

sorts of volunteerism to enter in, and certainly dollars that were shared from private sector sources and from FEMA at the Federal level and various other programs at the Federal Government. It will be an exhausting situation that will continue to drain the taxpayers as we move forward if we don't take action.

On this very solemn day of commemoration, as we call to mind all of the destruction that came into 24 States a year ago this evening, should be all the call to action that is required of us. Since then, it has been followed by devastation in Colorado, wildfires in the Southwest, and predictions that more and more damage will be part and parcel to a future that is allowed to go forward without the soundness of stewardship of the environment that ought to be a high priority in this House, in the United States Senate, and certainly across this Nation.

Sound leadership begins with the acknowledgement that there is a challenge out there and that the challenge is then met with accurate and detailed and information exchange that builds a dialogue that creates a package of response that indicates that we are a compassionate, caring, loving people in this Nation that through the Halls of this House can provide hope for this environment and hope to families who have suffered the consequences and hope to generations unborn as we pass to them a stronger sense of stewardship of this Earth.

It has been our pleasure in this hour to have shared many of our ideas, many of our concerns, many of the anecdotal bits that personalize a given situation for far too many, and we are thankful for the opportunity.

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

TRIBUTE TO OUR MILITARY VETERANS

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

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Speaker, tonight we are here 2 weeks before Veterans Day to take some time to pay tribute to so many of our outstanding veterans and for the great things that they have done. Arthur Ashe, a world-class tennis player, a hero to many, was once asked about heroism. He said:

True heroism is remarkably sober, very undramatic. It is not the urge to surpass all others at whatever cost, but the urge to serve others at whatever cost.

This describes our veterans so well—serving others at whatever cost.

Tonight, we give credit where credit is due. In honor of Veterans Day, we willingly say thank you, thank you to the 1 percent. Only 1 percent of Americans have worn the uniform. Over that time, they have produced exceptional results on behalf of freedom time and time again.

Army Chaplain Father Tim Vakoc was hit by an IED in Mosul, Iraq, in May of 2004. He suffered severe head wounds from the explosion and from shrapnel. He came home, but over time he succumbed to these wounds. The troops often asked Father Vakoc, Why did you go out so often with us when you could have stayed back on the base where it was safer? But, no, you came out with us into the fight, into the combat. He was quoted as saying:

The safest place for me to be is in the center of God's will; and if that is in the line of fire, then that is where I will be.

As I served as a surgeon in Iraq, it was part of my job to talk to troops whose comrade just was being taken back to the operating room, to talk to them before and after surgery when they were wounded. There are things you never forget from that.

I will never forget going into a room full of marines to tell them about the condition of their buddy before we operated, and sitting in that room hunched over was a marine praying his rosary. I will never forget how I felt when I went back an hour later to have to tell them that he didn't make it. They fight for their country, but they die for each other.

Tonight, we are honored to have several Members here, Members that very served, to tell their stories, to tell their stories about a hero that they have served with, to let America know about these great people, and to pay respect to our veterans.

At this time, I yield to the gentleman from Arkansas, Lieutenant Colonel TIM GRIFFIN, who is a colonel in the United States Army Reserve JAG Corps. He served in Iraq in 2006. He had been assigned to the Southeast Medical Area Readiness Support Group as a command judge advocate. When he went to Iraq, he was assigned to the 101st Airborne Division.

Mr. GRIFFIN of Arkansas. I thank the gentleman, and I thank the gentleman for his service.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk first here about a fellow Screaming Eagle, a fellow member of the 101st Airborne Division, who was wounded in action, Sergeant Carl Moore, III, from Bigelow, Arkansas, in the Second Congressional District, my district.

Sergeant Moore in early June of this year was wounded while on patrol in Afghanistan. A bullet struck him under his arm, puncturing one of his lungs and grazing his spine.

I pray for Carl's speedy recovery so he can get back to enjoying the things that he loves. My thoughts go out to his parents, Carl and Teresa of Conway, Arkansas, also in my district, and his wife, Heather, and their 4-year-old daughter, Addison.

□ 1930

This is just one example of the type of service that we should all be thankful for, and tonight I want to thank Sergeant Carl Moore for his service and for his sacrifice, and for his family's sacrifice.

When I think about all the vets who have impacted my life personally, it is a list that is too long to read, and they have impacted me in so many ways.

I often think of my grandfather who served in World War I in France in 1918. I never met my grandfather on my mother's side. He died in 1966, just 2 years before I was born, but he was in the Army. He processed through Camp Pike in Little Rock, Arkansas, where I did a lot of Reserve duty. I often thought of him when I was there. I went to basic at Fort Lee in Virginia, and come to find out, that is where he went. He went to Fort Lee before he went to France in 1918, and I thank him for his service.

