

Mr. GOWDY. Mr. Speaker, one of the most enjoyable parts of our job is speaking to children at schools, and you get some tough and interesting questions. A couple of months ago, a precious child at a school in upstate South Carolina asked me who was the most famous person I had ever met. That is a very good question, I told the child. I have met President Bush; I have met President Obama; I have met JOHN LEWIS; I have met PAUL RYAN; I have met Bono, the lead singer of U2; I have met McGruff, the Crime Dog—I have even met TIM SCOTT—but I told the child the most famous person I had ever met was his teacher, and we all smiled and laughed.

But it did get me thinking, Mr. Speaker, that we are surrounded by fame. We fly into an airport named for Reagan. We work in a town named for Washington. We pass monuments to Jefferson and Lincoln and Dr. King. The buildings we work in are named for famous people, and within those buildings are statues and portraits of still more famous people. We are surrounded by fame, Mr. Speaker, and it is easy to forget that, while those people made contributions to our country, the country was built, is being built, and will continue to be built by average, ordinary women and men who lead quiet lives of conviction and courage—average folks doing above average things, ordinary folks doing extraordinary things. That is the essence of who we are as a people, and while there may not be a monument or a portrait dedicated to those ordinary men and women, there is something even better, and it is called a legacy. So, in honor of those women and men, Mr. Speaker, who lead quiet lives of conviction, I want to honor a man who was just like them.

Bruce Cash was a pharmacist in my hometown of Spartanburg. He was buried last week—way too soon, in my opinion, but such are the ways of the Lord. He was a pharmacist, so we saw him when we were sick, and more importantly, we saw him when our children were sick. He was compassionate, and he was kind, and he acted like you were the only person he was taking care of that day. He was active in his church, doing everything from driving a bus on choir tour, to being chairman of the Board of Deacons, to taking his vacation time to chaperone other people's children while they went and sang to prisoners in prisons.

He was a devoted father and husband. He and his wife, Kitty, had six children and scores of grandchildren; and when you walked into his pharmacy, Mr. Speaker, you didn't see his business license, and you didn't see his pharmacy license—you saw a picture of his children. He wanted to quietly signal to you that that was the most important thing in his life.

I would tell you, Mr. Speaker, to look up Bruce Cash on the Internet, but you are not going to find much. In fact, he never even bothered to change the

name of his pharmacy. He left on his pharmacy the name of the man who owned it before him.

He had the quality that best defined the Lord Jesus that he believed in, which is humility. He didn't want to talk about himself; he wanted to talk about you. He didn't want to tell you his opinion; he wanted to ask you your opinion. He didn't want to talk about his illness; he wanted to talk about your illness. He didn't want to talk about how life had dealt him an unplayable hand of cards; he wanted to talk about grace and hope and things that last beyond our lifetime.

In conclusion, Bruce was humble, and he believed it was more important to live a sermon than to preach one.

So I want to thank you, Bruce, for setting an example of average, ordinary people building this country, and the next time a child asks me who the most famous person is I have met, I will tell him it is you.

THE STATE OF OUR ECONOMIC UNION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, this evening, from the dais behind me, President Obama will deliver his annual State of the Union message; and while there are hopeful signs and a brightening of the economic outlook for the country as a whole, the President will almost certainly concentrate on the battles ahead.

Even as America struggles to shake off the effects of the worst downturn since the Great Depression, our economy and our society are being challenged by a yawning inequality gap that affects tens of millions of American families and threatens to erode the underpinnings of our social contract.

Last fall, economists Emmanuel Saez and Thomas Piketty released an analysis of 2012 tax returns, and they found that the top 10 percent of American earners took more than half of the country's total income in 2012—the highest level ever recorded. The top 1 percent received more than 20 percent of the income earned by Americans, a level not seen since 1928, the year before the stock market crash and the beginning of the Great Depression. Top earners have also recovered more quickly over the last 3 years as their wages and investments have recouped value at a much brisker clip than those of the rest of Americans.

