

For 34 years, Jack Connell represented Augusta, Georgia, as a member of the Georgia House of Representatives. For 26 of those years, Jack had the distinction of serving as the speaker pro tempore of the Georgia House. A representative of the Greatest Generation, Jack served in the Army Air Force as a bombardier navigator during World War II. He then worked as a traveling salesman, went on to own several businesses, and began a long career of public service.

Someone once said that it's easier to fight for your country than it is to live for your country. Jack Connell did both, for which we can all be grateful.

#### SKILLS ACT

(Mrs. WAGNER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. WAGNER. Madam Speaker, the 113th Congress was elected to tackle the "big problems"—and there is no bigger problem facing our country right now than getting hardworking Americans back to work with the skills they need to compete in a very tough economy.

Today, the Federal Government currently operates more than 50 different job training programs, many of which are duplicative, at a cost of \$18 million annually to taxpayers. With nearly 20 million Americans unemployed or underemployed, it's time to cut through the red tape and start training individuals with the skills they need to find high-paying middle class jobs.

That's why the House will take up the SKILLS Act, which streamlines 35 overlapping job training programs, including many identified by the non-partisan GAO, and eliminates unnecessary red tape so that State and local resources go directly to job seekers.

According to a report released by St. Louis Community College, 76 percent of employers found that workers lacked the proper training to contribute right away, and the most in-demand certificates for job openings were for registered nurses. The SKILLS Act addresses those needs.

It's time we start investing in nurses, medical assistants, and manufacturing technicians, and be sure to cut the ineffective government programs that do little to train individuals with skills they need.

#### UNEMPLOYMENT IS A PRIORITY

(Ms. WILSON of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. WILSON of Florida. Madam Speaker, it's now been 803 days since I arrived in Congress and the Republican leadership has still not allowed a single vote on serious legislation to address our unemployment crisis. My question is simple: Why then are we here?

In poll after poll, election after election, unemployment ranks as our constituents' number one priority. And for

good reason. Unemployment deprives people of their basic dignity, their health care, their homes, and their self worth. High levels of unemployment deprive the government of the tax revenue needed to overcome our fiscal challenge. President Obama has proposed the comprehensive American Jobs Act to get people trained, get people working, and get people contributing to the tax base.

Madam Speaker, it's time to bring this bill to the floor. Our mantra should be simple: jobs, jobs, jobs. People are suffering. People are hurting for jobs, jobs, jobs.

#### PRESENTING A TIMELY BUDGET

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

Mr. HULTGREN. Madam Speaker, today I speak of the importance of working together to adopt a budget on time in the 113th Congress. For the last few years, the House has passed a responsible budget that would rein in spending and debt without raising taxes while protecting the vital safety nets of Medicare and Social Security—only to see the Senate fail to pass any budget at all. This is irresponsible and cannot happen again this year.

The American people and families back home in my district in Illinois cannot afford a government that does not meet its basic responsibility to adopt a budget on time each and every year. The very first bill I introduced as a Member of Congress was the Constitutional Congressional Pay Accountability Act in 2011, legislation that said if Congress failed to meet its statutory deadline to pass appropriations bills on time, then Members of Congress should not get paid. This simple and straightforward concept defines what every American family and job creator understands: that you cannot spend more than you take in.

Let's act responsibly to pass a budget and work with our colleagues in the Senate to ensure we get the job done this year.

#### HONORING SERGEANT MAJOR ANDREA FARMER

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

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Madam Speaker, I rise to honor and congratulate Sergeant Major Andrea Farmer, who will soon retire from the United States Army after 30 years of service.

A native of North Carolina's First District, Sergeant Major Farmer's work ethic has allowed her to successfully hold a variety of positions, including Chief Career Management NCO. Sergeant Major Farmer's abilities resulted in her being awarded a master's degree in Human Relations and Interdisciplinary Studies and receiving the Army Women's Legacy Scholarship Award. Sergeant Major Farmer will re-

tire as program manager for the 23rd Quartermaster, Sexual Harassment Assault Response Prevention Program, where she works very hard to aid victims of sexual assault.

It is with great pleasure that I congratulate her upon her retirement, and also to recognize Andrea's parents, Bobby and Mildred Farmer of Nash County, North Carolina, who instilled high values in their daughter many years ago.

I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking Sergeant Major Farmer for 30 years of service to our country.

□ 0910

#### REFORM ENTITLEMENTS

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

Mr. PITTENGER. Madam Speaker, for too many years our leaders have irresponsibly put off the tough decisions necessary to place our country on sound financial footing. President Obama seems to not be focused on the problem, as he never even mentioned our nearly \$17 trillion debt during his inaugural address and State of the Union speech.

Yet Peter Orszag, former Budget Director for President Obama, recently told a bipartisan group of freshman Representatives:

Unless you deal with the debt, you're playing games with our economic future. Unless you find savings with entitlements, you're playing games with the debt. You better go fix it.

American taxpayers deserve and expect an accountable government, not a bloated bureaucracy in need of credit counseling. Each passing year makes the decision more difficult and the changes more painful. Medicare will be insolvent by 2024, which means we are rapidly squandering any chance to fix the problem.

Our \$17 trillion debt, which currently results in \$220 billion in annual interest payments, is a drag on our economy, deterring our ability to create jobs for American families. Reforming entitlements must be done to help our economy grow today and provide for the future.

