

something about it. Some of us ran for office. I served in the Texas State House and now in the U.S. Congress. Jeremiah Denton, who blinked the letters "t-o-r-t-u-r-e" in Morse code while reading a prepared message from the enemy into a video camera, became a U.S. Senator from Alabama. JOHN MCCAIN served in the House and then in the Senate. Clearly, the thread of public service in Room Seven extended well beyond the military code of conduct.

I mention my 7 years in captivity for another reason as well. Today, for just about the last 7 years, our troops and their families have put their lives on the line, and many times on hold, to defend the freedom of this great Nation. The Nation has troops waging two different battles in two separate remote parts of the world, and our servicemen and women continue to stand up and be counted. Our troops have done an exceptional job. We all hope and pray they come home soon and safely when the time is right.

I would like to close today by dedicating this statement to a dear friend of mine who did not make it home from captivity, Ron Storz. The enemy held me in solitary confinement in a place we POWs named Alcatraz. There were 11 of us held alone in small 3-foot by 8-foot cells, each one adjacent to another. Being the ingenious American servicemen we were, we could communicate with our fellow POWs by tapping on the walls.

Of the 11 of us held in solitary cells, only 10 made it home. The North Vietnamese killed my friend Ron Storz, an Air Force captain, after he rebelled and went on a hunger strike to protest our harsh conditions. Ron Storz carried the banner of valor and heroism. This resolution includes him, too, and it includes all Americans.

All I want to say is God bless America, and today I salute all ex-POWs. Thank you for bringing this measure to the floor. I salute you.

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Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HUNTER. We have no more speakers and would yield back the balance of our time.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I would like to say what an honor it is for me to serve with a great American, Mr. SAM JOHNSON, here in the House, and I thank God, as my colleagues do as well, that he is here to share with us his extraordinary experiences and to remind us of individuals like himself who serve this country with such honor and valor.

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer my wholehearted support of honoring members of the United States Armed Forces who were held as prisoners of war during the Vietnam conflict and to ask for a full accounting of those great Americans still listed as missing in action.

The hardship bestowed upon our men and women in the Vietnam war prison camps is

well documented. I have two dear friends who spent years as prisoners of war in Vietnam. One is a constituent of mine named Digger O'Dell who spent more than 5 years as a prisoner of war in Vietnam. The other, my colleague in the House, Congressman SAM JOHNSON.

Their bravery, their commitment to our nation and their desire to fight for the freedom of every individual is unquestionable. I rise today in tribute to the service and sacrifice of Digger O'Dell, SAM JOHNSON, and that of their fellow POWs whose bravery under incredible circumstances did great honor to America.

Additionally, we can never forget the 1,729 members of our Armed Forces that remain unaccounted for from this conflict. This is unacceptable to me. This number represents families, loved ones, and comrades who have been left wondering about their fate for the past 30 plus years.

Those families that still await word of the fate of their loved ones deserve the sense of closure this information would bring. I feel that it is our duty as Members of Congress to at the very least work to provide them the opportunity for that closure.

My district is home to thousands of veterans of the Vietnam war and my husband is a member of one of the largest chapter of Vietnam Vets in the Nation. Each time I see a veteran of that conflict I say "Welcome Home" because too many were not welcomed properly when they returned from Vietnam.

That "Welcome Home" means even more to those who spent time in captivity and endured unspeakable abuses because upon their release they returned to the loving embrace of family and friends. And they did so with their honor intact and love of country strengthened.

For those who never returned and whose fate is unknown, we must never stop in our effort to leave no one behind.

I urge you as my friends and colleagues to join me in honoring the courage and sacrifice of all those members of our Armed Services who valiantly served our great Nation in Vietnam. And to every Vietnam Veteran—Welcome Home.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 986, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

HONORING WOMEN IN THE ARMED FORCES AND FEMALE VETERANS

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1054)

honoring the service and achievements of women in the Armed Forces and female veterans, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 1054

Whereas women have historically been an important part of all United States war efforts, voluntarily serving in every military conflict in United States history since the Revolutionary War;

Whereas 34,000 women served in World War I, 400,000 served in World War II, 120,000 served in the Korean War, over 7,000 served in the Vietnam War, and more than 41,000 served in the first Gulf War;

