

Even now, in 2012, discrimination is still haunting us.

It's not in the form of a poll tax, but it's in the cost of waiting in line for 7, 8, 9 hours just to vote.

We should be making it easier for everyone to participate in the democratic process, not harder.

We still need the Voting Rights Act.

We still need to be vigilant about protecting our full democratic right to vote.

That right is the heart and soul of our democracy, and we must defend it.

We will not go back.

Should the Supreme Court rule against the Justice Department and overturn this important legislation, minority communities will lose these vital voting protections.

Today, I attended a rally with my colleagues in the Congressional Black, Hispanic, and Asian American and Pacific Islander Caucuses outside the Supreme Court as oral arguments are delivered.

Many of us were part of the 390–33 majority—along with 98 Senators—who voted to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act in 2006.

After an exhaustive review that lasted almost a year, including 21 hearings, testimony from over 90 witnesses, and over 15,000 pages of evidence, Congress came to a nearly unanimous decision that protections are still needed to preserve the voting rights of ALL Americans.

After all, it is this right that lies at the very heart of our democracy.

The Voting Rights Act is routinely used to protect voters against efforts to dilute or suppress their vote. Section five is a critical tool to protect Americans whose voting rights continue to be threatened to this day. I am certain that the Supreme Court will uphold the will of Congress, and respect the overwhelming evidence and comprehensive review that led to President George W. Bush reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act in 2006.

Voting is at the heart of our democracy and we must constantly fight to protect it when it is threatened.

We have come a long way because of the work and sacrifice of millions who came before.

We encourage and support democratic movements around the world, yet here in our country these rights are being eroded each and every day.

Far too many have shed their blood and shed their tears.

So we must protect the most valuable right, the most central right, the right that makes America the nation that it is: the right to vote.

I call on every American to stand up and join us in the call to protect the right of every American to cast their vote.

As our great Drum Major for Justice, Dr. King once said: "Voting is the foundation stone for political action." Truly, our votes are the bedrock of democracy. We will not bow to voter suppression. These are our rights. We will not budge.

As we pursue the Founding Father's vision of a more perfect union, I am proud to stand with my Congressional Black Caucus colleagues in defense of this critical tool for our democratic republic.

HONORING KARI GRACE MORK

HON. JEB HENSARLING

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 27, 2013

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, today, I honor a mother and her child.

A member of my staff recently gave birth to her daughter, who had a fatal birth defect and could not survive outside of the womb.

This absolutely devastating condition unfortunately happens to many children each year. We rarely hear of these cases, though, because such pregnancies are often terminated.

But there are also many mothers who choose to carry their sons and daughters to term—providing nourishment and the most loving home possible here on earth.

This child had a name—Kari Grace. And she had a mom, Kirsten, and dad, David.

That is why I am sharing this story today—so that other women might hear it, and might feel that they are not alone, and know that caring for their child is an act of pure, unselfish love worthy of recognition.

Most of us will never meet these children. But they exist, and we will forever be touched by the grace of knowing that a life was created and a mother was made.

Thank you, Kirsten, for displaying such strength and love to a world that doesn't always recognize it. And to Kari Grace—please know you created a great mom, and that you will always be loved and remembered.

REMEMBERING THE 21ST ANNIVERSARY OF THE KHOJALY TRAGEDY

HON. ED PASTOR

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 27, 2013

Mr. PASTOR of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remember the 21st Anniversary of the Khojaly Tragedy, which occurred in this small town in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan on February 25–26, 1992. In the early 1990s, Azerbaijan was involved in a brutal conflict with its neighbor to the West, Armenia, and the repercussions from atrocities committed during that time still impact diplomatic and economic relations today. The Khojaly Tragedy is perhaps the worst single incident that occurred during this time, resulting in hundreds of lives lost, families devastated, and the town destroyed.

Since a cease-fire was negotiated in 1994, these two nations have been locked in a dispute over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, located within Azerbaijan but occupied by Armenian forces. The Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, of which the United States is a co-chair, was created to encourage a peaceful, negotiated resolution to this conflict, yet work remains in reaching this goal.

In December 2012, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Mammadyarov addressed this situation as follows: "As a result, our relations with Armenia are practically nonexistent. There is also a distinct lack of economic cooperation and trade between our two countries. Azerbaijan wants peace so that we can continue to

grow our economy, develop our energy resources and advance our relations with Europe and our neighbors. But Armenia also has a stake in peace with Azerbaijan. The country is isolated in the region largely because of this conflict. It is excluded from all regional infrastructure and energy projects, such as the oil and gas pipelines passing from the Caspian Sea to Turkey and Europe via Georgia, as well as a new railroad line between Azerbaijan and Turkey through Georgia, to be inaugurated this year. When we can agree on lasting peace, Armenia could become a stakeholder in these regional projects."

