

who turned out to support their Terrapins in record numbers. This championship is the product of outstanding athletes and coaches, untold hours of hard work, and the passionate support of the University of Maryland community. The University of Maryland demonstrates excellence in both academics and athletics, and I'm proud of this team for contributing to that legacy.

RECOGNIZING FOREST PARK HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL ERIC BRENT ON RECEIVING THE WASHINGTON POST DISTINGUISHED EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AWARD

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 08, 2010

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize Principal Eric Brent, the winner of the Washington Post Distinguished Educational Leadership Award for Prince William County Schools.

Principal Brent has more than 23 years of educational experience and is currently the principal of Forest Park High School. He has served as a secondary classroom teacher, coach, sponsor, guidance counselor, director of student services, assistant principal, and principal during his career. He is a student body favorite and is known as a devoted mentor who takes a sincere interest in the lives of his students. Teachers and parents cite his administrative style as polite and collaborative. His diverse experience and enthusiasm for education have given him the skills and talent to be a first-class principal.

His work at Forest Park High has produced a long list of results and accolades. In 2008, Newsweek magazine ranked Forest Park High School on its annual list of "America's Top Public High Schools." During his tenure, student scores on the SAT improved from 1511 to 1528 and the number of graduates attending four-year higher education programs increased from 50 percent to 60 percent. In 2009, Principal Brent was recognized for these accomplishments when he was named Principal of the Year in Prince William County.

Madam Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in congratulating Principal Eric Brent for receiving the Washington Post Distinguished Educational Leadership Award for Prince William County Schools. He is an asset to our local school system, and his work is helping countless children and setting them on the right path for a positive future.

THE GAZA FLOTILLA INCIDENT

HON. ADAM B. SCHIFF

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 8, 2010

Mr. SCHIFF. Madam Speaker, Israel has the right and the duty to defend its citizens from attack, and it is both reasonable and prudent to interdict weapons from being smuggled into Gaza.

Last Monday's confrontation between Israeli naval forces and a group of activists seeking to bring supplies to the Hamas-governed Gaza

Strip was tragic, and I join the worldwide outpouring of grief over the deaths of nine people aboard the *Mavi Marmara*.

In the midst of his tragedy, we must not forget that Israel has been engaged in a protracted struggle with Hamas, a terrorist organization that has repeatedly stated that it will never accept Israel's right to exist, and which has used the 1.4 million people of Gaza as human shields for rocket attacks and other acts of terror against Israeli citizens.

The Turkish group that organized the flotilla, the IHH, must accept responsibility for the loss of life aboard the ship by deliberately provoking a confrontation with Israeli Navy personnel enforcing a legal blockade of Gaza. Rather than accepting Israel's offer to offload its cargo in Israel for subsequent transport via the land crossings into Gaza, the *Mavi Marmara* chose to try to run the blockade and then resisted the Israeli boarding party, beating Israeli troops with metal pipes and other weapons. In the days since the incident, it has been revealed some of those aboard the ship were jihadist provocateurs seeking a clash with the Israeli military. And regrettably in this, they were successful.

The international community must show greater resolve in forcing Hamas to renounce terror, accept Israel's right to exist, and abide by prior agreements. We must work together with Israel to meet the urgent needs of the people of Gaza, but Hamas bears ultimate responsibility for the continued suffering of the people of that region.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2011

SPEECH OF

HON. GARY L. ACKERMAN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 27, 2010

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 5136) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2011 for military activities of the Department of Defense, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes:

Mr. ACKERMAN. Madam Chair, several months ago I received a letter from a soldier who lives in New York. The letter was very similar to those that many members of Congress receive from brave servicemen and women who reside in their districts. The letter spoke of multiple tours through Iraq and Afghanistan, of volunteering for more service even after completing enough tours to retire, and of the pride of a soldier who loves his country and is willing to sacrifice so much to defend it.

But this letter was not quite the same as those that many of us here in the Capitol receive from time to time. You see, despite serving his country for more than 20 years, despite volunteering to serve in a combat zone to defend America's principles of freedom from tyranny and from persecution, and despite receiving two bronze stars for meritorious service to his country, the gay soldier who wrote this letter is required by United States law to lie about who he is or face being discharged from the military.

