

MERCK FOR MOTHERS PROGRAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. LANCE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. LANCE. Madam Speaker, I rise to call attention to one of the world's oldest and most preventable health tragedies and to recognize efforts under way to address it. I am speaking of the needless and preventable death of women in pregnancy and childbirth.

Motherhood is, of course, at the heart of much of what we value and cherish in our civilization. Yet even today, in this age of scientific achievement, becoming a mother still carries great risk. During the next 10 years, an estimated 3 million women may die attempting to bring new life into the world. This is approximately 1,000 mothers per day. Yet when a mother dies, we lose so much. Her baby is at greater risk and so are her other children. Families are torn apart, and some are thrust into poverty, or deeper into poverty.

Maternal mortality is a problem in the developing world. It is also a problem, Madam Speaker, in the United States of America. As I understand the figures, mothers dying around the time of childbirth doubled here in this country between 1990 and 2008. Unfortunately, women in the United States have a higher risk of dying from pregnancy-related complications than women in 38 other countries.

Yet in acknowledging this tragedy, I rise to recognize and applaud efforts that bring real hope. In my district in Whitehouse Station, New Jersey, the health care company Merck has just announced a new program: Merck for Mothers. Merck has pledged a half billion dollars over the next decade to help alleviate this situation, complications of pregnancy and childbirth. The people of Merck will dedicate their expertise to help make proven solutions more widely available, to develop new technologies, and to improve public awareness to save lives.

Making progress against this complex challenge will not be easy. It is not purely a medical problem, and there are no magic bullets.

I applaud Merck and other organizations and individuals who are dedicating their time, their resources, and their expertise to creating an environment where no woman has to die in order to bring a child into the world.

A BRAVE AFGHANISTAN TRUTH-TELLER COMES FORWARD

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, it was an ancient Greek playwright who originally said: "Trust is the first casualty of war." More than 2,500 years later, those words still hold painfully and tragically true.

Tomorrow afternoon, I will join several of my colleagues in meeting with

Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Davis who has embarked on a brave truth-telling campaign about the war in Afghanistan.

□ 1010

After two combat deployments to Afghanistan, Lieutenant Colonel Davis has written two reports—one classified, one unclassified—in which he tells what he has seen. As part of his assignment with the Rapid Equipping Force, he traveled across Afghanistan several times, spanning some 9,000 miles, and visited with hundreds of troops as well as with Afghan civilians and Afghan security forces.

What he saw were Afghan police who stay in the safe harbor of their checkpoints while allowing the Taliban to roam free. What he saw were Afghan local governments completely unprepared to protect and provide for their people. What he heard were stories of, in his words, "how insurgents controlled virtually every piece of land beyond eyeshot of a U.S. or International Security Assistance Force base."

Madam Speaker, this is not exactly the story we've been getting from top military brass when they report on the status of the Afghanistan war. Lieutenant Colonel Davis' experience is yet one more example of how we're not getting the entire story.

As he puts it:

Senior ranking U.S. military leaders have so distorted the truth when communicating with the U.S. Congress and American people in regards to conditions on the ground in Afghanistan that the truth has become unrecognizable.

He continues:

This deception has damaged America's credibility among both our allies and enemies, severely limiting our ability to reach a political solution to the war in Afghanistan.

Madam Speaker, after everything Americans have sacrificed—the lives, limbs, the mental capacities of thousands of our people, the billions of dollars every month, our global reputation, and credibility—the least we are owed is the unvarnished truth. For the price the Nation has paid, we deserve transparency and not the propaganda we're receiving. A good start would be to declassify the National Intelligence Estimate on Afghanistan as well as to publicly release the classified version of Lieutenant Colonel Davis' story.

Some have suggested that Lieutenant Colonel Davis is a publicity seeker. My only response to that is, I certainly hope so. I want the message out. Goodness knows, the other side of the story, the official party line that the Afghanistan war is a strategic success, has gotten plenty of publicity over the last decade. It's about time that a different version of events got close to equal time.

I hope my colleagues, in particular those who have supported the Afghanistan war year in and year out, will read what Lieutenant Colonel Davis has written, and I hope they will consider

the significant risk he has taken and the patriotism he has shown. I look forward to meeting Lieutenant Colonel Davis today, and I look forward to the Nation finally heeding his words, honoring his courage and vindicating his story by bringing our troops home.