Whereas more than 185,000 women have been deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and other missions since 2001;

Whereas over 350 service women have given their lives for our Nation in combat zones since World War I, and more than 85 have been held as prisoners of war;

Whereas over 350,000 women serving in the Armed Forces make up approximately 15 percent of active duty personnel, 15 percent of Reserves, and 17 percent of the National Guard;

Whereas women are now playing an increasingly important role in America's military forces; and

Whereas the women of America's military, past and present, have served their nation in times of peace and war, at great personal sacrifice for both themselves and their families: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) honors and recognizes the service and achievements of current and former female members of the Armed Forces;

(2) encourages all people in the United States to recognize the service and achievements of women in the military and female veterans on Memorial Day;

(3) encourages all people in the United States to learn about the history of service and achievements of women in the military; and

(4) supports groups that raise awareness about the service and achievements of women in the military and female veterans through exhibitions, museums, statues, and other programs and activities.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS) and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WITTMAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Every time I visit military installations, at home and abroad, I'm constantly impressed by the tremendous job our servicemembers are doing, and I'm particularly impressed by our

brave servicewomen, whom I seek out at every chance.

Over 350,000 American women are currently serving in our Armed Forces, following in the footsteps of women who have voluntarily served in every military conflict in United States history since the Revolutionary War.

During the revolution, women served on the front lines as nurses, water bearers and even saboteurs. For years, women had to disguise themselves as men in order to enlist in our military. Although the Army and Navy Nurse Corps were established in the early 1900s, it was not until the Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948 that women were granted permanent status in the regular and Reserve Armed Forces.

As Memorial Day approaches, we should recognize that our servicewomen play an increasingly important role in America's military forces. Women serving in the Armed Forces make up approximately 15 percent of active duty personnel, 15 percent of Reserves and 17 percent of the National Guard.

Women are flying helicopters and fighter aircraft. They are saving lives as nurses and doctors, and they are driving support vehicles and policing perimeters.

Servicewomen are also receiving recognition of their service, including awards for valor. Most recently, Private First Class Monica Lin Brown became only the second woman since World War II to receive the Silver Star, our Nation's third highest medal for valor, for her service in Afghanistan. The first woman since World War II to receive this honor was Sergeant Leigh Ann Hester, who received the Silver Star in 2005 for her service in Iraq.

When I visit installations, I am so grateful for the response and insight I receive from women in the Armed Forces. They are adamant they do not want to be treated differently; yet they would like us to understand and recognize the additional burdens that are inherent in the many roles they play as wives, as mothers and caretakers.

Later this week, the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues will host its annual ceremony at the Arlington National Cemetery to honor our Nation's servicewomen and women veterans and to remember women who have died while on duty serving the United States.

As Chair of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Military Personnel and co-Chair of the Women's Caucus Task Force on Women in the Military and Veterans, I'm privileged to honor the legacy of servicewomen in the past, the courage with which women serve today, and the enthusiasm inherent in the young women who dream of serving this great Nation in the future.

Part of honoring them is asking the tough questions about the expanding roles our servicewomen are taking on and excelling in. We hear from women

in the military in person and through the media about their contributions in combat zones and their willingness to risk their lives in defense of their fellow servicemembers, our country and our families. These are issues we should recognize and address. They deserve nothing less.

We should never fail to remember the sacrifices our servicewomen and their families make to keep our families safe.

This resolution honors the service and achievements of women in the military and women veterans and encourages all people in the United States to do the same and to learn more about these wonderful accomplishments.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to have offered this resolution. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting it.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WITTMAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I might consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of House Resolution 1054, which honors the service and achievements of women in the Armed Forces and female veterans.

Mr. Speaker, throughout this great Nation's history, women have answered the call without hesitation to defend our democracy and freedom. Since the early days when we fought to gain our independence, women have served with distinction in every one of our Nation's conflicts. Before women were formally allowed to serve in our military, they served on battlefields as nurses, water bearers, cooks and saboteurs.

Frustrated by the gender restrictions of the day but fueled by ardent patriotism, many women found more unorthodox ways to serve. Often disguising themselves as young men, they joined the military and fought steadfastly alongside their brothers in arms.

