

Caucus, I rise today to recognize May as National Foster Care Month.

There are currently over 107,000 foster youth eligible and waiting for adoption and more than 400,000 youth in the foster care system. In an effort to raise awareness about the needs and the experience of these youth, I am honored to join my colleagues in a bipartisan manner to acknowledge the importance of this special month.

Through increased understanding and dedicated caregivers, we can and must continue to make important advances in providing more stable and caring environments for all foster youth. We must focus on learning from State and local child welfare providers, advocates, and foster children to better know how we can help. The needs of these youth are urgent and real. And while there are many alarming facts and figures that reflect the challenges these children face, the resiliency of foster youth remains strong; and we must all continue to do our part. Together, we can make National Foster Care Month a success.

FOSTER CARE MONTH

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

Ms. BASS of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize May as National Foster Care Month. The goal of this month is to raise awareness about the experiences and needs of more than 400,000 youth in the foster care system.

Throughout the month, members of the Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth will share stories of foster youth in their districts. Today I would like to share a story from my constituent Kevin, a young man from Hollywood, California.

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His story is unique, yet his resiliency is characteristic of hundreds of thousands of foster youth across our Nation.

Kevin was born into a family addicted to crack cocaine. He was removed from his parents at the age of 2, after a near-death drowning experience. After years in a group home, he was placed with a legal guardian. But this placement was difficult. Kevin was placed back with his biological mother, until she was incarcerated for the third time, leaving Kevin with no place to go.

In the face of all these challenges, Kevin has persevered. He recently transferred from community college with a full-ride scholarship and a 3.8 GPA. He plans to become a professor in the social sciences.

About his time in and out of foster care, Kevin says:

I am extremely grateful for the opportunities I have had because they allow me to identify and connect with a broad range of people.

Today, in honor of Kevin's courage and tenacity, I join my fellow cochairs

of the Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth and with Representative TOM MARINO, as well as over 90 of our colleagues in the House and the Senate, in introducing a bipartisan, bicameral resolution in recognition of National Foster Care Month. I invite my colleagues to cosponsor the bipartisan resolution as well as join the Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth.

THANKING OUR VETERANS

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

Mr. DOLD. This Memorial Day we will take time to remember those who have given their lives to keep our Nation safe and free. So many brave men and women have given the ultimate sacrifice to ensure that we can enjoy the very freedoms and liberties that we all enjoy today. I want to thank all of those who are currently serving, those who have served, and their families for putting our Nation first. America is a stronger and better Nation because of your sacrifice and service.

Recently, veterans from Illinois came to Washington, D.C., and it was truly an honor and pleasure to meet the Illinois Honor Flight at the World War II Memorial, not only to hear their stories, but to have an opportunity to talk with these true heroes and learn more about their friends, those who made it back and those who didn't. The heroic efforts of the men and women of World War II—and I would argue from all of our conflicts—helped keep our Nation safe and away from harm's way. I cannot thank them enough for all they have done for our country.

Last month, I had the privilege of presenting two veterans from Illinois's 10th Congressional District with their medals that had not been presented. These men served their country with distinction and deserve the medals that they have earned.

George Ott, from Arlington Heights, served as an Air Force staff sergeant in the 6th Aircraft Repair Unit during World War II. He served from 1944 to 1946, serving in the Marshall Islands, the Philippines, and Japan. I was able to present him with the World War II Victory Medal, the Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal, and the Army Good Conduct Medal.

Thomas Vana, of Des Plaines, was another veteran I was able to serve and present medals. He served as a sergeant in the 2nd Infantry Division during the Korean War. He served as an Active Duty medic from 1970 to 1974. I was able to present him with the Army Good Conduct Medal and the Korea Defense Service Medal.

Beyond working directly with veterans, Mr. Speaker, to ensure they receive the recognition that they have earned, my office is also working with veterans to document their stories. The Veterans History Project is an ongoing effort by the Library of Congress to collect stories and photos to learn

more about those who have served in battle and conflict not only at home, but overseas. My office is open to anyone who would like to document their story and share their experiences with the American public. It's important that we preserve these records, Mr. Speaker, so that future generations know the sacrifices that our men and women in the military have made. I would encourage anyone from the 10th District in Illinois who has served to call the Northbrook office at (847) 272-0404 and share your story so that we can preserve it for years and years to come.