A peaceful resolution of this conflict would benefit not only Azerbaijan and Armenia, but would ensure security and economic growth for the South Caucasus region.

RECOGNIZING HEATHER ERICKSON AS THE 2013 OKALOOSA COUNTY, FLORIDA TEACHER OF THE YEAR

HON. JEFF MILLER

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 27, 2013

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Ms. Heather Erickson as the 2013 Okaloosa County, Florida Teacher of the Year. For eight years, Ms. Erickson has been an inspiration to her students, her colleagues, and her community, and I am honored to recognize her success and myriad of achievements.

After receiving her bachelor's degree in Education from William Smith College in 2005, Ms. Erickson moved to Northwest Florida to begin her teaching career. After teaching kindergarten and second grade at Holley-Navarre Primary School for six years, Ms. Erickson joined Elliot Point Elementary School, where she currently serves as a kindergarten teacher.

Northwest Florida has been blessed with an abundance of exemplary educators who teach students of all ages. As a kindergarten teacher, Ms. Erickson understands and values the critical role she plays in the journey and development of her young students. Throughout her teaching career, Ms. Erickson has shown an unwavering commitment to inspiring her students and pushing them to their highest potential. Most recently, she has demonstrated her leadership as Data Team leader, and she has made a tremendous impact on Elliot Point Elementary.

Outside of her classroom, Ms. Erickson dedicates her time and teaching experience to mentor other teachers and support school activities. In addition to her involvement at Elliot Point Elementary, Ms. Erickson is a member of the Okaloosa County Educators Association, as well as, the National Educators Association.

Ms. Erickson has been widely recognized and honored for her years of exemplary work, dedication, and inspiration as an educator. She was awarded both the Holley-Navarre Primary School Teacher of the Year, as well as, the Elliot Point Teacher of the Year. In both 2007 and 2009, Ms. Erickson was a recipient of the Santa Rosa Education Foundation Grant, which she utilized to improve the reading and math curricula in the community.

While Ms. Erickson is an exceptional educator, she credits her success and achievements to the amazing students she has had the privilege of teaching. The most rewarding aspect of her profession is that she is able to watch her students grow as they learn.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to recognize Heather Erickson as the Okaloosa County, Florida Teacher of the Year and thank her for her commitment to service to Northwest Florida. My wife Vicki joins me in congratulating Ms. Erickson, and we wish her all the best.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. GUS M. BILIRAKIS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 27, 2013

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, February 26, 2013, I missed rollcall votes 48, 49, and 50 for unavoidable reasons. Had I been present, I would have voted as follows:

Rollcall No. 48: "nay" (On motion to adjourn.); Rollcall No. 49: "yea" (On motion to suspend the rules and pass H. Res. 77, the Academic Competition Resolution of 2013.); Rollcall No. 50: "yea" (On approving the Journal).

HONORING THE LIFE OF RAYMOND MINNITE

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 27, 2013

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay to tribute to the life of Raymond Minnite, who lived a long and fulfilling life of 95 years. As founder of the town of Three Rocks in California, Raymond was a true supporter and advocate for our Central Valley. His kind heart and generosity will be greatly missed.

Raymond was born into a large family with nine brothers and sisters. His parents were first generation immigrants from Italy. Growing up in an immigrant family of 12, Raymond quickly developed great values and principles. He knew the importance of treating others with respect, compassion, and consideration. Raymond's charitable acts were witnessed by many because helping those in need was essential to him.

As a young man, Raymond served in the Army in World War II. He was stationed in Germany, Italy, and France. Raymond did not discuss the brutalities of war with his family and friends. Instead he shared about the times when he would take extra food to the hungry children. Raymond's positive outlook on life was apparent to all of those around him.

After Raymond married Bernadette and they had their children: Gary, Jack, Bernadette, Janis, Dion, and John, he purchased 20 acres of land at the intersection of Clarkson and Highway 33. There was nothing built on the land, but he had a vision. Bernadette believed in his plan, so he had his families support. Raymond's boys took part in the project and helped him salvage old wood and nails. Slowly a small town was built, and Raymond named it Three Rocks. Surrounded by farming communities, it serves a place for farm laborers to

live. Today, Three Rocks has about 230 residents.

