

months at a time. Members of both parties came to the table ready to work, debate and negotiate.

For many years, legislation was drafted from the middle, and we passed bipartisan bills frequently. It wasn't uncommon for an important bill to get 400-plus votes; we didn't stop just because we had 218. Members didn't engage in partisan misbehavior for the sake of a good Twitter hit or the opportunity to call out the other side on cable news. Rather, members had respect for one another and for the political spectrum. They managed to limit outside parties from disrupting the legislative process for political gain.

We in Congress are tearing our country apart and weakening the foundation established by great leaders before us. Is anyone in Congress truly proud that we have not produced a budget? That we caused the downgrading of U.S. government securities, as well as appalling disorder and confusion in financial markets? Or that this situation caused the lack of job creation and economic growth that has contributed to the hopelessness and misfortune of millions of Americans?

Wrangling by all parties, from the top down, cripples our work, and media that encourage confrontation instead of negotiation fuel the fire. Being locked into this system of starting from the far left or the far right and then doing just enough for passage may get a single bill done, but it's not a system that produces the best law that does the most good for all Americans.

This partisan viciousness needs to stop.

I am ashamed of our recent record. I am disgusted with our performance, Republican and Democratic alike. There has been failed leadership and, worse, failed following within the ranks—and we owe the country far better. My daddy taught me that if God had wanted us to talk more and listen less, he would have given us two mouths and one ear. In our most combative moments, we must remember that no cause is greater than this institution and the ideals on which it was founded; no single man or woman is greater than this body and the collective wisdom we are capable of exhibiting. If we hold on to that core principle, we can make changes that will be better for Congress as an institution and for the American people.

We must all help this body improve and call upon our colleagues to join in doing better. It is our duty. If we do not, the people, in their righteous and justified outrage, will get rid of us all—as well they should. I beg my friends in Congress and the administration to put the interests of this great nation before partisan political interests and not let the rivalries of the past prevent us from acting in ways that will better the future of our nation.

The writer, a Democrat from Michigan, is dean of the U.S. House of Representatives and a senior member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ADAM SMITH

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 14, 2011

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, on Monday, September 12, 2011, I was unable to be present for recorded votes. Had I been present, I would have voted “yes” on rollcall vote No. 699 (on the motion to suspend the rules and pass H.R. 2076, as amended), “yes” on rollcall vote No. 700 (on the motion to suspend the rules and pass H.R. 2633, as

amended) and “yes” on rollcall vote No. 701 (on the motion to suspend the rules and pass H.R. 1059).

OUR UNCONSCIONABLE NATIONAL DEBT

HON. MIKE COFFMAN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 14, 2011

Mr. COFFMAN of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, today our national debt is \$14,717,868,058,346.24.

On January 6, 2009, the start of the 111th Congress, the national debt was \$10,638,425,746,293.80.

This means the national debt has increased by \$4,079,442,312,052.44 since then. This debt and its interest payments we are passing to our children and all future Americans.

“CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITIES” PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD WINNERS

HON. BILL SHUSTER

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 14, 2011

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the winners of the “Consider the Possibilities” Personal Achievement award from the HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital of Altoona, given to encourage and reward personal achievement within its community. HealthSouth has presented rehabilitation awards to members of their community who have remained steadfast in overcoming an illness or disability. This year I congratulate: Danielle Gibbons and Frank Germino, winners of the “Consider the Possibilities” Personal Achievement Award; and Shelly Beaver, Sherri McGregor, and Joe Reed, winners of the Advocate Award.

Danielle Gibbons is the winner of the HealthSouth “Consider the Possibilities” Personal Achievement Award. On June 18, 2010, Danielle, 37 years old at the time and a single mother of two, was involved in a motor vehicle accident. Danielle was driving when another vehicle crossed the center line and hit her head on. The other driver was killed and Danielle was left with life threatening injuries. Danielle had to be cut out of the car, and was transported to the hospital where surgeons were ready to amputate her right leg. Instead, she insisted that she be flown to Pittsburgh where she underwent nine surgeries in order to keep her right leg. In October 2010, Danielle began physical therapy and she made remarkable progress. In less than one year, she was ambulating independently. Danielle has returned to work full time as a nurse practitioner. I commend her for her perseverance and good attitude.

Frank Germino is also the recipient of the HealthSouth “Consider the Possibilities” Personal Achievement Award. On October 9, 2010, Frank's life was changed forever when he fell 12 feet from a tree stand while hunting. Frank broke his back in five places. After a five hour surgery, he was told that he would never walk again due to the extensive damage

that was incurred. Frank was determined to walk again and after months of rehab and therapy, Frank did just that. His courageous spirit is an inspiration to everyone around him.

