

fun activities for children, such as face painting, rock wall climbing, bounce houses, and a robotics demonstration, the sponsors of this annual event have committed to serving others during this Christmas season and giving back to their community in order to make a difference in someone's life.

This year, over sixty local businesses and organizations have made donations of food, gift certificates, equipment, cash and goodie bags. Toys for Tots will again make donations of toys for local children while the Sheriff, law enforcement officials and firemen have all volunteered their time. Florida Institute of Technology has partnered with The House at Palm Bay's Christmas Extravaganza team to provide free trolley rides for children and adults alike. Also, this year the Heritage High School Marching Band will be performing along with members of The House at Palm Bay's drama team which will provide their rendition of the Music Box, a Musical Drama for all ages.

Senior Pastor Ken Delgado of The House at Palm Bay said, "The essence of Christmas is about sacrificial giving. Parents do everything possible, to their own hurt, to bless their families. What an honor it is to see the business community sacrificially coming together to create a moment where families can find love, hope and joy—it's the example of the love, hope and joy that was expressed through the life of Jesus Christ 2000 years ago."

The Cities of Palm Bay and Melbourne have issued proclamations of support for this year's Christmas Extravaganza and the Brevard County Commission passed a resolution commending these efforts and encouraging families to attend.

I salute all those who have given so much to make the Annual Christmas Extravaganza possible, and applaud all the communities across our great nation who have seized upon this opportunity to spread the Christmas spirit through good deeds and charitable acts.

FEDERAL HOME LOAN BANKS

HON. LEE TERRY

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 10, 2014

Mr. TERRY. Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to recognize the 25th anniversary of a grant program that has benefitted thousands of individuals and families across the country—the Federal Home Loan Bank (FHLBank) system's Affordable Housing Program (AHP). The AHP is a flexible source of grants designed to help community-based lenders and their partners develop affordable housing solutions for very low- to moderate-income individuals and families.

The AHP receives its funding through annual contributions of 10 percent of the FHLBanks' net income. The Federal Home Loan Banks have awarded over \$5.1 billion in AHP funds since Congress created the program in 1990. These funds represent the largest single source of private grant dollars available for housing and community development in the country.

By developing affordable housing—and creating stable communities in the process—AHP funds have a long-term, positive economic impact. Many projects are designed for seniors, the disabled, homeless families, first-time

homeowners and others with limited resources. More than 845,157 housing units have been built using AHP funds. And I'm happy to say that the Federal Home Loan Bank system is the largest single funding provider to Habitat for Humanity, an organization that I have strongly supported during my 16 years in Congress.

Created by an act of Congress in 1932, the Federal Home Loan Banks are 12 regional cooperative banks that community-based financial institutions utilize to make home loans, small business loans and agriculture loans in every corner of America. Nearly 8,000 lenders are members of the Federal Home Loan Bank cooperative, representing approximately 80 percent of America's insured lending institutions. The FHLBanks and their members have been the largest and most reliable source of funding for community lending for over 80 years.

The FHLBanks have repeatedly demonstrated their ability to serve their members and to meet the affordable housing and community development needs of individuals, families and local communities through the Affordable Housing Program. As Congress contemplates the future of housing finance, I encourage members of Congress and the Administration to look to the Federal Home Loan Banks as an example of a system that works well.

AN IRANIAN OPPOSITION GROUP'S FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 10, 2014

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, you may not know it, but there is a group that, like the United States, thinks the Supreme Leader of Iran needs to go. They are a group of Iranians called the MEK. They want their countrymen to be free from the oppressive regime that has ruled with an iron fist since 1979. But the MEK is locked up in a prison-like camp in Iraq. 112 of its members have been killed.

How we came to this point is a story worth telling. After the Iranian revolution, the MEK opposed the Supreme Leader. So the newly installed Islamic regime systematically arrested and executed members of the MEK. The MEK fled and found refuge in Iraq. They built a home in the middle of the desert in a place called Camp Ashraf. In August 2002, the MEK disclosed two previously unknown nuclear facilities in Iran.

The Natanz enrichment facility and Arak heavy water facility triggered the IAEA inspection of Iranian sites for the first time.

After the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003, the MEK gave over all of its weapons to the U.S. Army 4th Infantry Division. In return, the U.S. promised to protect the MEK, labeling them "protected persons" under the Fourth Geneva Convention.

On January 1, 2009, U.S. forces handed control over to the Iraqi Security Forces. Then Prime Minister Maliki was beholden to Tehran so when the Supreme Leader asked him to crack down on the MEK, he obeyed. Maliki either allowed or facilitated two deadly attacks on the defenseless residents living in Camp Ashraf. In July 2009, 11 residents were killed

and 500 more injured. Two years later, in April 2011, the Camp was attacked again.

