

neck-deep water that obstructed the air currents needed to ventilate methane gas. The mine's owners routinely illegally changed ventilation plans and used faulty engineering.

In the months before the explosion, miners asked Massey management 561 times to quench the explosive potential of coal dust by applying rock dust, yet Massey only took action 65 times, or 11 percent of the time they were requested to do so.

Water sprays on a mining machine were not properly maintained and failed to extinguish sparks, which allowed a fire to ignite.

Coal dust provided the fuel that allowed a localized fire to trigger a massive explosion that ripped through miles of underground tunnels where miners were working.

Finally, the report found intimidation. Miners were afraid to speak out about their safety concerns. They dared not stop coal production. Anyone who challenged management was considered a nuisance or a threat and their jobs were on the line.

These conclusions are chilling. This report makes it clear that the failure to effectively deal with a reckless operator occurred at many levels:

Our Nation's health and safety protections failed these 29 miners because of the many loopholes in the law that were exploited by the mine industry.

Regulators allowed the mine to operate in a badly engineered ventilation system and failed to force operators to use modern technology to prevent coal dust explosions.

And the mining industry failed these workers because they repeatedly refused to speak out against some of the worst actors within their industry, and have opposed legislation to curtail their misconduct.

The State investigation is also a call to action. The panel urges Congress to enact reforms to modernize mine safety technology, give regulators better tools, strengthen criminal provisions, and improve the rights of miners.

Mr. Speaker, with this report and its recommendations, Congress has been warned. We cannot abide by the status quo any longer. We cannot let Washington's pay-to-play politics paralyze legislative action once again. Congress has been warned. We cannot let mine operators game mine safety enforcement by paying lawyers instead of fixing chronic safety problems.

Congress has been warned. We cannot let miners live in fear of being fired for speaking out on behalf of their safety. Their voices save lives.

Congress has been warned. We cannot let decisions made in the boardrooms to put production over safety go unchallenged any longer.

There are responsible mining companies that operate without an avalanche of violations. There are operators who do not make deviant behavior a part of their corporate culture. We want these mine operators to join us to rework the rules that govern this industry.

In the end, though, getting mine reform done depends upon Congress. The responsibility rests squarely here. These disasters are preventable. This report is a very clear warning. We should not—we must not—wait for another tragedy before Congress owns up to its responsibility.

□ 1010

IN MEMORY OF PRIVATE FIRST CLASS WILLIAM "SETH" BLEVINS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. SCHMIDT) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. SCHMIDT. Mr. Speaker, it is a sad day for my district because today we're going to lay an American hero to rest, Private First Class William "Seth" Blevins. He was only 21.

Just before Christmas in 1989, on December 22, Steven and Trish Wagoner Blevins got the best gift of all—a beautiful, healthy little boy. They lived in rural America, Sardinia, Brown County, Ohio. They were small business owners, working hard to make a living and working harder to make sure that their children achieve the American Dream. And they did their job with Seth. You see, Seth was a wonderful young man, a young man who loved our country so much he put the cloth of his country, a uniform, on and decided to protect our freedom no matter what cost or peril it was to him.

In 2008, he graduated from Eastern High School in Brown County. He played soccer, basketball, participated in the band, and was a member of the Eastern High School chapter of the National Honor Society, clearly a winning individual. He attended Ohio University and took courses at the University of Cincinnati prior to enlisting in the Army. He was a member of the Peace Lutheran Church in Arnheim.

His parents now feel an unbearable sorrow with the loss of their wonderful son, Seth, but so does his sister, Paige Blevins, his mother's fiancé, Brandon Black, his maternal grandparents, Will and Shirley Wagoner, and all of the aunts and uncles and cousins and friends, everyone in the community.

Seth was a member of the U.S. Army, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Schofield Barracks in Hawaii—commonly referred to as the Wolfhounds—and he loved what he did. Unfortunately, on May 23, 2011, while so many Americans were planning their celebrations for Memorial Day, he was the victim of an improvised explosive device in Kunar Province, Afghanistan, participating in Operation Enduring Freedom.