For 16 years, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" has placed an unthinkable and immoral burden on

gay and lesbian servicemen and women, who, under United States law and unlike their heterosexual counterparts, must hide their sexual orientation and their partners from the military. Their partners are not eligible for the military spousal benefits to which the partners of heterosexual servicemen and women are entitled, including health care and better housing. Madam Speaker, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" is, by definition, a discriminatory policy.

In the course of tonight's debate, several members have characterized the House of Representatives' impending vote to repeal "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" as a step forward for morality and equality. And it is. But, before we collectively pat ourselves on the back for a job well done, I would remind my colleagues that tonight's step forward is only a result of the giant leap backwards we took when we instituted the policy in the first place. Years from now, when our children read about "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" in their history books, what will they think of a government that so shamefully turned its back on gay servicemen and women in the interest of a political compromise?

Madam Chair, politics is a business of grays. Seldom do we have the opportunity to vote on legislation that is black or white, moral or immoral, right or wrong. Tonight is the rare exception.

For the thousands of gay servicemen and women who so bravely serve our country everyday but who live in constant fear of being discovered for who they are, for the principles of freedom and equality upon which the United States of America was founded, and in the interest of righting a wrong that has persisted for far too long, I rise in support of the amendment before us and for the patriotic soldier whose letter I enclose for the record; a letter in which he implores me: "If and when this issue ever comes up for debate, and even for a vote in Congress, I respectfully ask you to remember all the gay military personnel who are right now risking our lives to defend the U.S. and its values."

Madam Chair, that moment has come.

Hon. GARY ACKERMAN,

Member of the House of Representatives, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN ACKERMAN: I am a captain in the United States Army Reserve, and am presently deployed to Afghanistan. I am writing to you with regard to the military's so-called "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT) policy. As you may know, there is currently a strong push in Congress to overturn DADT—under which otherwise qualified gay men and women are still being involuntarily dismissed from service—and replace it with a policy of nondiscrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. I strongly support this proposed policy change. I would like to explain the basis for my judgment.

I am a veteran of both the U. S. Navy Reserve and the U. S. Army Reserve. In the latter I have served as both a sergeant and as a commissioned officer. Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 I have completed tours of duty in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Kuwait. I was informed that I had completed twenty good years of Reserve military service, and had thus earned the right to retire. But I did not want to retire with my country still at war. So I volunteered for another combat zone deployment, and am serving once again in Afghanistan. I have been at my current duty station—. I recite this brief resume to let you know that I am no mere observer of the military, but rather someone who has dedicated much of my life to our national defense.

Congressman Ackerman, I am also one of the many gay military personnel who have served our country faithfully in these times of terrorism and war. I want to give you my personal perspective on why DADT is so wrong. First of all, it is widely recognized that a married service member's relationship with his or her spouse has a profound impact on that service member's fitness for duty. Thus, straight married service members are free, within the limits of resource availability and operational constraints, to maintain communications with their spouses. In fact, such communication is actively encouraged. Regular phone calls, e-mail, and postal letters really help both the service member and spouse get through the strain of combat zone deployments in particular.

Many gay service members have committed partners who, every day, face the same stress and make the same sacrifices as do their straight counterparts. But because of DADT, gay service members and their partners have to constantly worry that an overheard telephone call, an intercepted e-mail message, or other type of compromised communication could lead to a degrading, career-destroying investigation. It is wrong, I believe, to place such additional burdens on the back of American patriots.

I write of these matters from personal experience. When the 9/11 terrorist attacks occurred I was in a serious long-term relationship. But the extensive post-9/11 active duty I performed put a serious strain on this relationship. The relationship finally fell completely apart during my first Afghanistan deployment in——.

As you may know, the military has seen a troubling increase in the service member suicide rate since 9/11. Furthermore, the loss of a serious relationship is one of the critical risk factors that may contribute to such suicides. I experienced this particular risk factor and my situation was compounded by its occurrence in a war zone. Six years later, I can still vividly remember cradling my government-issue pistol in my hands and fighting the urge to blow my own brains out.

I made it through that crisis. I completed my mission in Afghanistan successfully, and in fact was decorated with a Bronze Star Medal at the conclusion of that tour. I went on to earn a second Bronze Star Medal in Iraq two years later, and was promoted to—— shortly after that.