I also want to mention one of our famous vets in closing, one of our most famous vets from the Second Congressional District of Arkansas, and that is Nick Bacon. We recently were able to name a post office after Nick Bacon. He is a Medal of Honor winner. He passed away recently. He was born in Caraway, Arkansas, in 1945. He enlisted in 1963 at age 17. The story goes that he was too young to enlist, so he just sort of fudged a little bit on the age. He was stationed in Germany for awhile, did a tour in Vietnam. He was wounded three times during his first tour in Vietnam when the helicopter he rode in collided with another, and all were killed but Bacon and one other. So he volunteered for a second tour in Vietnam because that wasn't enough. I want to read this little paragraph that talks about what happened that led to him being awarded the Medal of Honor.

On August 16, 1968, while leading a squad in Bravo Company's 1st Platoon, in an operation, Bacon and his unit came under fire from an enemy position. He personally destroyed the position with hand grenades, but the platoon leader was wounded on open ground. Bacon assumed command, led the platoon in destroying still more enemy emplacements. The 3rd Platoon lost its leader, and Bacon took command of that platoon as well and led both platoons against the remaining enemy positions. During the evacuation of the wounded, Bacon climbed the side of a nearby tank to gain vantage point and direct fire into enemy positions, despite being exposed to enemy fire himself. He was personally credited with killing at least four enemy soldiers and destroying an anti-tank gun. For his actions in this battle, Bacon received the Medal of Honor, formally presented to him by President Richard Nixon during a 1969 White House ceremony.

He earned multiple awards within the military for various accomplishments. In addition to the Medal of Honor, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal with two Valor devices, and two Purple Hearts.

Then he went back to Arkansas and years later served as the director of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and was reappointed by Governor Mike

Huckabee in that position, and he served until February 2005.

We lost Nick in 2010, but he is a shining example of the type of selfless service that veterans often give, demonstrate for their country, and I just want to say thank you to Nick Bacon and the many veterans that he represents, the thousands of veterans from Arkansas that he represents.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Ohio for putting this together. A lot of times we come down here and debate a lot of policy issues, but I think it is the right thing to do, to take this time tonight to honor our veterans.

Mr. WENSTRUP. I thank the gentleman from Arkansas.

At this time, I would like to recognize the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. YOUNG). Mr. YOUNG is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy. He was a rifle platoon commander as well as an intelligence officer, serving a decade in the military as a Marine Corps captain.

Mr. YOUNG of Indiana. I thank the gentleman from Ohio for his leadership in these early stages of his first tour in Congress. I know he is proud of his military background, and I know he is proud of our Nation's veterans. I am proud of my own service, and I am proud of our veterans as well, the veterans of Indiana's Ninth Congressional District, those veterans I served with.

And I would like to just highlight today one veteran who inspires me as I reflect upon his life, one veteran that I had the opportunity to get to know when I was at the United States Naval Academy. He is a fellow marine. And Veterans Day, you will recall, is a day of celebration. November 11 is a time we celebrate not only those living, but also those who have worn the uniform and died in the course of service.

So today, I would like to talk about my classmate, the class of 1995 at Annapolis, Doug Zembiec. Maybe some of you have heard of Doug. He is a man of quite a reputation. He was a two-time NCAA All-American wrestler at the Naval Academy. He was a leader. He had an amazing presence. Even among his fellow athletes who spent a lot of their hours preparing for the next match, the next game, he stood out. He worked especially hard, always went above and beyond. Because of his tireless work ethic, because of his infectious personality and a certain X factor about him, Doug just earned all sorts of friends. And he earned the respect of people in an atmosphere at a service academy where leaders and aspiring leaders are competing for the respect of their peers, and that really says something.

On May 31, 1995, Doug and I were commissioned as second lieutenants in the U.S. Marine Corps, at which point our careers took separate paths. After initial training at The Basic School in Quantico, Doug joined a Force Reconnaissance platoon. It was among the toughest of the United States Marines. We like to think we are all tough, but

we can certainly agree that Force Recon marines have earned the respect of their fellow marines and fellow Americans.

He was among the first to enter Kosova in 1999 with his first unit, and 5 years later, he found himself in command of Echo Company, 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines. During Operation Vigilant Resolve in 2004, Doug led his rifle company of 168 marines and sailors in the first ground assault into Fallujah. His remarkable leadership earned him a number of decorations. These things weren't important to Doug, but it is important that our country recognize our fearless leaders like him. We awarded him a Silver Star, a Bronze Star, two Purple Hearts for the wounds he suffered in the course of the Battle of Fallujah. His men were so impressed by the bravery and the principled leadership that Doug exhibited that they named him the "Lion of Fallujah." The Lion of Fallujah would serve four combat tours in Iraq.

In his final tour, on May 11, 2007, Doug was killed by small arms fire. He was always thinking of others first. Doug warned the Iraqi forces that he helped train to get down, but Doug himself did not make it.

