

and couldn't wait to teach their baby boy soccer.

Jonathan's unwavering courage, huge heart, and strong Christian faith are the reasons why he answered his calling to join the Army. He was assigned to the 4th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team of the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. He was pursuing a medical career after the Army and, having already completed part of his EMT and paramedic training, was on the path to attending medical school.

Jonathan was part of a scout group sweeping an area in Afghanistan and doing what he does best—protecting others—when his group came under enemy fire and he suffered fatal wounds. At only age 20, Jonathan was taken from us much too soon. On April 7, the First Assembly of God Church in Griffin, Georgia, celebrated the life of Jonathan, and he was laid to rest by his close family and friends.

I am proud to stand before you and honor the life of PFC Jonathan Davis and thank him for his dedicated service to our country. His endless generosity and brave spirit are among the many reasons he will be missed so much by all who had the privilege to know him.

Joan and I extend our deepest sympathy to the friends and family of Jonathan, and we will never forget his great sacrifice for our Nation and those that allow us to live free every day.

Jonathan, until we meet again some day, thank you, Brother.

STOP MILITARY RAPE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SPEIER) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise again for the 19th time to highlight the epidemic of rape and sexual assault in the military.

By the military's own figures, 19,000 sexual assaults and rapes occur each year, but only 13 percent of the members of the military actually report them.

Last week, I met with Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, along with my colleagues, to discuss DOD's new report of data on rape and sexual assault in the military. The report shows a slight increase in reports of rape and assault but a startling decrease in the number of charges brought against reported perpetrators. With a decrease in charges came a significant decrease in prosecutions, in punishments, and in convictions. The numbers, frankly, are very discouraging.

When I left the meeting, I was only pleased about one thing. Secretary Panetta and I agreed that the only way to solve this problem is with an increase in prosecutions. We agree on the results to be achieved, but for right now, we do not agree on the steps to achieve it.

After our meeting, Secretary Panetta announced new initiatives, but DOD's three major proposals will not increase

prosecutions, convictions, or punishments.

Proposal one: elevate cases of rape and sexual assault to higher-ranking officials in the chain of command. Military commanders today told me that many are already having them handled by colonels and captains, yet this does not result in more prosecutions. I believe the cases have to be handled by an impartial office within the military but outside the chain of command.

Proposal number two: establish a special victim's unit in each service of the military. These units have been in place in the Army since 2009. I'm impressed with the training program that is offered to the various members of the investigation and prosecution within the Army. But again, we have not seen an increase in prosecutions, convictions, or punishments as of yet.

Proposal three: create a centralized database of these proceedings and cases. This is a good thing. It's already required in the Department of Defense as a result of the NDAA 2009.

So for all intents and purposes, all of these initiatives are already in place to some extent. The problem is the chain of command, and let me explain.

Claudia Castillo, an Army corporal whose attempts for justice back in 2003 and 2004 were thwarted repeatedly by commanding officers, including a high-ranking lieutenant colonel, all of whom were unmoved by her reports of sexual assault and harassment.

Corporal Castillo was on combat deployment in Iraq when she awoke to a fellow specialist on top of her sexually assaulting her and using force. She was in shock and screamed until he left. She immediately reported the assault to her platoon sergeant, who responded with a lack of surprise or concern. He advised her to wait while he "looked into it." He did not have any advice for how she could get help or go forward.

Corporal Castillo also encountered several incidents of harassment, stalking, and erratic behavior by a much older staff sergeant. She would wake up to find him standing by her bed while she slept. Her reports to command were greeted by ridicule and not taken seriously.

□ 1050

Command discretion empowers a commander to decide if the case goes forward to a court-martial. Even if very high-ranking commanders are in charge of these cases, captains and colonels are not shielded from the conflicts of interest that exist in the chain of command.

Victims should have the benefit of impartiality by objective experts, which is why my bill, H.R. 3435, attempts to do that. We need to overhaul the current military justice system, and I will continue to tell stories like Corporal Castillo's until military justice means justice for all.

