

issue the office has put a lot of time and effort into.

Everyone who knew Joe well knew that he could be stubborn at times—stubborn in a way you don't often find in his generation; the kind of stubbornness that stems from deep integrity and a willingness to fight for what he believed was right.

It was this same quality that drove him to keep working even during the toughest hours of his fight against cancer. Even on the most challenging days, Joe would come in to the office ready to work, and work hard. We practically had to order him home to rest up. Joe had an uncommon drive and commitment to public service.

Joe had an infectious smile and a great personality. Everyone loved being with him and he was always setting up office outings for the staff. In small Hill offices, where everyone attended different schools, there are friendly rivalries, particularly among Virginia schools.

Joe was part of the JMU mafia in the office, which at one point outnumbered all the staff from other Virginia schools and they never let anyone forget that, especially that JMU once beat Virginia Tech in football. Joe was proud to be a JMU Duke and volunteered with the JMU Alumni Association and the JMU Politicos, the school's Capitol Hill networking group.

Joe loved to eat, and for a little guy he could eat. He holds the office record for eating six giant glazed donuts in one day. One of his going away presents was donuts.

Joe also valued public service, which led him to take the next step in his career: law school. Although we missed him after he left our office this summer, we were so proud of him for getting into University of South Carolina. He pursued his dream of law school, daring to envision a future even when so much was uncertain about the present.

I want to read from parts of an email Joe sent to the staff on his last day in the office this summer:

"I just wanted to say thank you to all of you one more time. It has truly been an honor and privilege to work with all of you. I have learned so much working with all of you over the past three years and each of you have encouraged me and taught me lessons that I will never forget. I think it is important for all of us to remember how blessed we are to have the opportunity to serve our country. I know it's hard to remember that on a daily basis but that is truly what you are doing when you work for a member of Congress. You are serving the people of your community and you ARE making a huge difference.

"... My time on Capitol Hill has also taught me that many people are really cynical and believe that all politicians are corrupt. 'It's easy to reach a point where you think that it's too hard to enact real change or get the big things done. But this is a mentality I think we should try to suppress. If you believe in something and you want to enact change, then get in there and fight for what you believe in. That's what public service is all about. If you think you have good ideas that can help people, don't be afraid to fight for them. Don't let the weekly scandal or negative news story discourage you from trying to help people or make a difference in your country.'

Joe wanted to make a difference. And he did. But it was a life cut painfully short. Joe was a man of faith and scripture tells us

In Ecclesiastes 7:2

"For death is the destiny of every man the living should take this to heart."

We here today should take it to heart.

In Psalm 103:15, King David said:

"As for man, his days are like grass. He flourishes like a flower of the field, the wind

blows over and it is gone and its place remembers no more."

It's apparent even as the cancer attacked his body, that Joe's soul was strengthened by his faith in Jesus, a faith which only grew in the face of circumstance that would dictate otherwise. In an e-mail to a staff member before leaving last summer he wrote:

"There is no way I could have gotten through my bout with cancer had I not had a foundation in Christ. Reading my Bible was the one thing that gave me hope and encouragement when I was in pain and sick."

We grieve Joe's passing but we celebrate his life and know he has entered eternal life with his savior and Lord. Our goal should be to live a life of faith so that we can one day join Joe in the House of our Heavenly Father.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. STEVE COHEN

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 19, 2012

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, on December 17, 2012, I was attending to a sick friend and comforting his family and was unable to vote on rollcall vote 628.

If present, I would have voted "yea" on S. 3193.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. RUSH D. HOLT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 19, 2012

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I did not return to Washington in time on Monday December 17, 2012 and missed two votes.

Had I been present I would have voted "yes" on H.R. 4606—to authorize the issuance of right-of-way permits for natural gas pipelines in Glacier National Park, and for other purposes (rollcall 627), "yes" on S. 3193—to make technical corrections to the legal description of certain land to be held in trust for the Barona Band of Mission Indians, and for other purposes (rollcall 628).

RECOGNIZING COLONEL ROBERT M. WALTERMEYER

HON. CHRISTOPHER P. GIBSON

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 19, 2012

Mr. GIBSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Colonel Robert M. Waltemeyer of the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO), who will retire from the United States Army on January 11, 2013 after thirty years of distinguished service.

