

not sit by and just allow it to happen. It was actions like that and his dedication to American values that ultimately helped President Reagan bring down the wall between East and West and bring democracy to so much more of the world.

Charlie was also known for his ability to party, and it is true that he knew how to have a good time. He was married earlier in his life before coming up here to Washington, and I remember once, he had been dating this Russian beauty, and there were loud talks and rumors in the tabloids that wedding bells were inevitable, and then one day I woke up and the headlines read that the matrimony was off. So I asked him what happened, and he said to me, "Ralph, you knew I wasn't going to marry that girl," and I said, "Charlie, how was I supposed to know that?" And he said, "You ever see a three legged fox get near a trap again?"

Well, he was a wise old fox indeed and managed, himself, to trap the love of his life, the beautiful Barbara Alberstadt, and she blessed the last 11 years of Charlie's life. We're all sad that he's gone, but I for one am proud to have served in this Congress with such an outstanding man, Charlie Wilson.

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.)

REMEMBERING REPRESENTATIVE CHARLIE WILSON

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

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I do rise in tribute to Charlie Wilson. He was a constituent of mine. He was an inspiration to me. For those that don't know, he was born in Trinity, Texas, and had education at Sam Houston State University, but he also attended the U.S. Naval Academy. He loved this country. He was willing to lay down his life for this country.

Between 1956 and 1960, Charlie Wilson served in the United States Navy, obtained the rank of lieutenant, and the man knew about defending America. It was a part of his heart and soul and was something he carried with him throughout his life. His political career began in 1960 when he was elected to the Texas House of Representatives. And as my friend Mr. EDWARDS mentioned, the official version is that it began in 1960 when he was elected to the House of Representatives in Texas, but actually, it did begin when his neighbor poisoned his dog, and Charlie got so active as a young high school kid that he started taking people to the polls to make sure there were enough people to defeat the man that poisoned his dog. That was really his start in politics. But he saw what one person could do if they were deter-

mined enough and sincere enough and gave it their all.

But to give a little more of his history, he served in the Texas House of Representatives for 6 years and was then elected to the Texas Senate in 1960. Then in 1972, the Second Congressional District of Texas elected Charlie to the U.S. House of Representatives. And it wasn't until 1996 that he decided not to run again. The slogan that he used throughout his campaign—it really pretty well summarized the man, "Wilson gets it done," and Charlie did.

He is from what some people call the Bible Belt, and what I've heard from constituents many times is, Yes, we knew about Charlie's issues, but the thing about Charlie, he was always honest about them. And I will never forget when we were naming the VA clinic for the man who is the reason it's in Lufkin, Texas. The VA Secretary came and he spoke, and then I had the honor of introducing Charlie, and Charlie got up and he was really emotional. He told the crowd there—there was a huge crowd there that assembled in his honor there at the civic center—and he said very emotionally, I love you people. Sixteen times you overlooked my personal indiscretions and allowed me to represent you.

Now, there are not many politicians that would stand up and say, You overlooked my personal indiscretions 16 times and let me represent you, but Charlie did. That was Charlie, and he made no bones about who he was or what he was.

And in fact, when Tip O'Neill had put him on the Ethics Committee and a reporter said, Well, what are you doing on the Ethics Committee? He responded a famous quote: "Well, I love women, and I love whiskey, and we deserve to be represented on that committee too." He made no bones about it. His constituents loved him. He was always honest about things, and that goes so far, and everyone should take notice of that fact, that America loves people who are honest with them. He took care of his seniors. I heard that over and over. You know, Charlie Wilson took care of those who couldn't take care of themselves. And it was one of the reasons that people loved him in east Texas, and it's one of the things that inspires me, having seen what he did.

You know, here I was a Republican, he was a Democrat. He always made time if I had questions: What do you think about Afghanistan? Because nobody knew more about Afghanistan than Charlie. He always had sage advice, and I really appreciated that. And I would like to also quote Jim Turner that followed Charlie in Congress. Jim described him as a dedicated public servant who fought hard for the people of his district.

And I would just like to also pay tribute—and I know that Barbara, his widow, is still mourning his loss and will for a long time to come. Barbara Wilson made a difference in Charlie's

life. Barbara sustained and prolonged Charlie's life. He loved her. He loved her family. They loved him. And she made a difference in his life, just as he made a difference in this country. Just as Charlie showed what one man can do when he puts his mind to it, this body ought to always be inspired by the memory of the great, late Charlie Wilson.

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

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

REMEMBERING REPRESENTATIVE CHARLIE WILSON

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

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I did not know Charlie Wilson, but I know friends of Charlie Wilson, and based upon what his friends say, he was truly a remarkable person. I admire people who march to the beat of a different drummer. I admire people who are original, who do things in a very good way, but they do the things that they do in their very own way.

It appears that Charlie Wilson was such a person. While he could easily have been a great Congressperson representing the people of his district and not traveling abroad, he took it upon himself to not only help the people of Afghanistan but to go there and be a part of it and to actually take others into Afghanistan as well to help people with a resistance movement. He marched to the beat of a different drummer. He did not allow the circumstances of what we call "the norm" to prevent him from doing unusual things in a most significant way.

I regret that I did not have the opportunity to meet him, because I believe that such a person has a positive impact on the lives around him; and as I listen to his friends speak so highly of what he was able to do here in the Congress of the United States of America, I only can say, Charlie, I didn't have an opportunity to meet you on this side, but I know that at some point, I'll have an opportunity to meet you, and I want you to share some of those many stories with me.

You have been a friend of this country, and this country loves you. God bless you, Charlie, I know that wherever you are, there's a good time being had.