What made that crisis particularly difficult was the isolation imposed on me as a result of DADT. A straight Soldier in a comparable crisis could turn to his commander, his first sergeant, or a "battle buddy" for help and advice. But such avenues are legally closed to gay troops. If I, for example, had shared the details of my situation with my commander—a decent and honorable man—he would have been legally obligated to have initiated an investigation that would have heaped even more stress upon me, disrupted my unit's mission, and ultimately destroyed my career.

I know that many would say that a gay service member in such a situation could go to a chaplain in confidentiality. I have great respect for our military chaplains and for all the good work that they do. But I also believe that no service member should feel forced to see a chaplain as his or her only option. Every service member should have the right to speak freely with a commander, a trusted noncommissioned officer, or a battle buddy. I assert this not only as an individual Soldier, but also as an officer with extensive experience as a platoon leader and company commander. When I have been in these command positions, I have had Soldiers share with me some very personal information about their families and home lives. I was glad that these Soldiers trusted me, and this

bond of trust and openness enabled me to give each individual the counsel or moral support that was needed. But what about gay troops? They are legally deprived of such a relationship with a commander, a senior noncommissioned officer, or a battle buddy. This is wrong. These gay troops—especially those experiencing the stress of combat zone duty—deserve access to such relationships. The DADT policy shackles the hands of leaders like myself and prevents us from properly supporting all our troops. This policy puts service members and their loved ones at risk. DADT is a shameful blot on our national honor.

I know that many are wary of a repeal of DADT. Perhaps some—particularly those who oppose homosexual conduct on religious grounds—see such a policy change as the equivalent of governmental approval of homosexual conduct. But this is not so. Let me strike an analogy. Many religious individuals are opposed, on biblical grounds, to divorce and remarriage. But persons who have divorced and remarried are plentiful in the armed services, and many serve alongside very conservative religious persons every day. Respecting divorced-and-remarried persons as military professionals does not mean one agrees with their personal life choices, or that the government is advocating such choices. To me, the main issue is that we respect personnel who serve their country honorably and who act with responsibility and integrity in their personal lives. For example, in the military we will punish a "dead-beat dad" who neglects to pay his child support, but we support and respect the divorced father who stays committed to his parental responsibilities. I believe that we need to take a comparable stance towards gay service members.

There are also some who claim that repealing DADT will negatively impact morale and discipline in our armed services. But I have never seen a single shred of empirical evidence to support such assertions. In fact, the available evidence suggests that treating gay and straight troops equally has no negative impact on military forces. Consider the fact that many of our key allies in current combat and security operations—nations such as the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia—do not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation in their armed services. These fighting forces continue to perform admirably. Furthermore, troops from these and other nondiscriminatory nations live and serve side by side every day with U.S. troops in war zones. On this current tour, for example, I personally have shared living and bathing facilities with uniformed personnel from Australia, Canada, Denmark, Spain, and the United Kingdom—never have I seen a U.S. serviceman run shrieking from the showers because he feared that he might encounter an openly gay individual from one of these allied nations. Last year I met an openly gay chief petty officer from the Australian navy. He had served as part of a U.S.-led multinational team in Iraq. He told me that not only was his presence no problem for the Americans, but they decorated him with a U.S. medal at the end of his tour! Surely if Americans can accept a gay Australian, they can also accept gay fellow Americans. People who claim that the U.S. military cannot manage a policy of sexual orientation nondiscrimination are not only ignoring the realities of current operations, but they are also essentially saying that American service personnel are less professional than those of the U.K., Canada, and other nondiscriminatory nations—I consider such an assertion to be a highly offensive insult.

Of course, my argument ultimately leads to a logical—and fair—question: How do we

manage this change in policy? The answer is simple. Hold gay service members to exactly the same standards we hold straight service members. If gay individuals were to commit acts of sexual harassment, or engage in any other type of activity that goes contrary to military order, we would discipline them appropriately—and separate them from the service if necessary. This happens to straight service members when necessary; I myself once had to discipline a straight male noncommissioned officer for his inappropriate behavior towards a junior female Soldier. This NCO accepted my counsel, corrected his behavior, and completed his tour of duty successfully. On the other hand, those gay individuals who conduct themselves with honor and dignity, and who demonstrate respect for their fellow service members, would continue to do their jobs. This is exactly the policy that coalition militaries, many U. S. police departments, and dozens of civilian corporations have been following successfully for years. Are we really to believe that this course of action is beyond the capability of the U.S. military?