Colonel Waltemeyer was commissioned as an Infantry Officer in 1983. In 1987 he entered Special Forces (SF) and commanded his first SF detachment in Bad Toelz, Germany, where he implemented and supported operations throughout Southwest Asia, Western and Eastern Europe, and Africa. From 1997–2003 he commanded the 2nd Battalion 10th Special Forces Group where he conducted operations

throughout the Balkans. Following the events of September 11, 2001, Colonel Waltemeyer led the United States European Command's first war on terrorism mission through the Georgian Train and Equip Mission. In 2003 Colonel Waltemeyer conducted unconventional warfare operations in Northern Iraq, employing Kurdish, Christian and Arab militias to create a northern front in advance of Operation Iraqi Freedom. From 2003–2005, he served on the Joint Staff before taking command of United States Army Garrison Japan from 2006–2009. Upon leaving Japan Colonel Waltemeyer served as the Director of International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) Regional Command South's Joint Border Coordination Center in Spin Boldak, Afghanistan, where he led a combined staff comprised of United States, Afghan, and Pakistani military and security personnel.

Throughout his thirty years of service to the nation, Colonel Waltemeyer has earned numerous awards and decorations to include: Combat Infantryman's Badge, Expert Infantryman's Badge, Special Forces and Ranger Tabs, Master Parachutists Wings, the Meritorious Service Medal and the Legion of Merit.

I am proud to share in the celebration of Colonel Waltemeyer's military career. I would also like to congratulate his wife, Ramona, and his two children, Carrie and Sam, whose love and support has aided and strengthened Colonel Waltemeyer as he has served our great nation. I wish him all the best in his retirement.

HONORING THE LIFE AND SERVICE OF DOYLE EDWARD CONNER, SR.

HON. JEFF MILLER

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 19, 2012

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the life and service of Doyle Edward Conner, Sr. Throughout his long and distinguished career in politics, Doyle Connor served the people of Florida for 40 years in both the Florida House of Representatives and as the Commissioner of Agriculture. Commissioner Conner served as a mentor and an inspiration to countless individuals throughout the state. All of Florida mourns the loss of a great man and unparalleled public servant.

Commissioner Conner was a fourth-generation farmer who grew up learning the value of hard work on his family's farm in Starke, Florida where he helped raise cattle, grow strawberries and cut timber. Commissioner Conner was a born leader, and he was active in his community from a very young age. He participated in his local 4-H club and eventually became president of the Alachua County branch of 4-H. In 1947, he graduated from high school and enrolled at the University of Florida where he became involved in the Future Farmers of America (FFA), serving as the president of FFA at both the state and national levels.

In 1950, while still a 21-year-old student at the University of Florida, Commissioner Conner was elected to the Florida House of Representatives. Despite his youth, he quickly established himself as a serious and committed statesman who was respected by his

colleagues on both sides of the aisle. Due to his assiduous work ethic and natural leadership, Commissioner Conner quickly rose through the ranks of the Florida House of Representatives. In 1957, at the age of only 28, Commissioner Conner was elected as the Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives, becoming the youngest Speaker in the state's history—a record that still stands today. While serving as Speaker, he helped craft legislation to promote and advance Florida's agricultural industry, including the landmark Green Belt Law. He also worked to establish first-class agricultural labs to help eradicate numerous diseases and predators and pave the way for the further development of the Florida agricultural industry.

In 1960, after serving 10 years in the Florida House of Representatives, Commissioner Conner was elected as the Florida Commissioner of Agriculture, a position that he held until his retirement in 1991. Commissioner Conner brought his vast experience as both a farmer and a legislator to his new role and helped expand Florida's output from \$900 million in 1960 to more than \$6 billion at the time of his departure in 1991. Commissioner Conner was a tireless worker, who traveled around the world to promote Florida agriculture and open new markets for Florida's farmers. He also expanded on his earlier legislative efforts to combat diseases, and under his leadership, Florida established a method for detecting the Mediterranean fruit fly which became the worldwide standard.

His excellence and leadership in Florida was recognized nationally, and he was even asked by President Kennedy to move to Washington to lead the U.S. Department of Agriculture. After thanking the President for his offer, Commissioner Conner respectfully informed him that he wanted to keep his family in Florida and continue serving the state he so deeply loved. For his service to the agricultural industry, he was presented with numerous awards and recognitions. He was inducted into the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame, Florida Citrus Hall of Fame, the Florida 4-H Hall of Fame, and the Florida FAA Hall of Fame.

Commissioner Conner also had an unwavering commitment to educating young people to help advance Florida's agricultural sector. He maintained a life-long relationship with his alma mater, serving as the president of the University of Florida National Alumni Association, and in 1972, he received the Distinguished Alumni Award. Today, the University of Florida maintains a scholarship in Commissioner Conner's name, which is awarded to students throughout Florida who display leadership in FFA and 4-H.

Commissioner Conner served as a mentor to numerous individuals throughout his career. My wife Vicki and I both had the distinct privilege and honor of working for and learning from Commissioner Conner. His leadership and commitment to Florida helped inspire me and numerous others to pursue public service. His contribution to the state of Florida and our nation cannot be overstated, and his legacy will continue to inspire Floridians for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the United States Congress I am honored to recognize the life and service of a great man, Commissioner Doyle Conner. His contribution to Florida will never be forgotten. Vicki and I extend our most heartfelt condolences to the entire Conner family.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. STEVE COHEN

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 19, 2012

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, on December 17, 2012, I was attending to a sick friend and comforting his family and was unable to vote on rollcall vote 627.