A mutual friend of ours and fellow Naval Academy classmate, Eric Kapitulik, who was very close to Doug, he delivered a moving eulogy at Doug's funeral at the Naval Academy chapel. He read some words that were written by Doug himself in the closing of that eulogy, entitled, "Principles My Father Taught Me," and here they are:

Be a man of principle. Fight for what you believe in. Keep your word. Live with integrity. Be brave. Believe in something bigger than yourself. Serve your country. Teach. Mentor. Give something back to society. Lead from the front. Conquer your fears. Be a good friend. Be humble and be self-confident. Appreciate your friends and family. Be a leader and not a follower. Be valorous on the field of battle. And take responsibility for your actions. Never forget those that were killed, and never let rest those that killed them.

That is Doug Zembiec. May God continue to bless Doug Zembiec and his wife and beautiful child he left behind. May God continue to bless our Nation's veterans, and may God continue to bless this great Nation, the greatest Nation on Earth, America.

Mr. WENSTRUP. I thank the gentleman from Indiana, and thank you for sharing that story of heroism. So often we don't get to hear about our heroes today. They go unnoticed.

What you just spoke on reminds me of a gentleman named Mike Spann. Very few people know who Mike Spann is. Mike Spann was a marine, and he joined the CIA. After 9/11, 2001, he was the first American killed in Afghanistan. What is even more impressive about Mike Spann is what he wrote on his CIA application. He said:

I believe in the meaning of honesty and integrity. I am an action person who feels personally responsible for making changes in this world that are within my power, because if I don't, no one else will.

These are the type of people that we are here to honor tonight.

Next, it is my privilege to yield to the gentleman from Utah, CHRIS STEWART, an Air Force pilot for 14 years, flying both rescue helicopters and B-1 bombers. He holds three world speed records, including the world's record for the fastest nonstop flight around the world.

Mr. STEWART. Thank you, Mr. WENSTRUP, for organizing this Special Order honoring our country's heroes. It is a privilege for me to be with you tonight.

As you mentioned, I come from a family with deep roots in the military. I was a pilot for 14 years, and my father was a pilot in World War II. Four of my five brothers have served in the military. I have to tell you, my time flying in the military was, in many ways, the happiest years of my life. I remember I would be up flying, and I would think I can't believe that they pay me to do this. I would do this for free if I could.

In addition to my family members, three of my congressional staff are veterans. I know firsthand some of the sacrifices that come with service—the time away from family, the personal discomforts, the danger, being put in harm's way—for many of our soldiers, all to protect our Nation and to protect the freedoms of others.

There have been great sacrifices in the past. Some of those we have heard about tonight. I suspect that we will probably hear about some others.

I would like to mention one man from my hometown of Farmington, Utah. I think he is a great example of sacrifice and courage. His name is Lieutenant Colonel Jay Hess. He spent 5½ years as a prisoner of war at the Hanoi Hilton during the Vietnam war. During this time, you can imagine what he endured—starvation, beatings, isolation, and deprivations, which it is very difficult—probably impossible—for us to appreciate. After 2½ years, he was finally given a letter from his family. As he read this letter, he found himself smiling, and after awhile it hurt, because those smile muscles had not been exercised in 2½ years and he had lost that ability to smile. It was a joyous day when he was returned to his family, his wife and five children.

□ 1945

Despite all of this hardship, he looks back on his life and his experience with great humility and appreciation. He said, "How could I be so lucky? So fortunate? It is a good life." This man was a true American hero.

Heroism continues today. This fall I had the opportunity to honor four Army soldiers. Two of them, Sergeant Daryl Williams and Sergeant John Russell, were jogging here on the National Mall one morning when they heard a collision. They looked over and saw that a civilian had been hit by a bus. They didn't hesitate. They knew immediately what to do. They ran over, and using their shirts, they provided a tourniquet and they saved this

man's life. That may seem like a small thing, but it is a great example, once again, of the caliber of men and women that we find serving in our United States military. As Veterans Day approaches, I find myself humbled to share this background and experience with such people. I have always said that the military is the greatest incubator for leadership that there is anywhere in the world, and we see that demonstrated again and again.

Let me end with this. The United States of America is a special place. I recognize that most nations feel that way. Every one is proud of the land from which they come. I think God intended that they should feel that way. That is a good thing. Even though that is true, there is something special about this place. There is something truly unique about the United States, and there is no better example of that than the young men and young women that serve in our United States military. We don't fight to conquer people; we fight to keep a people free. We don't fight to capture a land; we fight to set a land free. The only thing we have ever asked is, as Colin Powell once said, the only land we have ever demanded is a tiny piece of pasture in which we could bury our soldier dead.

If you have ever been to a military cemetery—and they are spread all over the world, from France to England to the Netherlands to Panama to the Philippines to Japan—if you have walked among those stone-cold graves, then you know that this is sacred land.

A poet once wrote about these soldiers:

Here dead we lie, because we did not choose to live
And shame that land from which we had sprung
Life, to be sure, is nothing much to lose
But young men think it is
And we were all young

I, like millions of other Americans, will always be grateful for their sacrifice. I honor them, and once again I am grateful to be among them.