Videos would show Humvees running over residents and snipers shooting at residents as they ran for their lives. The attackers were not trying to talk. They were trying to kill. And they succeeded. 36 residents were killed and 345 injured.

I and other Members of Congress met with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki in June 2011. The meeting that was supposed to last 20 minutes but went for 2 hours came to an abrupt halt when our delegation asked to see Camp Ashraf where the MEK members lived. Maliki's mood immediately changed and he said that there was no way we were going to see the Camp. Maliki did not allow us to go because he had something to hide.

After pressure from the Government of Iraq and the U.S. Government, the remaining residents agreed to be transferred to Camp Hurriya near Baghdad as the UN worked to resettle them in some other country besides Iraq or Iran. But a new camp would still not keep them safe—not while Maliki was under the thumb of an Iranian regime that wanted to decimate the MEK. On three more occasions in 2013, 65 more unarmed residents were killed and over 600 injured. The UN has now resettled 600 residents, but there are still 3,200 living in squalid conditions in Camp Hurriya. They are confined to the Camp, not allowed to leave.

Lawyers and family members cannot visit them. After a series of rocket attacks killed many of them, residents dug trenches and slept inside them because they had no other way to protect themselves. These conditions are worse than an American prison. This is no way to treat thousands of people who have risked their lives for three decades so that their countrymen may know the sweet taste of freedom. One day, I believe, we will not be talking about ensuring Iranian freedom fighters like the MEK have another country to live in. One day, the Supreme Leader will supremely fall.

Democracy and freedom will once again flourish in Iran. And the freedom fighters, who have now been fighting for decades, can finally return home to join their families and their countrymen in building a new, peaceful Iran.

And that's just the way it is.

IN HONOR OF THE BIRTH OF MARY PARKS NATONSKI

HON. RICHARD HUDSON

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 10, 2014

Mr. HUDSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Pepper and David Natonski on the birth of their beautiful daughter. Mary Parks Natonski was born on her Thanksgiving Day due date at 7:02 a.m., November 27th, 2014; weighing 8 pounds and 8 ounces and measuring 21 and 1/2 inches long.

She was born to Pepper Pennington Natonski and David Richard Natonski, my Chief of Staff and KEVIN YODER's (KS-03) Chief of Staff respectively. I must admit, she clearly has her mother's punctuality—and her father's size.

Mary Parks gets her name from her two remarkable great-grandmothers, Mary Allen and

Mary Pennington, and her late great-aunt, Mary Natonski. Parks comes from her great-grandfather, Wayman Parks Allen.

She is the first grandchild for grandparents General and Mrs. Richard Natonski, and Cass and Cindy Pennington. Proud great-grandparents include Sadie Natonski, Mary Pennington, and Wayman and Mary Allen.

Mary Parks Natonski joins a wonderful family who are devoted to her well-being and will empower her for a bright future.

HONORING THE BOTHELL HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL TEAM

HON. SUZAN K. DeIBENE

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 10, 2014

Ms. DeIBENE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the 2014 Bothell High School football team. On December 6, the Cougars won the 4A Washington State football championship, finishing their outstanding season with a perfect record of 14–0. I congratulate them on this exemplary achievement.

The resounding 24–14 victory over the defending champions, Chiawana High School, left no doubt that Bothell is the state's best team. This championship win is especially remarkable for the Cougars, as it is the football team's first state title in school history.

I would like to give special recognition to Caleb Meyer, Damani St. John-Watkins, and Ross Bowers, for their exceptional performances in Saturday's game. Meyer and St. John-Watkins both capped the season with over 100 yards rushing, but it was quarterback Ross Bower's score with 6 seconds remaining in the 3rd quarter that grabbed the headlines. On a scramble from 5 yards out, Bower landed a complete front flip over the Chiawana defenders on his way into the end zone. He also went 17–19, passing for over 200 yards and a touchdown.

The Cougars displayed a great deal of character and determination throughout this season led by Coach Tom Bainter. His constant encouragement and training helped guide the Cougars to this momentous victory.

Again, I congratulate the Bothell football team on all of their success. Their accomplishments on the field this season are hard-earned and well-deserved.

PROTECTING VOLUNTEER FIRE-FIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY RESPONDERS ACT OF 2014

SPEECH OF

HON. PETER A. DeFAZIO

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 4, 2014

Mr. DeFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, today I am voting against the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of Fiscal Year 2015. Although this bill contains a few positive measures and provisions that I support it unfortunately creates a two year blank check for the U.S. to wage a war against the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL) in both Syria and Iraq.

I am vehemently opposed to this two year authorization to train and equip as yet un-

known forces in both Syria and Iraq to combat ISIL. Tragically, Congress has once again abdicated its constitutional responsibilities under War Powers. Instead of voting on a vague authorization today, we should wait and pass judgment on a more detailed assessment on this operation and vote on a specific authorization for use of military force (AUMF). In addition to the \$5 billion already authorized to continue the fight against ISIL, this bill mistakenly allows for the reprogramming of funds as the President sees fit from the \$63.7 billion overseas contingency operations account, which has turned into a slush fund to fight unauthorized wars.

