

Verizon Innovative App Challenge, team “Hello Navi” from Resaca Middle School in Los Fresnos, Texas. I commend the team for their hard work and dedication to the competition. These students exemplify the ingenuity and creativity found amongst South Texas students.

The Verizon Innovative App Challenge encourages middle school and high school students to use knowledge of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects to develop an original mobile app concept to address a need in their school or community.

Los Fresnos students Cassandra Baquero, Grecia Cano, Caitlyn Gonzalez, Kayleen Gonzalez, Janessa Leija, Jacqueline Garcia Torres, along with their faculty advisor Maggie Bolado, pioneered an app to help the blind navigate any building, including Resaca Middle School.

Their exemplary leadership and creativity encourages other students to improve our world with technological developments. Projects such as this that increase student interest and knowledge in STEM subjects are extremely important to our region and our country given the high demand for STEM college graduates.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to recognize these outstanding students for winning the 2013–2014 Verizon Innovative App Challenge and look forward to their future accomplishments.

HONORING GENERAL WILLIAM M.
FRASER III

HON. JOHN SHIMKUS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2014

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor and privilege to pay tribute to an exceptional Air Force leader, General William M. Fraser III, Commander, United States Transportation Command.

General Fraser is retiring after honorably serving this great nation with an incredibly distinguished 40-year career. General Fraser graduated from the Texas A&M University ROTC program in 1974. As a command pilot with more than 4,300 flying hours, General Fraser has held command and staff positions at the squadron, group, wing, major command, and Department of Defense levels and is considered one of the finest strategic logistics experts in the nation.

USTRANSCOM serves as the key logistics synchronizer for the Department of Defense. It provides global mobility for rapidly projecting national power and influence, anywhere, anytime. Whether sustaining our combat troops in remote parts of Afghanistan, ensuring critical cargo moves through ports in the South Pacific, or re-supplying our forces at the South Pole, General Fraser and his command have shown the world why we truly are an exceptional nation. No other nation can project power globally or sustain its forces in every far corner of the globe as we can, and we have achieved this ability largely through General Fraser's leadership and the efforts of his command.

Equally important, General Fraser cultivated trust with our allies and forged bonds that will

endure for many years. These relationships are reaping diplomatic, economic, and geopolitical benefits that contributing directly to regional security and stability and enabling our military to remain effective and efficient as we downsize and rebalance our forces.

General Fraser will tell you that his accomplishments were due to the hard work from the men and women of USTRANSCOM, but we know they were highly inspired by his leadership. We, in Congress, will miss his “Giddy Up” and “Aggie” persona and his proactive approach to keep us informed and to help us understand the impact of our work. But most of all, we will be forever grateful for General Fraser's unwavering support to our men and women in the Armed Forces, their dependents, and our entire nation.

Mr. President, while we recognize General Fraser for his 40 years of service, I also wish to recognize his wife, Beverly, and wish her the very best for the future, as well as their son Mac who served in the U.S. Marine Corps, and their daughter, Ashlee, a military spouse of an Air Force officer. The Air Force will lose not one, but two, exceptional people upon General Fraser's retirement. Will and Bev, we wish you well in your future endeavors and pray that those who follow in your footsteps may continue the legacy of your unprecedented support for our great nation.

HONORING THE DEDICATED SERVICE OF PATRICK G. EMMANUEL OF NORTHWEST FLORIDA

HON. JEFF MILLER

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2014

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am privileged to recognize the dedicated service and contributions of Patrick G. Emmanuel on the occasion of his retirement from Emmanuel Sheppard and Condon, one of the oldest law firms in Pensacola, Florida. For 67 years, Mr. Emmanuel proudly served the law profession and Northwest Florida with passion and integrity.

Prior to his career in law, Mr. Emmanuel served our Nation with honor and distinction as an officer in the United States Armed Forces. As a U.S. Army major, he earned the Bronze Star for his service as part of a tank battalion unit during World War II.

Upon graduating from the University of Florida College of Law in 1946, Mr. Emmanuel began his long and decorated legal career. His countless accolades attest to his expertise as an attorney. Mr. Emmanuel has been listed in each prestigious volume of *The Best Lawyers in America* from 1983 until present, was rated by Martindale Hubbell as an A–V attorney, and was the recipient of the Florida Bar Foundation's “2001 Medal of Honor Award.” He also served as a Fellow in the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel, the American College of Trial Lawyers, and the American Bar Association. His vast list of memberships include: The Florida Bar, President, 1985–1986; Florida Bar Foundation, President, 1971–1973; Federal Judicial Nominating Commission of Florida, member and Chairman, 1974–1981; American Bar Association, Delegate, 1986–1989; Society of the Bar of the First Judicial Circuit, President, 1967;

and the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals, Delegate, 1986–1990.

