

the Web site and then go to a page and find out who all of the corporate and who all the legislative members are. You can only get access to that if you're a member. And to become a member you have to be prescreened in advance to make sure that you are like-minded. And if you can pass that muster, they will let you in.

So this is the same organization that announced yesterday that they would not be involving themselves—they're disbanding their committee that had to do with social issues, as they call them, including voter rights. And so the Trayvon Martin killing, the shooting and killing of Trayvon Martin and then the claim of self-defense, stand your ground, but, really, shoot to kill legislation, that legislation was produced by an ALEC committee.

I'm glad to know that committee will no longer be in action, but the damage has already been done. As a result of that, you have had some corporations that have decided that this is not—we didn't buy into this. We didn't buy into this social thing. We just joined ALEC because we wanted to deal on the committees that deal with our issues—taxes, FDA, whatever. We wanted to deal on those things, but instead ALEC has gone to an extreme.

Now we have corporations that are threatened with boycotts of their goods and services jumping off the ALEC bandwagon, and that caused ALEC to announce yesterday that, We're not going to deal in any more social issues.

So I think that is instructive of the power of the people. If the people only know what is happening, the people will come together, despite the differences that we have. We can look at each other and say, Okay, you are older than I am. Plus, you are a white woman. And so, therefore, we don't have anything in common. Or I could say that this person over here doesn't have the same sexual orientation as I think they should and so therefore I'm going to condemn them to purgatory just on that basis alone. Or we can look at somebody and say Well, they've got a hoodie on. He's wearing a hoodie, and it's a black guy in a neighborhood. He can be 9 years old, he can be 15, or he can be 17; but he's still threatening me just by his mere presence. We size people up like that.

But when we really get down to it, our interests are the same. And if we can get past the fear that we have of each other and the misunderstanding that we have about each other, we can come together and we can reclaim this country so that it will be a government run by, of, and for the people. And so that is my goal, to continue to work towards that, if my citizens think that I'm worthy of continuing to do that.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

CLEARING THE NAMES OF JOHN BROW AND BROOKS GRUBER

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. NUNNELEE). Under the Speaker's an-

nounced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. JONES. I am coming to the floor again to clear the names of two marine pilots who crashed in Arizona April 8, 2000. Not only two pilots, but there were 17 marines in the back.

The V-22, which is the plane that goes from a helicopter mode to a plane mode, at that time was really an experimental plane. Major Gruber and Colonel Brow in the cockpit had no idea of what was happening when the plane went into what's called "vortex ring state."

I would like to go through this 10-year journey for the record, Mr. Speaker.

It so happened that in November 2002, Major Gruber's wife, who lives in my district in Jacksonville, North Carolina, wrote me a letter that I would like to read. Her husband, Brooks Gruber, was the copilot.

□ 1530

I contact you in hopes that leaders of integrity, free of bias, would have both the intelligence and the courage it takes to decide the facts for themselves. If you do that, you will agree the "human factor/pilot error" findings should not stand as it is in the marine military history. Again, I respectfully ask for your support. Please do not simply pass this matter along to General Jones without offering the support my husband and his comrades deserve. Please remember, these 19 marines can no longer speak for themselves. And I certainly am not afraid to speak for them and I believe someone has to. Even though it's easier to put to rest and forgotten, please join me in doing the right thing by taking the time to address this important issue.

Mr. Speaker, on March 9 of this year, The Hill magazine—and I would like to thank a new young man on the staff named Jeremy Herb, who did an article in the magazine about this 10-year journey that started with Connie Gruber's letter to me.

Mr. Speaker, over the 10-year journey, I have spoken to many, many experts. One that I would like to quote today for the RECORD is a former Assistant Secretary of Defense, Phil Coyle, and he states: Major Gruber should not be blamed for an accident caused by loss of lift due to the aircraft entering "vortex ring state," a phenomena which no one in the Marine Corps adequately understood in relation to the Osprey at the time of the accident.