I want to thank all those who have served, those that are serving currently, and those that have given their lives to protect our country. This Memorial Day I believe that we must honor those who have fallen and never forget the sacrifices that they have made to make sure that our country remains safe and free.

THE MODERN TAX SYSTEM: FAIR TO THE AVERAGE AMERICAN?

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

Mr. CRITZ. Mr. Speaker, in April, the Johnstown-Somerset Central Labor Council announced the winners of its annual scholarship essay contest. This year's first-place winner, Lisa Vatauvuk, wrote an essay entitled: "The Modern Tax System: Fair to the Average American?"

I would like to read Lisa's essay, as it has particular meaning to our current tax and budget debate:

Dating back to ancient Egypt in the year 3000 BCE, taxes have been a familiar part of society for almost as long as civilizations have existed. So how do taxes affect the current citizens of the United States? Today's tax system affects all three classes in different ways. Unfortunately, in the United States, taxation hits the average middle class family the hardest out of all three demographics.

The United States follows a progressive taxing system. This means that, ideally, families in the lowest income brackets pay the lowest percentage of taxes, while families in the highest income brackets pay the highest percentage. However, this system of taxation is flawed. Because the Bush administration cut taxes for the wealthy, families in the top income brackets pay much lower tax rates than the progressive system calls for. Also, because taxes include sales taxes, property taxes, and other kinds of taxes in addition to income taxes, families in the highest income tax brackets almost always pay lower percentages of their income in their total taxes than low and working class families. In addition, because State and local taxes are typically regressive rather than progressive, low and middle class families are given a higher percentage of taxes than wealthy families. In 2007, out of all the income brackets, families in the middle-income bracket paid the highest percent of their income in their total taxes in Washington, D.C., Maine, Minnesota, New York, South Carolina, and Vermont. In the vast majority of the remaining States, the lowest-income families paid the highest tax percentage, and the highest-income families

paid the lowest. There were no States in 2007 in which the wealthy families paid taxes at a higher rate than the middle and low classes.

The current tax system affects families in high-income brackets much differently than it affects those in the low- and middle-income brackets. First, wealthy families receive many tax deductions. The government, on average, pays for about 35 percent of high-income families' taxes. A second way in which the wealthy are not affected by the tax system as much as lower class families is that they generally do not have to pay as much income tax. The average millionaire does not earn their money from working; they earn money from their investments. Taxes on long-term investments are lower than taxes on income because the government wants to encourage consumers to spend money. However, this means that wealthy families that earn money from investments pay lower taxes than middle- and low-income working families.

Finally, the families in the top income brackets are almost never hurt by the current tax system because some politicians do all they can to protect the wealthy. Some politicians believe that as long as the wealthy families have money to spare, they will make investments that will benefit the economy and the lower classes. While this theory may or may not be true, the higher classes continue to have lower tax rates than the middle and low classes. The United States' current tax system clearly benefits wealthy families.

Wealthy families are not the only ones that benefit from this system of taxation in the United States. Poor families are often given benefits as well. While families in high-income tax brackets receive many breaks on their taxes, they are not the only people that receive these breaks. Families that are considered to be in poverty by the United States Government are many times given breaks on their taxes as well. For example, the Earned Income Tax Credit, or EITC, is given to many low-income families in this country. This tax credit gives families money back to help relieve the burden of taxes. In some cases, the EITC gives families back more money than they originally paid in government taxes. In some cases, poor families also receive benefits from the current tax system because in some cases the members of the family do not work. In families in which no one works, there are no income taxes or payroll taxes. These families instead receive assistance from welfare. There is no tax on money received from welfare, so families receiving this aid that do not earn additional income from a job do not pay any income taxes. Consequently, the tax system in the United States can be beneficial to low-income families.

In the current tax system, there are certain advantages to being in either high-income families or low-income families, but what happens to those families that fall in the middle? The majority of Americans are hardworking citizens that earn a moderate salary. These citizens are the ones that have to pay for the benefits that others receive. For example, when the wealthy receive tax deductions, the government receives less money as revenue, and the people that fall in the middle are the ones that suffer.

