

Loeb sack	Perlmutter	Sewell
Lofgren, Zoe	Peters	Sherman
Lowey	Pingree (ME)	Sires
Lujan	Polis	Slaughter
Lynch	Price (NC)	Smith (WA)
Maloney	Quigley	Speier
Markey	Rahall	Sutton
Matsui	Rangel	Thompson (CA)
McCarthy (NY)	Reyes	Thompson (MS)
McCollum	Richardson	Tierney
McDermott	Richmond	Tonko
McGovern	Rothman (NJ)	Tsongas
McNerney	Ruppersberger	Van Hollen
Meeks	Rush	Velázquez
Michaud	Ryan (OH)	Vislosky
Miller (NC)	Sánchez, Linda	Walz (MN)
Miller, George	T.	Wasserman
Moore	Sánchez, Loretta	Schultz
Nadler	Sarbanes	Waters
Napolitano	Schakowsky	Watt
Neal	Schiff	Waxman
Oliver	Schrader	Welch
Pallone	Schwartz	Wilson (FL)
Pascarell	Scott (VA)	Woolsey
Pastor (AZ)	Scott, David	Yarmuth
Pelosi	Serrano	

NOT VOTING—19

Ackerman	Lee (CA)	Schmidt
Austria	Manzullo	Stark
Barber	Murphy (CT)	Sullivan
Costello	Owens	Towns
Filner	Payne	Turner (OH)
Frank (MA)	Pence	
Gallagher	Roybal-Allard	

□ 1342

Messrs. HONDA, ELLISON, CARNEY, CLEAVER, and Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California changed their vote from “yea” to “nay.”

So the resolution was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated against:

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall 611, I was away from the Capitol due to prior commitments to my constituents. Had I been present, I would have voted “nay.”

ELECTING MEMBERS TO CERTAIN STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Democratic Caucus, I offer a privileged resolution and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 822

Resolved, That the following named Members be and are hereby elected to the following standing committees of the House of Representatives:

(1) COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE.—Mr. Garamendi.

(2) COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY.—Mr. Curson.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

HAMAS IS THE PUPPET AND IRAN IS THE PUPPETEER

(Mr. POE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the eyes of the world were on the Gaza Strip for 8 days as sirens wailed and Hamas rained rockets down on Israel.

Iran's mullahs shipped long-range rockets into Sudan, sent them up into Egypt before smuggling them through tunnels and assembling them in Gaza. Israel responded by doing the only thing a responsible nation should do: it defended itself. Now the United States needs to show there are consequences for attacking this sovereign nation, consequences for Hamas and Iran, as well.

We should have stricter enforcement of sanctions against Iran. Iran and Hamas both need to be held accountable for these attacks. Israel had the moral right and legal duty to defend itself from attacks by the barbarians, Hamas. There is a ceasefire, but only until Hamas obtains more Iranian missiles.

Hamas is the puppet, and Iran is the puppeteer. The Iranian regime needs to go. The Iranian people need to rid themselves of the little fellow from the desert, Ahmadinejad, and his ways of war.

And that's just the way it is.

□ 1350

NATIONAL FAMILY CAREGIVERS MONTH

(Mr. PAULSEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PAULSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the more than 65 million family caregivers across the Nation who work tirelessly and selflessly to care for loved ones who are chronically ill, disabled or aging. So this month, we celebrate National Family Caregivers Month, which is a time to thank all those heroes who sacrifice their time and effort in looking after others.

It is estimated that family caregivers provide 80 percent of our Nation's long-term care, saving families about \$375 billion annually. Caregivers are the silent heroes of the family. They work day in and day out to ensure that those in need of care receive that support. Taking care of sick family members is, no doubt, a difficult job; and I encourage caregivers to continue to utilize the resources they have in their communities for support.

I would like to acknowledge the hard work of the family caregivers in Minnesota and of those helping families in America. Your work to support your families exemplifies the true meaning of putting someone else's needs first.

COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

(Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, just about 40 minutes or so ago, we were in the midst of a debate concerning STEM, which is something

that most Americans have come to now understand as the acronym for science, technology, engineering, and math.

As a longstanding member on the Subcommittee on Immigration and on Homeland Security, STEM is now a basis for expanding visas to ensure or to give opportunities to young people who are graduating from our research institutions of higher learning who have been born in other countries and to give them the ability to be able to stay here in order to help create jobs and to build this economy. That's a good thing. Yet on November 6, 2012, I think America spoke and said, We're ready to do more and go further.

I voted “no” on the rule because I believe we are ready for comprehensive immigration reform, not something that will hurt us, but something that will help us. For those who appreciated the Statue of Liberty that welcomed the poor and the downtrodden, that welcomed the Irish and the Germans and the Italians, we know that comprehensive immigration reform is the right way. This rule, H. Res. 821, is not the right way. So I ask my colleagues to look to comprehensive immigration reform, and I will speak about this bill tomorrow.

UPHOLDING THE SECOND AMENDMENT RIGHT TO BEAR ARMS

(Mr. JOHNSON of Illinois asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. JOHNSON of Illinois. Twelve years ago, I took an oath to defend the Constitution of the United States. I am here today to urge my colleagues to uphold our Second Amendment right to bear arms.

Congress has to put aside partisan differences and act to uphold a citizen's right to bear arms in every State in the Union. Unfortunately, in my home State, residents are denied the ability to carry firearms even though the residents of every other State in the Union are allowed to protect themselves and their property. The Second Amendment is clear and concise, and it was meant to protect all residents no matter where they live.

I urge Congress and the States to uphold this fundamental and basic right.

THANK YOU, NOT GOODBYE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. POE of Texas). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I begin this Special Order for those Members on this side of the aisle who are retiring or who are leaving at the end of 2012, so I rise today not to say goodbye, but to say thank you.

After 14 wonderful and productive years, I will be stepping away from this podium for the last time at the end of

the 112th Congress. Representing the people of the 13th District of Illinois has been the great honor of my lifetime. Words cannot express the depth of gratitude I feel to my friends, colleagues, supporters, and staff who have made this time in Washington so cheerful and fulfilling. I can recall the first time that I stepped out onto the House floor as a Member of this great body and said to myself, How did I end up in the U.S. Congress, surrounded by the legacies of so many great leaders?

Growing up on the south side of Chicago, I never expected to become a lawyer or a school board president, much less a Member of Congress. At the time, few women went to college, let alone law school. Today, I know the path here was often the same for all who have walked these Halls. We are just Americans who love our communities and our country and who found ourselves pursuing that love through service to others. Even among those who rarely see eye to eye, I know that we share a passion for creating a better future for the next generation and that there has always been enough to bridge any gap that divides us. Maybe that's why I've always been known as a moderate. I like to assume the best about people with whom I disagree, at least until they prove me wrong. Thankfully, I can say without question that I've rarely been wrong, which is why my faith in this country and its future has never been stronger.

But listening is the key. Lawmakers must listen to those around them as one American to another, as neighbors with shared values and without assuming that any difference of opinion is evidence of greed, ignorance, or malice. I was fortunate. I learned that lesson early. Maybe it was because I was the only female Republican in my freshman class here. All of my colleagues, chairmen and ranking members seemed eager to come and say hello, to welcome me with a smile and sage advice. Their advice served me well, and, in turn, it allowed me to serve my constituents better. My hope is that our incoming class of lawmakers follows a similar path and that they come to Washington ready to learn from those around them and to benefit from the diversity of backgrounds and experiences that can be found here in the Capitol.

Because we face great challenges—the economy, immigration, the debt, Social Security, and Medicare—on these items and more we must find the answers soon if we hope to keep our country on a path to prosperity. Those solutions will only materialize if the Members of Congress take a chance, work together, and care more about results than sound bites or the next election. Equally important, they must be willing to take a walk a few hundred feet to the other side of the rotunda.