Mr. WENSTRUP. I thank the gentleman from Utah for his profound words and for sharing such a nice tribute.

Next, I yield to the gentleman from Nevada, Dr. JOE HECK. Dr. HECK is a colonel in the United States Army Reserve and commands the Medical Readiness Support Group. He was recently selected for general, and he continues to serve. Over time he has served us in Operation Joint Endeavor, Operation Noble Eagle, and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

I yield to the gentleman from Nevada.

Mr. HECK of Nevada. I would like to thank my brother in uniform, the gentleman from Ohio, for organizing this very important Special Order to pay tribute to some very special people, America's veterans, America's heroes.

I want to tell a story that I think epitomizes the very sacrifice and dedication that our men and women in uniform have to this Nation. The date was February 21, 2008. The place was Al

Asad, Anbar Province, Iraq. I was assigned as the chief of emergency services and aeromedical evacuation at a combat support hospital. A combat support hospital is similar to any inner city emergency department, with periods of hustle and bustle, kind of routine stuff, punctuated by moments of controlled chaos and sheer terror.

Such was that day on February 21. We were taking care of routine cases in the emergency services section when the radio crackled and we received a call from an incoming helicopter saying that they were bringing in a young Marine who had been shot in the chest. Of course we quickly focused on the task that would soon be at hand. As the chief, I was making assignments, making sure all our equipment was ready. We were ready to receive this casualty and make sure that we could return him home.

A couple of minutes later, the radio crackles again, and it is the helicopter calling in to tell us that the casualty was now unresponsive and that they have lost his pulse. A quiet fell over the resuscitation area. Everybody was singularly focused on what we were going to do for this young Marine when he arrived. The helicopter lands, we offload him, get him into the resuscitation suite, and we start doing what medical folks do, ripping off clothing, starting IVs, doing an assessment. It winds up that he received a single gunshot wound to the chest, just mere millimeters to the side of his trauma plate protecting his center of mass.

His eyes stared up at me lifeless as I was at the head of the bed. He was unresponsive. We quickly tried everything that we could to bring this young man back. We worked for over a half an hour doing things that in a civilian emergency department would be considered heroic, but we were going to do everything we possibly could. Alas, we were not successful. That young man was Lance Corporal Drew Weaver of St. Charles, Missouri, and he was 20 years old. He sacrificed and gave his last full measure of devotion to this country.

What happened next was even additionally awe-inspiring. My charge nurse, Lieutenant Colonel—now retired—Maria Tackett came into the room with a bucket of sudsy water and gingerly, carefully started to wash down Lance Corporal Weaver, wiping the dirt from his brow and his face, wiping off the now dried blood from his body. Just like a caring mother, she took care of this young 20-year-old Marine.

Just when I thought I couldn't see any other acts of compassion greater than that, two of my medics, young enlisted folks, came in with an American flag. I have no idea where they got it from. They might have taken it off the flagpole in front of the hospital. They carefully draped the flag over Lance Corporal Weaver, and then they both took up a position of parade rest at the foot of the bed. While we were waiting for Mortuary Affairs to come and re-

trieve Lance Corporal Weaver, they stood there and they stood there and they stood there.

I went in and said, "Guys, you need a break? Take a break. Sit down." Their response to me was, "Sir, never leave a fallen comrade." There they stood until Mortuary Affairs came to retrieve that young Marine.

Such is the story of those who sacrifice and of those who are dedicated to those who wear the uniform. I remember their names and I remember their faces to this day. I remember that day and the actions that those heroic men and women took, from Lance Corporal Weaver to the helicopter pilot to the medics in the back of that helicopter to my team and everything we tried to do. That is why we gather here tonight to pay tribute to these very special men and women.

May God bless our veterans, their families, their survivors, and may he continue to bless the greatest Nation on his Earth, the United States of America.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Thank you very much, Dr. HECK, Colonel Heck. Thank you for sharing that story. As a surgeon who served in Iraq, that was very moving to me and very familiar.

I think about how my experience in war has changed the national anthem for me. When I hear the "rockets red glare and bombs bursting in air," I think of those that we didn't save. When I think of "home of the brave, land of the free," I think of those that have saved us time and time again throughout our history.

At this time, I yield to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BENTIVOLIO). He is retired as a sergeant first class in the Army National Guard. He had service in Iraq in 2007 and served in Vietnam as an infantry rifleman from '70 to '71.

I yield to the gentleman from Michigan.

Mr. BENTIVOLIO. I thank the gentleman from Ohio and brother in arms for the opportunity to speak today.

Mr. Speaker, my grandfather served in World War I, and my father and uncle served in the 1940s. The gentleman who lived in the house across the street from where I grew up was a former sailor in World War II. His aircraft carrier was hit by a kamikaze.

Down the street a few houses, was someone who fought in the Korean war. His daughter, Cookie, gave me my first kiss. Near him lived another veteran who served on a destroyer in the Navy, and there were two men across the street from him who served together in General Patton's 3rd Army as part of the force that relieved the 101st Airborne at Bastogne. I can still see their faces. Their examples of service played a crucial role in why I served in the armed services.