In fact, I believe that the demise of DADT will happen as smoothly and quietly as did similar policy changes in the militaries of allied nations. Gay troops who have been behaving in a professional manner prior to the demise of DADT are not suddenly going to begin engaging in outrageous or disruptive behavior. Today's gay troops, despite the burdens of DADT, are putting their lives on the line every day to defend this country; many of us have been tested in Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, and other challenging locations. If the military gets rid of DADT, we will continue to do our jobs and take care of our battle buddies; we and our commanders will simply have a terrible burden lifted from our shoulders.

Congressman, after more than two decades of military service—at sea and on land, from the Cold War era to the Global War on Terror, in joint service and multinational environments—I think I know the women and men of our armed forces pretty well. I can tell you that every day U. S. service members overcome barriers of difference—difference in race, ethnic heritage, religion, regional origin, gender, socioeconomic class, and other areas. Sexual orientation is just another element in this complex equation. We are able to overcome all these types of difference and form cohesive teams by focusing on the basics: mutual respect, a solid work ethic, personal integrity, and commitment to our common missions. We are also able to recognize that a person whose difference may initially unsettle us may also possess a critical skill, a body of knowledge, or a depth of experience that we need to accomplish these common missions. Can we afford to lose a fluent Arabic linguist because she is a lesbian? Can we afford to discard a combat seasoned infantryman because he is gay?

I have enclosed with this letter some documentation from my combat zone service. My contributions have been modest compared to the heroism shown by many of my sisters and brothers in arms. Still, I am proud of what I have achieved. I leave it to you to look at my record and determine whether or not the military would be better off if I—and, for that matter, thousands of people like me—were to be involuntarily dismissed from duty.

I am an ordinary guy who grew up in New York. My dad is a retired New York City cop who was deeply impacted by the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Like any other deployed Soldier, I call my folks at least once a week, and they worry about me just like the parents of any Soldier. I don't want to turn the military into some sort of gay utopia. I just

want gay Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen—together with our loved ones—to have the sort of peace of mind that our straight sisters and brothers take for granted.

Congressman Ackerman, I read on your Web site about how you stood up for Soldiers who were not getting their combat zone tax exemption in Iraq. So I know you are a leader who believes in taking care of the troops. Sir, I believe that now is the time to give troops like me relief from the injustice of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” If and when this issue comes up for debate, and even for a vote, in Congress, I respectfully ask you to remember all the gay military personnel who are right now risking our lives to defend the United States and its values. If you have any questions or comments about anything I have written, you may contact me via e-mail. And please feel free to share this letter and its enclosures, including my contact information, with any individuals or organizations whom you deem appropriate.

Sincerely, ———.

CONGRATULATING NASCENT SOLUTIONS, INCORPORATED ON ITS FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 8, 2010

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Nascent Solutions, Incorporated on its fifth anniversary. Nascent Solutions is a humanitarian and development organization headquartered in the Commonwealth of Virginia which benefits several impoverished African countries.

Founded in 2004 by Dr. Beatrice Wamey in Fairfax Station, VA, Nascent Solutions has grown over the past 5 years with the help of donations and partnerships with other international and faith-based organizations. Now registered as a Public Volunteer Organization with the United States Agency for International Development, this organization is devoted to building the capacity for the poor in rural Africa to achieve self-sufficiency and assume total responsibility for their well-being.

Among the organization’s primary objectives are care for orphans and vulnerable children, literacy and skills development, basic health and child care, agricultural development and food security, and protection of the rights of women and children. This organization empowers young people and women in underprivileged African environments by providing resources and skills development programs that would have otherwise been absent from their lives. Through these efforts, Nascent Solutions effectively responds to the immediate needs of the people and encourages them to recognize and strive to work towards their potential.

Over the past 5 years, Nascent Solutions has been able to respond to natural disasters with relief efforts, provide food and clothing to underprivileged children, improve the health of the African people through agricultural development, promote and expand civil rights, and improve the education system. This organization models the selflessness and concern for humanity for which we all strive.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing the vision and dedication of those individuals who have worked to create

an organization so committed to international development. I wish Nascent Solutions continued success in its work to provide help and hope to those who so desperately need it.