The House and the Senate are two sides of the same coin, and yet they have never seemed further apart. My proudest moments as a Member of Con-

gress have all been as the result of collaboration. My work to keep homeless kids in school, to bar genetic discrimination, or to reform the Nation's Flood Insurance Program were all signed into law after extensive personal conversations with Members of the upper Chamber. We have great leaders here in the House, but they alone cannot maintain communications between the two greatest deliberative bodies in the world. It's up to all of us, and it will be to all of you.

So, Mr. Speaker, my advice is to work together across the aisle and across the Capitol. I urge my colleagues to stay close to their voters and true to their principles, but to never let "compromise" become a dirty word. That's what our constituents want; that's what America needs; and that's what has made these last 14 years the source of great joy in my life, none of which, I should add, would have been possible without my wonderful staff.

Before I close, I must give thanks to these individuals who have been with me for months or years and who have never let up in their service to the residents of the 13th Congressional District of Illinois. From casework, to flag requests, to building roads or to passing laws, my staff has taken every challenge in stride, has brought out the best in me, and has done it all without ever seeking recognition, praise, or a raise.

I also want to thank the great committee staff with Financial Services, with Education and the Workforce, and with Science, Space, and Technology, as well as the team at Ethics, with whom I worked for several years. Also, thank you to the unappreciated staff here on the House floor, who always keeps the debate moving forward.

Most of all, I would like to thank Kathy Lyndon, the best chief of staff and friend that a Member of Congress ever asked for. Without her, I would not be here; and without her, I would not have been able to assemble one of the smartest and most capable staffs in Washington.

□ 1400

So, thank you. Thank you to my colleagues, my staff, my friends, my family, my supporters, and even my critics who have helped me to grow, to learn, and to serve the people of Illinois. I have always viewed public service as a privilege, not a career, and you have all made this the fondest privilege of my life.

Mr. HOYER. Will the gentlelady yield?

Mrs. BIGGERT. I yield to the gentleman from Maryland.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentlelady for yielding.

I was in the cloakroom having some lunch, and I heard the gentlelady's comments. Most of us—a lot of us—went around this country listening to people as well as speaking on behalf of our respective candidacies and parties.

What I heard around America was that they want people who will sit down together and try to solve the problems that confront America's families and America's workers.

I want to say to the gentlelady from Illinois, my experience with her, throughout her career, has been that she is one of those types of people. And I want to thank her. I want to thank her for her decency. I want to thank her for her hard work. I want to thank her for her commitment to country first. It's been a privilege to serve with you, Judy, and I look forward to being your friend for many years to come. I wish you great success in the future.

I wanted to say that because too often the public sees us confronting one another and sometimes being angry with one another, but you and I have had the opportunity to work together and I know the good heart that you have and the openness that you have displayed, and I thank you for that.

Mrs. BIGGERT. And I thank you, the minority whip, so much for those comments. That really is very kind of you, and I appreciate it.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentlelady.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Would the gentlelady yield for one more comment?

Mrs. BIGGERT. I yield to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. PERLMUTTER).

Mr. PERLMUTTER. I just wanted to echo Mr. HOYER's comments. You and I have served together on the Financial Services Committee. We have worked together on legislation that I was proposing and that you were proposing, and working with you was always a pleasure and an honor. I always appreciated the knowledge you would bring to all of these different discussions; and the fact that you were willing to work with me in such a fashion, that helped bring me along as a Member of Congress. I think you definitely brought legislation to the country that was of value, and I just want to thank the gentlelady from Illinois.

Mrs. BIGGERT. I thank the gentleman. I will always think of you as the green man from Colorado.

Now I would like to yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. TODD PLATTS, who is also retiring.

Mr. PLATTS. I thank the gentlelady.