Shelly Beaver and Sherri McGregor are the recipients of the HealthSouth Advocate Award. Through the efforts of Shelly Beaver, Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist, and Sherri McGregor, Education and Training Specialist at Penn State Altoona, “Sense-ational Endeavors” was developed. The program creates a combination of sensory activities, physical movement, and social skill development. In addition to therapeutic programs, campers engage in recreational activities and exercise tailored to their ability. Both Shelly and Sherri have dedicated their lives to enriching the lives of countless children.

Joe Reed is also the recipient of the HealthSouth Advocate Award. Joe is responsible for bringing a Miracle League to Blair County. The Miracle League provides baseball for all children with special needs. The field is constructed using a cushioned rubber surface with everything flat and level so there is nothing to trip over. Joe first heard about the Miracle League during a trip to Moody, Alabama while visiting friends in the fall of 2003. About two weeks later he read about it in the Kiwanis Magazine and knew this was something that Blair County needed. He returned to the Moody field, and then went to see the original Miracle League field in Conyers, Georgia. There, he met with the Executive Director of the Miracle League Association, Diane Alford. After getting permission to use the land owned by the Kiwanis Club of Eldorado, he assembled a Board of Directors in early 2004 and began fundraising and promotion. Joe raised over \$150,000. Construction began in the fall of 2006. The total cost of the project was \$497,000. Opening day was July 21, 2007 with 24 children. Today they have 125 players and over 175 volunteers.

Congratulations to Danielle, Frank, Shelly, Sherri, and Joe. Their accomplishments are a testament to us all that with hard work, persistence, and a big heart, we can overcome any hardship. I congratulate each of them on their perseverance, and I wish them the best as they continue to overcome illnesses and disabilities while setting an example for the rest of the community.

TRIBUTE TO LANCE CPL. TRAVIS MICHAEL NELSON

HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 14, 2011

Mr. BONNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Lance Cpl. Travis Michael Nelson who recently lost his life in the service of his country. We will always be indebted to his sacrifice for our freedom and we join his family and many friends in mourning his loss.

Lance Cpl. Nelson was assigned as a rifleman with the 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2d Marine Division from Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. He lost his life during combat operations in Helmand Province, Afghanistan on August 18, 2011, one month after his unit's arrival.

He was a dedicated Marine who loved his country and loved the Marine Corps. He always wanted to be a Marine and beginning at

the age of 14 he devoted his youth to preparing for his eventual role as a defender of America. Prior to his active duty service, he was a member of the Young Marines of Pensacola, Florida and the Pace High School Naval Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps program.

A native of Pace, and a resident of Bratt, Lance Cpl. Nelson, also had relatives in the nearby South Alabama towns of Atmore, Brewton, East Brewton and Daphne.

On behalf of the people of Alabama, I wish to extend condolences to his parents, Scott and Beckie Nelson; his brother, Daniel Nelson; his half brother, Chandler Case; sisters, Jenna Nelson, and Anna Nelson; and grandmothers, Anna Sanspree and Louise Nelson; as well as his fiancée, Madeline Cates.

You are all in our thoughts and prayers.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to add to this tribute the words of Sherry Digmon, publisher of Atmore magazine made in honor of Lance Cpl. Nelson.

"In tragedy, we come together. Atmore and the surrounding area came together in August as we all mourned the death of Marine Lance Cpl. Travis Nelson who was killed while on duty in Afghanistan. He was 19.

Most of us didn't know LCpl. Nelson, but we all knew him. His was the face of the young man who always wanted to be a Marine, who loved the flag and country, and who enlisted to preserve our freedoms.

On Friday, August 26, as we waited for the funeral procession to make its way down Main Street from the First Baptist Church to Oak Hill Cemetery, we looked at the people around us, almost all holding flags—the veterans lined up on the sidewalk in front of the American Legion building; the kids and the older folks; people who came out of their businesses and stood in the mid afternoon sun.

The Patriot Guard Riders came to Atmore to accompany the body of LCpl. Nelson and his family from Petty Eastside Chapel Funeral Home to First Baptist Church, then from the church to Oak Hill Cemetery. My hat is off to this fine group of men and women on motorcycles who show their respect to the fallen soldier by honoring and protecting the sanctity of his funeral and burial.

Someone in our group said, "That's America." We agreed. And then I said, "That's Atmore."

This was one event I hope never to witness again—the funeral of a young soldier. I hope never again to think about how a mama feels when she sees the officers standing at her front door. How a fiancée feels when she finds out her intended has been killed. How the men in his unit felt when they heard he didn't make it."

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. PETER J. VISCLOSKY

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 14, 2011

Mr. VISCLOSKY. Mr. Speaker, on September 13, 2011, I was absent from the House and missed rollcall votes 702 and 703.