Our next door neighbor was Charles Parker, Sr. As a Marine in World War II, he received the Purple Heart on Iwo Jima. His son, Charles, Jr., was my best friend. When I think of Chuck, I

still smile. He was the guy who stood up for the little guy. I remember one time when this big bully picked on this little kid and a fight started. Chuck rushed into action and broke up the fight. He defended the weak. Doing the right thing matters.

Charles Parker's name is inscribed on the Vietnam Wall memorial, panel 40 west, line 25. He died in service to his country on October 23, 1968. Doing the right thing matters.

I think my understanding of service can be best summed up in the message of the movie "Saving Private Ryan." Perhaps you have seen it. If you haven't, let me tell you what it is about. The movie begins with an elderly man walking through the cemetery off the beach at Normandy. His family is quietly following behind him. The scene then shifts to a landing craft heading for the beaches of Normandy on D-day. Tom Hanks plays the part of Captain Miller, 2nd Rangers. As the landing craft hits the beach, the soldiers quickly experience the horrors of battle.

Many of his comrades are killed and wounded in the scenes that follow. But after securing the beachhead, Captain Miller receives new orders. His new mission is to locate and bring home Private Ryan, played by Matt Damon, who is in the 101st Airborne. Ryan's three brothers were recently killed within weeks of each other, and the Army thinks that no family should lose four sons to war. With a small contingent of soldiers under his command, Captain Miller sets off to locate Ryan.

Over the course of a few days, Miller's group takes several losses. Eventually, they find him in a small village in France, but alas, he decides to stay and fight alongside his brothers in arms as they defend the small bridge in the village. During the battle, most of Miller's soldiers are killed. Only two remain. Captain Miller receives a mortal wound and sits gasping, his back against a motorcycle. He looks up at young Private Ryan and says with his last breaths, "Earn this. Earn this."

The scene changes to a close-up of Matt Damon. His face changes from young Ryan to the older man we met at the beginning of the movie. He is overlooking a gravestone that reads, "Captain Miller, 2nd Rangers." Old Ryan falls to his knees in front of the gravestone and says, "Not a day goes by that I don't remember what you all did for me. I tried to live my life the best that I could. I hope that was enough. I hope that, at least in your eyes, I have earned what all of you have done for me."

Let me tell you something. Not a day goes by that I don't remember what the fathers of my childhood friends and playmates did for us to protect the American Dream, and my good friend Charles Parker. No matter where your family hails from, no matter what your background is, as citizens of this great Nation, we must never let it be said that we have forgotten what our forefathers did for us.

To my fellow veterans of the 182nd Field Artillery of the Michigan Army National Guard, and to all the veterans past and present, thank you for your service. May God always bless America, and may we continue to be the home of the free because of the brave.

□ 2000

Mr. WENSTRUP. I thank the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BENTIVOLIO) for his words.

I would like to take a moment to tell you about James McNaughton, Staff Sergeant James McNaughton, Army Reservist, an MP, New York City policeman.

We served on the same base in Iraq; and one day he and some other sergeants were being tasked with a mission that was going to be dangerous, and one of them had to go. James McNaughton volunteered over the other two. He did that because the other two had children.

On that mission, Staff Sergeant James McNaughton was killed by a sniper; and today there are two families that have their father because of James McNaughton. This is the type of selfless service that we see from our troops day in and day out.

I had the opportunity to tell that story on TV one time, national cable TV. A couple of days later I got a call from James McNaughton's father who said they were so shocked to hear their son's name and so honored that he was remembered in that way.

We need to honor and remember all of our veterans, especially those that have made the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of us.

At this time, I am pleased to yield to the gentleman from Illinois, Mr. RODNEY DAVIS. Mr. DAVIS is not a veteran, but he is a supporter of veterans, and he will be speaking on behalf of one of his staff members. Outside of his office he has a sign that says, I hire veterans.

I yield to you, Mr. DAVIS.

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Thank you to my colleague from the great State of Ohio.

I am humbled to be here as a non-veteran, somebody who has not served our country in our military, but is so proud of those of you who have. And I am just honored to be able to be a part of this Special Order that you have arranged.

Mr. Speaker, this is an opportunity that many in this country will take for granted as they are watching this tonight, and not know that it is because of the sacrifices of those like my colleague BRAD WENSTRUP, who have served their country so well, that give us the freedoms today to stand on this floor and debate the issues that will impact this country for generations to come.

I would like to stand here as somebody who hasn't served to thank all of my colleagues who have come to this floor to honor those who have, who have served with them, those who have served our country and have had the

opportunity to come home and, as we have heard tonight, those who have served our country and paid the ultimate sacrifice.

So I would like to personally thank my colleague, TIM GRIFFIN from Arkansas, for his service, not only as a member of our military, but as a Member of this Congress.