Before commenting on my own retirement, I want to echo the gentlemen from Colorado and Maryland, Mr. PERLMUTTER and Mr. HOYER, and their right-on-point remarks, Judy, about you and your service.

We have sat together for the last 12 years on the Ed Committee working on education issues and children's issues. You've been such a great leader on the issue of homeless children and the importance of us doing right by them in the education arena even though they were homeless—and maybe all the more important that we do right by them.

When we hear the terms "statesman" or "public servant," you epitomize

both. Judy, it has been a great privilege to work with you.

As I think back to arriving 12 years ago, one, it is hard to believe it has been 12 years since first coming here. My decision about a year ago, January of this year, to step down was not an easy one, but it's one that I felt was the right decision for me. I've always been one who believed in 12-year term limits and thought I've got to live what I preach as a servant, as a public official, but maybe most importantly as a dad, that I needed to set a good example to my sons, Tom and TJ, that they saw me living up to my word and that my actions backed up my words. So while it wasn't an easy decision to decide to leave this great Chamber, I believe it was the right one.

But it has been such a privilege to represent the people of Pennsylvania's 19th Congressional District—Adams, Cumberland, and York counties; Gettysburg, Carlisle, and York, the county seats in the three counties in my district—and the fact that 12 years ago the citizens of this district said, Todd, we trust you to represent our interests in Washington. And to allow me to return for five more terms after that first one has been pretty remarkable.

And it speaks volumes to me about what truly a land of opportunity we are. As a kid growing up, that I would be given this opportunity, it only happens in America. I'm one who's known that I wanted to do this since I was 14. I've often been asked, What made you want to serve in Congress at such an early age?

I point first to my mom and dad, Babs and Dutch Platts, just average citizens, middle class family. Dad was a mechanical engineer; Mom was a stay-at-home mom, park director, a lot of odd jobs that were part time to make sure that she could be hands on with all five of us kids. They were not active politically other than always voting and taking us with them to vote when they would go, but they were so active in the community. They were community servants, teaching Sunday school, coaching Little League baseball. In fact, I had the privilege to coach my sons for about 10 years on the same fields that my dad coached three of us Platts sons way back when; Mom running the school candy sales. They gave all five of us children—I'm the fourth of the five—a wonderful example to follow, that if you want to live in a great Nation and a great community, you need to do your part. You need to be engaged and be involved. So they gave me the example of service, and then it was my eighth grade social studies teacher by the name of Earl Lucius, who passed away just shy of 2 years ago, who encouraged taking that community service example of my parents and to make it a public service career.

So as I left eighth grade and Mr. Lucius' class and got ready to enter high school, I joined the Teenage Republicans as a ninth grader and volun-

teered on my first campaign. It was Jerry Ford running for reelection for President, John Heinz for the United States Senate, and Bill Goodling for his first reelection to represent the 19th Congressional District of Pennsylvania. Pretty eerie, 24 years later, after volunteering for Mr. Goodling as a ninth grader, that's who I succeeded. When he retired after 26 years here in the people's House, I had the privilege to succeed him. But I have known ever since then that this is what I wanted to do.

So first, I thank the citizens of the district for allowing me this privilege and for giving me their trust. Certainly I could not have served the citizens back home without a tremendous staff in the district, as well as here in Washington. I have been blessed with just true public servants. When we would hire, I never asked what their party registration was or anything about their politics other than, Why do you want to serve, and why do you want to serve in the 19th District in particular? So, thanks to all of my staff, to my personal staff in the district and down here, and to the committee staff. I've had the privilege to chair a subcommittee on Oversight and Government Reform for many years, and have been blessed in the past and present with a great staff there as well.

But the one thing I would emphasize is we call this the people's House, and I look at it that way for a number of reasons. One in particular is the only way you get here is if you're elected. You can be a Senator, you can be Vice President, you can be President and never be elected to those positions. Jerry Ford, never elected Vice President and President, served in both Houses. You can serve in the Senate, but here, if there's a vacancy, you have to wait until the people decide. So we're the people's House. But also because we're a great representation of the people of this great country.