Inequality has also been a persistent political theme here and around the world, and it helped to launch the Occupy Wall Street movement. Last year, Pope Francis spoke out against what he termed an "economy of exclusion" while New York City's new mayor, Bill de Blasio, won the election by highlighting inequality there. President Obama, himself, made expanding opportunity a major theme in a speech in

December, and he discussed the issue at length in his past two State of the Union addresses. I expect him to return to the theme tonight and in the coming months of the 113th Congress as we prepare to go to the polls in November.

There is a broadly held, national consensus that an overly high concentration of wealth spawns a host of economic social and political ills, but that agreement has not fostered a concerted strategy on expanding opportunity and closing the wealth gap. America has always rewarded hard work, and the possibility for a better life has been part of the attraction for generations of immigrants and others struggling to climb the economic ladder; but economic mobility, as a recent study from Harvard and Cal demonstrates, varies greatly within the United States, and while economic mobility has not changed significantly over time, it is consistently less prevalent in the United States than in most developed countries. We should never seek to punish success or to, as some describe it, soak the rich, but we must take steps to address the problem of growing inequality both in the short term and in the long term.

I believe there are three things that Congress and the President can do to give Americans and the middle class and those who aspire to join it the chance to move up:

First, we need to extend emergency unemployment assistance for those who are still looking for work and who cannot find a job on their own. The weekly litany of those who are losing benefits is disheartening, and we must not turn our backs on our fellow Americans;

Second, we need to raise the minimum wage nationwide, and it is shameful that it has been 5 years since the last increase. In fact, according to one study, the minimum wage today is actually worth \$2 less than in 1968. Raising the minimum wage to just over \$10, as I support, would push millions of hardworking Americans out of poverty and stimulate economic activity throughout the country;

These two steps can be part of a short-term solution that stops the bleeding, but real change requires giving American workers the education and training to compete domestically and internationally for the high-skilled, high-wage jobs that are the ticket to the middle class and beyond. Investing in education and building schools and curricula for the 21st century is a long-term project, but it is the one that has the greatest potential in terms of economic growth and increased opportunity while preserving the spirit of free enterprise and entrepreneurship that built this country.

Mr. Speaker, tonight the President will challenge us to join him in an effort to reinvigorate the American Dream for another generation. Let us join him in that sacred task.

THE DARRELL GWYNN
FOUNDATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Darrell Gwynn Foundation, a national organization that for almost 12 years has made its mission "to provide support for people with paralysis and prevent spinal cord injuries."

On Friday, May 9, this important foundation will be holding an event in my congressional district to assist in providing power wheelchairs to children and young adults with spinal cord injuries.

Darrell Gwynn, son of former NHRA drag racing world champion Jerry Gwynn, seemed destined to replicate his father's achievements when his life took a tragic turn at the young age of 28. While participating at a demonstration race in England, Darrell's car broke apart, then veered into a retaining wall at 240 miles an hour.

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He sustained life-threatening injuries, but faith and determination allowed Darrell to survive this ordeal.

In response to his new circumstances, Darrell was motivated to help others who face similar challenges, and he founded the Darrell Gwynn Foundation. The Foundation's cornerstone, the Wheelchair Donation Program, provides the gift of mobility and independence to those living with paralysis.

Darrell's spirit and relentless efforts to offer support to people living with paralysis have earned him the respect and adulation of his colleagues. My good friend for many years—decades, actually—Angel Pardo, president of Spinal Cord Living-Assistance Development, said the following:

Mr. Gwynn is passionate about his work, and works hard to help others. Despite being quadriplegic and a partial arm amputee, he often works 7 days a week.

Thank you, Angel.

Mr. Speaker, the work that Darrell Gwynn and Angel Pardo do every day on behalf of individuals afflicted by this condition is very important. There are an estimated 12,000 new cases of spinal cord injury and paralysis each year. Over 36 percent are a result of car accidents.

I know from the many personal stories from my constituents and friends just how devastating these injuries can be. The toll is often not exclusively physical. The emotional and financial tolls can be substantial, both on the victims and their families.

The provision of a power wheelchair can return confidence, freedom, and independence to a victim. This life-changing piece of equipment, however, comes at the considerable cost of approximately \$25,000 a chair, and that is where the Darrell Gwynn Foundation comes in. They are committed to improving the victims' quality of life by

providing each with a power wheelchair.

