia, Georgia." It was produced in 1972, and she was honored with an Emmy because of her, as it was said, "search of clear messages with easily digested meanings."

She even adapted that first biography, "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings," for a television movie that had the same name. She wrote poetry for a film called "Poetic Justice," and she played a role in that film. She played a role in another television film.

What a life.

As you read of this life, much of which we may not have known about, you see that it is not her life as a famous woman, but her life as a woman that Maya is able to write about and get us to want to read.

I had an unusual experience, oh, about 15 years ago. Essence magazine took me to Winston-Salem, North Carolina, to Maya's home, for Maya and me to have what they called a fly-on-the-wall conversation. They wanted us to talk about Black women embracing their own power.

Now, how do you talk about that? With a great woman like Maya Angelou, you find a way to talk about that. Let me quote from some of what Maya Angelou said during that fly-on-the-wall conversation.

Remember, this is about finding power from within, and that was the theme throughout this conversation.

Maya Angelou said:

A powerful sense of self involves humility, but never modesty. Modesty is a learned affectation that is very dangerous, but humility comes from within.

Hear the power of those words.

She goes on to say:

Someone went before me, and I am here to try to make a path for someone who is yet to come.

□ 1230

Somehow good attracts good and, in turn, you do get some external power. If you start with the power inside you, you won't abuse external power when you get it. Be prayerful that your use of it will be constructive rather than destructive. Be careful and diligent and watchful that you don't abuse power to the detriment of others who have less.

This is off the top of Maya Angelou's head, you understand, these pearls of wisdom for which she became so well known, because she was a deep woman and deeply wise.

At one point in the conversation, I said that the difference between Maya and me is that, though she may not speak for people in some formal sense, my God, she speaks to them. And they listen. I believe that profoundly. And her life proved it profoundly.

Later on in the conversation, when we were talking about how people relate to one another, Maya said:

In some cases, people say they want change. What they really want is exchange.

Now, that is not necessarily progress. Maya believed in giving without asking in return.

She said:

Real power is like electricity. We can't see it. You can plug it into an electrical outlet, those two little holes in the wall, and light up this room. You can light up a surgery. Or, you can electrocute a person strapped in a chair. Power makes no demands. It says, "If you're intelligent, you will use me intelligently. If you're not, you will use me with deception." It's up to you.

Maya said:

You use power according to how you acknowledge it inside of yourself.

She is telling us that your execution of power is a statement about yourself.

That ought to make all of us stop and think: What I am saying or doing, in the name of what power I have, to be taken as meaning who I am.

She hinted, really, as to how she got the power within herself to rise and to make something of herself. She said she was in San Francisco with her mother, and she wanted to be a conductor on one of those wonderful streetcars in San Francisco.

And here I am quoting Maya:

So I went down to the streetcar offices, and the people just laughed at me. They wouldn't even give me an application. I came back home crying. My mother asked me, "Why do you think they didn't give you an application?" I said, "Because I'm a Negro." She asked, "Do you want the job?" I said, "Yes." She said, "Go get it. I will give you the money every morning. You get down there before the secretaries are there. Take yourself a good book. Now, when lunchtime comes, don't leave until they leave. But when they leave, you go and give yourself a good lunch. But be back before the secretaries, if you really want the job."

Three days later, said Maya Angelou, "I was so sorry I had made that commitment, but I couldn't take it back. Those people did everything but spit on me. I took Tolstoy, I took Gorky—the heavy Russian writers—and I sat there. The secretaries would bump up against my legs as they were leaving. They stood over me. They called me every name you could imagine.

Finally, I got an application. Within a month, I had a job. I was the first Black conductor on the streetcars of San Francisco. It cost me the Earth, but I got the job."

That is Maya Angelou, not reading, just recalling. I tell you, if you could tell that story to every kid in this country who has no mother or father, who was left in poverty and hears the television talk about the income gap and how miserable things are in the Congress and the world, if that story could be told to that kid, I know of no story that could inspire such a child as that story, because it was a real story. It was real life. It was the life of Maya Angelou.

My friend Maya needed every single one of her 86 years to live such a rich life—to come from utter poverty and abuse to become the Nation's renaissance woman, writer, poet, actor, dancer, screenwriter, professor, and civil rights activist. And I am here to attest, on top of all that talent, a master, magnificent cook extraordinaire.

Maya found her voice early in life, and then she kept singing, kept speaking, kept telling. She found it, to be sure, after being molested as a child and immersing herself in books, as if to

find words, as if to find her voice, as if, she thought that, if she read, fertilizing her own mind she would find her own voice. And she did.

When she found that voice, it was one of those voices that carried. Was there ever a performance like hearing Maya Angelou read her own poetry? That voice carried across lines that typically divide people, using her poetry, using her writing. And it was poetry and writing and essays that spoke to Presidents and to poor people alike.

This woman had range. Maya's life experience was so full that it kept feeding memoirs. It took six of them to tell it all. Prolific until the very end, Maya Angelou lived to become a seer, the Nation's wise woman and, I would imagine, never to be forgotten.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

HONORING THE LIFE OF RABBI HAIM ASA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) for 30 minutes.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of my neighbor and friend, Rabbi Haim Asa, who passed away at the age of 83 on May 28, 2014. His presence in the Jewish community of Orange County and beyond will be greatly missed.