The approach and how I got here, it was because of the people of the 19th District. When I leave, it's my understanding that I'm the last Member of the House or Senate, other than a couple of self-funders, who rely solely on individual contributions—no special interest money, no PAC contributions. I've never had a paid television commercial in any campaign. I've never had a paid pollster in any campaign. It's been about volunteers going door to door with me spreading the word.

I think back to that first campaign 12 years ago when over 500 volunteers came out in 1 day and stuffed a 115,000-piece mailing for me. And not only did they come and volunteer and spend about 10 hours that day doing that work for us, but they also brought their own food and fed themselves because we were a low-budget campaign, then and now.

□ 1410

We didn't have money to buy them food, so it was kind of like a church

supper where everybody brings a dish and we'll have food, we'll get some good work done. But the people of the 19th district is what allowed me to come here. That first campaign I was outspent 5-1, 3-1, 2-1, and because of the people, I've been allowed to serve here for the last 12 years, and I will be forever grateful for that.

Before I wrap up, I'd be very remiss if I didn't recognize my family. My wife, Leslie, well, we celebrated 22 years of marriage this past July. I've been in office for 20 of those, 8 in the State House, 12 here. And so this is our first election year in 22 years where we weren't campaigning, going door to door. And I certainly would not be standing here as a Member of the United States House of Representatives but for her great love and support over all these years, along with our sons, T.J. and Tom, and my extended family.

Mom and Dad. Dad passed away my first year here in Congress, but Babs and Dutch Platts; my brothers, Mark and Craig; and sisters, Pam and Jill; and my sons, Tom and T.J., who have made so many sacrifices while I've been allowed to serve in this position from a time standpoint of being away and missing ball games here or there. But because of their support, and that love and support of my family, and the support and trust of my constituents, I've been allowed this great privilege.

I'll leave here with a heavy heart, because I'm still pretty passionate about what we do. I'll leave here with great friends on both sides of the aisle, Republican, Democrats, from all corners of this great country. It's been such a privilege to serve with these true public servants.

I'm going to share one final story that kind of captures what I think is great about our country and the fact that I've been allowed to serve here. When my dad passed away my first year in Congress, June 25, 2001, I had just, about a month earlier, had the privilege of introducing my parents to President Bush for the first time. In fact, the last picture of my dad before his passing is a picture of my mom and dad with me and President Bush taken up on the edge of my district in Pennsylvania.

Dad passes away. I get a note from the President expressing his sympathies, having just met my dad. But about a week after his funeral, President Bush was here in the Capitol with us in caucus and meeting with all the House Republicans. And when it was over, we all scattered and went back to our offices, wherever it may be.

As I'm leaving the Capitol Building to go back to Longworth House Office Building, I hear applause up here in the rotunda. And I come up, and this was pre-9/11, and the President's just going down a rope line, shaking hands with all the visitors to the Capitol that day. So moms and dads and kids are just getting to meet the President of the United States by good timing of being in the Capitol.

I'm standing at the House side of the rotunda with Bill Livingood, our then-Sergeant at Arms, and the President stopped and said hello to Bill, said hello to me, and invited me to walk out to the motorcade with him. And the subject of our conversation was the passing of my dad and how he dreads the thought of some day losing his dad. And, thankfully, President Bush 41, 88 and I know in the hospital right now, but hopefully still going strong.

But it was an amazing conversation, one, President Bush, a new President showing concern for a freshman House Member and my family and how my mom and I were doing with the loss of my dad and my mom's husband. But it also spoke volumes about what an amazing country in which we live.

My dad was one of nine kids who grew up in a row house in the city of York during the Depression. Five boys, four girls. Five boys in one bedroom, four girls in the second, Grandma and Grandpa, his mom and dad, in the third.