Secretary Coyle further states: Not only did the Marine Corps not understand Osprey performance under VRS, the root cause of the accident, but neither did the contractor nor the Marine Corps had not tested the aircraft near VRS—vortex ring state—conditions, something which, following the accident, it later took the Marine Corps years to accomplish. Surely Major Gruber and Colonel Brow could not be blamed for something that the Marine Corps, itself, did not grasp until years after the accident and after the death

of the 19 marines. Considering that it was ignorance on the part of the Marine Corps that caused the April 2000 accident, the Marine Corps should make it clear to the Gruber and Brow families, with no ifs, ands, or buts, that Gruber and Brow were not responsible for the accident.

He further stated: I don't suppose the Marine Corps ever apologizes, but considering that the accident was their fault and not Major Gruber's and Colonel Brow's fault, an apology to the family would be in order also.

Mr. Speaker, I read that because this 10-year journey—and I will continue to add names in the next few minutes of people trying to help me. These two marines were the very best of the pilots, Major Brooks Gruber and Colonel John Brow. They gave their life for this new plane known as the V-22 Osprey. And those young marines sitting in the back, 19, 21, 23, 24, and 25, were selected from other marines to sit in the back of that plane. Those in the Marine leadership that created the mission in Arizona should join me in clearing the names of these two pilots.

Mr. Speaker, I further read for the RECORD, a former adviser to the Secretary of Defense, Rex Rivolo, stated in a letter trying to clear these names, and I read:

The failure of the manufacturer, Bell-Boeing, and the Navy to characterize the slow speed, high rate of descent handling qualities of the V-22 through flight testing, to describe them for the aircrew in the NATOPS, and to provide an adequate warning system were the causes of the mishap—not aircrew error.

With the passing of 10 years, and the future of the aircraft now secure, I sincerely hope that the names of Lieutenant Colonel Brow and Major Gruber can now be exonerated and cleared for posterity. I strongly support any and all measures to this end and request this letter be included in any official record regarding the causes of the MV-22 mishap at Marana, Arizona, on April 8, 2000, or any resolution attempting to clear the names of Lieutenant Colonel Brow and Major Gruber.

Mr. Speaker, what has been so ironic about this 10-year journey of everyone that was part of reviewing the accident, or maybe it was in the air like Lieutenant Colonel Jim Schaeffer who is joining this effort. Colonel Schaeffer was a friend of John Brow and Brooks Gruber, and Colonel Schaeffer was in a third airplane that night, a V-22, and he saw his friends and the 17 marines in the back flip, crash, and burn. And there is no reason that the Marine Corps will not give the wives what they're asking, and I'll explain that in just a moment, Mr. Speaker.

In this 10-year journey, Mr. Speaker, I've gotten to know the two attorneys, Jim Furman in Arizona, who defended the families of John Brow and Brooks Gruber before Bell-Boeing—it was a major suit—and then Brian Alexander in New York, who defended the 17 families of the marines sitting in the back of the plane. They have all joined in this effort to clear the names of John Brow and Brooks Gruber.

Mr. Speaker, what is so ironic in their effort, Jim Furman and Brian Alexander, to see the names cleared, they have given letters to the commandant that clearly state there can be no future lawsuits. It has all been settled. There can be no more lawsuits.

I must say that along this journey, at one time I had the Marine Corps to take the findings of the experts and put it into the personnel jacket of Colonel John Brow and Major Brooks Gruber. But, Mr. Speaker, I knew at that time that was not enough because the press continues to put articles about the crash in Arizona, and they say pilot error, human factors.

The JAGMAN report, which was the official report that was written by and signed by Colonel Mike Morgan, Colonel Ron Radich and Major Phil Stackhouse—they were the three investigators sent from Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, to Arizona the day after the crash, and they were given the responsibility, Mr. Speaker, of determining what caused the crash. Mr. Speaker, in the JAGMAN report that I just made reference to, on Page 77, those three men that I just named wrote this:

During this investigation, we found nothing that we would characterize as negligence or deliberate pilot error.