I would like to thank my colleague, TODD YOUNG from Indiana, for his service in the military, and also for his service in this body.

I would like to thank my colleague, JOE HECK, Dr. JOE HECK, for his service for our Nation, not only in our Nation's military, but also in this body.

I would like to thank CHRIS STEWART, my good friend and colleague from Utah, for his service for this country and our military and, again, for his service today as a Member of Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank one who has yet to rise, Mr. DOUG COLLINS, for his service to our country as a member of our military, protecting our freedoms, and also for his service to the citizens of Georgia.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you for your service in our Nation's military and for the service that you provide today for the great citizens in the great State of Michigan.

Thank you on behalf of those of us who have not had the opportunity to serve. I want to say thank you for giving us this great Nation that we now have the opportunity to serve in this body.

Mr. Speaker, I, again, am humbled to rise today to talk about our veterans and the sacrifices they have made to ensure the freedom of every single American, and I want to specifically mention a couple of folks.

One is a good friend of mine who served our country in Vietnam, who came back injured and served my State, my great State of Illinois as a Member of the Illinois General Assembly.

He still serves the citizens of Illinois today as somebody who is a pharmacist, works in the private sector; but my friend, Representative Ron Stephens from Greenville, Illinois, now spends his time, his spare time, raising money to help our wounded warriors. He walked miles upon miles over the last 2 years to raise thousands of dollars to help those who made it back home but paid a price.

Representative Ron Stephens, thank you for your service in Vietnam, thank you for your service to the great State of Illinois, and thank you, sir, my good friend, for serving this country for our heroes who walk the streets with us today.

And one of those heroes, as my colleague from Ohio mentioned, is someone who is not only a good friend of mine, but he works for me in my office in Champaign, Illinois. His name is Garrett Anderson.

Garrett was on patrol in Iraq, ran over an IED. Garrett sacrificed his right arm. He sacrificed time away

from his family, and he sacrificed the road to recovery for the freedoms that we enjoy and take for granted every day.

Garrett now works with the veterans who are trying to access the benefits that they were promised; and Garrett was out here with me a few weeks ago as we stood here and did an unprecedented, bipartisan Special Order that honored all 79 living Congressional Medal of Honor recipients.

We stood here with my colleague, TULSI GABBARD, who has also served her country and continues to serve her country today in this body. We stood there side by side, making sure that we honored every single recipient.

These are our heroes, and I was humbled to see men and women from both parties come here to honor those who have served our country and showed acts of heroism.

But since that time, Mr. Speaker, we had someone else awarded, given the Congressional Medal of Honor, and I would like to stand here today because he didn't have the opportunity to have his story told until now.

I would like to honor today the heroic efforts of the newest Medal of Honor recipient, Captain William D. Swenson of the United States Army. Captain Swenson would have made the 80th living Medal of Honor recipient. However, Sergeant Nicholas Oresko passed away on October 4, leaving the number of Medal of Honor recipients at 79 still.

My thoughts and prayers are with Sergeant Oresko's family and friends.

Captain Swenson, though, was awarded the Medal of Honor for extreme bravery at the risk of his life, above and beyond the call of duty in the Kunar province in Afghanistan on September 8, 2009.

Captain Swenson's combat team was ambushed as it moved into the village of Ganjgal for a meeting with village elders. The enemy began unleashing a barrage of fire onto the team. Captain Swenson immediately returned fire and directed his Afghan border police, while simultaneously calling in suppressive fire.

Surrounded on three sides by enemy forces, Captain Swenson coordinated air assets and medical evacuation helicopter support to allow for the evacuation of the wounded.

He ignored enemy radio transmissions demanding surrender and maneuvered uncovered to render medical aid to a wounded fellow soldier and moved him for air evacuation. With complete disregard for his own safety, Captain Swenson unhesitatingly led a team in an unarmored vehicle, exposing himself to enemy fire to recover the wounded.

Captain Swenson's team returned to the battlefield amidst enemy fire again to recover three fallen marines and one fallen Navy corpsman. His exceptional leadership and gallantry during 6 hours, 6 hours of continuous fighting, rallied his teammates and effectively disrupted the enemy's assault.

It is for his unwavering courage and heroism that I am proud to honor the actions today of Captain William D. Swenson.

And I would be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I did not mention the role that one of our other colleagues and veterans and heroes who have served this great country in the military and who serve this country now in this body, my colleague, DUNCAN HUNTER, who played a role in making sure that Captain Swenson was awarded this great honor as the now 79th living recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Thank you, Mr. WENSTRUP, for what you have done for veterans tonight and what you continue to do every single day that you are here. May God bless you. May God bless all those who you have honored this evening, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

Mr. WENSTRUP. I thank the gentleman from Illinois for that fine tribute.

I would like to share a story about Major John Pryor, John Pryor, MD, trauma surgeon from Philadelphia. He joined the Army Reserve in 2004; but on September 11, 2001, seeing that his Nation was under attack, he got in his car and he drove to Ground Zero, hitchhiked all the way in after he drove as far as he could. And after that, he took care of people.