In addition to serving his profession, Mr. Emmanuel also maintained an honorable level of commitment to the Northwest Florida community. For 20 years, he was a pro bono attorney for the Northwest Florida Crippled Children's Home, as well as served on their Board of Directors. Mr. Emmanuel was Chairman of the Advisory Board of Sacred Heart Hospital in Pensacola for a decade, was appointed by the Governor to the Florida Children's Commission, chaired the Legal Division of the March of Dimes, and was a member of the James Baroco Foundation, Inc. His extensive pro bono work earned him the recognition of the Florida Bar and their President's Pro Bono Service Award.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the entire United States Congress, it is an honor to recognize the impressive career and achievements of one of Northwest Florida's most accomplished attorneys, Patrick G. Emmanuel. My wife Vicki and I congratulate Mr. Emmanuel, and we wish him and his family all the best for continued success.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2015

SPEECH OF

HON. PHIL GINGREY

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 4486) making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2015, and for other purposes:

Mr. GINGREY of Georgia. Mr. Chair, I rise today in support of my friend Mr. ROTHFUS's commonsense amendment to H.R. 4486. I also want to thank Chairman CULBERSON for his hard work on this legislation on behalf of our nation's veterans.

This amendment would prohibit senior VA officials from collecting bonuses. According to several reports by the Inspector General at the Department of Veterans Affairs, there have been a series of tragic—and preventable—deaths at VA facilities across the country. The preventable deaths in the VA healthcare system have been attributed to mismanagement, improper oversight, and failure to schedule timely medical appointments, among other errors.

Yet, despite the fact that more than 20 deaths have been attributed to mismanagement and lack of oversight, tens of thousands of dollars in bonuses were awarded to top level executives at the VA.

This practice has been evident at the Atlanta VA Medical Center, where Inspector General reports highlighted widespread mismanagement, delays in care, and a lack of uniform and acceptable policies. At least three deaths—and possibly a fourth—have been attributed to this lack of oversight, including a suicidal patient who was supposed to be closely monitored by staff in the hospital's mental health ward but died of a drug overdose after staff members lost track of him for

hours. Despite the fact that as many as four unexpected deaths were attributed to mismanagement and lack of oversight, thousands of dollars in bonuses were awarded to top level executives at the facility.

At the Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center in Augusta, thousands of patients sat on a backlogged list for endoscopy consultations after management failed to act in a timely manner to schedule appointments for check-ups in the gastrointestinal clinic. These delays contributed to the deaths of three patients, who died waiting for care in what could otherwise have been a treatable illness. No one has been fired at this facility—to the contrary, VA refuses to say whether or not officials there are eligible for bonuses despite the deaths. Simply put, our veterans deserve better.

It is past time that we stop rewarding people for simply showing up to work—bonuses should be the exception, not the norm. It should never be easier to get a bonus than to get fired, but that is what we have seen at the VA.

Top officials at facilities from Atlanta to Pittsburgh have received “performance awards,” even while veterans died. Veterans deserve to know that in return for serving their country, they will not be endangered in the very place they go to seek care. They deserve the peace of mind that would come from knowing that those responsible for the tragic deaths received more than a slap on the wrist one day and a bonus the next. Our veterans deserve to know that deaths in the system are taken seriously and met with consequences. It is incomprehensible that management officials could simultaneously be complicit in mismanagement that led to a preventable death and also rewarded with a hefty bonus.

Furthermore, at a time when so many of our soldiers are returning from war, and in light of the deaths in Georgia and across the country, I believe the VA should prioritize veterans’ health and well-being above all else.

Mr. Chair, I believe we should reward our veterans with quality care and services in exchange for their commitment to our country and our freedoms. Money spent on executive bonuses would be better spent on ensuring our nation’s men and women in uniform receive the best possible care when they come home.

I urge my colleagues to join me in expressing support for our nation’s veterans by supporting this amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

HONORING THE SERVICE OF
SENATOR MARGARET CRAVEN

HON. MICHAEL H. MICHAUD

OF MAINE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2014

Mr. MICHAUD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the career of Maine State Senator Margaret Craven.

