

ARMY SPECIALIST KAMISHA BLOCK—DAUGHTER OF TEXAS

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

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, small towns and rural America are historically notable and courageous for sending their young sons and daughters off to fight the wars of America. When volunteers are called for duty, it is these close, small communities that seem to always answer America's call to arms. When one of their number is killed in war, the entire community is emotionally affected.

In southeast Texas, the small town of Vidor has lost one of its daughters of democracy. Army Specialist Kamisha Block was killed in Baghdad August 16, 2007, in the hot war for Iraq.

Kamisha Block became the first female from southeast Texas to die in this war. She enlisted in 2005 at the age of 18 in the United States Army.

Mr. Speaker, Kamisha volunteered for the Army when this country was at war, and she probably expected to be sent to the desert of the gun and the valley of the sun. She joined the Army right out of high school. Specialist Block was a military police officer, and eventually wanted to be in law enforcement with a career in the FBI or the CIA.

She was assigned to the 401st Military Police Company, 720th Military Police Battalion and 89th Military Police Brigade out of Fort Hood, Texas.

Kamisha and her best friend, Amanda Buck, grew up together. As Amanda says, we rode the school bus together from kindergarten all the way up through high school. Amanda said Kamisha knew where she was headed in life, had a big heart and genuinely wanted to help people.

Specialist Block's death hit her family hard, and the whole community mourns for her. Her loss has not gone unnoticed. Let me explain.

Local newspapers, the Examiner and the Beaumont Enterprise, carried numerous front-page stories about Block and her life. In this small town of Vidor, Texas, almost every business had posted a message for Block and words of support for her family on signs and placards.

When Specialist Block was returned to Texas draped in the cloth of the red, white and blue, the funeral procession traveled through rural areas and small towns. The Patriot Guard led the procession with their 75 motorcycles, many carrying large American flags. Next were the numerous police vehicles from the nearby communities.

As the funeral proceeded, hundreds of teary-eyed people lined the streets of Beaumont, Texas and Vidor, Texas, removing their hats, placing their hands over their hearts, and waving American flags. Cars even pulled off the road and drivers stood out of their vehicles to pay honor and respect to this warrior. People came out of their homes

and stood on their porches in honor of the dead.

According to a local paper, The Examiner, Jamie Reynolds, a friend and coworker of Block's at the Waffle House in Vidor, said, "It was so amazing. I had chills all up and down my arms. It was overwhelming."

Mr. Speaker, showing silent respect and tribute is what people do in southeast Texas when one of their kids is killed in war.

People who knew Block from the Waffle House said that she was always happy with her bright eyes and endearing smile as she served waffles, eggs, and grits and a happy spirit.

While Jerry and Jane Block, the parents of Kamisha, mourn the death and absence of their daughter, America owes them our gratitude and our patriotic appreciation.

Specialist Kamisha Block while serving in Korea and Iraq was awarded several commendations. She was awarded the National Defense Service Medal, the Korean Defense Service Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Army Service Ribbon, the Good Conduct Medal, Operation Iraqi Freedom Service Ribbon, and the Bronze Star.

Here is a photograph of Kamisha Block, not yet 21 years of age. She died at the age of 20. It has been said "that how we yet live will echo throughout eternity."

Specialist Block showed in a mere 20 years the example of compassion, duty, determination, love of country, and love of God that will echo in her small town of Texas throughout eternity.

Rare breed these women warriors who go to war for the rest of us.

And that's just the way it is.

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

(Ms. WOOLSEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

□ 1700

HONORING CORPORAL PHILLIP J. BRODNICK

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

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and pay tribute to Corporal Phillip J. Brodnick, a courageous young soldier who died in Iraq on August 22, 2007. As we mourn his loss, we use this time to honor his life and express our gratitude for his dedicated service.

Phillip Brodnick was born in Mokena, Illinois, and lived in Burbank until he was 8. He then moved to Frankfurt, Illinois and graduated in 2000 from Lincoln-Way High School. After graduation, Brodnick's desire to serve his country led him to enlist in

the Army, and he soon served a 2-year tour of duty in Kosovo before being discharged in 2002.

However, the country's need and Brodnick's desire to serve led him to re-enlist in the Army in 2005.

In August of 2006, Brodnick was deployed to Iraq as part of the 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division based out of Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. His excellent service, leadership and ability were soon recognized, leading to a recent promotion to the rank of corporal.

Although initially scheduled to return home in June, Corporal Brodnick dutifully accepted a 4-month tour extension in Iraq. Tragically, on August 22, Corporal Brodnick and 13 other soldiers were killed when the Black Hawk helicopter they were on crashed. He was only 25 years old.

Aside from his military service to our Nation, Corporal Brodnick is remembered as patriotic and as a great friend and also as an animal lover who always looked out for his family. He aspired to one day follow in his father's footsteps and become a police officer.

While attending his wake last week, I was moved by the large number of lives that Corporal Brodnick had touched in his 25 short years. Today I ask my colleagues to join me in mourning the loss of Corporal Phillip J. Brodnick. We will never forget his sacrifice and are forever indebted to him, as well as all of our soldiers who have died for making the ultimate sacrifice for our country. Our thoughts, prayers and deepest sympathies are with Corporal Brodnick's family and friends in this difficult time.

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

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

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

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

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, this House will soon be considering a reauthorization of No Child Left Behind. Now, when President Bush signed No Child Left Behind into law 5 years ago, the theory went that schools would raise their standards and strive to make improvements and that this would then eventually trickle down and assist all, even the underperforming students that needed the help the most. Now as we now reconsider this reauthorization of this bill, I submit that many of these changes brought on by this bill have had tremendous burdensome unintended consequences.

