

their story in this Chamber, and I commend both for their actions.

RECOGNIZING OUR IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

(Mr. GRIJALVA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, I rise again today to once again bring a sense of reality and clear light to the immigrant and Latino communities of our Nation.

Six months ago, my family and I went to the wake of a 19-year-old soldier who died in Iraq from my hometown of Tucson, Arizona. It was very difficult, especially when his mother asked me to tell her why he died. I should say, she spoke only Spanish. I said what I could about freedom, sacrifice, and liberty. And now, this Congress wants to change legislation to have the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission not investigate or prosecute cases of discrimination if the complainant doesn't speak English, like this young man's mother. She gave this Nation a son.

I challenge, no, I demand of those proponents that want to have second-class citizenship in this country to go to that mother and tell her why.

OH, CHRISTMAS TREE, OH, CHRISTMAS TREE

(Mr. POE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, A Tree, A Tree, but don't call it a Christmas Tree. Let me explain.

Since forever, Christmas trees have been called Christmas trees. Everyone in the world knows what a Christmas tree is and the traditions that accompany them.

It is almost that time of year for most homes throughout the fruited plain to have some type of tree in them. Even Charlie Brown has a Christmas tree. But Lowe's Home Improvement stores that sell trees won't call them Christmas trees, but now they call them "family trees" so as not, I suspect, to offend non-Christians. Of course, it is okay in our culture to offend Christians because they are just supposed to turn the other cheek. However, calling them family trees may offend single individuals who don't have families. So should the trees be called family-individual trees?

Where is this nonsense of political correctness going to end? Lowe's should change its policy. This is the same silliness that caused some retailers last year to refuse to put up signs saying "Merry Christmas," but instead said "Happy Holidays."

It is tradition at the Poe house on Thanksgiving that we buy and decorate a Christmas tree. But we won't buy one at Lowe's because, you see, they don't sell Christmas trees.

And that's just the way it is.

IMMIGRATION

(Mr. BACA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot of hateful rhetoric surrounding the immigration debate on this floor. Some of my colleagues stand here and compare immigrants to terrorists and say that immigrants are lazy and are looking for a free ride, when in fact they have made many contributions to this country, positive contributions.

Let me tell you about an honorable immigrant family from Rialto. Corporal Jorge Gonzalez was one of the first soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice in Iraq, and I say in Iraq, for this country. The wife and infant son were left behind to apply for special permission just so that their United States flag could be draped over his coffin. Jorge was willing to die to protect this country, willing to die to protect this country; but since he was an immigrant, there are some in this body who would call him a criminal. Immigrants are not criminals. They are soldiers. They are our friends. They are our students. They are our doctors.

It is time for Congress to recognize what is right. Stop this hateful rhetoric, stop the lies. Honor the sacrifices made by men like Jorge.

Lord, help us understand and pass real immigration.

FUNDING OUR VETERANS

(Mrs. DRAKE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. DRAKE. Mr. Speaker, this is day 46; that is, 46 days so far that our veterans have not had the use of the increased funding for their benefits and health care. That is \$18.5 million a day not able to be used.

This bill has been done for months and the President has already agreed to sign it. Now, Veterans Day has come and gone and the Democratic leadership continues to delay this bill.

I am calling on the Speaker not to adjourn for Thanksgiving until this bill has been sent to the President. And I call on all Americans to contact their Representatives to tell the Democratic leadership to send a clean veterans appropriations bill to the President. How can we celebrate a holiday with our families knowing that there are benefits that our veterans don't have access to simply because of a leadership decision to hold our veterans funding hostage?

BUSH AND REPUBLICANS REFUSE TO EXPAND HEALTH CARE TO 10 MILLION CHILDREN

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

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Mr. Speaker, Thanksgiving Day, as my colleague just mentioned, is next week and we have the threat of another Presidential veto to deny 10 million children across this country of all races, all poor, access to health care.

The President has become a born-again fiscal conservative, disregarding any requirement that we pay for the war and disregarding the fact that we are paying for children's health care.

On Thanksgiving Day, all of us are thankful, those of us who have health care, and we are determined that the children of this country will join the Members of Congress in this country, government employees, and citizens across this country who do have access to health care.

The President has refused to meet with congressional leaders. And, by the way, this is bipartisan. Republicans and Democrats in this body stand united in wanting to insure our kids, and the only obstacle is the Presidential veto.

OKLAHOMA'S CENTENNIAL BIRTHDAY

(Ms. FALLIN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. FALLIN. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow the State of Oklahoma will celebrate its centennial birthday, and today I come to the House floor to commemorate and honor our State's rich history. And, most of all, I am here to honor the people of Oklahoma, our greatest strength, whose hard work and pioneer spirit have written a truly unique chapter in American history.

Oklahoma has been defined by the adventuresome nature of the men and women who settled there. Although we are a young State, our legacy is significant. Oklahoma has gone from Indian territory to land runs to a State on the cutting edge of American agriculture and energy production. Each portion of our history has left a unique imprint on the culture of our State and our Nation.

Today, 100 years after Oklahoma achieved statehood, we have so much to offer: a tremendous quality of life, a work ethic second to none, and a pioneer spirit just as much alive as it was a century ago.

On the eve of our centennial, we honor all Oklahomans. We have our household names, Will Rogers to Jim Thorpe, but there are millions of others of hardworking, compassionate Oklahomans. I just wish Oklahoma a happy birthday, and may God continue to bless our State.

