

Mr. DINGELL, Michigan

APPOINTMENT AS MEMBERS TO MILITARY COMPENSATION AND RETIREMENT MODERNIZATION COMMISSION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair announces the Speaker's appointment, pursuant to section 672(b) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 (Pub. L. 112-239), and the order of the House of January 3, 2013, of the following individuals on the part of the House to the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission:

Mr. Dov S. Zakheim, Silver Spring, Maryland

Mr. Michael R. Higgins, Washington, D.C.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE DEMOCRATIC LEADER

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Honorable NANCY PELOSI, Democratic Leader:

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, May 17, 2013.

Hon. JOHN BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House, U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC.

DEAR SPEAKER BOEHNER: Pursuant to section 4(c) of House Resolution 5, 113th Congress, I am pleased to re-appoint The Honorable James P. McGovern of Massachusetts as Co-Chair of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission.

Thank you for your attention to this appointment.

Sincerely,

NANCY PELOSI,
Democratic Leader.

HONORING MR. AND MRS. BENTON MARKS

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

Mr. ROKITA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an exceptional Hoosier couple, Mr. Benton and Mrs. Sandi Marks, who are being honored with the 2013 HAI-Life Distinguished Service Award by the Hasten Hebrew Academy of Indianapolis.

Mr. Marks has served as president of both the Hasten Hebrew Academy and the Bureau of Jewish Education, as Jewish Federation campaign chair and president, and as chairman of the State of Israel Bonds. He has also served as a member of the Indiana Judicial Nominating Commission, and has volunteered with numerous civic and professional organizations.

Mrs. Marks has devoted her life to education, serving on the Hasten Hebrew Academy Education Committee and as a board member of the school. She recently retired from Washington Township Schools but continues to serve the district and Indiana as a school psychologist. She is also a trust-

ed friend and confidante of mine on education issues in my capacity as chairman of the subcommittee on K-12 education.

Mr. and Mrs. Marks are wonderful entrepreneurs, excellent philanthropists, and most of all, friends. I am honored to know them, even since my days as Indiana Secretary of State, and I know they will continue to serve as leaders in our Indiana community for many years to come.

CONGRATULATING MATTHEW MADDOX

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

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to follow the gentleman from Indiana, the subcommittee chairman of K-12, because I'm going to recognize a leader in our K-12 community in Illinois.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Matthew Maddox for being named the VFW National Citizenship Education Elementary Teacher of the Year.

Matthew is a fifth-grade teacher at Columbus Elementary School in Edwardsville, Illinois, and he was selected as the Teacher of the Year from among 60,000 other teachers for his dedication to education, innovative teaching style, and resource development.

In the classroom, Matthew has made it a commitment to recognize the sacrifices made by our Nation's veterans by regularly inviting veterans to visit and share their stories to help make history much more relevant to his students.

In addition to being an educator, Matthew has proudly served our country in the Illinois National Guard's 445th Chemical Company since July 2011, and has enrolled in officer training school at Camp Lincoln in Springfield, Illinois.

Far too often, our Nation's educators do not deserve the credit and recognition they deserve. So I am proud to stand here today to congratulate Matthew Maddox for the work he does in the classroom, and also to thank him for his service to our country.

□ 1940

HONORING THE SERVICE AND SACRIFICE OF OUR NATION'S VETERANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. FORTENBERRY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I recently visited the Eastern Nebraska Veterans Home in Bellevue. It's a lovely place that is well-designed to care for those who have served in the protection of our country. I had a nice

visit, talking with many of the veterans there, each with their own unique stories of service to our Nation.

A conversation, though, with one man in particular, Mr. Speaker, has stuck with me ever since. Now in his nineties, Don McBride sat quietly as I was speaking to the entire group. But as I was leaving, I went over to him to thank him for his commendable service to our Nation; but as soon as I got those words out, Don stopped me.

You see, Don has a very interesting story. As I understand it, he did not directly enlist in the United States military. It was a unique situation. Don was a pilot with Pan Am Airlines, and during World War II, he helped the war effort by flying planes into China. During World War II, China was our ally.

In all, Don flew 524 missions. He had to put a few planes down a couple of times because they were shot so badly, but he didn't stop. He and his fellow pilots did whatever was needed for the war effort, whether it was engaging Japanese aircraft or delivering aid to remote places in that rough terrain.

For his service, Don was awarded the Presidential Citation, four Bronze Stars, the Air Medal, the Distinguished Flying Cross, and the China Service Medal. He didn't want to tell me all this. He was quite reserved about it, but his nurse encouraged him to share his story.