I encourage all members of our south Florida community to attend the Darrell Gwynn Foundation event on Friday, May 9, at Casa Larios Restaurant in Miami.

Congratulations, Darrell and Angel. May you continue to help so many afflicted individuals.

OPTIMISM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak of the optimism of this Nation and of her people. Frankly, we do live in the greatest Nation in the world. Sometimes we are questioned when we say that, but I say it proudly and with a spirit of humbleness. I know that because on faraway shores and lands there are men and women who wear the uniform proudly.

This morning, in our own House of Representatives, we held a reception for participants of the Wounded Warriors program. These individuals are in a number of Members' offices. Many of us look forward to that opportunity, and they continue to serve.

So I know as President Obama rises tonight to speak to the Nation, he will have a sense of optimism, which I will enjoy and support. He will note, however, that as we are optimistic, we must provide that optimism and economic opportunity for all of our brothers and sisters, citizens and persons, in the United States of America.

It is well known that we have made great strides. We no longer have the horrific mortgage collapse, though we are still working with homeowners. We don't have the debacle on Wall Street because, as Democrats, we worked hard to fix that problem, as Wall Street continues to thrive. Of course, we have taken ourselves out of the doldrums of a deep depression—or recession—in 2008 and 2009 with a powerful stimulus package which today, in Houston, Texas, has seen the retrofit of the Mickey Leland Federal Building. With \$90 million, they put people to work fixing a building where citizens come for services.

That is the American way of investing, and not handouts, as has been described by my colleagues on the other side of the aisle. When are we going to recognize that the investment in human resources is really the answer?

Thank you, Mr. President, for understanding that.

Theodore Roosevelt said:

The man of great wealth owes a peculiar obligation to the State, because he derives special advantage from the mere existence of government.

That is true. Wealth inequality must be fixed, and it must be fixed now. In the U.S., income inequality has been rising steadily over the past four decades, reaching levels not seen since the late 1920s.

The President has signed an executive order, which I congratulate him on, understanding that you cannot live on less than \$10 an hour. It needs to be more. That is investing in the American way. That is generating the jobs so that individuals can then spend their dollars and then more jobs are created.

So tonight I don't want there to be a retrenching. I don't want us to be overwhelmed with this myth of debt and deficit so much so that we cannot invest in the education of our children and we can't fix the horrible situation of individuals not having access to higher education.

Who in their right mind would continue to allow those who are chronically unemployed and need unemployment insurance to suffer, as they are doing? Who would allow four out of five beneficiaries who have at least one adult that they are taking care of, children that they are taking care of, or multiple adults, who would allow 50 percent of those who have a college education and 36 percent who have a high school education and are not able to get jobs, and not extend the unemployment benefits on an emergency basis? Who would allow the over 9 in 10 that live in households with a total income under \$75,000 that need this extension of unemployment benefits so they can pay their rent or mortgage, who would allow such a crisis?

We are doing it right here, and we should be optimistic.

I have introduced legislation to extend unemployment for a whole year. It is an emergency. Then I introduced H.R. 3888, which indicates that those who are on unemployment benefits can get training to redirect their career with a stipend—their unemployment benefits do not cease—so that they can come back to what they want—the very stories that I listened to as I went to career recovery and resources fairs.

Mr. Speaker, tonight, I will be optimistic. I will be optimistic for Maggie, a 25-year-old Army veteran who has to get food stamps. She makes \$10 an hour, 6 days a week, in order to save for paramedic training. She is the very example of someone that we can provide that training for so she can invest in the community, even though she tried nursing but did not have the money to finish. Or, maybe I can speak of Ms. Aguilar, who lives in my State of Texas, which refuses to expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act.

Where is the optimism, Mr. Speaker?

So tonight, Mr. President, you do what is necessary for the optimism of this Nation. It is the greatest Nation in the world. We will stand with you as you invest in human resources, create jobs, provide unemployment extension, and raise the minimum wage to cure wealth inequality.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from