

HONORING THE LIFE OF SPECIALIST ROBERT J. TAUTERIS, JR.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. RIBBLE). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. DONNELLY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DONNELLY of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to solemnly remember and honor the life and dedicated service of Specialist Robert Tauteris, Jr., a native son of Hamlet, Indiana, and a proud member of the 713th Engineer Company based in Valparaiso and assigned to 81st Troop Command.

Specialist Tauteris died, along with three of his fellow soldiers, on January 5, 2012, in Kandahar province, Afghanistan, of wounds sustained when their vehicle was hit by a roadside improvised explosive device as they scouted for bombs and potential problems along a major supply route.

The State of Indiana mourns the loss of the four brave men who took on this dangerous mission to ensure the safety of their fellow soldiers. Specialist Tauteris died, along with his fellow National Guardsmen, Specialist Brian Leonhardt, Specialist Christopher Patterson, and Staff Sergeant Jonathan Metzger. Private Douglas Rachowicz was severely injured in the same incident.

Robert graduated from North Judson High School in 1986 and had worked in manufacturing at Ferro Corporation in Plymouth. Robert Tauteris served one tour in Afghanistan with the National Guard and volunteered for his second deployment when his son, Robert Tauteris III enlisted. Father and son left together for Afghanistan in the fall of 2011. Bobby III accompanied his dad's body home to Dover Air Force Base.

Robert's posthumous awards include the Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart, Army Good Conduct Medal, and the Army Achievement Medal. He also earned the National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal with the Bronze Service Star, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal with M Device, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, the NATO Medal, Combat Action Badge, Driver and Mechanic Badge, Combat and Special Skill Badge, Basic Marksmanship Qualification Badge, and the Overseas Service Bar. It is an extraordinary record, and he is an extraordinary hero.

Robert will be remembered by his friends, his family, and fellow soldiers as a dedicated, reliable, hardworking man who cared deeply for his family. He is survived by his sons, Robert III and Matthew; Robert III's wife, Kayla—and they are here with us today—his dad, Robert Tauteris; his sister, Tammy Tauteris Smith; brother, Tom; half-brother, Darrel Ray Minix; and stepmother, Nichelle; as well as extended family and friends who are left to treasure his memory.

It is my solemn duty and humble privilege to honor the life, the service,

and the memory of Specialist Robert Tauteris, Jr. He is a testament to the great honor possessed and sacrifices made by our men and women in the Armed Forces. We mourn his passing and offer solemn gratitude for his service and sacrifice.

On behalf of the United States of America, we want to thank your family for your service, for your sacrifice, and for everything you have done.

God bless you.

REFORMS TO THE MEDICARE SYSTEM

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

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on behalf of the senior citizens in Pennsylvania's Eighth Congressional District who rely on a Medicare system which makes predictable and stable payments to their physicians.

I came to Washington, with one of the largest freshman classes in recent history, to make the difficult decisions that for too long have been deferred and delayed. I'm proud to have joined a bipartisan group of my fellow Representatives last spring in passing a budget resolution which addressed the long-term challenges facing Medicare.

The budget resolution we supported provides fiscal stability to a program which will face severe cuts and drastic changes in the future without serious reform. However, while these basic reforms to the existing system are being debated, we are currently faced with a more pressing issue, the solution to which has already earned widespread support among lawmakers, doctors, and health care industry groups.

The practicality of the sustainable growth formula for Medicare payments has been a subject of much debate in this Chamber since its implementation in 1997. Over the course of the past two decades, Congress has deemed it acceptable to provide for short-term, temporary fixes to ensure that doctors receive adequate payment for the services they provide to Medicare patients. Short-term fixes provide no stability or predictability to these important service providers.

In speaking with a cardiologist in my home of Bucks County, he shared his concerns with me over the way Congress has chosen to handle the SGR. He told me that every time a short-term extension comes up for a vote, he is faced with the possibility of having to lay off employees and reducing his practice in the face of potential cuts.

The constant threat of cuts to the Medicare reimbursement rate prevents doctors and hospitals from developing new delivery and payment models intended to reduce rising health care costs and denies them the flexibility they need to achieve savings through improved care.