But, again, as I went to thank him, Don stopped me and he said this, Mr. Speaker. He said: We don't need any thanks. Every man here did it because he wanted to, because it was necessary. I don't know of anybody who has ever been sorry for serving.

Mr. Speaker, it is this spirit of selflessness that lives on in so many of our veterans and the military men and women who are serving our Nation today. They gave, and continue to give, for one simple reason: it is necessary and it is their duty.

On Memorial Day, this coming Monday, we will gather for an occasion that is both solemn and joyful. We honor those who gave everything in service to their countrymen. The formal remembrance of fallen heroes mixes feelings of both sorrow and pride. That a person would lay down his life for his friends, for another, is the noblest of human ideals. That we would unite in gratitude to reflect on the sacrifices of those who have gone before us is one of the greatest human expressions.

And for those who are veterans, Mr. Speaker, who have stood next to persons who have given their all, perhaps holding them as they died, watching helplessly as war consumed another innocent life, their living presence, Mr. Speaker, the living presence of our veterans today is an honor to those who did not come home.

Communal remembrance is a long-standing human tradition. When we focus our remembrance on the war veterans who have sacrificed for us, the act is particularly meaningful and appropriate.

Ever since there has been fighting and dying in war, there's been a calling in the human heart to memorialize the fallen heroes of battle, especially in this Nation, born in war, where the legacies of those who died defending our country are written on our hearts and are seen clearly in the blessings of liberty that we still hold today.

In spite of our political divisions, in spite of the rancor and divisiveness that sometimes exists in this body and in our Nation, we are still called to yield to proper reflection about that which is noble and that which is good.

Mr. Speaker, yet, for nearly 100 years, our fledgling country did not have a day set aside to remember and celebrate the sacrifices of fallen soldiers. In America, the practice of Memorial Day began in the years immediately following the Civil War.

In 1868, the head of an organization of Union veterans established what was called Decoration Day at the time for the Nation to decorate the graves of the Civil War dead with flowers. The day picked was May 30, a day in late spring to ensure that the flowers would be in full bloom across our Nation.

Throughout the countryside, people began to visit cemeteries to decorate the graves of fallen soldiers, both Union and Confederate. On one noted occasion, women living near Columbus, Mississippi, deep within the defeated Confederacy, were so disturbed by the neglected graves of Union soldiers that they took care to see that these graves were properly decorated as well.

Decoration Day grew in popularity and in practice, and by the early 1900s, ceremonies were held on May 30 throughout the Nation. After World War I, the day was expanded to honor those who have died in all American wars. Decoration Day soon became known as Memorial Day. But it was only in 1971 that Memorial Day was declared a national holiday by an act of Congress, to be celebrated annually on the last Monday in May.

Mr. Speaker, this coming Monday, we will continue this solemn tradition and reflect upon its profound meaning. We honor those fallen heroes of yesterday for their sacrifices on our behalf. Their bravery has afforded us the liberty and security we enjoy today.

But the price of the blessings of peace has not come without great cost. Since the Revolutionary War, more than 42 million Americans have risked their lives for our country. Of those, more than 656,000 servicemembers have died in battle. Their loss runs deep in the lives of those whom they left behind. Wives lost husbands, husbands lost wives, parents lost children, and children lost parents. The soldier's ultimate sacrifice is not merely his own, Mr. Speaker.

In 1944, along the northern coastline of France in a place called Normandy, the future of civilization hung in the balance. At 6:30 a.m. on June 6, the first wave of American troops landed at a place called Omaha Beach. As their

Higgins boat troop carriers opened, 18- and 19-year-old young men from cities and farms, from New York to Nebraska, were asked to do the impossible—dash across hundreds of yards of open beach with no cover, in the face of a hail of German machine gun fire and mortars, and take the high ground.

Somehow, somehow, they did this. They withstood the violence and made their way to the steep hillside.

Mr. Speaker, last winter I stood where those soldiers landed, at water's edge, and looked across that beach. It is hard to get the mind around the chaos of that day, to feel what they felt as the horror unfolded before them.

I made my way to that steep hillside, now so peaceful and lovely, and stood in a German machine gun bunker. A young German soldier named Severloh manned the machine gun that day. And in a book that he wrote shortly before he died a few years ago, Severloh said that he wept as he fired his gun at the slaughter that unfolded before him.

I walked around the nearby American cemetery, with its orderly rows of white crosses testifying to the dear price our soldiers paid. I stopped at the grave of a young man named Billy D. Harris, from Oklahoma. Billy D. Harris had married young and died young. His wife didn't know that her husband had been killed and buried there until about 10 years ago. Such is the chaos of war. She never remarried. She had all her hopes that her husband would one day return to her.