Mr. Speaker, we must never forget the bravery of our men and women in uniform that continue to serve our country and continue to serve it in harm's way. These are true American heroes—so many who have died, so many continue in the battlefield, so many that are injured. But today, I ask

this Chamber and America to recognize Seth Blevins's family and pray for them so that they can endure this heartache and find a way to overcome it.

Mr. Speaker, may Seth Blevins rest in peace, and may his family find peace.

WELCOMING PRESIDENT WALLACE LOH TO UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, as you know, I am a very proud alumnus of the University of Maryland. For more than a century and a half, the University of Maryland has represented the best of American ideals of public education. Now I am very proud to say that the University of Maryland tradition is in the capable hands of our new President, Dr. Wallace Loh, who was inaugurated this spring.

Wallace Loh came to the United States at the age of 15, alone, without family, with \$300 in his pocket, his parents life savings. Wallace Loh was born in Shanghai, China. His father, a diplomat, fled the Communist regime to Lima, Peru when Wallace was a very young man. He grew up in Lima until the age of 15, but it was here in this country that he pursued the education that would ultimately make him one of our most respected academic leaders.

President Loh comes to College Park from the University of Iowa, where he served as Provost and Executive Vice President. He brings to the University of Maryland more than three decades of hard work and accomplishment in higher education. His successful career as a scholar and administrator has taken him to Seattle University, the University of Washington, the University of Colorado-Boulder, Beijing University in China, and more. He also served as a top policy adviser to Governor Gary Locke, who will be our ambassador in China. Gary Locke, of course, was the Governor of Washington State. In that capacity, he led the State's effort to expand access to higher education for low- and middle-income students.

As a leading scholar in the legal field, Dr. Loh has also been elected President of the Association of American Law Schools. Wallace Loh holds a law degree from Yale University, a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan, a master's from Cornell University, and a bachelor's from Grinnell College in Iowa.

I believe that the University of Maryland could not have chosen a more qualified leader to take our university into this century. Throughout his diverse career, President Loh has built a strong track record of creating academic excellence at every stop. What an extraordinary background Wallace Loh has for this increasingly integrated world, particularly as it relates to our relations with China, one of the

world's largest nations both in terms of people and its economy.

In his inaugural address, President Loh reflected on Barack Obama's statement that America has reached a "sputnik moment," a moment when our place as a world economic and innovative leader is increasingly challenged. Institutions like the University of Maryland are critical to our continued leadership in the world. As President Loh said, and I quote, "The American research university—a crowning achievement of American civilization—must respond to this sputnik moment. We are a premier research university"—speaking of the University of Maryland. He went on to say that "we must also become a premier innovation and entrepreneurial university."

I have no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that the University of Maryland is well-equipped to fill that role and do its part for our State and our Nation. And I have no doubt that Wallace Loh was exactly the right person to choose to lead the university at this time.

I want to wish Dr. Loh and the university the very best as it works with so many other extraordinary universities and colleges and educational institutions in the United States of America to make sure that we "make it in America." That is to say that we out-educate, we out-build, we out-innovate our competitors so that we can provide the kind of quality of life, the jobs that our people need, a growing economy for the future, for our children.

THANKING 26 REPUBLICANS WHO VOTED FOR MCGOVERN-JONES AMENDMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, like most of my colleagues in the House, on Memorial Day I had the privilege to speak to two different groups down in the Third District of North Carolina, which I represent. One of the events comes to mind down in Beaufort, North Carolina. There were well over 150 people there—most of them obviously were veterans or family of veterans, and a couple of families whose loved ones didn't come home from previous wars.

That brings me to the point that last week JIM MCGOVERN and I offered an amendment to create a formula to bring our troops home from Afghanistan, and I want to thank the 26 Republicans who voted for that amendment. We came within six votes of creating a formula for the President to bring our troops home before 2015.

Mr. Speaker, at these two events down in my district, I had veterans line up when I finished to come up to say, "We agree with you on your position to bring our troops home from Afghanistan." And even at one event I got a very strong applause when I mentioned the McGovern-Jones amendment and

how close we came to create a formula to bring our troops home.