Mr. Speaker, all the two wives are asking the Marine Corps is a letter from the commandant on his stationery that clearly states one paragraph: Lieutenant Colonel John Brow, pilot, and copilot, Major Brooks Gruber, were not at fault for the accident that occurred on April 8 of the year 2000.

□ 1540

Mr. Speaker, the three investigators have joined in this effort, and I'd like to read from retired Lieutenant Colonel Ron Radich, one of the three investigators that I just named:

Despite the fact procedures were in the NATOPS for vortex ring state, there was no discussion concerning the aircraft flight characteristics during high rates of descent at slow airspeeds. No mention was made of a possible asymmetric condition that could lead to an uncontrolled and unrecoverable situation. With no knowledge, training, or warning concerning the possible consequences of VRS, the pilots of Nighthawk 72 were essentially on their own in uncharted territory.

These two pilots did not know what was happening, and it was the fault of Bell-Boeing and the Marine Corps. He further stated:

It was through their misfortune that the MV22 VRS hazard was identified.

Because of the accident, they learned so that nothing like this would ever happen again to a pilot. Colonel Radich further stated:

The Marana mishap of April 8, 2000, represents a monumental discovery that enhanced the overall safety and effectiveness of this highly capable weapon system. May the marines of Nighthawk 72 rest in peace knowing that the ultimate sacrifice they made for their country also led to a critical

advancement in V22 safety and capability, and overall readiness of the United States Marine Corps. My thoughts and prayers go out to the families who continue to cope with the loss of their loved one and search for some form of closure.

Mr. Speaker, I further would like to add some comments from Lieutenant Colonel Mike Morgan. Again, he was the lead investigator of this crash that happened in Arizona. And I read:

I applaud and fully support the extraordinary effort you have undertaken in support of John Brow, Brooks Gruber, and the families who lost loved ones in the tragic crash of Nighthawk 72. One merely needs to look at what has transpired in the years since this tragic accident. After a second MV22 crashed just 8 months later, a blue ribbon panel closely examined the MV22 program. NAVAIR also aggressively pursued a test program to understand VRS and develop safety measures to educate and protect future MV22 pilots from the dangers. This was such a monumental undertaking that the lead developmental test pilot, Mr. Tom McDonald, was awarded the Society of Experimental Test Pilots Kinchloe Award for outstanding professional accomplishment in the conduct of flight testing.

Colonel Morgan further states:

John Brow and Brooks Gruber did their job and did it well. I look forward to the day when DoD officials accurately recognize the sacrifice made by them and all the marines of Nighthawk 72.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read the third letter from the third investigator, Major Phillip Stackhouse. It states:

I do not believe that it would be a surprise to anyone that it is in my opinion the mishap was not a result of pilot error, but was the result of a perfect storm of circumstances. During the conduct of the investigation, we collected some 20 binders of evidence—including, among other things, maintenance records, training records, telemetry records, operational and testing records, and dozens of photographs.

I do not feel that our investigation reflects that the mishap was a result of pilot error and if the investigation was interpreted that way, it was misinterpreted. For any record that reflects the mishap was the result of pilot error, it should be corrected. For any publication that reflects the mishap was a result of pilot error, it should be corrected and recanted.

Mr. Speaker, the problem has always been that after the JAGMAN report, which I just made reference to, if the Marine Corps in 2001, 2002 had issued a press release stating that new evidence has shown and proven that Colonel John Brow, pilot, and copilot Brooks Gruber were not at fault, Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't be on the floor today. But the Marine Corps has never, in a press release, corrected the misinformation that happened shortly after the Osprey crash when the Marine Corps' original press release indicated possible pilot error.