I proceeded on to the little town of Sainte-Mere-Eglise, where our airborne troops landed the night before the D-day invasion.

□ 1950

Some fell into the town square occupied by Germans. One soldier's parachute got caught on the church roof and he hung there as the battle raged below. A replica of the parachute and soldier still hangs from the church today.

In August of 1944, a young medical doctor left his wife and two children and entered the Army. He was first headquartered at a hospital in England, where the last official records show that he was located. As Patton's Army moved against the Germans, Captain Luther Sexton Fortenberry went into action in France, probably to begin field operations there. In November of 1944, he was killed by ordnance explosion. He was my grandfather. He was initially buried at the cemetery at Sainte-Mere-Eglise. Now he is reinterred here in Washington at Arlington National Cemetery.

As part of our civic life, Mr. Speaker, we honor the memory of all those who have served us. We all know of the great battles and heroic sacrifices at places like Bunker Hill, Omaha Beach, Khe Sanh, and Fallujah. What we do not know are the untold stories, witnessed by no one, of Americans who fought it out to the death to preserve our country. We also do not know the

untold stories of the many who left their families and quietly performed their duty with no questions or demands made; the veterans who maintained tanks and aircraft, cooked, computed, cleaned, and drove.

Today, we honor our loved ones and ancestors lost long ago as well as those who have left us more recently. The sting of loss is not so distant for some whose loved ones have given their lives of late in Iraq and Afghanistan. Of the American soldiers who have been killed there, 72 were Nebraskans.

Like so many of our colleagues, Mr. Speaker, I have attended many funerals and memorial services for those who have been killed from my district. I have seen many of the families bravely bear the weight of this devastation. I have seen communities come together to honor their local heroes and to help bring healing to these hurting families. I could not be more proud of these patriots and their family members for their remarkable bravery, their remarkable honor, their character, their selflessness—young men and women of the highest caliber who, like so many before them, gave themselves for their country, fighting courageously for America and our ideals of liberty, equality, and justice for which they died.

Mr. Speaker, I was recently contacted by the family of John Douangdara. John and his family are new Americans. His parents came here from Laos. He was killed several years ago when his helicopter was shot down in Afghanistan. You may remember the incident. We lost 30 servicemembers that day. On Memorial Day, John's family is gathering in South Sioux City, Nebraska, to erect a statue in his honor. I'm grateful—no, perhaps privileged—to be asked to join them on that day.

Like his fellow soldiers, John Douangdara was an American. He was loyal. He was brave. And now he is free. His sacrifice, and the sacrifice of all American veterans, brings to mind the seriousness of our time.

Memorial Day is an especially important time of reflection for lawmakers. We carry a tremendous responsibility to recognize the real-life consequences behind our policy deliberations, analyses, and votes.

On that first Decoration Day in 1868, Major General John Logan offered his posts these words as he ordered them to decorate the graves of the war dead. He said this, Mr. Speaker:

We should guard their graves with sacred vigilance. Let pleasant paths invite the coming and going of reverent visitors and fond mourners. Let no neglect, no ravages of time, testify to the present or to the coming generations that we have forgotten as a people the cost of a free and undivided Republic.

Mr. Speaker, during a visit to a nearby hospital to see our wounded here in Washington, there was a soldier there whose wounds were pretty devastating. As I was leaving, I noticed there was a sign hanging on the outside of his door.

It said: America—home of the free because of the brave.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. POCAN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. POCAN. I rise today on behalf of the Congressional Progressive Caucus.

The Congressional Progressive Caucus has been fighting for economic fairness for the middle class and those striving to be in the middle class for this entire country. Today, we would like to talk specifically about the growing, skyrocketing student debt that we have in this country.

Just this past weekend, 6,200 students graduated from the flagship university in my State, my alma mater, UW-Madison. These young people leave Madison with new friends, new skills, new knowledge, and, most importantly, access to increased economic opportunity through their college diploma.

Students with a bachelor's degree have half the unemployment rate of those with a high school degree. In 2012, students with a bachelor's degree earned almost 80 percent more than someone with a high school diploma in a similar position. Unfortunately, these students are also leaving college with something else: unprecedented levels of student loan debt.

The drastically increasing student loan debt held by Americans across the country can be considered nothing less than a crisis. Not a looming crisis, but an urgent, already-here crisis. Total student debt in this country now tops \$1 trillion. That exceeds all the credit card debt in this country. And that's up from just \$200 billion in 2000, just 12½ years ago. Every second in America, total student debt increases by \$2,854. According to the New York Federal Reserve, total student debt has tripled over the last 8 years, representing a 70 percent increase in both the number of people with debt and the average debt held per person.