Any plan to reform entitlements must preserve the current benefits promised to this generation while providing guaranteed options for future generations; however, we must be strong and take action. We must enact a responsible plan to preserve these important safety nets for future generations; for if we do nothing, we will watch as American families suffer even more after Medicare and Social Security collapse while our Nation faces economic collapse.

#### HONORING MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT RICHARD PITTMAN

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

Mr. McNERNEY. Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me today in recognizing the Medal of Honor Day, as well as honoring Master Sergeant Richard Pittman, a veteran who served more than 20 years in the Marines. Mr. Pittman earned the Medal of Honor, the Defense Distinguished Service Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal, and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal, along with others.

Mr. Pittman was born in Stockton, California, and attended local schools. After graduating from Franklin High School in Stockton, he enlisted in the United States Marine Corps. During the Vietnam War, he was assigned as a rifleman to the First Platoon, Company I, Third Battalion, Fifth Marines, and would later become squad leader.

While on assignment near the demilitarized zone, his leading company came under enemy fire at close range. Mr. Pittman risked his life to save many of his comrades while he exchanged fire and destroyed many enemy forces.

I've been fortunate to get to know Mr. Pittman over the last several years and know that he cares deeply for this country. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Master Sergeant Richard Pittman and all the Nation's other veterans for their bravery and service to the United States.

#### HEALTH CARE CONSCIENCE RIGHTS ACT

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

Mr. FLEMING. Madam Speaker, the Obama administration's assault on religious freedom must stop. The so-called HHS mandate established under ObamaCare forces individuals, charities, and businesses to buy health insurance that includes coverage for drugs which may destroy human life.

This week a Federal judge stopped the enforcement of the HHS mandate against the founder of Domino's Pizza, the former founder. Like many other companies, Domino's Farms Corporation, the company which was granted this injunction, offers health insurance to its employees, but not coverage for drugs that could destroy human life. To do so would violate the religious rights and beliefs of the company's owners.

That injunction is a victory, but no one should have to battle the Federal Government in court to stop it from infringing on religious values. That's why I am proud to introduce with my colleagues, DIANE BLACK and JEFF FORTENBERRY, the Health Care Conscience Rights Act, a bill that rests on the bedrock principle that our government must not force people to violate their religious and moral beliefs.

I ask everyone to sign on today and support this bill.

#### HONORING YOANI SANCHEZ

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

Mr. GARCIA. Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize a courageous woman whose work on behalf of the advancement of human rights has inspired millions throughout the world and continues to shine a light on the cause of freedom just 90 miles away.

For over 10 years, Yoani Sanchez has documented the realities of life in Cuba through her blog, Generation Y, and drawn worldwide attention to Cuba's civil society. Her riveting accounts detailing human rights violations and other injustices have earned her praise and recognition throughout the world. Yoani stands as a beacon of hope for Cuba's future, and her strength in the face of incredible odds has earned our community's profound admiration and respect.

If my colleagues would indulge me, I would like to say a few words in Spanish.

It's a great honor to recognize the courage of Yoani Sanchez who serves as a source of inspiration for the millions around the world who seek freedom and human rights.

Yoani will be here next week. I invite my colleagues to take the opportunity to meet this very courageous woman.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FLEMING). The gentleman will provide a translation to the Official Reporters.

#### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Mr. Brian Pate, one of his secretaries.

#### SUPPORTING KNOWLEDGE AND INVESTING IN LIFELONG SKILLS ACT

##### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. KLINE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 803.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Minnesota?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 113 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 803.

The Chair appoints the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) to preside over the Committee of the Whole.

□ 0917

##### IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 803) to reform and strengthen the workforce investment system of the Nation to put Americans back to work and make the United States more competitive in the 21st century, with Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIR. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

The gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KLINE) and the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota.

Mr. KLINE. Madam Chair, I rise in strong support of H.R. 803, the Supporting Knowledge and Investing in Lifelong Skills Act, the SKILLS Act, and yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Despite an increase in hiring last month, our Nation is still experiencing a jobs crisis. Twelve million Americans are searching for work. Nearly 5 million of these unemployed workers have been without a job for 6 months or longer. For many Americans, the hope of a new job grows more desperate the longer they are unemployed.

Jack Walerius has not had full-time work for more than 3 years and has lost count of the number of times he has applied for a job. He recently told CBS News:

From my perspective, from my eyes, I still see that we're in a deep recession.

Today, we have an opportunity to advance reforms that will give workers like Jack a better chance to succeed. Our economy is extremely competitive and constantly changing. Unfortunately, the workforce training system has failed to keep up. It's not surprising when you consider the size of the bureaucracy that now exists.

This chart is a snapshot of the current job training system. It includes more than 50 programs spread across nine Federal agencies. President Obama described it as a "maze of confusing training programs." I completely agree.

□ 0920

The current system is inefficient and ineffective. For individuals served through the Workforce Investment Act, less than one in five completed training. Fewer than half of those who received employment assistance such as job searches and resume writing were able to find work.

To make matters worse, Federal mandates stifle the engagement and innovation of employers and State and local leaders. Onerous rules prevent workers from accessing the training they need when they need it. And taxpayer dollars are being spent with little accountability.

A bloated bureaucracy is standing between workers and the support they need. We've tried the Washington-knows-best approach, and it isn't working. It's time to move in a new direction. It is time for a workforce training system that empowers job creators to meet the demands of a dynamic economy. It is time to give State and local leaders greater freedom to serve their communities. It is time for a workforce training system that spends taxpayer money wisely. It is time to invest less