If you turned to any of my colleagues today and asked the basic question who are the 5,000 fighters that the U.S. will train and equip in Syria, they could not give you an answer. Not even our intelligence agencies know who we can trust. Before granting authorization, Congress should at least know who it is we are giving U.S. weapons to and what their ideology and political goals are. This is a complex mess of various actors, many of whom cannot be considered trustworthy allies. The Syrian opposition is made up of hundreds of thousands of fighters from various factions that are also fighting amongst each other.

In Iraq, the U.S. is looking to form an alliance with a new government whose current Prime Minister has yet to prove he will bring Sunnis back into an inclusive society and government. At the moment the Iraqi army barely exists on paper. The main Iraqi force currently fighting ISIL, Asaib Ahl al-haq, is incredibly hostile to the U.S. and was attacking our troops up to the last day of the U.S. occupation of Iraq. The enemy of our enemy is not always an ally.

That is why it is so critical that Congress be presented with a detailed plan of this "train and equip" operation including who it is that we are arming before we vote and this authorization fails to do that.

Most importantly what we are voting on today is a small part of President Obama's larger strategy to go to war with ISIL. No President can declare war without Congressional authorization. If the U.S. is going to war with ISIL as it appears that we are, then my colleagues need to vote on an AUMF. The American people did not elect us to punt the responsibility for matters of war and peace to the President. The purpose of an AUMF is to lay out in detail the scope, plan, purpose, and duration of a military operation and to provide both classified and non-classified briefings to Congress and allow them to debate and express their opinions on the merits of this. Absent an AUMF from Congress, we are committing ourselves to an open ended war, declared by the President about which we have little to no details.

Despite my disagreements with the President on defense policy, members of our armed forces must be adequately funded and get the services they deserve. The bill includes increased funding for the National Guard, a 1% pay raise for our troops, and additional funding for mental health screenings and psychological services for those who have served and suffer from post traumatic stress disorder. Additionally, this bill prevents the retirement of the A–10 Warthog, a more cost effective close air-support weapons system than the F–35 Joint Striker, contains funding for nuclear non-proliferation activities, and acquisi-

tion reform measures that take a small step in reining in the bloated Pentagon budget. I strongly support these provisions of the NDAA.

Lastly, there was a public lands package attached to this bill that include provisions that are critical to the West Coast and Oregon. The REFI Act will save West Coast fishermen millions of dollars by refinancing expensive, unfair high-interest federal loans. The expansion of the Oregon Caves National Monument will boost the local economy and create needed jobs in southern Oregon, protect the unique cave system for hiking and other recreational opportunities, and it designates the River Styx—the underground stream running through Oregon Caves—as the first subterranean Wild and Scenic River in the nation. The package wasn't perfect, but it was the result of a multi-year negotiation to clear the backlog of mostly non-controversial, locally supported lands bills that have languished in this dysfunctional Congress. I didn't pick the vehicle to move these bills, and unfortunately it was attached to the NDAA.

Again, I will ultimately vote no on this legislation because it contains a two-year blank check to fight an unauthorized war in Iraq and Syria. Congress shouldn't duck its responsibility to thoroughly debate and discuss the authorization of use of force.

IN HONOR OF NEW MEXICO HOUSE CHIEF CLERK STEPHEN ARIAS

HON. BEN RAY LUJÁN

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 10, 2014

Mr. BEN RAY LUJÁN of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the distinguished career of New Mexico House Chief Clerk Stephen Arias, who is retiring at the end of the year.

Mr. Arias began his career with the New Mexico Legislature in 1966 and worked his way through the ranks of the House, starting as a clerk reading legislation, a payroll officer, and even a coat checker. In 1983 he was elected House Chief Clerk by the majority caucus and has served in that position for the past 31 years. In that time, Mr. Arias became the third-longest serving legislative clerk in the country. Originally elected Chief Clerk under Speaker of the House Raymond Sanchez, Mr. Arias went on to serve under four subsequent speakers as he was re-elected time and again by the members of the House—a testament to the tremendous job he did over three decades.

Although they may not receive a lot of attention, Chief Clerks are essential to the smooth functioning of the legislature. Chief Clerks are in charge of hiring seasonal staff, tracking and filing bills, maintaining and setting the House budget, keeping communication between the House and Senate chambers flowing smoothly, and helping incoming lawmakers and committees address constituent issues. Mr. Arias has done all these things and more during his tenure as Chief Clerk, and I applaud his tireless work ethic. I congratulate Stephen Arias on his remarkable career, and I wish him the best in his future endeavors.