Rabbi Asa's contributions as a spiritual leader since the mid 1960s and as Rabbi Emeritus of Temple Beth Tikvah in Fullerton have had a strong and positive impact on the community. His life story is full of remarkable accomplishments.

As a Holocaust refugee from Bulgaria, he fought in Israel's War of Independence. Rabbi Asa was also known for cofounding the Congregation Emanu-El in Buenos Aires, rescuing a Romanian refugee from Turkish authorities, and saving a Jewish university student from Argentine authorities.

His involvement in every local, regional, and national cause concerning the welfare of the State of Israel and its people is well known. He was instrumental in the development of many of the Jewish organizations, including Jewish Federation & Family Services, that serve the Jewish community today.

Additionally, Rabbi Asa contributed to building the Holocaust memorial called Garden of the Righteous. It stands to educate people on the Holocaust in order to prevent a historic tragedy from repeating itself.

I know that Rabbi Asa has touched thousands of lives over the years. Many in the community share my appreciation for his work to bring people together, always done with humor and insight. We feel a sense of deep loss. His achievements have left a permanent mark on the community and will inspire the lives of countless others for years to come.

My thoughts go out to the friends and family of this remarkable community leader, Rabbi Haim Asa. I join the Jewish community and everyone who had the pleasure of knowing Rabbi Asa in honoring and remembering him. My condolences go out to his family.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. CLYBURN (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of a funeral.

Mr. FATTAH (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today.

Mr. LEWIS (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for May 29 and today.

ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

Karen L. Haas, Clerk of the House, reported and found truly enrolled bills of the House of the following titles, which were thereupon signed by the Speaker:

H.R. 1726. An act to award a Congressional Gold Medal to the 65th Infantry Regiment, known as the Borinqueneers.

H.R. 3080. An act to provide for improvements to the rivers and harbors of the United States, to provide for the conservation and development of water and related resources, and for other purposes.

H.R. 3658. An act to grant the Congressional Gold Medal, collectively, to the Monuments Men, in recognition of their heroic role in the preservation, protection, and restitution of monuments, works of art, and artifacts of cultural importance during and following World War II.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 42 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until Monday, June 2, 2014, at noon.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

5831. A letter from the Under Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting the Department's report on the amount of purchases from foreign entities in FY 2013; to the Committee on Armed Services.

5832. A letter from the Chairman and President, Export-Import Bank, transmitting a report on transactions involving U.S. exports to Cargolux Airlines International S.A. (Cargolux) Luxembourg City, Luxembourg; to the Committee on Financial Services.

5833. A letter from the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, transmitting Transmittal No. 13-56, Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer and Acceptance, pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

5834. A letter from the Associate General Counsel for General Law, Department of

Homeland Security, transmitting a report pursuant to the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

5835. A letter from the Acting General Counsel, Department of Housing and Urban Development, transmitting a report pursuant to the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

5836. A letter from the Assistant General Counsel, General Law, Ethics, and Regulation, Department of the Treasury, transmitting two reports pursuant to the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

5837. A letter from the President, Inter-American Foundation, transmitting the Foundation's annual report for FY 2013 prepared in accordance with Title II of the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (No FEAR Act), Public Law 107-174; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

5838. A letter from the Secretary, Department of the Interior, transmitting a report to Congress on a gift of land in San Diego County, California, from the Mohave Desert Land Trust, pursuant to Public Law 93-632; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

5839. A letter from the Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General, Department of Justice, transmitting the Department's report on the Paul Coverdell National Forensic Science Improvement Grants Program, managed by the Office of Justice Programs' National Institute of Justice, pursuant to Public Law 90-351, section 2806(b); to the Committee on the Judiciary.

5840. A letter from the Attorney Advisor, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Regulated Navigation Area; Arthur Kill, NY and NJ [Docket No.: USCG-2011-0727] (RIN: 1625-AA11) received May 5, 2014, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

5841. A letter from the Paralegal Specialist, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's final rule — Modification of Area Navigation (RNAV) Route Q-20, TX [Docket No.: FAA-2013-0951; Airspace Docket No. 13-ASW-22] (RIN: 2120-AA66) received May 12, 2014, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

5842. A letter from the Paralegal Specialist, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's final rule — Revocation of Class E Airspace; Kwigillingcock, AK [Docket No.: FAA-2013-1008; Airspace Docket No. 13-AAL-8] received May 12, 2014, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

5843. A letter from the Paralegal Specialist, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's final rule — Modification of Navigation (RNAV) Route T-265, IL [Docket No.: FAA-2013-0952; Airspace Docket No. 13-AGL-18] (RIN: 2120-AA66) received May 12, 2014, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

5844. A letter from the Paralegal Specialist, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's final rule — Amendment of VOR Federal Airways V-35 and V-25; Eastern United States [Docket No.: FAA-2013-0961; Airspace Docket No. 13-AEA-13] (RIN: 2120-AA66) received May 12, 2014, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

5845. A letter from the Paralegal Specialist, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's final rule — Modification of Class E Airspace; Sitka, AK