

Today, only one of six children eligible for Federal child assistance receives it. Twenty-two States have waiting lists for child care. And families in 37 States were in worse circumstances in February of 2011 than they were in February of 2010 as the child care waiting list continues to grow, copayments rise, eligibility tightens, and reimbursement rates stagnate.

After three decades of wage stagnation in this country, with paychecks failing to keep up with the cost of health care, housing, and education, child care has become an unaffordable necessity for too many Americans.

A related problem that we also must acknowledge is the gender wage gap. Women only earn 77 cents for every dollar earned by men, according to the Census Bureau. Yet two-thirds of the women are now either the primary breadwinners or co-breadwinners in their family. So when there are wage gaps, entire families suffer. That means less money for food on the table and everything else that a family needs to survive.

Two days ago, Senate Republicans blocked a bill introduced by Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI that would strengthen the Fair Labor Standards Act's protections against pay inequities based on gender. As President Obama said, Republicans have once again put "partisan politics ahead of women and families." This is wrong. Republican Senators ought to explain to their constituents why they did not vote for Senator MIKULSKI's bill.

Let me be very clear: equal pay for equal work isn't just a woman's issue—it's a family issue. For the millions of American women whose families depend on their earnings, reliable child care is vital.

It's time to level the playing field for working women. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 5188 so that all parents, particularly working women, have the child care they need to stay on the job.

□ 1010

SPACE CAMP CELEBRATES 30TH ANNIVERSARY

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

Mr. BROOKS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to commend the United States Space and Rocket Center on its upcoming June 15 30th anniversary of Space Camp. Established in 1982, Space Camp in Huntsville, Alabama, is a national leader in informal science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education and workforce development.

Space Camp uses the leading edge of spaceflight technology simulation to teach campers real-world concepts and skills which translate into future academic and professional careers for students and teachers. The Space Camp program provides an essential public relations and support role to both gov-

ernment and private space programs by inspiring and training America's next generation of explorers, engineers, scientists, and leaders.

For emphasis, with nearly 600,000 graduates of the program, Space Camp has a 30-year track record of success in inspiring young people to pursue successful careers, particularly in STEM fields. Space Camp alumni include NASA mission control directors, NASA scientists, NASA engineers, executives of corporations, State government officials, national news correspondents, as well as soldiers and aviators who defend America's freedom every day. Graduates of Space Camp include three NASA astronauts and one astronaut from the European Space Agency.

Space Camp contributes to the future of America's exceptionalism in science, engineering, and research by instilling an exciting, life-changing educational experience with values of leadership, teamwork, and hard work. Space Camp's 30th anniversary is the perfect opportunity to recognize their important work and incredible achievements.

I congratulate Space Camp on their 30 years of unparalleled success and wish them well and salute them as they embark on their next 30 years.

POVERTY AND UNEMPLOYMENT

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

Ms. LEE of California. Mr. Speaker, as the founder of the Congressional Out of Poverty Caucus, I rise to continue talking about the crisis of poverty and the ongoing jobs emergency in America today.

Tea Party Republicans are busy blaming the President for our struggling economy, and the fact that our economy only gained 69,000 jobs last month. I want to remind my Republican colleagues that it was their deregulation, failed economic policies, and two wars off-budget that had our Nation losing over a million jobs every month when President Obama came into office. We were losing over a half-million jobs every single month.

Now they are complaining the Democrats have not been quick enough in cleaning up the Republicans' mess. The President and a Democratic Congress helped to stem that tide, and now despite every roadblock and Republican obstructionism, our economy is growing slowly and jobs are slowly coming back. So I don't understand how anyone can even try to blame the President's economic policies when they have refused to enact any of them.

Republicans have refused to work with us and to help Americans refinance underwater homes, to help protect investors and consumers by implementing the sound regulations of the Dodd-Frank bill. Also, they refuse to pass the American Jobs Act, or any sort of jobs plan, quite frankly. In fact, Republicans have done everything possible to obstruct every proposal to cre-

ate jobs at every turn. Even though 56 percent of Americans think jobs should be Congress' number one priority, Republicans have failed to pass even one significant jobs bill. Instead, they work to create another false panic about a so-called fiscal cliff if they aren't allowed to immediately extend hundreds of billions of dollars in tax giveaways to the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans.