Mr. Speaker, since 1901 when the Army Nurse Corps was established, formally granting women rank and military status, hundreds of thousands of women have served with honor in the Armed Forces. They have never shrunk from the tough jobs or hesitated to go in harm's way: 34,000 women served in World War I; 400,000 in World War II; 120,000 in Korea; 7,000 in Vietnam; and over 41,000 served in the first Gulf War.

Today, Mr. Speaker, over 350,000 women are serving in our Armed Forces. Over 190,000 have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan to help rid the world of tyranny and terrorism. They serve on land, at sea and in the air, doing dangerous jobs such as pilots, military police and convoy truck drivers.

Mr. Speaker, these women, just like the men in our Armed Forces, are volunteers. They have always been volunteers. They have chosen to serve, chosen to make the sacrifices that are inherent in military service. They endure long hours, long separations from their

loved ones and the hardships and horrors of combat. And as so many who have served before them, these women have been wounded, imprisoned and have paid the ultimate price for their devotion and duty to this great country.

It is without question that our military forces are unsurpassed. It is also undeniable that women have played a significant role in developing the extraordinarily capable military we are so proud of today. Military women have been pioneers in computer science, space and undersea exploration and medicine. Through their accomplishments America has made great strides in technology, mathematics and engineering.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentlelady from California for introducing this resolution to honor America's extraordinary military women and veterans. I join her and all of my colleagues to celebrate the courageous women of our Armed Forces who serve today and who have served in the past. Their indomitable spirit and powerful sense of patriotism guarantee our freedom now and for generations to come.

I, therefore, strongly urge all Members to support this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to my friend and colleague, the gentlelady from New Hampshire (Ms. SHEA-PORTER), a thoughtful member of the Committee on Armed Services and the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. I would like to thank the sponsor of this important resolution, the gentlewoman from California, SUSAN DAVIS. Congresswoman DAVIS is the Chair of the Military Personnel Subcommittee, and it is my great honor to serve with her.

As we prepare to honor our military and our fallen on Memorial Day, it is appropriate to honor the women who have served, also. Almost 800,000 have served since World War I, and together, women make up almost 15 percent of our active military and 17 percent of our National Guard Reserve forces.

Sadly, many of the women who earned medals and served this country never collect those medals. They served quietly and they left quietly, too humble to tell their tale and too humble to ask for their medals.

In New Hampshire, I recently had the great pleasure to present medals to Hazel Jones, 50 years after she had earned them in World War II. The Dover resident enlisted in the Army in 1944, completed her basic training, and went on to serve her country for the next 17 months, transporting troops and the mail and protecting our national security.

I was really proud to present Hazel with her medals, and I am proud today to honor the hundreds of thousands of other women who have nobly served our beloved country.

While women may not make up the majority of our Armed Forces, they stand and work side by side with the men, and they are critical to our mission. As we celebrate Memorial Day, it is fitting that we take this moment to celebrate their service.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased, as a cosponsor of H. Res. 1054, to recognize the service and achievements of the women in the Armed Forces and the nation's women veterans. I thank my San Diego colleague, Congresswoman SUSAN DAVIS, for introducing this important resolution.

These women have been the unsung heroes of every war since the Revolutionary War. So, as we approach Memorial Day, it is fitting that we sing their praises. They are playing an increasingly prominent and important role in our nation's military forces. 350,000 are now serving, making up 15 percent of active duty personnel, 15 percent of Reserves, and 17 percent of the National Guard. More than 185,000 have been deployed since 2001.

Women veterans are second only to elderly veterans as the fastest growing segment of the veteran population. 255,000 women use VA health services today. There are 1.7 million women veterans, 7 percent of the total veteran population—expected to be 10 percent by 2020.

As Chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, I want to report that Congress has responded to the challenge of meeting the needs of women veterans. Today, there exist within the Department of Veterans Affairs, two main offices specifically focused on addressing the needs of women veterans, put into place by Congress.

The 102nd Congress passed landmark legislation (P.L. 102-484) which authorized VA to provide gender-specific health care at VA medical facilities. The position of Director of Women's Health was also created by this law. This position has recently been elevated to the Chief Consultant on Women Veterans' Health, Strategic Health Care Group, reporting to the Undersecretary for Health (of the Veterans Health Administration). At each medical center, a Women Veterans Program Manager is ready to assist women veterans with their health care.

