

There was no objection.

WELCOME HOME GI BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EMANUEL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, at the President's second inaugural, last January, he said, "A few Americans have accepted the hardest duties in this cause, the dangerous and necessary work of fighting our enemies. We will always honor their names and their sacrifice."

The other day I introduced a bill called the Welcome Home GI Bill, to recognize the returning veterans of Iraq's and Afghanistan's theaters of war, to give them the type of compensation that they have deserved.

Now, a little history. We all know about the GI Bill. The fact is that the GI Bill was passed approximately 11 months before the end of World War II, signed by the President of the United States. Even before the war was concluded, the GIs from that war knew what the GI Bill was going to be.

And it helped them on health care and education and buying a home. It helped them put themselves on the road to their civilian life, but also put America back on the road coming home from that war.

And the truth is that every Congress, every Congress, at the end of hostilities has had a package of compensation for its veterans. Going back to the War of Independence, disabled veterans received a pension. There has not been a military engagement that the United States Congress, as the voice of the American people, has not designed a package for its returning vets; and it is high time that the 109th Congress follow the great tradition of every Congress before and begin to think what we will do for the vets returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Two weeks ago I met the Marine Corps 2nd Battalion 21st Regiment. I had seen them off 7 months earlier, and greeted them at Rosemont Horizon Arena in the Chicago suburbs, and saw those families. And one father said to me in a very poignant way, that this reception was a lot different from the reception he received about 35 years ago when he came home.

Now, what I have done in this package, which we have put together now with 15 sponsors, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Illinois Chapter has endorsed and supported, is three parts: education, health care and housing.

In the area of education, today, full benefits would be around \$36,000 in 3 years under the Montgomery GI educational benefits, and you would have to pay \$1,800 to get that \$35,000.

The Welcome Home GI Bill is 75,000 over 4 years, and you do not have to pay \$1,800 to get that educational benefit because, in the view of the legislation, your service is your contribution. You do not have to pay \$1,800 to receive

an educational benefit, whether that is for college, 4 years of education, whether it is for job training, whether it is for postgraduate work, that benefit you earned by your service.

Second, if when you come back, your place of employment does not provide health care; or if because you went off to war, when you came back your health care was canceled, you and your family will get 5 years of TRICARE health care, the gold standard and the gold-plated health care that you are provided on active duty.

Today, vets get, if obviously if they are hurt or are in poverty, they get the veterans health care system. We are going to provide them the TRICARE system that they get as if they were active duty, for them and their families.

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Third, we provide today a mortgage insurance for a home. The hardest part of getting a home is actually the down payment. It would be a \$5,000 contribution towards the down payment on their home. TRICARE health care for 5 years if your employment does not provide it or you lost it for you and your family, \$75,000 for 4 years of education to pursue job training and education and you do not have to contribute \$1,800 to get that. Your service provided that. And, lastly, \$5,000 for a down payment on a home. That is in my view the minimum of what we can do for the returning veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan is provide them that sense of compensation. It is a welcome home for the GIs. Every Congress has done it in the past.

Lastly and more importantly, today we have a disparity between the benefits between National Guard and Reserve and regular enlistees. We eliminate that disparity between Reserve and active duty because you saw the same experience in Iraq and Afghanistan. So Reserve and National Guard get the same benefits as the regular enlistees have received. It eliminates that discrimination.

As I always say, we do not owe our veterans a favor, we just have to repay one. The Welcome Home GI Bill has now received the support of the Illinois chapter of the VFW. I look forward to the support of others. We will be submitting the bill next week.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. POE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. OSBORNE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HONORING MATTHEW DRAKE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, this week Matthew Drake, a soldier who had been serving our Nation in Iraq, was awarded the Purple Heart for grave injuries he sustained on October 15, 2004, in Anwar Province, Iraq. May I please extend to him and to his family warmest congratulations and deepest gratitude on behalf of the people of the United States.

Private First Class Drake, a resident of Toledo, Ohio, and graduate of Sylvania North High School, while driving a 6-ton truck became the only survivor of a bombing. Comatose, he had a fractured skull, severe head injuries, multiple back injuries, many broken bones, and damage to his right arm and shoulder. He underwent many surgeries while hospitalized in Germany at both military as well as German private hospitals and more after traveling to Walter Reed Army Hospital here in Washington where he remained in a coma for many weeks.