Each time Congress enacts a short-term fix, the scheduled cuts in the SGR

formula grow deeper and the cost of a full repeal increases. A full repeal in 2005 would have cost less than \$50 billion. Today's cost is upwards of \$300 billion. In the next 5 years, if nothing is done to correct this predictable crisis, the cost of short-term fixes and the total debt accumulated from the SGR will climb to over \$600 billion.

With the drawdown of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and the homecoming of many of the brave young men and women who so proudly served our country in those theaters over the course of the past decade, we are presented with a unique opportunity to provide for a permanent fix to the Medicare physician payments, and to do so without adding to our already burdensome national debt. The use of savings from the Overseas Contingency Operations fund to permanently repeal the SGR formula will provide doctors and their patients with the certainty they so desperately need in these difficult economic times.

As with so many of the challenges facing our Nation today, we are presented with two clear options:

We can choose to ignore the problems posed by the SGR formula to doctors, seniors, and to our fiscal health by continuing the practice of short-term fixes and forced draconian cuts to hospitals and health care providers and apply the savings from the OCO funds elsewhere; or

We can choose to use these funds to permanently repeal the SGR and to set our Medicare system on a new path and provide for long-term stability for doctors that promote equality, efficiency, and improved health care services for our Nation's seniors.

I understand that we're presented with another opportunity to provide some breathing room for doctors and their patients as part of the middle class tax cut bill that looks to achieve bipartisan support here this week. Let us use the next 10 months to engage in some honest discussion about the real cost and impact of the SGR. Let's get this right before the end of the year. And I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to do just that.

BRING THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN TO AN END

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

Ms. LEE of California. Mr. Speaker, first let me just thank my colleagues, Congressman JONES, Congressman McDERMOTT, Congressman ELLISON and others, for speaking out this morning clearly, saying that it's past time to bring the war in Afghanistan to a swift and orderly end.

There's no military solution in Afghanistan. We need to bring our troops home now, and we need to make sure that we leave no permanent military bases. The American people are sick and tired of the past decade of war, and they want this war to end.

At a time when tens of millions of Americans are unemployed and nearly 50 million Americans are living in poverty, the Pentagon is requesting almost \$100 billion in the President's budget to fund Overseas Contingency Operations, including the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

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First of all, we all thought the war in Iraq was really supposed to be over. So why in the world are we spending billions of dollars on a war that we are no longer fighting? Mr. Speaker, we've already spent over \$1.3 trillion on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and we cannot afford to blindly continue down this path.

The reason, of course, that I voted against that original resolution in 2001 authorizing the use of military force was because it was a blank check for war against any nation, anywhere, anytime, any organization, and any individual.

The situation we are in right now, being asked to spend another \$100 billion on endless war, is exactly what we should have considered 10 years ago when we went down this path. This war without end must end.

While everyone would like a stable democracy in Afghanistan, the facts on the ground suggest that we are not headed in that direction, yet we've spent hundreds of billions of dollars there. Instead of a stable democracy, we have a corrupt state that relies almost entirely on foreign countries for its budget.

The reality on the ground in Afghanistan stands in stark contrast to the steady reports of progress we have been hearing from those who seek to maintain a military presence in Afghanistan in 2014 and beyond. It's time to bring our troops home from Afghanistan—not in 2014, not next year, but right now.

Later today, some of us will be meeting with the courageous Army officer Colonel Daniel Davis. Colonel Davis wrote a revealing account of the war in Afghanistan after witnessing the huge gap between what the American public was being told about progress in Afghanistan and the dismal situation on the ground.

Colonel Davis' assessment is backed up by a recently released report from Afghanistan's NGO safety officer. The report warns NGO employees in Afghanistan not to take seriously the message of advances in security coming from the Pentagon.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that this page from the Afghanistan NGO safety officer quarterly data report be inserted into the RECORD.

AOG INITIATED ATTACKS

AOG initiated attacks grew by 14% over last year and demonstrated an enhanced operational tempo—with 64% of all operations occurring before the end of July (compared to 52% in 2010)—and then trailing off sharply once OP BADR ended over Ramadan.

The tactical portfolio remained consistent with 2010, with close range engagements

(SAF/RPG) making up the bulk of operations (55%) and IED/IDF operations at 44%. Suicide attacks remained at just 1% of the total yet caused close to 70% more fatalities this year, including roughly 400 Afghan civilians (230 in 2010).

