

the founder and administrator of St. Joseph's Hospital in Syracuse, the city's first hospital.

In 1883, Mother Marianne received a letter that would change her life. It was from Father Leonor Fouesnel, a missionary in Hawaii, who was desperately searching for volunteers to take charge of the hospitals that served people with Hansen's disease. More than 50 religious congregations had already declined, but Mother Marianne was different. She eagerly accepted the mission. She wrote back to Father Leonor:

I am hungry for the work and I wish with all my heart to be one of the chosen ones. I am not afraid of any disease.

Mother Marianne left for Hawaii, along with six sisters from Syracuse, in 1883, where she began a 30-year mission caring for those diagnosed with Hansen's disease. Mother Marianne accepted a government plea to start a new home for women and girls with Hansen's disease at the Kalaupapa settlement. Mother Marianne arrived in Kalaupapa just months before Father Damien's death. She oversaw the expansion of health services and programs to provide education and tend to the spiritual needs of the patients.

Mother Marianne lived until the age of 80. On August 9, 1918, she died in Kalaupapa. She was deeply mourned and is still revered. I have visited her grave site, where I left ho-okupu, a traditional Hawaiian offering. I was deeply moved by the devotion of this woman from New York who left all that was familiar to live on an isolated peninsula 5,000 miles from home. Kalaupapa became her home and its people her family.

Mother Marianne recognized the rights and inherent dignity of all people. She dedicated her life to caring for those who needed it the most. People of all faiths can admire her spirit of aloha—encompassing love, compassion, mercy, and grace—and malama—to care for others.

ONE LESS PLACE SETTING AT THE HOLIDAYS

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, it's the time of year when families reunite and renew their very close connections—connections that are actually, in most instances, the most precious parts of our lives. This Thanksgiving I know all of us were grateful for the company of those we love the most. But more than 2,000 American families sat at tables where there was one less serving of the Thanksgiving meal just a week ago. Those families lost a loved one in the deadly war in Afghanistan—now more than 11 years long and a tragically reckless policy.

I'm personally grateful for the service of all of our Afghanistan veterans and for their sacrifice and for the sac-

rifice of our military families. But sometimes I don't know how we as a Congress and a Nation can look them right straight in the face after everything we've put them through. The benefits of this war don't come close to justifying the devastating human cost—not just fatalities, but disfiguring wounds, lost limbs, traumatic brain injury, and demons of post-traumatic stress. They all add up to tragedy at the utmost.

For too many of our veterans, the transition back to civilian life is a daily struggle. Many face not just health care challenges but joblessness, housing and credit troubles, and overall economic anxiety and stress. We've had enough of this. Why would we want to extend a war that has given so much misery and so much heartache and so few actual national security benefits?

The American people have rendered their verdict on the occupation of Afghanistan. Poll after poll shows they want it over. Who can blame them? In fact, the public opinion was so clear during the last Presidential election that both candidates for President in this year's campaign were saying that they would end the war. But the question, Mr. Speaker, is, When? The current 2014 timetable is not nearly aggressive enough—not when we're losing brave servicemembers every single week, not when our military presence is sustaining the very extremists we're trying to defeat, and not when American taxpayers are paying the bill to the tune of \$10 billion a month, at least.

And now it seems that our policymakers might be planning for a significant military presence in Afghanistan beyond 2014. According to a new New York Times article last weekend, one of the options on the table calls for 10,000 American troops and several thousand more NATO troops to remain on the ground after 2014. Sources say that General John Allen, our top commander in Afghanistan, prefers to keep as many as 60,000 troops for another year. As The Times editorial board points out, this is not the "steady pace" of troop withdrawal that the President has promised.

This is unacceptable. We ought to have a role in Afghanistan, but it cannot and must not be a military role. We need more humanitarian aid, more support for education, health care, democracy promotion, civil society, and so much more. But we will not make America safer and we will not make Afghanistan stronger by continuing this war. The only morally decent and strategically sensible approach is to bring our troops home now—certainly before 2014.