COLONEL SAM JOHNSON, A TRUE HERO AMONG US

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Madam Speaker, the date was April 16, 1966. The pilot was SAM JOHNSON, United States Air Force. He was a colonel, and he was doing his second tour of duty in Vietnam. He was flying with the fighter squadron called Satan's Angels. He was a career pilot who had already flown 62 combat missions during the Korean war, flying an F-86 Sabre jet. Colonel JOHNSON also flew with the famed Air Force Thunderbirds.

But on that day, April 16, 1966, Colonel JOHNSON in his F-4 was shot down by ground fire by the North Vietnamese. He was captured, and he was put in a prisoner of war camp. Madam Speaker, he was in that POW camp for 7 years.

Because of the way that he would not give in to the torture and to the interrogation, the enemy moved him to the famous Hanoi Hilton, a place they called "Alcatraz." It was as bad a POW camp that ever existed in history. Alcatraz was where 11 POWs were put because they were the most obstinate men, and they were leaders of other POWs. They were hard-nosed, and they had to be segregated. They called themselves the "Alcatraz gang." They were defiant, and the North Vietnamese called this man right here, Colonel SAM JOHNSON, "Die Hard."

They tortured him, but they got no information from him. During that time, that 7 years he was beaten and tortured, SAM JOHNSON never broke down. He was so obstinate that they finally decided to put him in solitary confinement where he remained for 4 years in a cell that was 3-feet-wide by 9-feet. During that 4 years, all that was in that cell was a light bulb above his head that the enemy kept on for 24 hours a day. During the nighttime, they put SAM JOHNSON in leg irons, and during that 4 years, he never saw or talked to another American.

While in the POW camp, he and other POWs communicated with each other with a code by tapping on the wall, and during that time, he memorized the names of the other 374 POWs in captivity. He kept that memory going so that, when he got away or was released or escaped, he would be able to tell their loved ones who they were and where they were. It was brutal, it was harsh, it was cruel, it was mean.

The enemy laughed and made fun of Colonel SAM, and all he ever said was, Is that the best you can do? For food, he ate weeds and pig fat and rice, and

he went from 200 pounds to 120 pounds. After 7 years of confinement, on February 12, 1973, 39 years ago this week, Colonel SAM JOHNSON was finally released.

After his release, Colonel JOHNSON continued to serve in the United States Air Force for a total of 29 years. While he was in that POW camp, back home in Texas, his wife, Shirley, knew he'd been shot down, but she didn't know what had happened to him for 2 years—whether he was alive, dead, or missing in action.

After he left the United States Air Force, he served in the State house in Texas. He had his own business, and then in 1991, he came to the House of Representatives, where he continues to serve with distinction and to represent the folks from Texas.

SAM JOHNSON returned to America with honor. He is a special breed. He is the American breed. He is that special warrior, even during the time he was a captive warrior, who never forsook his duty and never forsook his honor.

Colonel SAM and other Vietnam veterans were not only treated badly in Vietnam, but many who returned were treated poorly by America. These vets had no welcome home parades. They were cursed and they were spit upon. America did not really appreciate those old warhorses from Vietnam.

So, to Colonel SAM and all who served in Vietnam, welcome home, welcome home, welcome home.

Some served and returned. Some served and did not return. Some served with the wounds of war.

So, to Colonel SAM JOHNSON, we appreciate your service because the worst casualty of war is to be forgotten.

And that's just the way it is.

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. The fancy new software at use in our congressional offices gives us the ability to see all of the constituent contacts, all of their questions, complaints, and concerns by category.

I wonder if anyone in Congress has received any complaints about the Safe Routes to School program. I'll bet not. So why is the Republican transportation bill eliminating Safe Routes to School, creating an "unsafe route to school"?

This is a wildly popular program, costing a fraction of a percent of the transportation budget, and it has had a huge impact nationally on our children because it deals with real consequences for them.