The fact that his passing was the subject of a conversation between the President of the United States and a Congressman who happened to be his son speaks volumes about us being truly a land of opportunity. That this kid from a typical middle class family has been allowed to serve here for 12 years, it's just amazing about what we stand for, that if you are willing to work hard and follow your dreams, they can come true.

So to the people of the 19th District of Pennsylvania, I say thank you for allowing this now 50-year-old's dreams to come true many years ago as a State representative and then ultimately as a United States Congressman. I will be forever grateful and would tell you that while I'm a proud Republican, most importantly, every time I entered the Chamber, I came into this Chamber, as our men and women in uniform do every day on the front lines of democracy, as a proud American, first and foremost.

I think they give us the example, and that's my final comment is to all those out there who are defending the freedoms we have and the blessings we have, such as TODD PLATTS, me, being allowed to serve in Congress, I say thank you to those courageous men and women and to their families.

Godspeed as they continue to defend us and all that's great about this great Nation.

I thank the gentlelady for yielding.

Mrs. BIGGERT. You know, I just would like to say how we have worked together, and I really appreciate all that you have done. And what's different is that you had this family. And that is the hardest thing to have, you know, the kids and a wife, but to have the kids that you're always worried about. You always want to be to their games. I know you were always rushing around to do that and driving home, and I appreciate that.

I have four children and a husband. Actually, we just celebrated our 49th

wedding anniversary, which I can't believe, as time flies when you're having fun.

Mr. PLATTS. Congratulations.

Mrs. BIGGERT. But my children, we raised them, I think, well, and we raised them to be independent. We didn't think that they would be so independent. One lives in London with her husband and three children, one lives in Los Angeles with her husband and three children, one lives in Bethesda with her three children, and our son lives in New York City.

They're great places to visit, but you don't really have time, I think, when you're here as much as it was.

But to have the family that's there all the time I think it's wonderful, but it has also been really difficult.

Mr. PLATTS. It's one of the blessings, Judy, that I've been allowed, because of my district, about 100 miles each way, in my 12 years serving here, while I've been honored to work here, I've been blessed to live at home all but 12 nights, or maybe 13 nights that I couldn't go back home. But being able to go back to my wife and children, to start every day and end every day with them kept me grounded. And it's one of the sacrifices that, as you know, and our colleagues, the families of Members make a tremendous sacrifice, because I'm the exception. I'm the only Pennsylvanian. There's a couple of Maryland and Virginias, but most Members have to be away all week or relocate their families here, so it is a tremendous family commitment.

But you're right. As I say, my kids, when I walk in the door, they don't care if I was meeting with the President of the United States or working whatever issue. Dad, get rid of the coat and tie. We're late for practice. Let's go. Kids do a good job of keeping our priorities straight.

Mrs. BIGGERT. I also thank you for the experiences we've had working together on the Education Committee and being the Bermuda Triangle that we always laughed about, sitting on our side with Tom Osborne. We made a nice triangle to put things like vouchers in there. They go away, but they wouldn't come back.

Mr. PLATTS. And public education, and one of our colleagues who we both had the privilege to serve under when he was chair of our committee as well.

Mrs. BIGGERT. So thank you.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Will the gentlewoman yield?

Mrs. BIGGERT. Yes, I will yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. I want to thank the gentlewoman for yielding. I want to thank the gentlewoman from Illinois, JUDY, and TODD from Pennsylvania. Thank you so much for your service in the Congress. I've known you as members of the Education and Labor Committee, and I can't thank you enough. I've known you when I was in the minority, I knew you when I was chairman, I've known you when I was ranking minority member.

But you've always been willing to discuss the issues with us. You've always been willing to make suggestions. We haven't always agreed. We've agreed a lot on these issues of child nutrition and school reform and out-of-home children and where do they go to find the schooling and the support systems they need to be successful in our education systems. And I just can't tell you how much I appreciate your service. Thank you. I thank you for that.