OUR FUTURE IN AFGHANISTAN

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

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Speaker, this afternoon we had a serious and earnest

debate about our future role in Afghanistan. I firmly believe that there are respectful differences of opinion on this war, and that support for a war is not a litmus test for one's support for America. However, I'm grateful that this House has overwhelmingly rejected running from America's vital interests and the people of Afghanistan.

Our debate today presented a stark choice to Members, quite literally, to stay or to go in Afghanistan. It is one in which there is no middle ground, no hedging, no fudging. In the most unequivocal terms I can muster, I resolutely oppose our retreat from Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, more times than I can count in the past few years, we have been reminded that the war in Afghanistan was the good war, that it was the war of necessity over the war of choice. I stand here today to remind my colleagues of their many statements in that regard. We did not seek this war. Our enemy sought us out. We did not march into Afghanistan for profit or pleasure or plunder. We went to ensure that Afghani soil is never again used to wage war or terrorize civilians.

We did not ask for this war; but now that it's come, we cannot loosen the amount of responsibility that we have taken up. To be certain, our goals in Afghanistan are difficult. Continuing to forge a partnership with the Afghans will take military might, diplomatic finesse, and our hard-earned taxpayers to succeed.

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However, these are costs that we must bear and should bear. The President and our military leadership understand the seriousness of our task. Time and again in speeches and testimony and interviews they have repeated that Afghanistan is the epicenter of Islamic extremism, and that defeating al Qaeda in central Asia is essential to securing peace both in the region and here at home.

Our partners in bringing peace to Afghanistan are the Afghan people themselves. It is their homes that have been destroyed and their children who have perished in 30 years of war. Yet these beaten and downtrodden people have stood next to our soldiers to fight for their future and their country because we told them that we will help them bring order to the chaos of their homeland.

Many of my colleagues have discussed the costs of war, and they are right to consider what we have paid in blood and treasure to fight this fight. However, they have failed to weigh what giving up would cost us. Practically speaking, to retreat today means the Afghan central government will fail. When it fails, the Taliban will return to reclaim what was theirs and again plunge the country into the despotism of blind religious zealotry. The Taliban will welcome home radical Islamic jihadists back to their soil to again plan their acts of murder

and destruction. They will also expand their fight to the tribal areas of Pakistan, which has the potential to destabilize a nuclear power, and inflame the simmering tension between Pakistan and India, another nuclear power.

While it is relatively easy to estimate what we have spent so far and what we will spend in the coming years in Afghanistan, it is impossible to know the value of the calamities that have been prevented because we remain. There is no value that can be put on the growth of a civil society, no cost that can be put on stabilizing Pakistan, and no price that can be put on the recent rapprochement of Pakistan and India. Failure in these developments will hurt our national security, yet a retreat will make them more likely.

I believe, as we all do, that Americans want peace above all else. None of us desires our friends and families to be deployed overseas, battling among the rocks and caves of the foreign countryside. However, peace will not come until our enemies end their drive for our destruction. Until that day, talk of leaving Afghanistan means only that our enemies will bring the fight back to us.

There can be no peace in Afghanistan without a cessation of hostilities. Whether we leave today, tomorrow, or at the end of this year, this war does not end simply because we choose not to be engaged in it. The Taliban will return. With their return, they will expand their efforts to destabilize our ally Pakistan, and again provide sanctuary for radical Islamic jihadists who will continue to try to murder Americans in the name of their faith.

Mr. Speaker, I hope and pray fervently for a day when our Armed Forces do come home. However, until our enemies lay down their arms and give up their fight to destroy our civilization, our military must remain out there on the wall, doing their duty to uphold America's democracy and our safety.

That we have spent so much time today discussing abandoning our allies deeply saddens me. Halfway around the world I know that our Afghan partners were watching what was said and trying to divine our intent by holding this debate. It is my firm hope that they see today's vote for what it is, the unqualified, overwhelming voice of the House of Representatives announcing that we will not abandon our friends in their deepest hour of need.

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

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

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

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

HONORING CHARLIE WILSON

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

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the life and honor the accomplishments of Congressman Charlie Wilson who passed away on February 10, 2010.

Charlie Wilson was a remarkable Congressman, and in his time in the U.S. House of Representatives, he worked diligently for his constituents in East Texas. During his tenure in the House, he gained a seat on the House Appropriations Committee and through his position on the Subcommittee on Defense, he helped to fund the Afghan Mujahideen during the Soviet War in Afghanistan. Additionally, his support for progressive politics led him to be an advocate for the Equal Rights Amendment, a minimum wage bill, and Medicaid.

All of these actions have garnered Congressman Wilson a place in the history books, but it was his personality that earned him a place in the hearts of so many people across Texas. When everything was said and done, we all knew that his deepest concern was for the people of his district in East Texas, and as a fellow Texas Democrat, I am privileged to have served with him. His love for life will reverberate through the halls of Congress for years to come, and he will be truly missed by his fellow Texans, and especially me.

Mr. Speaker, Texas has lost a great leader and legislator with the passing of Congressman Wilson, and I ask my fellow colleagues to join me today in honoring his memory.

ECONOMIC RECOVERY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. CHU) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOCCIERI) is recognized for the remainder of the hour.

Mr. BOCCIERI. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sorry for the confusion this evening.

Tonight I am joined by several of my colleagues from around the country who want to talk to you about the economy and how we are working hard here in Congress to set the record straight, but also, more importantly, to put our people back to work.

If you remember when we took office, Mr. Speaker, we were suffering from one of the worst recessions since the Great Depression. In fact, many have called this the Great Recession. And ironically, of all commercials, there is a contemporary insurance commercial out on the airwaves today that says, "How will we remember the time and our experience? Will we remember this time as the great recession or the recession that made us great?" I think