Mr. Speaker, they said to me, well, why did we go into Afghanistan? Bin Laden, he was responsible for 9/11, he's dead now. Al Qaeda, which had a large presence back in 2003, 2004 in Afghanistan, is now diminished. Now these are the veterans talking to me. I'm not a veteran. But my statement was, you're right. Our country is financially broke, we've spent over \$8 billion, we can't pay our bills, and yet Mr. Karzai—who's corrupt to begin with, the leader of Afghanistan—we always seem to find \$8 billion a month to send to him. It makes no sense.

So Mr. MCGOVERN and I and people on my side and his side, we're going to continue to work to create an atmosphere and environment to encourage President Obama not to wait until 2015.

□ 1020

That's exactly what Secretary Gates said to the Armed Services Committee, on which I serve: "In February of 2015, we will start bringing home our troops." Well, then, Mr. Speaker, how many more will have to die, lose their legs and their arms in the next 4 years? It's only 2011, and we're talking about 2015?

I can tell you our military has won the war many, many times. As you can see, this is a paper not even in my district, Greensboro, North Carolina, where Mr. HOWARD COBLE is from. This is an editorial a few weeks ago and it says, "Get Out," and there's a flag-draped coffin/transfer case being carried off the plane by soldiers or airmen.

So it is time that this Congress come together in a bipartisan way and bring our troops home.

I see the families down at Camp Lejeune, which is in my district. I talk to them. I listen to them. They think they have done their job. They think it's time to come home.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I do all the time on the floor of the House when I'm closing, I ask God to please bless our men and women in uniform. I ask God to please bless the families of our men and women in uniform. I ask God in His loving arms to hold the families who have given a child dying for freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq. I ask God to please bless the House and Senate that we will do what is right in the eyes of God for His people in this great Nation. I will ask God to give wisdom, strength, and courage to Mr. Obama that he will do what is right in the eyes of God for this great Nation.

And I will ask three times: God please, God please, God please continue to bless America.

TRIBUTE TO REVEREND DR. DOROTHY SHARPE JOHNSON

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. BUTTERFIELD) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to pay tribute to a

lifelong friend, the Reverend Dr. Dorothy Sharpe Johnson, an accomplished pastor, educator and author who passed from labor to reward on 31 May 2011 after a long illness, a long illness that did not curtail her work.

A native of Wilson County, North Carolina, Dr. Johnson resided in Matthews, North Carolina, which is near the City of Charlotte, with her beloved husband of more than 50 years, Retired AME Zion Bishop Joseph Johnson.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Johnson was the fifth of eight children born to Mark Benjamin and Clara Farmer Sharpe. After finishing Spight High School at the age of 15, she went on to earn her bachelor's degree from North Carolina Central University, known at that time as North Carolina College at Durham. Later in life, she earned a master's degree in religious education and a Doctor of Divinity degree from the James Walker Hood Theological Seminary in Salisbury, North Carolina, on the campus of historic Livingstone College, and she received a Doctor of Ministry degree from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Charlotte.

Over the years, Dr. Johnson found many ways to serve her community as a public school teacher, school administrator, social worker, and even a seamstress. She was particularly devoted to her faith and church. In 1979, Dr. Johnson was elected by the AME Zion General Conference to oversee the youth mission. During her 8-year tenure, she worked to build a youth retreat that was eventually named in her honor and today serves as many as 575 youth at a time.

Dr. Johnson was a missionary supervisor with the AME Zion Church and was pastor of Indian Hill AME Zion Church in Fort Mill, South Carolina. Her work with the AME Zion Church took her around the world working in England and Puerto Rico, the Bahamas and across America as an outreach to her ministry. She published a great number of books that were inspired by her life experience and devotion to God. In addition to all of this, she was a devoted member of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority and the NAACP.

Mr. Speaker, one of most profound statements I can make about this great American is that despite having a medical condition known as systemic lupus erythematosus for more than 40 years, including many surgeries and hospitalizations, she lived a productive life that cannot be surpassed by anyone. She was a good wife, mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, cousin, pastor, and friend. Dr. Johnson distinguished herself in so many ways and made a difference in this world.

The Johnsons are the proud parents of two adult sons, the Reverend Anthony Johnson, pastor of St. Matthew AME Zion Church of Rock Hill, South Carolina; and Timothy Johnson, a civil engineer in our great State. And they are the grandparents of two grandchildren, Angelica and Derrick, both of whom are honor students.