More recently, Congress passed P.L. 108-422 to extend VA's authority to offer Military Sexual Trauma Counseling and Treatment to active duty service members.

In addition, The Center for Women Veterans was established by the 103rd Congress in P.L. 103-446 to oversee the Department's programs for women veterans. The Center Director reports to and is an advisor to the VA Secretary on matters related to policies, legislation, programs, issues and initiatives affecting women veterans. To name a few of its activities:

Perform outreach to minority women veterans, homeless women veterans with children, elderly women veterans, and women veterans living in rural areas.

Monitor transition assistance program (TAP) briefings to ensure that the gender-specific information about benefits and services is provided to women service members.

Monitor VA Office of Research and Development to ensure that VA research includes the issues of women veterans.

Their goal is to identify any programs that are unresponsive or insensitive to women veterans and to address their deficiencies. The center is concerned with Department-wide legislative policies, within the VHA and VBA (Veterans Benefits Administration) and NCA (National Cemetery Administration), as well as the State offices.

The center is holding the 4th National Summit on Women Veterans' Issues on June 20-22 in Washington, DC.

H.R. 4107, the Women's Veterans Health Care Improvements Act, has been introduced by my colleague serving on the VA Committee, STEPHANIE HERSETH SANDLIN. This is one of a number of ways that we are currently working on behalf of women veterans.

The House VA Committee continues to provide oversight to ensure that the laws we have passed are doing the job and that women veterans are receiving the information, benefits and care they deserve.

In the light of these actions by Congress, it is my hope that all women veterans will receive the care and benefits they have earned through their service and accomplishments that we recognize here today.

Mr. WITTMAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, at this time, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, it's a joy to celebrate the women of our armed services. At this time, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1054, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1200

COMMENDING THE ALASKA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 961) commending the Alaska Army National Guard for its service to the State of Alaska and the citizens of the United States.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 961

Whereas the 297th Infantry and the scout group of the Alaska Army National Guard deployment of almost 600 Alaskans was the largest deployment of the Alaska National Guard since World War II;

Whereas the Alaskans of the 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry came from 80 different communities across Alaska;

Whereas the 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry included 75 soldiers from New York, Mississippi, Illinois, Georgia and Puerto Rico;

Whereas the 586 soldiers of the 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry were mobilized in July

of 2006 and deployed to Camp Shelby, Mississippi;

Whereas the 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry was deployed to Camp Virginia, Camp Navstar and Camp Buehring in Northern Kuwait;

Whereas the 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry courageously performed route and perimeter security missions, mounted combat patrols and inspections and searches of vehicles going into Iraq from Kuwait, among other assignments;

Whereas the 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry, over the course of 12 months in Kuwait and Iraq, inspected and searched over 30,000 semi-trucks;

Whereas the 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry designed all force protection plans in northern Kuwait;

Whereas the families of the members of the 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry have provided unwavering support while waiting patiently for their loved ones to return;

Whereas the employers of members and family members of the 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry have displayed patriotism over profit, by keeping positions saved for the returning soldiers and supporting the families during the difficult days of this long deployment, and these employers are great corporate citizens through their support of members of the Armed Forces and their family members;

Whereas the 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry has performed admirably and courageously; gaining the gratitude and respect of Alaskans and all Americans; and

Whereas members of the 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry received 3 Bronze Stars, 12 Meritorious Service Medals, 142 Army commendations and more than 200 Army Achievement Medals for their outstanding service: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That Congress—

(1) commends the 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry of the Alaska Army National Guard upon its completion of deployment and brave service to the Commonwealth of Alaska and the citizens of the United States; and

(2) directs the Clerk of the House of Representatives to transmit a copy of this resolution to the Adjutant General of the Alaska National Guard for appropriate display.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS) and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WITTMAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today in support of House Resolution 961, commending the Alaska Army National Guard for its service to the State of Alaska and the citizens of the United States.

Let me first take a moment to thank Representative DON YOUNG of Alaska for taking the lead and getting this resolution to the floor here today.