DEE COOK—CHILD ADVOCATES OF FORT BEND COUNTY

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

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Dee Cook, a distinguished leader in my home community of Fort Bend County, Texas. For over 40 years, Dee has given her time and her energy to help with the children of Fort Bend County, in part through her commitment and support of Child Advocates of Fort Bend County, which fights on behalf of abused and neglected children.

Dee has served as the grant officer of the George Foundation since 1988. The George Foundation contributes to many worthy causes throughout Fort Bend County, and Dee has played a pivotal role in making sure the generosity of the foundation is directed to causes that help our communities the most. However, it is her generous contributions through the George Foundation to Child Advocates of Fort Bend County that bring me to the floor today.

By contributing her time, energy and resources, Dee has enabled Child Advocates to serve over 8,000 children throughout Fort Bend County. Under her leadership, Dee Cook has helped teach the staff and volunteers to be better leaders, more effective program managers, and to achieve the dream of helping the most vulnerable children in our communities in ways we never thought possible 20 years ago. Her contributions are helping children and, in turn, are strengthening our communities and neighborhoods. On their behalf, she has given a voice to those who desperately need one.

Dee's efforts to build philanthropic leaders do not stop with Child Advocates. She has also started an annual 8-month Leadership for Nonprofit Excellence course to teach the rising stars of Fort Bend County the skills they need to harness and grow Fort Bend's strong nonprofit community. Most importantly, she has led a cooperative effort between the George Foundation and the Sugar Land Chamber of Commerce to create Youth in Philanthropy, the YIP Team. The YIP Team is 100 Fort Bend County high school juniors and seniors who spend a school year seeing how volunteerism and philanthropy co-exist to serve our Fort Bend community. At the end of the school year, the YIP Team will put their knowledge to the test by awarding monetary grants to nonprofits—life changing, indeed.

I commend Dee Cook for a lifetime of service to Fort Bend County. I simply want to say to Dee, on behalf of the people of Fort Bend County, thank you. Fort Bend County would not be the county that we all know and love without Dee Cook.

In closing, Dee's love for Fort Bend County will be on display tonight at Constellation Field as Fort Bend's new pro-baseball team, the Sugar Land Skeeters, has its first home game. I join Dee and the people of Sugar Land and Fort Bend County in saying, Go Skeeters.

STUDENT LOANS

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

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, we all know if Congress doesn't come together soon, interest rates on student loans will double on July 1. Rates will go from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent.

Right now in our country, student loan debt is higher than credit card debt. This is a huge challenge and barrier facing students, their families and our economy. We cannot have our graduates leaving school with crushing debt. It limits the careers they can pursue, and we certainly don't want young people shying away from continuing their education because they know they'll never be able to afford it. We must keep open the doors of opportunity for all and, in the process, produce a well-educated workforce that's going to grow our economy.

But, if Congress doesn't act soon, more than 7 million low- and middle-income students nationwide will be required to pay more for their student loans. This would mean adding thousands of dollars to a college bill, and that's why I am a proud supporter of legislation to address this issue. I support ending some of the lavish subsidies we give to extraordinarily profitable oil companies and using that money to keep student loan rates from doubling and, at the same time, reducing our deficit by billions of dollars.

We must get our priorities straight. We should be investing in our students and bringing down our deficit instead of handing over taxpayer dollars to some of the richest corporations in the world. I urge my colleagues to join in this effort.

VA COMMUNITY-BASED
OUTPATIENT CLINICS

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

Mr. BOUSTANY. Mr. Speaker, I recently received the first monthly update from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs since the announced delays associated with the Lafayette and Lake Charles VA Community-based Outpatient Clinics. VA Secretary Eric Shinseki's office followed through on my request for detailed monthly updates of the progress the VA is making with regard to these clinics in both Lafayette and Lake Charles. The errors in the contracting process were solely the VA's fault, and they've admitted it. I will remain vigilant in overseeing the expedited process to deliver south Louisiana veterans the local care they need and deserve.

I am pleased to announce that there are new and much-needed services for veterans coming to Lafayette in early May. These services include home-based primary care, imaging and x ray services, prosthetics and dental care.