Mr. Speaker, there are only two real fiscal cliffs that I see. One is the fiscal cliff that will push our entire government over if they can make good on their threats and force our Nation into default and shut the government down. The second fiscal cliff is one that Republicans are pushing American families over the edge of when they cut off, mind you, cut off the emergency extension of critical unemployment benefits for millions of Americans who are struggling to find a job.

Republicans are telling struggling Americans that there is a fiscal cliff if you are out of work; they have to cut off your employment benefits. They are telling struggling Americans that there is a fiscal cliff if you are poor and hungry; they have to cut your food stamps. But somehow, if you are rich and a defense contractor, Republicans make it their business to protect you from facing any cliff or falling off of any cliff.

This is not the path forward for our Nation. What we need to do right now is to stop pushing families off fiscal cliffs. We have to support the economy by investing in the American people. We need to get back to growing the middle class by lifting millions of Americans out of poverty.

Mr. Speaker, we must pass the American Jobs Act, invest in our country's infrastructure and transportation needs, increase job training efforts, and strengthen our safety net. Safety net programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and unemployment insurance just don't support struggling families, they support small businesses all across the country and in every single congressional district regardless of one's party.

This Congress must ensure that our Nation's safety net is a bridge that is strong enough to deliver us all, even the most vulnerable, over these troubled waters.

Americans are waiting. Democrats have been prepared to act, and Republicans must join us in creating jobs and reigniting the American Dream for all.

HONORING JOHN ROBERT "BOB" SLAUGHTER

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

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today, along with Representatives MORGAN GRIFFITH and ROBERT HURT, to honor the memory of a constituent, a World War II veteran, a community

leader, and a friend, John Robert "Bob" Slaughter.

On May 29, 2012, southwest Virginia lost one of its great American heroes. A passionate advocate for veterans and a driving force behind the National D-day Memorial in Bedford, it is only fitting that we honor Bob's memory as we mark the 68th anniversary of D-day this week.

Born on February 3, 1925 in Bristol, Tennessee, Bob's family later moved to Roanoke, Virginia. In 1941, at the age of 15, he joined the Virginia Army National Guard, Company D, 116th Infantry, 29th Division. A short time later, the United States was attacked at Pearl Harbor and entered the war. On September 27, 1942, the 29th Division set sail for England.

On D-day, June 6, 1944, Bob waded ashore to battle the foes of democracy at Omaha Beach. He was just 19 years old. His life was forever impacted by the memories of that day.

Mr. Speaker, I have stood on Omaha Beach in Normandy at low tide, which was the circumstances when these brave men landed there on June 6, 1944. The width of that beach, the distance that they had to come out of those landing boats through withering machine gun fire, bombs, and mines, is absolutely a remarkable demonstration of the courage of those men to liberate Europe.

Despite being wounded twice in combat following D-day, Bob remained in the field until the end of the war in 1945. After the war, Bob returned to Roanoke, where he had a long career with the Roanoke Times & World-News. He was dedicated to his family and was also active in the community, coaching a basketball team for local youth.

Bob showed great determination by working to ensure that there was a proper memorial to the countless men who took part in the D-day invasion. On June 6, 1994, the 50th anniversary of D-day, Bob walked Omaha Beach with President Bill Clinton. On June 6, 2001, Bob's dream became a reality when the National D-day Memorial in Bedford was dedicated by President George W. Bush.

Thanks in large part to his efforts, the National D-day Memorial now stands in Bedford, where it serves as a constant reminder of those who paid the ultimate price to protect the freedoms that we hold so dear.

The life of Bob Slaughter is a true testament to the "Greatest Generation." We are honored to have known Bob and pay tribute to this great man's many contributions. We pray for his family—his wife of 65 years, Margaret Leftwich Slaughter; his two sons; two grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren—during this difficult time. We join the entire community in mourning the loss of this American hero.

