

Unfortunately, the Army has reported a similar increase in suicides. The suicide rate among Army soldiers hit its highest level in three decades in 2008 when there were 128 confirmed suicides.

Yesterday, at a hearing of the Armed Services Subcommittee on Military Personnel, I was impressed with the comments by military leaders from each of the four services who described the steps they are taking to combat psychological stress among servicemembers. I was also pleased to read in the Marine Corps Times that the Corps has taken increased suicide rates seriously by rolling out a new suicide prevention program and implementing additional all-hands prevention training. However, I also believe that the policymakers in Washington have a role to play.

With Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune and Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point in my district, I am well aware of the strain that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have placed on our Nation's marines and their families. Military officials have speculated that repeat combat deployments and the toll these deployments have taken on servicemembers' marriages and families have contributed to increased suicide rates.

Mr. Speaker, I also believe that continuous war without a clearly defined goal is contributing to anxiety and depression among some of the members of our military.

In recent days, I have come to the House floor to talk about our Nation's military involvement in Afghanistan and the importance of knowing the end point to our war strategy. After nearly 8 years in Afghanistan, President Obama's order for a surge of additional troops will certainly lead to more killed and wounded, more frequent deployments and more stress on our military and their families. That is the price of war.

While American military personnel faithfully conduct their missions abroad, elected officials here in Washington also need to take seriously their responsibility to develop a viable, long-term strategy for these operations.

I have spoken to many in the Army and Marine Corps who say our Nation needs an end point to its war strategy. Many servicemembers have gone to Iraq and Afghanistan more than once, and their desire to serve this Nation is greater than ever, but the stress placed on our all-volunteer forces cannot continue forever.

That is why I will continue to urge the President to work with his military commanders and the Congress to articulate to our men and women in uniform what is to be achieved and to develop the best possible strategy for achieving our goals and wrapping up our military commitment in Afghanistan. I will also continue to work with my colleagues in Congress to ensure adequate funding for mental health programs for servicemembers and veterans.

Before closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Department of Defense and our military leaders who are doing everything possible to help servicemembers who suffer from anxiety and depression.

Mr. Speaker, as I do just about every night that I come to the floor of the House, I have to close this way, because I regret that I voted to send our troops to Iraq. I have signed over 8,000 letters to the families and extended families so that I could say to God, forgive me for making that decision.

So my close will be this. God, please bless our men and women in uniform. God, please bless the families of our men and women in uniform. God, in Your loving arms, hold the families who have given a child dying for freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq.

And, dear God, because America is in so much trouble, I will close three times by asking, God please, God please, God please continue to bless America.

THE COST OF AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ SOON TO BE \$1 TRILLION

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, I would like to thank Congressman WALTER JONES for his 5-minute speech. That was a perfect lead-in to my remarks tonight.

Mr. Speaker, last week I stood in the House to mark two tragic milestones. I said that July had become the deadliest month for our soldiers in Afghanistan since the conflict began, and I reported that the number of American troops who have died in Afghanistan and Iraq had gone over the 5,000 mark.

Today, I rise to warn the House that a third tragic milestone is coming up. According to a report by the Congressional Research Service, Congress has approved \$941 billion in war-related spending since 9/11. If Congress approves the administration's request for the next fiscal year, funding for Afghanistan and Iraq will go over the \$1 trillion mark. And that is just for direct military operations, Mr. Speaker. The \$1 trillion figure doesn't include the indirect costs, such as health care for our wounded veterans. Many of our veterans will need care for the rest of their lives. Joseph Stiglitz, the Nobel-winning economist, has estimated that when you add it all up, the occupation of Iraq alone will cost us over \$3 trillion.

Tragically, all that spending has not made us any safer. Violent extremists have launched more attacks around the world since 9/11 than before 9/11. The war spending hasn't made us any richer either. It has contributed to our economic crisis, exploded the lid off our national debt, and diverted funds from desperately needed domestic priorities.

Besides Iraq and Afghanistan, Congress has also approved spending for a

third war called the global war on terror. That war has been a big mistake, too. As the Rand Corporation has pointed out, when you use the word "terrorist," you elevate them. You elevate them to the status of holy warriors and it encourages them to conduct holy war against the United States.

We need to call terrorists what they really are, criminals and violent extremists. To stop them, we need good intelligence and good police work in the communities where they hide, not massive military occupations that don't get the job done and bleed our Treasury dry.

I am glad that President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton have stopped using the phrase "war on terror." That is a good first step. But now we need to take several more steps. We must speed up the withdrawal of our troops and military contractors from Iraq. We must change our mission in Afghanistan to emphasize economic development, humanitarian aid, education, jobs, and better government.

This is the kind of help that the people of Afghanistan want and need from the United States. This is the kind of help that will give the Afghan people real hope for the future and a reason to reject extremism.

And throughout the world, we must replace military power with the tools of smart power, such as diplomacy, multilateral action, and nuclear non-proliferation. I have offered a "SMART Security Platform for the 21st Century" which could put these tools to work and make the world a safer place.

Mr. Speaker, America cannot afford to keep using military power as our only option. It is dumb foreign policy, dumb military policy, and dumb fiscal policy. Smart power will save lives and money and build a more peaceful world for our children and their children.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. 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.)

RECOGNIZING THE OUTSTANDING WORK OF TAKE STOCK IN CHILDREN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to recognize the outstanding work of Take Stock in Children, an amazing program throughout

my home State of Florida which provides low-income and at-risk children the scholarships and the guidance that they need to obtain a quality college education.

As a former educator and a former Florida certified teacher, I am personally aware of the importance in providing our children a solid education so that they may be successful, productive, and active members of society in the future.