INVESTING IN R&D AND STEM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) for 5 minutes.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Today, I would like to empha-

size the important role that Federal investments in research and development, or R&D; and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, or STEM, education play in stimulating growth, creating new industries and jobs, and delivering long-term benefits to our citizens.

As a member of the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, and now as ranking member, I have had the privilege of hearing countless witnesses from industry, academia, and government over the past several years testify that investments in R&D are essential to keeping America competitive in a challenging international marketplace. In fact, according to a paper by the National Bureau of Economic Research, changes in technology are the only source of permanent increases in productivity.

If we are to reverse the trend of the last 20 years, where our country's technology edge in the world has diminished, we must make the investments necessary today. The statistics speak for themselves. It is estimated that more than 50 percent of our economic growth since World War II can be attributed to development and adoption of new technologies. The path is simple: research and education lead to innovation. Innovation leads to economic development and good-paying jobs and the revenue to pay for more research.

□ 1050

As private firms underinvest in research and development because the returns are too far off in the future, there is a clear and necessary role of government to help our Nation keep pace with the rest of the world.

More than 50 years ago, when DARPA was first created, no one had any idea that the research that they would fund would be responsible for the creation of the Internet or the proliferation of GPS technology, but it did. Those inventions started with Federal dollars, as did countless other game-changing technologies.

It is clear that Federal investments in R&D bring significant returns for decades to come. In 1987, MIT Professor Robert Solow was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics for his work proving that improved technology and improved education in the workforce was clearly and chiefly responsible for long-term growth, much more than increases in labor or capital. The current best estimate for the return on academic research alone is 28 percent. Federal efforts are underway now to more vigorously and rigorously quantify the return on Federal investments in R&D.

Today we find ourselves at a crossroads. The United States remains a leader in science, technology, and innovation but no longer the unchallenged leader. While our own world-class innovation infrastructure is under stress, our competitors in other countries, even as they institute austerity measures in other parts of their budgets, are

seizing the opportunity to make strategic investments in long-term basic research and build and leverage public-private partnerships to support the shorter term R&D that will help create jobs now and long into the future.

As we struggle with our own deficits, we too can make the strategic choice to continue to invest in our future—both in our human capital and physical infrastructure—or we can make the strategic choice to permanently cede our leadership, to fail our current generation of young people and to put our economy in a state of stagnation for years to come.

STEM education is another critical component to the Nation's economic competitiveness. Yet according to the Program for International Student Assessment, the U.S. currently ranks 17th in science and 25th in math out of 34 countries. Though our best STEM students have no trouble competing with their international peers, on average, our K-12 students continue to lag far behind their international peers in math and science aptitude. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 2009 science assessment, 34 percent of the fourth-graders, 30 percent of the eighth-graders, and 21 percent of the 12th-graders performed at or above the proficient level in science. When eighth-graders were tested again in 2011, they achieved a modest 2-point gain in the percentage of students demonstrating proficiency.

When the results are broken down by demographic groups, we see a 6–7 point gender gap that begins somewhere between the 4th and 8th grade and persists through 12th grade. Even more troubling, there are huge and persistent gaps across racial/ethnic groups. Among African American students, in 2009 only 11 percent of fourth-graders, 8 percent of eighth-graders, and 4 percent of twelfth-graders performed at or above the proficient level in science. The number for Hispanic students—14, 12 and 8 percent, respectively—are only slightly better. The one small sign of improvement is a 4 point gain for Hispanic 8th graders from 2009 to 2011. But how as a nation and as parents and grandparents can we tolerate any of these numbers for any of our students?

We must also do better at the college level. Even among those minority students who have access to high-performing schools or who otherwise succeed against the odds and enter college intending to major in a STEM degree, fewer than 20 percent finish within five years, compared to a 33 percent 5-year completion rate for White students and 42 percent for Asian students.