□ 1020

SEXUAL ASSAULT IN THE MILITARY

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

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, I have now come to the floor some 21 times to tell the story of survivors of military sexual assault and the institution and culture that failed them. Some would tell you that the military has learned from their egregious mistakes and that they are largely now addressing this problem. The situation I'm describing to you today is happening right now and flies in the face of what we are being told by our military and the Members of Congress who believe that they have this problem under control.

Recently, a San Antonio newspaper began reporting on a scandal at Lackland Air Force Base that is growing by the day. So far, at least four Air Force instructors have been charged with sexual misconduct with at least 24 trainees. Like many cases of rape and sexual assault, the perpetrators are not denying that they engaged in sexual misconduct; they simply contend that the sex was consensual. It comes down to the words of the accused and the accuser—the instructor against the trainee. In the military, this usually means the perpetrator gets off or receives a disproportionately small punishment and the victim endures an arduous and humiliating legal process with little sense of justice at the end.

Two of the women that have come forward were called over an intercom 2 days after they graduated from basic training last fall and asked to leave their dorm and to meet their instructors. In a dimly lit supply room, the women said they had sexual relations with their instructor. "I was frozen," one of the women said, explaining that her mind was racing. "I tried to think." Both women said failure to follow orders could cause them to be retained in basic training under the very instructors that assaulted them.

While unnerved about the order to leave their dorms, they told themselves it had to be legitimate. From the day they entered the military, they had been trained—and required—to follow the orders of their instructors, even those that didn't make sense. This may be hard for some in the civilian world to relate to, but it is the constant reality within our Armed Forces. It is ingrained in our military servicemen and -women to follow the orders of their chain of command and never, ever disobey. The justice system is also beholden to this chain of command, but I will get to that a little bit later.

Staff Sergeant Luis Walker, a military instructor, is charged with sexually assaulting 10 women, including sodomy and rape. Staff Sergeant Kwinton Estacio is charged with sexual misconduct with one woman, violating a no-contact order, and obstruction of justice. Staff Sergeant Craig LeBlanc

is charged with sexual misconduct of two women trainees. Staff Sergeant Peter Vega-Maldonado has been charged and convicted of sexual misconduct with one woman.

Staff Sergeant Vega admitted in a plea bargain to having sex with one woman. His punishment? Ninety days in jail, 30 days of hard labor, reduction in rank, and forfeiture of \$500 a month in pay for 4 months. After striking the deal with prosecutors, Vega admitted that he actually had improper contact with 10 trainees.

Now, mind you, we are not firing these people. They continue to serve in the military. Vega is not immune to further prosecution, but his admission of guilt cannot be used against him in future procedures. Each victim will have to come forward and the prosecution will have to start from scratch. Vega will be forced to leave the Air Force, but without a bad conduct discharge. Imagine that, without a bad conduct discharge.

If the military is as vigilant as they say they are, how could such a repetitive, widespread, and sickening behavior still be occurring? What is being uncovered at Lackland flies in the face of what we are being told by our military. Is this what zero tolerance means in the military?

Former Air Force Secretary Whitten was quoted in the newspaper saying:

The age-old problem is that you're putting very smart, attractive people, marrying age, together in close quarters. It's a circumstance that is difficult and really requires restraint. Sometimes restraint is very difficult.

Secretary Whitten doesn't get it. The age-old problem in the military is attitudes like this. The age-old problem in the military is a broken justice system that delivers weak sentences, if any. The age-old problem in the military is that nine out of 10 women Staff Sergeant Vega has now admitted to committing sexual misconduct with have not come forward because they know that the odds of getting justice are slight and the odds of their careers being finished are great.

What is happening at Lackland Air Force Base should and needs to be a wake-up call. This problem is happening now, and it is systemic.

Victims are still not coming forward because of what keeps happening—backwards attitudes of blaming the victim, and disproportionately weak sentences. Writing off survivors as women who had consensual sex and now have regrets is insulting and I'm afraid how many in our military see this problem.

The Department of Defense has so far been unable to appropriately address this problem—and Lackland is proof of that.

We—Congress—need to act to circumvent the chain of command and give discretion to an impartial office to determine and facilitate the appropriate path for perpetrators and victims. We need to fix the system that