A native of Galway, Ireland, Senator Craven immigrated to Massachusetts at the age of 17 and later moved to Maine where she adopted Lewiston as her home city. Senator Craven was first elected to the Maine House of Representatives in 2002 and later to the Maine Senate in 2008.

Senator Craven currently serves as Chair of the Health and Human Services Committee and as a member of the Government Oversight Committee, and has previously served on the Appropriations Committee.

During her time in the Maine Legislature, Senator Craven has fought tirelessly on behalf of Maine’s most vulnerable citizens, including veterans, the elderly, the disabled, women and children. Among her most significant accomplishments is her work on the Commission to Study Long-Term Care Facilities, which provided recommendations for addressing long-term care challenges in Maine.

In addition to her service in the Maine Legislature, Senator Craven has served her community through other means as a hospice volunteer and board member for several organizations, including Lewiston Public Library, Healthy Androscoggin, and Community Concepts.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in thanking Maine State Senator Margaret Craven for her service to the state of Maine and in wishing her the best of luck in future endeavors.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS AND RE- LATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2015

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 4486) making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2015, and for other purposes:

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Chair, I rise to speak on H.R. 4486, MILCON-VA Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2015.

The bill provides a total of \$165 billion in FY 2015 to fund military construction projects and programs of the Veterans Affairs Department—\$7 billion (4 percent) more than current funding.

This total includes \$93.5 billion in mandatory spending (all for VA benefits) and \$71.5 billion in discretionary funding.

Sequestration has caused significant problems for the VA in meeting the needs of our nation’s veterans.

Unfortunately, H.R. 4486, does not provide the President’s budget request for Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) medical care and includes unnecessary restrictions that could have negative consequences for benefits to our veterans.

I am disappointed with the funding level for VA Medical Care, which is \$368 million below the President’s request.

This funding level could delay the timely delivery of health care services to veterans and impede the Administration’s efforts to end veterans’ homelessness in 2015.

I hold our men and women of the armed services in the highest regard. I have fought for them to receive pay raises, affordable and safe housing, family support services, and the best possible medical care.

The Dr. Michael DeBakey VA Medical Center is in my District, and I am proud to say that

Harris County is home to 187,717 veterans and Texas is called home by more than 1,618,413 veterans.

Our veterans never fail to respond to the call to serve their country. That is why we cannot and must not fail to serve them. And that begins by eliminating the back log. Veterans should not have to wait months to receive the care they need.

We must continue to fund programs to end veteran homelessness and increase benefits for veterans to assure they have access to healthcare, education and good paying jobs.

My support of veterans has been consistent and strong over the time I have served in the House of Representatives. I know firsthand how painful it is for Veterans to seek assistance for medical care—especially PTSD or Traumatic Brain injuries.

The VA has made important progress on the disability claims backlog which was at 900,000 last year, but the agency despite sequestration has made progress in reducing.

I will not be satisfied until the VA disability claims backlog has been eliminated.

VA funding should not be reduced from the amount requested by the Administration especially in light of the continuing backlog in disability claims.

Further, the bill provides \$50 million below the request for Information Technology operations and maintenance programs, which may result in delayed technology infrastructure improvements that ensure continuity of operations for services that support all of VA’s services and benefit delivery.

I appreciate the funding level provided for electronic health record interoperability and VistA Evolution, but I object to restriction on obligations for VistA modernization efforts.

Interoperability between the DOD and VA recordkeeping systems could significantly reduce the number of Veteran disability claims that are waiting processing.

Interoperability can also lead to significant cost savings by reducing inefficiencies that are created when the capacity for computing systems to automate benefits management and track claim submissions are not available.

Furthermore, interoperability among systems that are key to our men and women in uniform transitioning to civilian life makes sense for them and their families.

The Administration is committed to achieving seamless data integration and interoperability between the Department of Defense, VA, and also with private healthcare providers.

Meeting the challenge of interoperability must be addressed to make sure that Veterans receive the necessary and appropriate care in a timely manner.

The level of discretionary funding for FY 2015, which includes \$55.6 billion in advance funding from prior-year appropriations, is \$1.8 billion (2 percent) less than current comparable funding and \$398 million less than requested.

I do thank the Appropriations Committee for its decision to provide \$58.7 billion in advance FY 2016 funding for VA medical programs.

The measure boosts discretionary spending for the VA, providing \$64.7 billion for FY 2015, \$1.5 billion (2 percent) more than the comparable current level, while cutting military construction by \$3.3 billion (33 percent) to \$6.6 billion, equal to the administration’s request.

The administration, given current budget caps on defense and nondefense spending,