After that, he started thinking that there is more that he could do for his country. He joined the Army Reserve. We served together in Iraq, became good friends; and after returning, we did a trauma conference together in Cincinnati.

John returned to Iraq in 2008; and on Christmas Day, after attending mass, he walked out and he was hit by a mortar and killed.

John was the type of person that did all for others. He left behind, unfortunately, a wife and three children.

Above his desk he had a quote by Albert Schweitzer that said:

Seek always to do something good, somewhere. Every man has to seek in his own way to realize his true worth. You must give some time to your fellow man. Even if it is a little thing, do something for those who need help, something for which you get no pay but the privilege of doing it. For remember, you don't live in a world all your own. Your brothers are here too.

It is now my privilege to yield to the gentleman from Georgia, Mr. DOUG COLLINS. He serves as the Air Force Reserve Chaplain with the 94th Airlift Wing.

Doug has ministered to members of our military as a chaplain in the Air Force Reserve since 2002. He served a combat tour, stationed at Balad Air Force Base in Iraq in 2008.

I yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. COLLINS).

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. Thank you, I appreciate that.

Mr. Speaker, it is just an honor to be here tonight, for in 2 weeks, Americans across this great Nation will pause to remember, to honor, and to commemo-

rate the men and women who have served the cause of liberty while wearing the uniform.

Veterans Day origins come from the battlefields of Europe when, on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, the guns of World War I fell silent.

Of all of our Nation's holidays, Veterans Day holds a special meaning for me and my family. This day affords a unique opportunity to reflect and to remember people I have served alongside in the uniform and out.

It also reminds me tonight of not only those that I served in uniform with, but I continue to serve with who are actually members of my staff. I serve with two, one who is with me tonight in the gallery, retired Master Sergeant Bill Kokley, and also Vernon Robinson, Major, United States Army, who serves in my D.C. office as well.

It is just a reminder of the continuity of those who serve and the areas in which they serve as we go forward each and every day in our daily walk.

As a chaplain serving at Balad Air Base in Iraq, I was privileged to know and to comfort those who bore the wounds of battle. I watched in awe at the absolute determination and phenomenal dedication of doctors, nurses and medical technicians as they fought back against death itself to save the lives of our military warriors.

And because of their skills, more than 98 percent of those arriving at Balad alive left Balad alive. That is an amazing statistic and a compliment to you, Congressman, and others like you, and seeing the others at night on the flight line, both Army and Air Force, Marine, Navy, and even Coast Guard, in the middle of the desert.

I also think of the young airman I met one night while he was on guard duty. He didn't come to the gate when I first drove up, and I sat there for a second in the truck, and then he didn't come out. And he finally came out and he came rumbling out of the back. He said, oh, Chap, I'm sorry I didn't see you sitting there. I didn't see you. I apologize.

I looked at him and I said, okay if it is just me, but if the colonel had come along, it might have been a different issue. What were you doing? I was going to try and help him.

And I was ready for some excuse, that he was tired or whatever, and he got out a little piece of paper and he had written down. And I said, what are you doing?

He said, well, I was figuring up my salary, because now I have got a little bit of money, and last year wasn't real good at home. Mom and Dad, Mom was sick and Dad got laid off, and he said, we didn't have a lot of Christmas.

□ 2015

He said, "But this year, I am making big money." He is an AIC. "Big money." He said, "I want to make sure that I will be able to send stuff home so

my brother and my sister can have Christmas.” That is what I met that night.

When I came home, I carried with me a reminder, because one day, I picked up the Stars and Stripes—you know, in a war zone, you pick up anything to read, and I would pick up the Stars and Stripes, pick up everything. One of those papers I happened to just be reading while I was eating, and I opened it up, and in the Stars and Stripes, they carry pictures of those who did not make it. They died in combat. I remember opening that page up, and I looked, and along the bottom, there were eight pictures. I remember distinctly four of them because I stood beside their bed and held their hand in Balad. I carry that picture and that flag.

As Congressman WENSTRUP has said, the National Anthem is no longer—if it ever was—just a song. It is a spirit that lives.

The Ninth District of Georgia has a great legacy of citizens who have proudly served in our Armed Forces. This spring, we lost one of our greatest, Colonel Benjamin Purcell, United States Army. Colonel Purcell was the highest-ranking Army officer held as a prisoner of war.

Colonel Purcell was commissioned a lieutenant through the Army Reserve Officers Training program at North Georgia College, my alma mater. He was stationed at Fort Benning, Georgia, and was subsequently sent to Europe. In August 1967, a year after I was born, he was stationed in Vietnam.

Colonel Purcell became a POW after his helicopter was shot down in Quang Tri City, Vietnam, in 1968. Most of his time as a POW was spent in solitary confinement. He was unable to be with other prisoners until shortly before he was released. On March 27, 1973, Colonel Purcell was freed, as the U.S. was finally pulling out of Vietnam.