When students receive the support, the mentoring, and the financial assistance necessary to pursue a college degree, they begin to realize that they can achieve their goals, they are capable of reaching their dreams, and there are people ready to say, "We are here to help you."

This is what Take Stock in Children offers to all of these children. It is an opportunity for the kids in our community to take advantage of the education they might not have otherwise been offered.

Take Stock in Children created an ingenious model of operation which provides the structure and the stability that at-risk and low-income students need in order to be guided to be most productive into college and beyond.

With its innovative mentorship, scholarship, case management, and accountability systems, it is no wonder why Take Stock in Children has flourished. The passion and commitment evident in all aspects of the organization is indeed inspiring. Over 94 percent of all funds that they gather go directly to scholarships and services to students. As more funds are made available to Take Stock in Children, they are quickly made available to the students.

Take Stock in Children has been able to expand into a public-private partnership, so that for every \$2 raised for scholarship and student services, they receive a \$1 match from the Florida Prepaid College Foundation, creating millions of dollars worth of resources for our kids.

As all of our Florida families know, the Florida Prepaid program allows them to invest early for their children's college education. Parents lock in the cost of college when they begin paying into the program, saving them years of college rate increases and allowing them several years to save for their children's educational needs.

One in ten Florida children has a Florida Prepaid plan, and over 206,000 prepaid students have already graduated from college. I am proud to say that I was one of the cocreators of this program when I served in the Florida Senate.

Take Stock in Children is actually the largest single purchaser of Florida Prepaid scholarships, and it is a great coordinated victory in the fight to help children achieve their dreams of success. It has been over 21 years since I helped create the Florida Prepaid program, and I am continually proud of its successes.

With Florida Prepaid and Take Stock in Children working together, an educational powerhouse has been created for Florida students, combining financial aid as well as guidance and counseling for enrolled and eligible children.

Over 520 students in my district today are recipients of scholarships from Take Stock in Children, and without the support, finding college tuition for these students would not have been likely.

□ 1845

Today, almost \$109 million have been awarded in scholarships and over 1 million hours logged, with over 11,000 volunteers dedicated to helping these students. It is because of the commitment of dedicated individuals that Take Stock in Children has come to be such a tremendous success. As a Member of Congress and an ardent supporter of giving the best education possible to our youth, it pleases me greatly that organizations like Take Stock in Children exists today. I look forward to hearing about all of the future successes of Take Stock in Children, and I again applaud them for their everyday victories for all of our children.

HONORING THE LIFE OF VERMEL COOK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise to salute a woman of success and pay tribute to Vermel Cook, 95 years old, who passed just this last week, born on November 24, 1913, a woman that has a very special place in my heart, and that of the city of Houston. Mr. Speaker, can you imagine a woman born before the conclusion of World War I, in the midst of a segregated South, who became an important surgical nurse who attended to the surgeries of the famed surgeon, Dr. Michael DeBakey, and Dr. Denton Cooley, at the Methodist Hospital.

What an achievement. And she did that for 30 years. In her 30 years I would imagine she saw some of the first heart transplants. She saw the first opportunities to give new life to patients through the genius of Dr. Michael DeBakey, already passed, and Dr. Denton Cooley, who still lives in our community. I'm very proud that this woman raised beautiful children, 6 children. She has 8 grandchildren, 4 great grandchildren.

And one of her wonderful children was a dear friend of mine, the Mitchell family. Her granddaughter, Pam Mitchell, who is saddened by her death, is one of the 8 grandchildren. And her wonderful daughter, surviving daughter, JoAnn Griggs, as well, had the opportunity to live with a great mother and a great father. Her husband, deceased, Leroy Cook, they were married for 50 years and produced great talent

for the Mitchell family. Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell and granddaughter Pam and grandson, her young grandson, traveled around the community and provided great music.

She was a woman of religion as well, a member of the Progressive New Hope Church under the Reverend Ennis Brown, and she served at that church for many, many years, a great historic church in the city of Houston. But then as Pastor Brown passed away, she moved to one of the up-and-coming starrng churches under the leadership of my dear friend, Pastor Samuel Ratliff, Brentwood Baptist Church. And I am reminded of my visits to that church when Pastor Ratliff and all of the leadership of that church always rallied around Sister Cook. They always were so grateful of her presence there, and, as well, the spark and the laughter and the smile that she brought to the congregation.

I will always remember her, generous in spirit and heart, a nurturer. And now I know why. A surgical nurse in the midst of a segregated America, living through World War I and World War II, standing at the side of the founder of the veterans hospital system of America, Dr. Michael DeBakey. And then his tutee, Dr. Denton Cooley, two giants in the field of medicine. Now their fallen hero goes alongside of Dr. DeBakey, my very dear friend, Sister Vermel Cook.

As she is buried this coming weekend I would ask that we remember her challenges, but also her spirit. I will always be proud to have known her and to have recognized the greatness of her service and how she pioneered for nurses who now have come behind her. She'll be funeralized on Saturday, this coming Saturday, August 1, 2009, at the Brentwood Baptist Church. Though we are saddened by her passing, we know that this will be a commemoration, a celebration of the pioneering spirit and the successes that she had. We pay tribute to Vermel Cook; yes, fallen, but yet successful, a woman that we can be very proud of in this great Nation that gives us opportunity. God bless you, Vermel Cook, and God bless America.

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

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

THE BIG GUNS HAVE LINED UP AGAINST H.R. 1207

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

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, the big guns have lined up against H.R. 1207, the bill to audit the Federal Reserve. What is it that they are so concerned about? What information are they hiding from