About two-thirds of the class of 2011 graduated with student debt. Their average debt was more than \$26,000. In my home State of Wisconsin, the weight of student loan debt is severely affecting college graduates' ability to support themselves and their families.

There's an organization in Wisconsin that I want to give a little thanks and credit to. One Wisconsin Now is a progressive think tank run by Scot Ross. This organization has made it one of their leading efforts to talk about rising students debt and the trillion-dollar debt that we have and what it's doing to our economy. Thanks to them, I have some stories and figures to share specific to Wisconsin, and nationwide.

According to one study from One Wisconsin, the average monthly pay-

ment made by Wisconsinites with a bachelor's or advanced degree is nearly \$400 a month. It's \$388, to be exact. Let's put it in this perspective. Before someone can pay their rent or their mortgage, their utilities, their groceries, child care, they already owe \$400 in student loans. If they're lucky, they'll have some funds left over to save for retirement.

□ 2000

Because of these exorbitant rates, it will take the average citizen in my State almost 19 years to pay off their student loan debt from a 4-year university.

There are some long-term economic effects to this. The effects of the skyrocketing costs are twofold:

Number one, at a time when a college degree is more important than ever to obtain reliable employment, we are in grave danger of pricing too many of our young students out of a college education. These drastic increases in tuition have occurred at the same time that we have seen the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression.

We know that to compete for the jobs of the 21st century and to thrive in a global economy, we need a growing, skilled, and educated workforce, particularly in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and math.

It is estimated that the U.S. will need 22 million more college-educated workers by the year 2018. Currently, driven partly by rising college costs, we are expected to fall short by 3 million workers. Our colleges and universities such as UW-Madison and Beloit College and others in my district have the talented faculty to produce our 21st-century workforce, but they need the students to teach and train. And an unaffordable college education is an unaffordable future for our country.

In the short term, we also see these effects on our economy. As students become more and more bogged down with high student loan debt, they're understandably reducing their expenditures in our current economy. According to one study by One Wisconsin, due to the high burdens put on students from their loans, new car purchases in our State are reduced by more than \$200 million annually, and that's just in the State of Wisconsin. Meanwhile, households with student loan debt are overwhelmingly more likely to rent a home than to own a home, affecting home sales throughout America.

Owning a home, buying a car—these aren't just typical byproducts of the American Dream. These are important components of our country's overall economic health. If our economy is to recover—not just in Wisconsin, but across the country—we need to see strength in these two markets.

So we find ourselves at a crossroads. Instead of providing an enriched and educational background and advanced economic opportunity for our young people, a college education is increasingly trapping students in endless debt,

preventing them from advancing economically and contributing to our economy.

If we continue to believe that an accessible, affordable, and quality education should be a national priority, that it is critical to our future economic prosperity, then we need to come up with a long-term plan to manage the skyrocketing costs of education.

Now, Democrats have already done a number of efforts in these areas. We've tried to increase the maximum Pell Grant from \$4,050 in 2014 to \$5,645 in 2016. We have increased income-based repayment programs to ensure that graduates can manage loan repayments during stressed economic times. We have tried to create the American Opportunity Tax Credit, providing a maximum of \$2,500 tuition tax credits to eligible families and students. We have provided loan forgiveness for graduates in public interest careers after 10 years of payments, and for everybody else after 25 years of payments. And we have required schools to give an online calculator so that students and families can estimate their costs based on their family's financial condition.

But we need to and we must do more over the long run. We can restore consumer protections for our students. We can increase our funding for higher education. And we can reauthorize the Higher Education Act and protect programs like Pell Grants that support low-income students attending college.

But as we all know, we have a pressing issue facing our body right now that will affect students who live in every single one of our districts. Unless we take action, on July 1 interest rates on subsidized Stafford loans will double, from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent. If we do nothing at a time when our country is still facing a steep economic recovery, 7 million low- and middle-income students nationwide will see their student loan rates increase. That's 7 million people in this country will have their rates increase on student loans. That will wind up costing student borrowers \$1,000 more a year. If we do nothing, that will add \$4.3 billion to students' debt burden in just 1 year alone. Quite simply, we cannot afford to do nothing. Allowing these interest rates to double would represent a dereliction of our duties.

Right now, banks can receive loans from the Federal Reserve at historically low levels, less than 1 percent. If banks can receive such loans, shouldn't we protect lower loans for our students who are struggling in today's economy more than anyone else?

Last year, before I arrived in Washington, Congress extended the 3.4 percent rate for 1 full year. There are a number of bills right now—including those introduced by my Democratic colleagues—that would extend the 3.4 percent rate by at least 1 year, if not more. But we must take action now before we risk drowning our future workforce in even more student loan debt.