During his military career, Purcell was awarded the Silver Star, the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star, and the Purple Heart, along with the Parachutist and Combat Infantryman badges. Colonel Purcell was laid to rest with full military honors.

Colonel Purcell’s courageous story is just one of the many we remember on Veterans Day. He will always have the thanks and admiration of many Georgians.

On this Veterans Day, I will think about a young Marine from my hometown of Gainesville. In 2011, Corporal Sean Adams was on patrol in Afghanistan when he stepped on an improvised explosive device. The IED left him without legs, his left thumb, and his right pinky finger. He told me that when he went to Afghanistan, “I fought for myself, my family, my country, and the Corps, and now I’m fighting for my life.”

Sean is being medically retired from his beloved Marine Corps and is even now searching for the opportunity to continue to serve his community. He is

now fitted with prosthetic legs. His stated goal is to run the Marine Corps Marathon next year. Having seen this young man’s courage and strength, I am certain he will make it.

Later this week, I have the privilege of attending a retirement ceremony at Dobbins Air Force Reserve Base for Colonel Timothy E. Tarchick, who has honorably served our Nation for his entire adult life. I am humbled to call him a mentor and, most importantly, my friend.

These are just a few of the veterans who have touched my life. I often think back on the men and women of our Armed Forces with whom I have had the pleasure of serving our Nation, and I think of the conversations, the laughter, and also the tears that we have shared. It is often the very short or one-time interactions with a comrade in arms that leave the most indelible memories.

On my desk, if you were to come to my office, if you can find it on the fifth floor of Cannon, you will see on my desk a little bracelet that was made for me by a young lady in Balad who was struggling every day. I would go by and see her, and I would take her stuff, and I would give her encouragement or I would give her a coke or give her a candy. One night, I came by, and she said, “Chap, you are always giving me something. I want to give you something,” and she gave me this parachute bracelet which sits on my desk right now.

So I don’t care what goes on on the floor of this House in the big sense because all I have to do is remember that bracelet on my desk and remember why we are here and what that flag means.

This Veterans Day, let us commit ourselves to express our gratitude to America’s veterans by remembering their service and sacrifice and, of course, thanking each of the veterans in our own lives in our own way.

Before I yield back, I want it to be known the one who put this together, the gentleman who has become a valued part of my life in the time that we have served together.

Lieutenant Colonel BRAD WENSTRUP has served in the United States Army Reserve since 1998. In 2005 and 2006, he served a tour in Iraq as a combat surgeon and was awarded the Bronze Star and the Combat Action Badge for his service. During his time in Congress, BRAD is fulfilling his Reserve duties by treating patients at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda.

I commit to you, Mr. Speaker, he is serving every day on a place called Capitol Hill with the gifts that he has been entrusted to by his Creator. He is also a soon-to-be dad who will pass along this legacy of service to his child.

With that, I yield back to you, sir.

Mr. WENSTRUP. I thank the gentleman from Georgia, my dear friend, Chaplain DOUG COLLINS, for those kind words.

We are honored to serve here with so many that have served—not all of them are here tonight—on both sides of the aisle.

I think of my colleague from Illinois, TAMMY DUCKWORTH, who suffered severe injuries in Iraq, has bilateral leg prosthesis. She had the courage to serve again and to continue to serve not only in the Guard but here as a Congresswoman from Illinois. It is an honor to serve with her here on Capitol Hill.

Teddy Roosevelt said it so well when he said, “It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood.”

Our veterans serve. They fight in wars, wars they didn’t start, and those who serve in war are probably the greatest lovers of peace, the ones who appreciate it the most.

Our great American veterans, they may be best described in this way: they are what others care not to be. They go where others fear to go, and they do what others fail to do, and they ask nothing from those that gave nothing.

I want to thank everyone for being here tonight to honor those that felt that they should give of themselves for something greater than themselves.

You know, when I was a child, and we would go to bed at night, we would kiss my parents good night, and my father would come in one more time, and he would take his thumb, and he would make the sign of the cross on our forehead.

When you tuck your children in at night, when you go to bed and you close your eyes and you feel safe and secure and unafraid, remember why.

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

IMMIGRATION REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BENTIVOLIO). Under the Speaker’s announced policy of January 3, 2013, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. POLIS) for 30 minutes.

Mr. POLIS. Mr. Speaker, tonight we will be talking about a very important accomplishment that this body, the House of Representatives, could make on a bipartisan basis for our country, and that is immigration reform.

By refusing to act on comprehensive immigration reform, there is great cost to the American people in jobs, the undermining of the rule of law, and destruction of the opportunities that will arise by tackling this head-on. The longer we delay passing comprehensive immigration reform, the greater the cost of inaction in both economic, human, and security terms. Every week that Congress is in session for the rest of the year, I will be here on the floor, talking about the cost of inaction on immigration reform.