Raymond had an ingenious idea, and he made it into a reality. He truly achieved the "American Dream." Raymond's children, 17 grandchildren, and 31 great-grandchildren have an outstanding role model that they will hold in their hearts forever.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great respect that I ask my colleagues in the House of Representatives to pay tribute to the life of Raymond Minnite. His presence will be greatly missed, but his legacy will surely live on in Fresno County.

HONORING DONALD AND BARBARA HORAN

HON. LUKE MESSER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 27, 2013

Mr. MESSER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of my constituents, Donald and Barbara Horan of Greensburg, Indiana.

Don and Barb were married and actively involved in their church and community. After working with several local businesses, Don acquired Collection Associates Incorporated and developed it into a thriving business. Don served on the Decatur County Fair Board, Greensburg Redevelopment Board, and the Decatur County Community Foundation. Barb volunteered with Tri Kappa and the Decatur county YMCA Board, among others. They were both actively involved in St. Mary's Catholic Church and the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

Don and Barb will forever be remembered as devoted parents to their daughters and lifelong friends of their community. I ask the entire 6th Congressional District to keep their four daughters Rebecca, Olivia, Regan, and Adrienne, along with the entire extended Horan family, in your thoughts and prayers.

OPPOSITION TO SEQUESTRATION

HON. JUAN VARGAS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 27, 2013

Mr. VARGAS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong opposition to sequestration. I am appalled by the complete and utter abdication of leadership and responsibility by Speaker BOEHNER and House Republicans to bring a bill to the House Floor that would replace the catastrophic and needless sequester.

Early this week, President Obama reminded us of the untold damage that the automatic, across-the-board spending cuts would inflict on our fragile economy, on the lives of working families, children, students, and on our military. I am outraged that House Republicans would stand idly by and allow these disastrous, self-inflicted cuts to go into effect causing between one and two million people to lose their jobs. We should be adopting policies that create jobs, instead of succumbing to policies that eliminate jobs.

California residents cannot afford another GOP-manufactured crisis. That is why, on behalf of all the residents of California, and es-

pecially the residents of the 51st Congressional District, I have joined with my colleagues to call on the House Republican leadership to do what is right for our Nation's economy, security and families and take action this week on a balanced plan to avert these damaging and mindless spending cuts.

The Office of Management and Budget released a report earlier this week that substantiates many of the devastating and widespread impacts that sequestration will have on local communities in California, several of which are included below:

Military Readiness and Jobs: In California, approximately 64,000 civilian Department of Defense employees would be furloughed, reducing gross pay by around \$399.4 million in total. My district includes portions of San Diego, which has one of the largest military presences in the Nation and is the headquarters for the Navy Region Southwest. These cuts to defense spending will cause the maintenance and repair of ships and aircraft to be cancelled, putting at risk the safety and security of our men and women in uniform. As nearly 25% of the jobs in San Diego County are directly connected to the defense industry, these brutal cuts will cause extraordinary harm to the struggling economy and put thousands of jobs at risk.

Job Search Assistance: Around 130,000 fewer Californians will get the help and skills they need to find employment as California will lose about \$3.3 million for job search assistance, referral, and placement. My district includes Imperial County which suffers from one of the highest unemployment rates in the Nation, nearly 30%. My constituents cannot afford to lose critical employment assistance.

Nutrition for Seniors: California would lose approximately \$5.4 million to help provide meals for seniors. Many of our seniors live on limited fixed incomes and rely on these programs to help provide basic necessities. We cannot sit here on our hands and allow our seniors to go hungry.

Child Care: Up to 2,000 disadvantaged and vulnerable children could lose access to child care, which is also essential for working parents to hold down a job.

Vaccines for Children: In California around 15,810 fewer children will receive vaccines for diseases such as measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus, whooping cough, influenza, and Hepatitis B due to reduced funding for vaccinations. It is callous and unacceptable to put the health and safety of our children at risk.

Public Health: California will lose approximately \$2.6 million to help upgrade its ability to respond to public health threats including infectious diseases, natural disasters, and biological, chemical, nuclear, and radiological events. In addition, California will lose about \$12.4 in grants to help prevent and treat substance abuse, resulting in around 9,400 fewer admissions to substance abuse programs. And the California State Department of Public Health will lose about \$2 million resulting in around 49,300 fewer HIV tests.

Teachers and Schools: California will lose approximately \$87.6 million for primary and secondary education, putting around 1,210 teacher and aide jobs at risk. In addition about 187,000 fewer students would be served and approximately 320 fewer schools would receive funding.

Head Start: Head Start and Early Head Start services would be eliminated for approximately 8,200 children in California, reducing