RECOGNIZING THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY

HON. PATRICK J. MURPHY

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 8, 2010

Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor and commemorate the National Museum of American Jewish History.

Originally established in 1976, the National Museum of American Jewish History is the only museum in our great Nation which has devoted itself fully to the preservation and exploration of the American Jewish experience. This important museum was founded by the Congregation Mikveh Israel, one of the oldest synagogues in the United States. Established in 1740 as the “Synagogue of the American Revolution,” the Congregation Mikveh Israel stands for values and ideals which all Americans share.

The National Museum of American Jewish History is a vibrant component in the cultural life of Philadelphia. Through its lectures, panel discussions, authors’ talks, films, children’s activities, theater, and music, this museum educates us all about the rich cultural heritage of Judaism in America. It has an impressive record of preservation, conservation and collections management and is the largest repository of Jewish Americana in the world, with more than 25,000 objects.

Honoring and remembering the American Jewish experience is crucial to a deeper understanding of our values as Americans. Located at the birthplace of American liberty, this institution represents our freedoms, the same freedoms that have made it possible for Jewish Americans to flourish.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to offer my ongoing support for the National Museum of American Jewish History and for its project of preserving the material culture of Jewish Americans. It is my belief that we must recognize the great efforts of this institution to educate Americans about this important piece of our shared history.

TRIBUTE TO DR. ROSA ATKINS

HON. THOMAS S.P. PERRIELLO

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 8, 2010

Mr. PERRIELLO. Madam Speaker, today I wish to recognize Dr. Rosa Atkins, who was named Virginia’s Superintendent of the Year on May 20, 2010. Last October, U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan attended a roundtable discussion at Greenbrier Elementary—our Blue Ribbon school—with area school superintendents. In that meeting, Secretary Duncan saw in Rosa Atkins what we see every day, and what the Virginia Association of School Superintendents recognized with this award—an educator fiercely determined to lift all of her students.

It is a task worthy of Hercules, but she accomplishes it with grace and seemingly with ease.

But we know closing the achievement gap is not easy. It is especially difficult in tough economic times. But Dr. Atkins has tenaciously persevered and the results are remarkable—and ongoing.

You would be hard pressed to identify a single job more important to a community than school superintendent, and you would be hard pressed to identify a single individual better suited to that job than Dr. Rosa Atkins. On behalf of Virginia’s 5th District, I offer my deepest appreciation for her service to our students.

TRIBUTE TO MR. JEFF THEERMAN, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CLEAN WATER AGENCIES

HON. WM. LACY CLAY

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 8, 2010

Mr. CLAY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Mr. Jeff Theerman, Executive Director of the Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District, MSD, on his election as the new President of the National Association of Clean Water Agencies, NACWA.

Mr. Theerman is an accomplished leader and committed environmental steward. He has dedicated his career to the improvement of the environment and public health in Missouri, and throughout the Nation. Without a doubt, he is ideally suited for this national leadership position with NACWA.

Mr. Theerman has served Missouri through his work at MSD for over 25 years. In October of 2003 he was named MSD’s executive director, willingly and ably accepting accountability for all aspects of the utility’s operations.

As MSD’s executive director, Mr. Theerman leads one of the Nation’s largest wastewater and stormwater management utilities, providing services to approximately 1.4 million people in the city of St. Louis and St. Louis County. Under his leadership the MSD currently operates seven wastewater treatment facilities, treating an average of 330 million gallons of water per day and maintaining 9,649 miles of sewers.

Since joining others in founding NACWA 40 years ago, the Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District has benefitted from his active engagement with the organization. A member of NACWA’s board of directors since 2004, Mr. Theerman has served as the organization’s secretary, treasurer and vice president. It is fitting that his election as president coincides with the 40th anniversary of NACWA’s advocacy on behalf of the Nation’s clean water agencies—and the environment we all value so much.

When I hear terms like “accountable” and “responsive,” I think of public servants like Mr. Theerman. Under his able leadership NACWA looks forward to proactively and effectively addressing the complex 21st century water quality challenges we face as a Nation.

It is my sincere pleasure to congratulate Jeff Theerman on becoming president of NACWA. I am certain his actions will ensure continued water quality progress for St. Louis, Missouri, and the Nation.