We've been talking about "A Nation at Risk" since the report by that name came out nearly 30 years ago, but in that time we've made little to no improvement. Some suggest we may even have gone backwards. As long as our nation overall was still number one, it was easier for our leaders to let year after year pass without taking the hard steps to take on an enormous set of challenges in a large and diverse country where, rightly so, education is controlled at the local level.

However, the world is changing, the demand for STEM skills is steadily increasing,

and our nation's leadership is being challenged. At the same time, our demographics are shifting in profound ways, making the racial/ethnic gaps that much more consequential for our future. By the year 2050, minorities are predicted to represent 55 percent of the national college population.

I am heartened by many of the initiatives going on now at both the federal and state levels, including the Obama Administration's Race to the Top, Initiative and the state-drive common core standards in math and science. Nevertheless, we have a long way to go to ensure that the U.S. continues to produce the world's best scientists, mathematicians, and engineers and to make sure that every student is prepared for the highly technical, high-paying jobs of the future. According to 2008 data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the professional information technology (IT) workforce was projected to add a little under a million new jobs between 2008 and 2018. This represents more than twice the rate of overall workforce growth over that same period. Many high-tech companies cite the availability of a skilled STEM workforce as the number one reason for determining where they locate their facilities. Producing students with the STEM skills needed to fill the jobs of the future is necessary to maintaining our nation's innovation capacity and creating new high-skill, high-paying jobs at home.

We need to take a step back and refrain from making short-sighted, ill-advised cuts to our R&D and education investments in pursuit of illusory budgetary benefits. While we debate turning the lights off on groundbreaking research projects, shuttering world-class research facilities, stopping emerging industries in their tracks, and losing many of our best and brightest scientists from the STEM pipeline for good, our competitors in China, India, and elsewhere are surging ahead in their investments in R&D, STEM education, and emerging industries.

I urge all of us, as we undertake our very difficult task of trying to set us on a more sustainable fiscal path, to do whatever it takes to prioritize steady growth of our investments in science, technology, and STEM education. It is when our economy is hurting the most that we should be redoubling our efforts to innovate our way into a brighter future of new jobs, new technologies, and untold societal benefits.

CORRUPTION IN AFGHANISTAN

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

Mr. COFFMAN of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, this year I pushed for and received a congressional investigation into the Dawood National Military Hospital in Afghanistan based on allegations that senior Afghan medical personnel sold U.S. military medical supplies and that Afghan soldiers and police were dying in the facility from untreated wounds and malnutrition because their families couldn't come up with the necessary bribes to pay the hospital staff for their care.

The Afghan surgeon general, General Ahmad Zia Yafthali, was complicit in the corruption. U.S. Army Lieutenant General William Caldwell was instrumental in covering it up by not only

delaying an investigation but by limiting the scope of it when it did occur. Neither General Caldwell nor General Yafthali have been disciplined for their conduct.

Last week I was in Afghanistan and I visited the hospital. I left Afghanistan confirming my belief that the greatest threat to the future of Afghanistan is not the Taliban but the pervasive corruption that permeates every level of Afghan governance and the lack of leadership by the United States in confronting it.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 55 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

Reverend Dr. Leslie Callahan, St. Paul's Baptist Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, offered the following prayer:

Gracious God, we offer thanks for the joys and challenges of self-government, which this House and the whole Congress symbolize.

In a world ravaged by violence, political and domestic, we enter gratefully the sanctuary of these Chambers for peaceful deliberation for this Nation's good. Even in the spaces of deep disagreement may these debates be seasoned with mutual understanding. May Your presence as liberty, love, and justice walk up and down and, yes, even between these aisles. Remind everyone of the sacredness of the trust of their constituents and the hope of all our citizens.

At day's end, may all affected by their decisions be confident of their good faith. At the end of the term, may the reelected redouble their efforts for the common good and those retiring find satisfaction in having done their duty. In the name of all that is holy and good.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from New York (Mr. REED) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.