And TODD reminds us—I'm listening to you talk about your family. Somebody once said, there's no great way to do this job with a family because the family sort of is the shock absorber for our schedules and everything else. But you obviously have done it pretty darn well.

I just want to thank you for your service to the Congress, to the country, and to obviously the people that you've represented so terribly well. Thank you.

Mrs. BIGGERT. I really appreciate that. Thank you. You were great as chairman, great as ranking member, and I think education is where it all starts in this most important committee. Thank you.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. If the gentlelady would yield to me one more time, as to Mr. PLATTS and to yourself, I mean, the word that has come to me as I'm sitting here and always has struck me is "respect." You both have respect on both sides of the aisle. You listen, you work, you have energy, you want to make this country a better place for all of us. And I just want to thank you for the service to the Nation. It's been an honor to serve with both of you.

And I would say to my friend, Mr. PLATTS, he introduced me to about a half a dozen military installations in the Far East on the fastest moving trip I have ever been on; and that was a year and a half ago and I'm still tired from how quickly and how much energy he put into this trip to expose me to the needs of our troops throughout the Far East.

□ 1420

Again, your respect on both sides of the aisle is well known. Your energy is well known. And thank you for your service.

Mrs. BIGGERT. I appreciate that. Thank you.

Mr. PLATTS. If the gentlelady will yield, I would add it's been a great privilege to serve with you here and to travel. You'll enjoy a story from that trip when we were visiting the Special Forces in the Philippine Islands. This past September, I was at my local fair in York, Pennsylvania, and I ran into one of those Special Forces members that's from my district that we had met and had just left the military and was getting ready to go back to school. But we were reminiscing about our trip to visit him and his fellow special operators on that trip.

It was great to travel and to serve with you, and I wish you great success as you continue to serve the State of Colorado with great fashion.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Thank you.

Mr. PLATTS. I thank the gentlelady again for the time she's allowed me here today.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Thank you.

I yield 1 minute to Mr. YODER.

CONGRATULATING KANSAS HOUSE SPEAKER
MICHAEL O'NEAL

Mr. YODER. I thank the gentlelady from Illinois for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to salute the legacy of service and dedication of my friend, Kansas Speaker of the House Michael O'Neal. After 28 years, Mike has decided to retire from public service to the people of Kansas. He leaves behind a history of courageous leadership in making smart public policy on behalf of all Kansans.

Mike spent his career in the Kansas House notably chairing the Judiciary Committee and the Education Committee before eventually being elected by his colleagues twice as Kansas speaker of the house. While Mike's career in the people's house in Kansas will be remembered for his many notable legislative achievements, his most prominent legacy may be the wonderful friendships and relationships he built along the way. Many of us consider Mike a mentor and true friend, someone you can always count on—a rare quality in politics today.

So as the gavel falls for the last time and Kansas Speaker of the House Mike O'Neal closes this chapter of service on behalf of so many appreciative Kansans, I would like to thank him for his 28 years of tireless service to make Kansas the best State in the Nation.

Rock Chalk, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. BIGGERT. We have no other Members that are here so I would just like to say, again, thanks so much to my colleagues, and particularly my family. Some have been with me these entire 14 years and some have arrived after the start of the 14 years. To my friends and my supporters who have helped me really to grow and to learn and to serve the people of Illinois, it's been a real honor and a privilege. Public service is something that is such a privilege and honor, and I think that this has been the greatest privilege of my life, to have been a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives.

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

THE PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. YODER). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. ELLISON. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My name is KEITH ELLISON, cochair of the Progressive Caucus along with my good friend, RAÚL GRIJALVA. I want

to come before the body today, Mr. Speaker, with the Progressive message. The Progressive message is a message that the Progressive Caucus shares with people. The progressive message is very simple. It's a basic idea that America, this great land of ours, is big enough for everybody, has enough abundance for everybody, and we have natural resources which should be respected, and we should live in harmony and promote a green economy and should have civil and human rights for all people.