Mr. Speaker, that's why all these names that I have read today have joined me in asking the United States Marine Corps—who I have great respect for; they're among the best—to give the families, Connie Gruber and her daughter Brooks, to give Trish Brow and her two sons, Matthew and Mark,

one letter on the commandant's heading on his stationery, clearly state to the Brow family that your husband, John Brow, a true American hero, was not responsible for the crash on April 8, 2000. The same for Connie Gruber and her daughter Brooks down in Jacksonville, North Carolina, one paragraph with the same language that I just mentioned for Colonel John Brow, the same language for Major Brooks Gruber.

Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that as long as I have the privilege to serve in the United States Congress, and with all these experts that I've quoted today that are willing to join me, that the right thing must be done for the family, and the right thing is that letter from the commandant.

Mr. Speaker, I would not be the kind of person that I am without the faith that I have in my God. My mom and dad taught me the Bible. They taught me right from wrong, and they taught me that truth does matter. I have, with the help of God and the many experts, we have the truth. The truth is that these two outstanding pilots were put into an impossible situation without any training to understand how to react to vortex ring state. So, therefore, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to speak out on the floor of the House.

I have told the families that when this clarification comes through and their husbands are cleared, I would like to go with the Brow family to Arlington Cemetery and stand there with Trish, Matthew, and Mark and salute the colonel and say, Colonel, rest in peace. You're not blamed for this accident any longer.

I want to do the same thing with Connie Gruber down in Jacksonville, North Carolina, where her husband is buried. I want to walk with Connie and Brooks, and I want to stand at the grave and say the same thing to Major Gruber: Rest in peace. You no longer will be blamed for the accident on April 8, 2000.

Mr. Speaker, before closing, there's a quote that someone sent me in this 10-year journey to clear these names by Voltaire that says:

To the living we owe respect. To the dead we owe the truth.

That's what this is all about, Mr. Speaker, is the Marine Corps could issue one paragraph to the two families so that never again will they have to read in the paper the accident in Marana, Arizona, on April 8, 2000, was due to pilot error. Because as the families have said to me, help us get this clarification, and we will make sure that any print about the pilot error on April 8, we will ask and demand that it be retracted because it is not the truth.

□ 1550

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 to hold in

His loving arms the families who've given a child dying for freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq.

I ask God to please bless the Brow family and the Gruber family. Bring peace to these families, God, by helping us get this misinformation corrected.

And I'll ask God to please bless the House and Senate that we will do what is right in the eyes of God for God's people.

I will ask God to bless the President that he will do what is right in the eyes of God for God's people.

And I'll ask three times, God, please, God, please, God, please continue to bless America.

I yield back the balance of my time.

BUDGET AUTONOMY FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) for 30 minutes.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I've come to the floor today to inform the Congress of exciting new developments about the major priority for the District of Columbia for this year's Congress. These developments have come very quickly, both in the Congress and in the Nation.

We now have unprecedented momentum, both in the country and here in the Congress, to allow the District to spend its own local funds without coming to the Congress of the United States. That will seem very strange to Members of the public since they've never heard of a local jurisdiction having to bring its own local funds to a national legislature, which had nothing to do with raising those funds, for approval to spend them.

It is an anomaly whose time has passed. And I'm very pleased at the response we are getting in the Congress, and that we have gotten in very little time, less than 6 months.

We see it culminating in a national poll that, in essence, blesses the momentum we are seeing in the Congress for budget autonomy for the District of Columbia. This poll was released just this week, and it's been an important week for the District of Columbia, because the District has just celebrated Emancipation Day. The slaves who lived in the District of Columbia were emancipated 9 months before slaves in the rest of the United States. And there's some analogy here, my friends, because what was not emancipated was the budget of the District of Columbia. And that's what we're trying to free now.

And that's what the American people seem to want, by a very large majority. A polling organization that is bipartisan, called Purple Insights, using the traditional methodologies that you see in all the national polls, asked this question of Americans in all parts of the country, from both parties and Independents.

The question was preceded by the following: The budget of the city of Washington, DC, is funded by local residents' tax dollars. Do you think that decisions about Washington, DC's local budget should be made by Washington, DC, taxpayers and their own elected officials, or should those budget decisions be made by the U.S. Congress?