Throughout the year ISAF made a number of statements claiming a 3% reduction in attacks between Jan–Aug when compared with 2010. We are not in a position to evaluate their data but, obviously, we do not agree with their finding and advise NGOs to simply ignore it as practical security advice—a use for which it was likely never intended in any case. We find their suggestion that the insurgency is waning to be a dangerous political fiction that should be given no consideration in NGO risk assessment for the coming year.

Interestingly, our data does find that this year's 14% growth rate (what you might call the IEA profit margin) is substantially lower than previous years (above right) suggesting that there has indeed been some serious reduction in the effort that the IEA is putting in. Whether this reduction has been forced upon them by ISAF or whether they consciously chose it—on the calculus that there is no point sprinting to the finish if everyone else has dropped out of the race—is unknown to us and, we suspect, to ISAF.

The report reads:

We find their suggestion that the insurgency is waning to be a dangerous political fiction that should be given no consideration in NGO risk assessment for the coming year.

“A dangerous political fiction”—that is how this organization dedicated to ensure the safety of NGO employees in Afghanistan characterizes the rosy reports of steady progress in Afghanistan. Mr. Speaker, if we're going to ask our brave men and women in uniform to continue to risk their lives in Afghanistan, the least we can do is be frank and honest about how we are doing in Afghanistan. Our soldiers deserve to know the truth, and the American people deserve to know the truth after spending the past decade fighting wars.

The war in Afghanistan has already taken the lives of almost 1,900 soldiers and drained our treasury of over \$500 billion in direct costs. Those costs will only go up as we spend trillions of dollars on long-term care for our veterans, which we must do.

We are set to spend an additional \$88 billion in Afghanistan over the next year while domestic cuts in education, health care, roads, bridges, and other essential priorities are sacrificed. Again, I repeat, it is time to bring our troops home from Afghanistan, not in 2014, not next year, but right now.

Let me conclude by saying that as the daughter of a 25-year Army officer who served in two wars, I salute our troops, and I honor our troops. Our service men and women have performed with incredible courage and commitment in Afghanistan. But they have been put in harm's way, and they have performed valiantly. It's time to bring them home.

ALCATRAZ ELEVEN

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

Mr. DOLD. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to pay tribute to American men and women in uniform, but specifically to an era in the Vietnam conflict that I think did not get as much thanks as it deserves.

On February 11, 1965, flying off of the USS Coral Sea, Lieutenant Commander Robert Harper Shumaker, flying an F-8 Crusader, was shot down over North Vietnam. His parachute deployed about 35 feet before he hit the ground. His back was broken upon impact. He was immediately captured and paraded through the streets.

They took him to what became known at that time as the Hoa Lo Prison. This was going to be the main facility that would house POWs over the next several years. This prison was then dubbed by Commander Shumaker as what we know it today, the Hanoi Hilton. This was an area where a number of POWs were tortured on a regular basis.

Lieutenant Commander Shumaker was the second American pilot shot down. At that point in time, it was somewhat of a blessing because the news media actually got pictures and was able to send word back to his family that he was, indeed, alive. That same fate would not be given to many other POWs, which is why the POWs spent time each and every day memorizing the names, the ranks, of all of the other 591 POWs that would go through the halls of the Hanoi Hilton.

The Hanoi Hilton wasn't the only prison, however. Eleven members of the United States military were actually taken out of the Hoa Lo Prison and brought over to what would become known as Alcatraz Eleven. These were considered by the North Vietnamese to be the eleven greatest threats to camp security. We had men like Jeremiah Denton, who was a senator from Alabama, Jim Stockdale, who was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, George Coker, Ron Storz, and I'm pleased to say a Member of this body, SAM JOHNSON.

In Alcatraz, these men spent literally years in solitary confinement in a 3-by-9 foot box with a single lightbulb which was kept on all the time. They were tortured on a regular basis if they were caught communicating. Lieutenant Commander Shumaker was actually known amongst his peers as “the great communicator.”

They'd devised a tap code earlier, the tap code which would become famous for those going through POW training, survival training.

It was a 5-by-5 box. Starting in the top row, A, B, C, D, E—they cut out “K” so they could have an even 5-by-5 box. They would communicate unbelievable volumes of knowledge. Lieutenant Commander Shumaker actually taught French through the walls to SAM JOHNSON.

In that solitary confinement, again, if they were caught communicating, they were tortured, so there was a reluctance to communicate. But that's