In the Progressive message we say that we would promote dialogue and diplomacy before we ever find ourselves in military conflicts. The Progressive message is about an inclusive America—all colors, all cultures, all faiths, an America that says if you live in this country and you want to work hard, the economy should be robust and broad enough and fair enough for you to make a good run in this economy. If you work 40 hours a week, you ought to be able to feed your family. You shouldn't have to resort to public assistance. It's talking about standing up for the rights of labor, the rights of working men and women, the right to be able to be paid fairly, the right to be able to go to the doctor, the right to look forward to a decent and fair retirement, the right to be able to see that your children will be able to get a good education that can see them through. In other words, the Progressive message is the message of an inclusive America that makes sure that our economic and our environmental lives are strong, healthy, and affirming.

We contrast this with another vision—a vision of a divided America, where not everybody counts and not everybody matters; an America in which labor and management are fighting and there's no peace; an America where there's not full inclusion of LGBT Americans or Americans who are trying to join America through immigration—a not fully inclusive America; an America in which women have to worry about their right to be able to seek out contraception or seek out equal pay for equal work. This is the America that we don't embrace. The America that we embrace embraces equality, inclusion, and opportunities.

Now where are we today? We are in the middle of a national conversation which is playing itself right here in Congress that has to do with the so-called fiscal cliff. I'm not going to use that term anymore because we're actually not on a cliff. What we are on is a set of important deadlines that we should meet and we should work at. But this imagery of a cliff and of falling over something and plummeting downward is false, and we should stop using this analogy. I know the press likes it because it adds drama. Of course, the press thrives on drama. But in truth, there are some important deadlines we should meet. But we should not surrender our deeply held

views simply to get any deal done. The deal we should do should be a fair deal, it should be a deal for all, and it should be a deal that meets our most important priorities. But it should not be some force-fed thing that we accept simply because we fear going over this cliff that really doesn't exist.

You can refer to it as a set of deadlines. That's the best way to put it. That's what it actually is. And if you don't meet a deadline, then, of course, there are consequences to not meeting deadlines. And you want to avoid them. But at the same time, this idea that we've got to put up with anything that the other side may offer because we're facing a cliff is a concept that I reject, and I hope the American people reject, Mr. Speaker, because that's not really what is going on. We have a set of deadlines that we should meet. And everybody in this body should work earnestly, sincerely, and in good faith to compromise. But in terms of just accepting some bad deal just to get a deal done because of a crisis that they've threatened, we shouldn't buy into that line of thinking.

Now what are these deadlines? Well, we know that the Bush tax cuts are expiring. They'll expire for everyone, not just the top 2 percent. This is something that we don't want the American middle class to get hit with, a tax increase at this time, but we do believe the wealthiest among us should pay more. And we think that the top 2 percent should pay a higher tax rate on the money they make after \$250,000 a year.

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We also believe that there's more that can be done. Closing loopholes. People say, well, let's talk about that tonight too. But we see the Bush tax cuts expiring for everybody. We see the production tax credit expiring—which is something important for people who work in the wind industry and in the area of industry that promotes environmental matters. We also see the expiration of things like the estate tax, the SGR—which is the doctor fix for Medicare. We also see the sequestration, which is the outcome, the final outcome of the Budget Control Act that we passed in August 2011 which is now coming due. There will be equal defense and discretionary spending cuts on both sides, which will inflict damage.

So all these things are happening at the same time, and so the same question is going to be asked: How will this budget entanglement be resolved? Will it be resolved on the backs of people who can least afford it, or will the people who can best afford it be asked to help out?

So it's within this context, Mr. Speaker, that I come before you with the Progressive message today to try to bring some clarity to folks listening to C-SPAN today about what the real issues are, what we have to avoid, and what we have to fight for.