Had I been present for rollcall 702, on agreeing to the amendment, Holt of New Jersey Amendment No. 7 to H.R. 2218, the Empowering Parents through Quality Charter Schools Act, I would have voted "Aye."

Had I been present for rollcall 703, on agreeing to the amendment, King of Iowa Amendment No. 8 to H.R. 2218, the Empowering Parents through Quality Charter Schools Act, I would have voted "no."

CELEBRATING ALYCE L. DIXON ON HER 104TH BIRTHDAY

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 14, 2011

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask the House of Representatives to join me in celebrating Alyce L. Dixon on her 104th birthday on September 11, 2011.

As the nation and the city recalled a tragic day ten years ago that changed the lives of many and altered American history, the District of Columbia celebrated Alyce's birthday and applauded her for her support to the country and to the city.

Alyce Dixon has spent most of her life as a resident of the District of Columbia. After graduating from Paul Lawrence Dunbar Senior High School, she attended Howard University in the District. Ms. Dixon worked at the Lincoln Theatre, at an insurance company, and was one of the first civilian employees at the Pentagon, from which she retired after 35 years of service to the federal government.

Alyce Dixon was one of the first women to join the military and one of the first African-American women to become a member of the Women's Army Corps. While in the Army during World War II, Ms. Dixon served as part of the 6888th Postal Battalion in France, Scotland, and England, where she and other African-American women sorted mail for soldiers. Before retiring from the military, Ms. Dixon received the Good Conduct Medal to commemorate her service to the Army. She continued to serve the public by volunteering at Washington Hospital Center and Howard University Hospital for 12 years.

As a resident of the Washington, DC VA Medical Center, Alyce is loved by the hospital staff, personnel, and residents alike. She has the unique ability to bring joy to others, and is known especially for her bubbly personality and comedic storytelling.

Ms. Dixon is a member of Jones Memorial United Methodist Church, where she has graced the congregation with inspirations for a long life, filled with joy and laughter. She has also supported D.C. students in their pursuit of higher education through generous donations to church scholarships and youth programs.

In celebrating this significant milestone, we acknowledge the extraordinary personal qualities and contributions of Alyce Dixon to her family and to our community. Her birthday gives me, her family, and friends, as well as the residents of the District of Columbia, an opportunity to thank her for her many gifts of love, friendship, and consideration for others. I ask the House to join me in celebrating the 104th birthday of Alyce L. Dixon, a special woman whose service to this country and community is greatly appreciated.

RECOGNIZING THE YOUNG AMERICA'S FOUNDATION

HON. TOM MCCLINTOCK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 14, 2011

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, the attack against our nation ten years ago today was our generation's Pearl Harbor. Indeed, in many ways it was far more infamous. More Americans died on September 11th than in the attack on Pearl Harbor. It was an attack not upon some distant outpost but upon our nation's greatest city and our nation's capital city. It was an attack not upon heavily armed warships, but upon defenseless Americans peacefully going about their business.

This atrocity set new records for its ruthlessness and barbarity and depravity. Benjamin Netanyahu called it a "wake-up call from hell," and that's exactly what it was. It is appropriate, though, to note one constant that defines us as a people and that guarantees us that all will come right. I speak of something that can only be described as the Spirit of America.

The attack on our nation ten years ago reminded us that the American spirit is still very much alive, and that this generation is more than capable of rising to great acts of heroism.

The attack ten years ago produced a pantheon of heroes—Americans who had gone about their business one peaceful morning, and in a few brief moments found themselves facing well prepared, intractable and barbaric adversaries.

At that fateful moment, they rose to the occasion. They resisted with everything they had. On December 7th, cooks became gunners and nurses passed the ammunition. On September 11th, office workers became rescue workers and businessmen laid down their cell phones and took up hand-to-hand combat in the skies over Pennsylvania.

Centuries from now, Americans will proudly remember the story of the young men and women aboard Flight 93 as it headed for our nation's Capitol: how they responded instantly to their country's peril — and armed only with their bare hands stopped cold those who would destroy our nation. In his last words heard over his cell phone, Todd Beamer asked—not just of his fellow passengers, but of all of his fellow countrymen: "Are you guys ready?" His answer on behalf of us all was, "Then let's roll."

The memory of firefighters and police officers rushing into the burning buildings as everyone else rushed out personified duty and honor for an entire generation.

For those young people in our nation who were not alive to experience, or were too young to remember that day just over ten years ago, we have an obligation as a society to pass on our memories and the lessons we learned, purchased at the high price of innocent life and years of conflict.

I rise today in recognition of the ongoing work of the Young America's Foundation to preserve our history for future generations.

Each year Young America's Foundation helps students—many of whom comprise the "9/11 generation"—to properly remember the anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks through their 9/11: Never Forget Project. Young America's Foundation began this program in 2003.