Matthew Drake survived by all accounts miraculously and will undergo rehabilitation for a very long time. He has been courageous in his journey. He said this week that on receiving this Purple Heart he wanted to be able to stand from his wheelchair in order to have it pinned on him.

Throughout the months since Matt was wounded, his family has struggled to afford what is necessary to help him to travel to the hospitals on our coasts where people have been trying to help him. For his family to be near him and to help his very long rehabilitation, a fund was established at Sky Bank in Toledo, Ohio, on his behalf.

Last week, I attended a spaghetti dinner which was a fundraiser arranged by Matt's family and friends to raise the money, at least part of it, required for this son of our Nation to continue his progress with the support of his family. And before I left, they gave me this T-shirt to remember Matt. And it says on it, "The Long Road Home, Matthew Drake, Army Special Forces Injured in Iraq. He was there for us. October 15, 2004."

Matthew Drake was born in Toledo, Ohio, in 1983. He was raised in Sylvania and attended Maplewood Elementary School. He played soccer and was a Boy Scout and a member of Olivet Lutheran Church. While a student at Northview High School, Matthew was a wrestler and excelled in gymnastics. He trained in the martial arts, played guitar, and was an honor roll student.

After graduation, he started college at Bowling Green University and worked for the United Parcel Service, but 1 year later he felt duty-bound to serve our country. He left college and enlisted in the United States Army on October 13, 2002. Following training, he was assigned to Special Forces Bravo Company and sent to Iraq on September 7 just having turned 21. Not 6 weeks later he was promoted to specialist and 2 days after that the attack that changed his life forever occurred.

Now facing the greatest challenge of his young life, to return from a near

mortal head and bodily injuries and trying to regain as much strength as he can, Matthew Drake's dream of becoming a physical therapist have turned to dreams of gaining inches of recovery day by day. He had always planned to work in a profession where he could be of help or service to other people. Yet his commitment to his family, his feeling responsible to protect his younger siblings brought him to a most dangerous place. He felt he had a job to do, and he did it.

How many times have we heard that sentiment echoed by the families of the more than 11,000 service members injured in Iraq? Matthew Drake joins the 6,050 of those who were not able to shortly return to duty and whose future in service to America and their God will take another form.

Matthew faces struggles of rehabilitation most of us cannot imagine. Even swallowing whole food is still not possible. Matthew's story represents one family's heroic struggle multiplied by more than 11,000 families whose loved ones have been injured and the over 1,550 who have had to lay their loved ones to rest.

Our government must assure that we properly care for and fully compensate these young people through their entire recuperation and lifetimes. Why should a family have to have spaghetti dinners in order to have the funds necessary to travel to be with one of these severely injured veterans who have come home?

Matthew is a quiet and shy young man who loves to laugh, especially enjoys children and animals, and who joined the Army to make the world safer. He represents the citizenship ideals of hundreds of thousands of service members whose value we should not forget.

The explosion that so injured Matt on October 15, 2004, killed all his colleagues but him. His injuries were grave. He was never expected to live. Matthew Drake survived by miracle and support of his family. His mother, Lisa, has never left his bedside since he has returned Stateside, and his father Tom has traveled time and again to be with him.

On April 18, 2005, with his mother and father by his side, along with his immediate family and friends, Matthew was awarded the Purple Heart. Matthew had made a promise to his parents that no matter what he would try to stand dressed in his uniform to receive this special honor. He needed help to do that, but he did it.

Four Star General Douglas Brown, who presides over the Special Operations Units for all branches of the military, was given the honor of presenting the Purple Heart Award to Specialist Matthew T. Drake.

Our hearts swell with Matt and his family, not only because he was awarded such a prestigious and significant medal but because he lived to receive it and understands the meaning of words duty, honor, and country.

Congratulations to Matt. We love you.

[From the Toledo Blade, Oct. 19, 2004]

SYLVANIA SOLDIER SURVIVES SUICIDE ATTACK: NORTHVIEW H.S. GRAD IS IN COMA, WITH SKULL FRACTURE, INJURIES TO ARM, SHOULDER

(By Elizabeth A. Shack Blade)

A Sylvania soldier was seriously hurt in a car bombing in Iraq on Friday that killed four other people, and his family and friends are anxiously awaiting word on his recovery.