□ 1020

A generation ago, 40 or 50 percent of children were able to get to school on their own. Now only 13 percent can. It's no wonder that childhood obesity has exploded over the same period of time,

with one in three of our children now overweight or obese or seriously at risk. Asthma has gone up for children 74 percent over the last 5 years. There are real consequences for accidents. There were 23,000 5- to 15-year-olds injured, and more than 250 kids killed walking or biking in 2009.

Getting our children to school in the morning represents 10 to 14 percent of the entire American morning commute, 6.5 billion trips stretching 30 billion miles. Doesn't it make sense to do something about the congestion, the injuries, deaths, and the obesity? Absolutely.

Twenty years ago, as Portland's commissioner of public works, I started a program in my city to help teach kids how to get to school safely and to improve road and sidewalk conditions. Ten years ago, we started a national program, Safe Routes to School. Schools with these programs show a 20 percent to 200 percent increase in the number of kids walking or biking. According to a recent California study, these students are healthier, they do better in school, and there is a 49 percent decrease in accident rates.

So why are my Republican friends advancing a transportation bill attacking Safe Routes to School, stripping it out, making it an unsafe route to school? Well, it's a fitting metaphor for perhaps the worst transportation bill in history. I think that may be one of the reasons they were afraid to even have a single hearing on the package that's coming to the floor this week.

They attacked the foundation of 20 years of balanced transportation reform. It shatters the 30-year partnership between transit and road interests that gave 80 percent to roads and 20 percent to a transit account, brokered by Ronald Reagan's administration. It undercuts the role of local governments and metropolitan areas to shape and control their own destiny, leaving them to the tender mercy of bureaucrats in their State capitals.

But it's not just Safe Routes to School. They attack high-speed rail, bicycles, Amtrak. They attack the basic environmental and public participation protections that have been gutted that actually have been very important to make sure that we have good projects that aren't held up politically or in court.

Sadly, I am very disappointed. I have worked for years on a coalition of broad interests across the spectrum of highway, professional, environmental, labor, business groups toward a good transportation bill and a coalition that can work together for the badly needed transportation resources. This Republican bill splits away valuable allies and will make it almost impossible to get the resources we need in the future. And, of course, their bill is \$5 billion short for highways after taking all of these resources and stuffing them into the Highway Account.

This is, simply, the worst highway bill ever. It is the first we've seen that

has not been at least a semblance of bipartisanship and is something that's never been considered in committee. Too timid to do the job, it recklessly abandons the trust fund principle, raising the ire of budget hawks for abandoning "user pay". It guts the most popular programs that help stretch dollars and improve communities. And, as I say, it shatters the coalition that we need to deal with the future resources.

Mercifully, this theological statement, sloppy, incomplete, and ill-considered has no chance of ever being enacted into law; but it's important that the House reject it. There is no more powerful symbol of how bankrupt this proposal is than eliminating the wildly popular and effective Safe Routes to School. If for no other reason, reject this bill for our children.

IMPROVING THE TRANSPORTATION BILL

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

Mr. DOLD. Madam Speaker, one of the core functions of the government is to invest in infrastructure and transportation. This is not a Republican idea or a Democrat idea. It's an American one. At a time when people are so desperately looking for Washington to come together, this is an issue that we should and can work together on.

This week we're debating the transportation bill. While there are many great qualities about this bill, there is still a need—and I would argue a great need—to improve it. That's why I am pleased that there are literally hundreds of amendments to try to strengthen this bill.

I hail from the State of Illinois. Illinois is a donor State, which means that we are putting in more transportation funds than we are receiving back from the Federal Government. That is why I am concerned by the cuts facing our State. We stand to lose almost \$650 million. As one of the largest manufacturing hubs of the country, our region cannot afford to lose this critical funding. Our transportation funds help strengthen our local economy and keep jobs at home.

Let me be clear. There are some very good steps in this bill that I believe we all should be able to embrace. The bill provides long-term certainty to States when they're planning their transportation projects. We haven't had a transportation bill in a number of years, since 2005; and this would provide 5 years of stability. It includes numerous reforms that enable States to cut through red tape and speed up the completion of projects, many taking about 15 years today, which would be going down to 7 or 8 years in the future.

I'm pleased that the bill strengthens the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund, which impacts places like Waukegan Harbor. Waukegan Harbor is a critical part of the Great Lakes harbor system