FUNDING FOR VETERANS

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

Mr. ARCURI. Mr. Speaker, the Democratic Congress is wrapping up its first

year with a proud record of providing real support for our Nation's veterans that starts to make up for lost time. We have passed historic increases in veterans health care benefits totaling nearly \$12 billion to meet the needs of those returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, to make up for the President's past shortchanging of our veterans and to keep new fees from hitting veterans families.

Along with focusing on veterans who are returning with PTSD and traumatic brain injuries, we address the military health and disability crisis brought to light by the conditions at Walter Reed Hospital, and we are providing the necessary oversight to ensure a scandal like that never happens again.

This new Democratic majority is also working to make sure troops and their families, strained after multiple deployments in Iraq, get a 3.5 percent pay increase, which the President called unnecessary.

Mr. Speaker, we commemorated Veterans Day this past weekend. Democrats are proud of our accomplishments in honoring our veterans by providing them with health care benefits they deserve.

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TARDINESS IN CONGRESS

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

Mr. AKIN. Mr. Speaker, one of the things that can be a problem here in Congress is tardiness or lateness. And we've certainly seen some examples of that. One of the examples is the alternative minimum tax. It's something that every year just keeps reaching down and taxing more and more Americans. And so through the last years, Republicans passed patches to push that alternative minimum tax back. Unfortunately, this year, we're late. We don't have that done. The IRS has got to have that done by tomorrow, or else they're going to take a whole long time to change tax forms, and 50 million Americans will have their tax returns and the money that's owed them by the government late because we're just not on time with getting the AMT patch fixed.

It's also true with the veterans bill. We passed a bill, Republicans and Democrats agreed to it, put more money into the veterans, take care of post-traumatic stress and all kinds of other things that are expenses that the veterans face. The trouble is that bill's been sitting around. We're late again. Let's get a move on.

DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS HAD TO FIGHT PRESIDENT BUSH ALL THE WAY ON THE VETERANS FUNDING BILL

(Mr. PALLONE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, last week this House passed a final veterans funding bill that provides the largest investment in veterans health care in the 77-year history of the VA. Congress initially passed this legislation over the opposition of President Bush and his administration.

Now, back in June, then Bush budget director, Rob Portman, said that the Bush administration would veto the Homeland Security measure as well as an even more generous bill funding veterans health programs and construction at military bases.

One week later, when this House was about to vote on the legislation, the White House sent over a letter saying that planned increases to veterans were excessive.

And then in August, the President directed his VA Secretary to send Congress a letter letting them know that veterans didn't really need \$3.7 billion we had included over the President's request.

Mr. Speaker, it's clear that, until recently, President Bush and his administration did not believe we should fulfill our promises to our Nation's veterans. The President's paper trail is clear, and had it not been for this Democratic Congress, our veterans would not now be one step closer to the historic funding increase.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE COURAGEOUS SHAWNEE STATE UNIVERSITY MEN'S SOCCER TEAM

(Mrs. SCHMIDT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. SCHMIDT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a team of courageous student athletes from Portsmouth, Ohio.

On Sunday, October 28, the Shawnee State University men's soccer team, fresh off their final victory of the season, traveled back to campus to find themselves facing another battle. This was a battle they'd never imagined having to face.

These men witnessed an SUV plunge over an embankment, hit a tree, roll over several times, and land on its top in a creek.

The bus filled with Shawnee State soccer players pulled to the side and went to the rescue. What they found at the bottom of the dark ravine was a family trapped, a family of three. The soccer team broke the vehicle's windows and rescued all the family members safely. Thankfully, the family is alive and well today.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in recognizing these amazing student athletes of Shawnee State University: Paul Adkins, Ryan Appell, Bryan Barker, Jordan Buck, Barry Collins, Michael Cornell, Steven Cox, Rocky Dunkin, Danny Frantz, Ross Frantz, Chris George, Curtis Jones, Andrew Kachilla, Bobby Krauss, Matt Lonsinger, Michael Mohr, Rusty Ortman, Graham

Purdy, Brad Reffitt, Kurt Rininger, Drew Sampson, Ken Shonkwiler, Weston Thobaben, Jonathon Venters, and head coach Ron Goodson for their incredible act of heroism and bravery.

And let's say a prayer that the family continues to do well.

JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE IRAQ WAR REPORT

(Mrs. MALONEY of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, last night House Democrats voted to send the President a smaller war-funding package with a clear message, send our troops home now. We know this rapid redeployment will save countless American lives.

The Joint Economic Committee estimates that a sharp downturn in U.S. forces in Iraq, like the plan we are advancing, would also lower the war's economic costs by about \$2 trillion over the next 10 years.

The cost of this war has simply been too great and the human toll too high. We have already lost more people than this country lost on 9/11, 162 from my home State of New York. In so many ways, we can no longer afford to stay in Iraq.

Democrats in Congress are committed to bringing our troops home soon; repairing our military; caring for our veterans; and charting a new, more responsible, course, a more secure course in Iraq.

IN RECOGNITION OF MICKI WORK

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to say farewell and best wishes to a long-time member of the Second District staff, Micki Work. Micki has been a member of the staff more than 5 years where she has served with integrity and professionalism. She will be leaving our office to join the Magazine Publishers of America as the vice president for government affairs.

Micki came to Capitol Hill as an intern on the House Ways and Means Committee. After serving as a staff assistant to Representative GARY MILLER of California, she joined our office as a legislative correspondent. Her hard work and dedication led her to assume the role of legislative director, where she has been invaluable in helping me address the needs and concerns of the people of the Second District of South Carolina.

A native of Hilton Head Island and a graduate of Hilton Head Christian School and Clemson University, Micki is the daughter of Dorothy Howard and the late Edward "Mickey" Howard. Our office will miss Micki tremendously, and we wish her well in all of her future endeavors.