The less money the government has, the less it can provide funding to programs that benefit middle-income families, such as education funding, libraries, and government aid for skyrocketing college costs. A second way in which the middle class is hurt by tax deductions is when poor families receive tax credits. As previously mentioned, sometimes when families receive the EITC, they receive more money from the government than they originally paid.

This money comes from money taken straight from taxpayers. Middle-income families are many times forced to pay the highest tax rates out of any of the income brackets, and they receive no special treatment from the United States government.

In conclusion, in the United States today, most of the burdens of taxation are put onto the average middle-income working families. The system of taxation is extremely unfair for working families; they work their entire lives to have a large part of their income taken away from them by the government when people in both high- and low-income brackets receive special treatment from the government. The average American family falls in the middle-income category, and in the current tax system, this family, the heart and soul of America, is the one that ultimately suffers.

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HONORING LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

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

Mr. REICHERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the nearly 1 million law enforcement officers who work day and night to protect all of us. All of us sleep more soundly at night knowing that the brave men and women of law enforcement are in our communities patrolling, protecting, and watching over our homes and businesses. They do so bravely and selflessly, and they do not ask for recognition. They put their lives on the line knowing the risks, and they take those risks on with unwavering courage.

I worked for 33 years as a law enforcement officer before I came to Congress. I didn't do that because I wanted to be the sheriff of King County in Seattle. I didn't do it because I wanted to be a Member of Congress. I did it because I wanted to serve my community by protecting it and making a difference. I found that I wasn't alone. Each of my law enforcement colleagues carried in them the heart of a servant.

So this week, National Police Week, is bittersweet for all of us in law enforcement because we remember the tragedy of our fellow officers' loss. Already this year, 40 officers have been killed in the line of duty.

Tuesday was Peace Officer Memorial Day, a day to remember the brave brothers and sisters killed in the line of duty. We've lost them; they're gone, but they're not forgotten.

Why do law enforcement officers come together today during this week in Washington, D.C., and on this memorial event? To share the fellowship and remember, because we made a promise. Everyone in this room has made a promise and everyone across this country has made a promise, Mr. Speaker, to never forget—to never forget the pain, the suffering, the feeling of great loss, the brokenness of families, the sadness that will touch that family for the rest of their lives. We

made a promise to never forget not only those sad times, the feelings of brokenness and loneliness, but those good times, the funny stories we hear.

I have two friends killed in the line of duty, one in June of 1982. He was my good friend and partner, Sam Hicks. He was shot and killed. But I remember a night when he and I, together, went to catch a robber. We surrounded the house, just the two of us. It was pitch dark outside, and all of a sudden I heard Sam scream, Run, DAVE, run.

So when Sam said "run," I ran. And I ran. Then I heard a barking dog. I looked and saw that Sam was being chased by a large dog. Sam and I jumped in our police car and I peeled out, headed out of the driveway because the lights were coming on inside the house where the robber was, and I began to smell something a little bit funny. Well, what happened is that Sam decided he was going to mace the dog, but instead he maced himself.

That's one of the stories I remember about my good friend Sam. He also taught me how to tie a tie. I only know one knot. It's the knot that I'm wearing today.

My good friend, Mike Raburn, who went to the academy with me, saved my life one night. I was directing traffic in Federal Way just south of Seattle, and I didn't know it, but someone behind me had run up behind me with a knife with the knife raised in the air. Mike had just driven up, and the guy was running toward me to stick the knife in my back. Mike tackled him and saved my life.

I remember those good times. I remember those bad times. We can never forget the sacrifice of our law enforcement men and women. We are all safe today. You can be in this Hall today, Mr. Speaker. We can all be here today, we can walk on the streets safe knowing that our brothers and sisters in law enforcement are there to protect us.

Now, you can help them. This week we passed the Blue Alert bill. All you need to do is watch for those, like those AMBER Alert, the Blue Alert signals on your freeway signs. If an officer has been shot or killed, you'll see information on those signs. Call in.

We can work together to keep the communities safe, because if they hurt a cop, if they kill a cop, they'll hurt somebody, somebody in the community. So help us by participating in Blue Alert.

And also, I ask of you today, Mr. Speaker, and everyone listening across the great Nation of this United States of America to never forget.

God bless you. Thank you.

ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

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

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month and to recognize