If present, I would have voted "yea" on H.R. 4606.

IT'S THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 19, 2012

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, it's the most wonderful time of the year. Next week, Americans throughout the fruited plain will come together and pause from the bustle of their everyday lives to celebrate Christmas with the ones they love. To Christians, Christmas is the day to honor the birth of Jesus. The word "Christmas" actually comes from the words "Cristes Maesse," which literally translates to Christ's Mass. The word "holiday" derives its meaning from the words "Holy Day". It also means Grandma's apple pie, Christmas carols, wreaths, cookies, Santa, presents, ornate Christmas trees and other rich traditions that symbolize December 25th.

In the midst of the holiday cheer, we should never forget that some families will have an empty chair at their Christmas dinner this year. For some homes, the empty chair represents a loved one who is serving overseas. For others, the chair is a somber reminder of the warrior who served but never returned. As you celebrate the season within the warmth of your home, think of the families without a full house and the sacrifices they make not just at Christmas time but the other 364 days of the year as well. These families bear the burdens of war, and these burdens weigh heaviest during this time of year.

War at Christmas is not new, and this year will be no exception for those who are still on call serving America. But there is a special way to connect with our troops throughout the world. Each year in Southeast Texas, children and businesses in the community come together and volunteer to make handmade cards for our troops who won't be home for Christmas. It began when my office gathered dozens of cards for me to bring in my suitcase to visit NATO troops overseas. Then we teamed up with Operation Interdependence and the Red Cross to collect 6,000 cards. And every year since it has grown. This year a record-shattering 69,000 handmade cards from the community are on their way overseas. The cards come from all walks of life in the community from the third grader to the local business employee. Each card is different but their message is the same: Thank you. Texans are especially grateful during this time of year for that soldier, that warrior, that sailor, that airman who can't be with their families because they're representing the United States in lands far, far away. There is something about a warrior from the United States

opening up a handmade Christmas card from some kid in the United States. At that moment, the darkness of war seems to disappear because of the brightness of a child.

No matter what is going on in the rest of the world, the Christmas spirit of good will and generosity is alive and well in America. Random acts of kindness are seen throughout the nation whether it is a handmade holiday card, a charitable donation to a stranger to ensure that families get to eat a Christmas dinner or a toy drive for children who may not otherwise get to experience the joy of giving and receiving. Christmas really does bring out the best in America.

So next week pause. Eat Grandma's cookies, sing Christmas carols, open presents and enjoy your loved ones. Think of those who have an empty seat at the table this year because their husband, wife, son, daughter, mother or father is serving our country in lands far far away. And don't forget the reason for the season, the birth of Jesus that occurred over 2,000 years ago. Wish your neighbor a Merry Christmas, and be thankful that you live in a nation where you can.

And that's just the way it is.

IN TRIBUTE TO THOMAS AND ESTHER WACHTELL

HON. ELTON GALLEGLY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 19, 2012

Mr. GALLEGLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in tribute to my good friends, Thomas and Esther Wachtell, patriots, entrepreneurs, philanthropists, and community volunteers.

Tom and Esther own and operate Oak Knoll Ranch in Ojai, California. They produce and ship apples from their 10-acre orchard but more importantly, the ranch is their base for their many other efforts.

Tom and Esther both have had storied careers. Tom was a Navy lieutenant commander in the Office of Naval Intelligence, executive vice-president of Occidental Petroleum Corporation in Los Angeles, president of Merrit Energy in Los Angeles, an investor/consultant for Gulf Exploration in Covington, Louisiana, and, with Esther, co-proprietor of Eve's Apples in Ojai.

Esther is president of The Wachtell Group, a fundraising consulting company specializing in large capital campaigns. In addition, she was executive vice-president and president of The Music Center of Los Angeles, an investor with her husband in Gulf Exploration, and co-proprietor of Eve's Apples.

The lists of their community involvements are even longer. Tom's list includes founder/president of the Los Angeles Opera, director of the Performing Arts Council of The Music Center of Los Angeles, director of the World Trade Center in Los Angeles, director of the Good Hope Foundation in Los Angeles, a Republican Eagle, and a member of the Romney Finance Committee.

Esther's list includes founder/chair of the Center on Philanthropy and Public Policy at USC, trustee for Children's Hospital in Los Angeles, director of the Museum of Ventura County in Ventura, California, president of the Ojai Music Festival in Ojai; director of the Libbey Bowl Foundation in Ojai, and director for Ojai Community Bank.