See, instead of giving local school districts the flexibility to develop their own curriculum, they are instead hampered by the NCLB's testing requirements and must tailor their classes now around these tests. Instead of schools setting their standards high in an aggressive drive towards excellence, we have seen just the opposite. In order to maintain their Federal funding, the States are now setting their standards low. In essence, it's a race to the bottom, if you will, as far as standards in this country. And instead of allowing our educators to focus on education, NCLB has instituted some absurd regulatory burdens on the States.

According to the GAO, 41 percent of the financial support and staffing of State education agencies was a product of Federal dollars and regulations. In other words, this means that the Federal Government was the cause of 41 percent of the administrative burden at the State level, despite the fact that the Federal Government only sends 7 percent of overall education funding in this country.

Also, according to the GAO, the testing requirements of NCLB alone will cost States around \$1.9 billion between 2002 and 2008 and spend up towards 6.6 million hours to administer all the paperwork that comes with it as well.

Now, I recently held a town hall meeting on NCLB. Every person that came to that meeting, showed up, had something negative to say about the administrative burdens in NCLB. At one point during the meeting I asked how many people had contact and met with either their local principal or their local school board about some of these problems. Just about every hand in the room went up.

So then I said, Well, how many people here in the room went and talked to somebody down at the New Jersey capital, the New Jersey Department of Education? About half the people raised their hand.

I said finally, Well, how many people went to Washington and took the time out to go and visit somebody with the U.S. Department of Education? Only one person raised their hand.

You see, my point in this is, by instituting these requirements for NCLB in Washington, we are moving accountability for education farther and farther away from where it belongs: parents, students, educators at the local level.

In addition to this, the regulations NCLB places on schools often attempts to fix problems that really don't exist.

One of the schools in my district consistently was cited in publications as one of the top performing schools in the State, but it was placed, because of NCLB, on its watch list 2 years after NCLB was instituted. Now, notice, this was not an underperforming school. Every year nearly 100 percent of the kids graduated. Most went on to college. The average combined scores of SATs was 1100; 14 AP programs were offered at the school. This was a great

school. But instead, NCLB found it underperforming. And because of this, now the teachers and administrators at this school have to turn their attention away from what they were doing, which was running an excellent school and now focus on the paperwork and the burdensome accountability requirements of NCLB. So less good education is coming about because of this.

Now, let me be clear. I share, along with all my colleagues from both sides of aisle in Congress here, the ultimate goal of providing a high quality education for every child in America. This year I introduced legislation that would allow a State then to opt out of the majority of the requirements of NCLB, but, at the same time, would allow that State to keep their education funding through a refundable tax credit.

My bill is H.R. 3177. I call it the LEARN Act. That stands for Local Education Authority Return Now. It gives the States the ability to opt out of NCLB and provides residents of those States a State tax credit equal to the amount of money that otherwise would have gone to Washington and then come back to their State for Federal funding. What it does is give control back to the States, allow them, the States, the parents, the school boards, the option to pursue local and State educational initiatives based on what they know is best for their kids. It allows the States and local school districts to set their own standards, enforce their own penalties for failure, and establish their own goals for their teachers and their students. With my bill, education accountability is transferred from D.C. bureaucrats back to the people who know the schools and the students personally.

See, under my proposal, States that feel that the regulation of NCLB is both necessary and beneficial to continue on, well, they can stay in the system. If they need Washington bureaucrats in their State to tell them what to do, well, they can stay in NCLB.

However, if the State's residents feel that the responsibility for educating their children is best left in the hands of the State, then this legislation will empower them to do so and keep the funding in place that the States rely on.

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

(Ms. KAPTUR addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ANNIVERSARY OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Mr. Speaker, next week we'll be cele-

brating the 6th anniversary of the terrible attacks that happened on September 11 in New York, here in the Washington area, the Pentagon and in Pennsylvania.

While we remember those that we lost, I hope that we also reflect on how our Nation, and especially this Congress, came together during the weeks and months that followed that terrible, terrible day.

Following 9/11, we, as Americans, demonstrated the best of all of us. Thousands volunteered to help with the rescue and recovery efforts on Ground Zero. Scores more donated money, gave blood, took time to help people that they didn't even know. Millions prayed for the families of those that lost loved ones. It was a remarkable time. People from all walks of life stood together with a renewed sense of purpose and compassion.

While we remember those we lost on this anniversary of September 11, let's also remember how we came together to help get America through perhaps the most difficult time in our history. Let's remember the firefighters, the police officers, the union workers who risked their lives to save others. Let's remember the families who lost loved ones on 9/11, who became advocates for commonsense laws down here in Washington that would prevent another tragedy from happening. These courageous men and women worked tirelessly so that other families wouldn't experience what they went through.

As each year passes, the needs of those affected by 9/11 change. We work with a number of families back on Long Island in my district, especially the children, that still need mental health care. We need to improve the health care for the recovery workers who put their lives on the line and are now suffering from illnesses. And local residents, it is still paramount in our minds to make sure that they stay healthy.

The long-term mental health of families and children who lost loved ones maintains its high importance. Most people will remember it as being post-traumatic syndrome. One never knows when those flashes of that day come back. Sometimes it takes years and years for the treatment to take hold.

The Fourth Congressional District, I want to salute such groups as the South Nassau Communities Hospital and the World Trade Center Family Center that have been working hard to address the mental health needs of the children affected by 9/11 and have made great progress in helping them cope with this horrible tragedy.

In my office, I have a painting that was done several years ago by a young child on how they saw the world. And through therapy, you can now see the paintings have improved with the sun shining, meaning the young child is getting on with their life. Their work is equally as important as the search and recovery efforts following the attacks, and I commend them for it.