Pfc. Matthew T. Drake, who is in an Army Psychological Operations unit based at Fort Bragg, N.C., arrived at Ramstein Air Base in Germany last night on his way to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center.

On Friday, Private Drake was driving a truck near the town of Qaim near the Syrian border. Two other psychological operations soldiers, a Marine, and an Iraqi translator were killed in the suicide attack.

Private Drake was in a coma when he reached a military hospital and also has injuries to his head, right arm, and shoulder, including a fractured skull.

"It's an unbelievable miracle that he survived," his aunt, Linda Marie Domini, said.

He has had several surgeries for his head injuries and will have more surgeries when he is in a more stable condition. He will eventually be transferred to Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Private Drake graduated from Sylvania Northview High School in 2001 and attended Bowling Green State University for a year. In October, 2002, he left to join the Army.

He wanted to protect his younger siblings, Heather Schuster, a sophomore at Northview, and Michael Schuster, a sixth grader at Arbor Hills Junior High.

"He really felt called to serve," his aunt said, "He wanted to go fight the terrorists over there rather than have them come over here."

A member of the 9th PsyOp Battalion, Bravo Company, Private Drake left for Iraq on Sept. 7, two days after his 21st birthday, assigned to a three-man psychological operations unit. He drove an armored six-ton truck with a speaker.

His aunt said he felt that he had a job to do and he was going to do it, and he promised his mother, Lisa Schuster, that he'd come home. His father is Thomas Drake of Toledo.

"He's coming home a Purple Heart veteran," his aunt said, her voice breaking.

Private Drake, who was a wrestler his junior and senior years in high school and is a certified personal trainer, was thinking of becoming a physical therapist, Mrs. Domini said.

Friends and family described Private Drake, who belongs to Olivet Lutheran Church in Sylvania, as a kind, funny, and generous man.

Matt Serror, who has known Private Drake since they played soccer together in elementary school, said he was quiet and shy in high school but always helped people out, whether he was shoveling snow for an elderly neighbor or dropping a dollar in a can by a cash register.

"It's the little things you might not think about," Mr. Serror said. "He's one of those people that doesn't come around every day."

When his aunt's 150-pound Rottweiler was recovering from surgery, Private Drake carried him outside when needed to go outdoors.

In an e-mail to his mother a week before the attack, he wrote that he had befriended a feral dog that ran around the encampment where he lived with two other men in a room the size of a two-car garage.

"We pray that when he does come out of his coma that he's still Matthew," Mrs. Domini said.

Sky Bank branches are accepting donations to the Matthew T. Drake fund. His aunt said that if he doesn't survive, the money will go to families of other wounded soldiers.

But she said their family is one of strong faith, and they believe he's going to make it.

"We certainly ask for people who believe in prayer to pray for his recovery," Mrs. Domini said.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. JONES of North Carolina addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

SMART ENERGY POLICIES, NATIONAL SECURITY AND IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, later this week the House will vote on energy legislation that concerns every man and woman in America. This energy bill presents a terrific opportunity to reduce our Nation's continued dependence on petroleum by promoting clean and renewable energy sources. But instead of encouraging the use of renewable energy, this Neanderthal legislation promotes the interest of corporations through tax breaks that encourage air pollution, water contamination, and the general destruction of our environment.

This energy legislation will harm more than our environment. American's continued reliance on fossil fuels is the single largest factor that contributes to our national insecurity. That is because we obtain most of our fossil fuels from the Middle East, a region where democracy is about as common as desert oases. By spending billions of dollars annually on foreign fuels, the United States supports autocratic regimes in countries like Saudi Arabia, Libya, and Venezuela.

The citizens of oil-rich countries run by despots rarely, if ever, receive even a dime from these oil sales. More often than not, these riches line the pockets of fat-cat leaders and their cronies, instead of paying for projects that would help improve the lives of all the people in the country.

This drastic gap in wealth between the upper and lower classes, in turn breeds hostility and despair among the local populace. This hostility, combined with the militant form of Islam that is encouraged by the fat-cat leaders, creates the conditions in which terrorism runs rampant.

If the United States were to become fully energy independent, we would essentially pull the plug on the supply of money that flows to the Middle East much like oil through a pipeline. Therefore, the most effective measure we can take to address global terrorism