And here are the results. Seventy-one percent of the American people said the DC budget should be decided exclusively by the DC government. Only 23 percent said that the decisions should be made by the U.S. Congress.

What is most gratifying is the way in which these numbers reflect both parties. The polling organization broke down these numbers, and they were careful to ask people from both parties. For Democrats, the notion that the budget should be decided only by the DC government was 71 percent. But Independents were at 75 percent, and Republicans were at 72 percent. So, no matter where my colleagues come from, their constituents support the bedrock principle—no principle is more American—that if you raise the money, you get to decide how to use it. And you certainly don't go to a national body for approval.

And they looked at men and women. 68 percent of men, and 72 percent of women believe that the local government should decide the local budget and be the final decisionmakers.

If you look at regions of the country, Mr. Speaker, they had the same kind of virtually even breakdown in support of local control. If you look at the Northeast, it's 69 percent. You look at the Midwest, it goes up to 74 percent. You look at the South, it's 68 percent. You look at the West, it's 72 percent.

No red-blooded American is going to say, with a straight face, that you can take my local budget with my money in it and make the Congress the final decision-maker on that budget. That's what this poll shows.

The Republicans and the Democrats are virtually even. But more Republicans say that DC budgets should be made by the local DC government; that's 72 percent, 71 percent Democrats.

If you look at those who oppose, the opposition shows the same breakdown. You have 24 percent of Democrats saying Congress should control the DC budget, and you have 22 percent of Republicans.

Where's your majority here?

The majority is where I think most people would have expected it to be. But I am grateful for a local organization called DC Vote for commissioning this poll. And DC Vote realized that the poll might come under some scrutiny, so it went to a polling organization which is known for its bipartisan reputation in polling.

□ 1600

That, of course, should be all we need to hear, but the fact is we have a parallel development right here in the Congress.

This week, Senator JOE LIEBERMAN announced that he was preparing his own budget autonomy bill for the District of Columbia. Now, Senator LIEBERMAN, who works in a very bipartisan way in the Senate—I am so sorry to see that he has decided to retire—has long been the foremost Senate champion of equal rights for residents of the District of Columbia.

The momentum for budget autonomy began with a Republican chairman in the House, DARRELL ISSA. I will have something to say about how that happened. We then had two more Republican leaders—House Majority Leader ERIC CANTOR and the Republican Governor of Virginia, Bob McDonnell—weigh in for budget autonomy for the District of Columbia. This week, citizens from the organization DC Vote were here in the Congress, speaking to Members about the latest poll results. But let me say something about the Members because it's the Members who have the last say here.

As chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, DARRELL ISSA is responsible in the House for matters that involve the District of Columbia. His committee, and I've been here more than 20 years, had never had a hearing on the DC budget. He decided to have one. He listened to his witnesses, and he listened to the chief financial officer of the District of Columbia and to other District of Columbia officials.

What he heard was that the District of Columbia had the largest budget surplus in the United States, here in the middle of a recession, and that its budget and finances were in better shape than those of virtually any State in the United States. He heard the witnesses from his side as well as our side—the Republican side as well as the Democratic side—and from objective witnesses from the outside saying that the major problem the District faces are the inefficiencies and the premiums it pays on Wall Street because its local budget cannot be implemented until it is approved by the Congress of the United States. This creates huge uncertainty, of course, among bondholders and on Wall Street not of the making of our citizens but due to the fact that the Congress has to approve the City's budget.

Now, I can tell you that no one can remember when the Congress of the United States has changed the City's budget itself, and you can imagine why. A budget is a very delicate document to put together, and Congress does not have the kind of hearings you would have here to know what to take out and what to put in and how to sew it back together again. So what's the point of bringing it over here except tradition? The chairman listened to the problems with bringing the D.C. budget to the Congress and heard even more problems than he expected.

School begins in September, but by the time Congress finishes with the Federal budgets, even the earliest