For the veterans in Lake Charles, a mobile clinic providing primary care services is expected to begin June 4, and the selection of a location is under way. This will be a first for our veterans in Lake Charles who have had to travel far to get basic care. According to the VA officials, the Veterans Affairs' clinic primary care services will be available in Lake Charles 3 days per week also beginning June 4. Women's services will be provided 1 day per week in Lake Charles beginning then as well.

We need to do more, and we're going to do more. These are all very important services the veterans of south Louisiana deserve after sacrificing so much for our country. They should not have to wait any longer for this very much needed medical care. Expediting this process must remain a top priority for the VA.

Having cared for veterans in the VA system during my medical career, I know localized, personalized outpatient facilities and care are best for our veterans. This is a critical priority for our area. This is the least we can do for those who have fought on behalf of our country, and I am committed to ensuring that this unnecessary VA mistake does not repeat itself in the future. I will continue demanding accountability from the VA leadership on this and on other issues. I will continue to be the leading advocate for local veterans as we work to improve health care for our veterans in Lafayette and Lake Charles and in the surrounding communities of south Louisiana.

God bless those who have served our country. God bless America.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Wisconsin (Ms. MOORE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. MOORE. Mr. Speaker, I come humbly to the well today, under the "E Pluribus Unum," to ask that there be swift bipartisan action in reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act. VAWA's authorization, of course, lapsed at the end of the last fiscal year, on September 30, 2011.

□ 1100

Unfortunately, for every day that passes by, women pay the price. The annual National Census of Domestic Violence Services—a daily snapshot taken every year by the National Network to End Domestic Violence—found that in one 24-hour period in the United States, over 67,000 victims were served through emergency shelters, transitional housing, counseling, legal advocacy, and more. Over 22,000 hotline phone calls were answered and over 26,000 people participated in domestic violence prevention and education training.

For all these people who are served, unfortunately, in the same 24-hour period, there are nearly 11,000 unmet requests for services because these programs neither have the resources to

help these victims nor the authorizations based on best practices on how we need to change VAWA in order to meet the needs of women.

Our colleagues across the Capitol in the Senate are on the cusp of passing a bipartisan VAWA reauthorization bill that contains these provisions to strengthen our ability to combat not only domestic violence, but also sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking. And I'm so proud to say that right here on this floor, 1 month ago, I introduced a companion bill to the Senate legislation that contains these badly needed updates to reflect the input of numerous stakeholders and lays a path forward for VAWA.

The vision is to protect all victims, no matter what their gender, sexual orientation, immigration status, or whether or not they reside in sovereign territories or in States. These updates have garnered criticism from our colleagues on the other side of the aisle that offer fundamental, simple rights that ought to be guaranteed by the 14th Amendment.

For example, this bill would recognize the tribes' authority to prosecute non-Indians or Indians who abuse their American Indian spouses or dating partners on tribal lands. Fifty-two percent of women who are beaten, battered, raped, or stalked on tribal lands are not prosecuted because tribes have no authority. And on tribal lands, there is no follow-up and no prosecution.

The bill would also provide equal opportunity for areas that are in traditionally underserved areas, including those who have barriers because of their religion, gender identity, or sexual orientation. It's absurd to say that because you are a homosexual that you don't deserve protection from being beaten, stalked, or raped. And, of course, the Hippocratic Oath would have us scoop up a person who may be lying in the street, hit by a truck. We don't ask people for their immigration papers in order to intervene in a life-saving intervention. Why would we demand this of immigrant women?

We have got to ensure a more comprehensive response to the continuing problem of enforcement, reporting, and services for victims of sexual assault.

In spite of the strides we have made toward a new and improved VAWA, just yesterday the House Republicans put their so-called "clean" reauthorization bill on the floor. Let me tell you this: it's clean, perhaps, because we don't want to sully our hands dealing with the beaten, stalked, murdered, and bullied butch-batterers, because we don't want to deal with homosexuality. We want clean reauthorization, a sleight of hand that keeps immigrant women in the shadows and keeps their pain and their battery and their victimization in the shadows and makes them invisible. We're actually sanctioning the abuse that occurs on tribal lands and providing a sanctuary for assailants who commit these crimes on