

This article goes on to describe the Afghan road network, built with U.S. tax dollars, as a “\$4 billion project that was once a symbol of promise in post-Taliban Afghanistan but is now falling apart.”

Another headline from January 30 from The New York Times:

U.S. aid to Afghanistan flows on despite warnings of misuse.

This report informs us that two global firms hired by the United States 3 years ago have found that none of the 16 Afghan ministries can be counted on to keep American aid from being stolen or wasted.

Most recently, this week Reuters published an article titled, “U.S. aid plan seeks to shield Afghanistan from end to war economy,” which details a new initiative from the U.S. Agency for International Development that would spend almost \$300 million to prop up the Afghan economy.

Mr. Speaker, the common factor in these articles is that each describes in alarming detail the absolute waste of American tax dollars overseas. How can we in good conscience tell the American people we are going to continue to send their money to Afghanistan for 10 more years under the Bilateral Strategic Agreement that the United States is currently negotiating with President Karzai?

I hope President Karzai will not sign the agreement. It would be the best thing to happen to the American taxpayer.

Ironically, today or tomorrow we are going to raise the debt ceiling. This is after already raising it by \$230 billion in October of 2013, with \$30 billion reserved for Afghanistan. This is not right or fair to the American people.

We need to stop the insanity in Afghanistan, which could be done if the leaders of the House and Senate would allow Members of both parties to bring bills related to this issue to the floor for a vote.

In addition to the money we are spending, how many more American lives must be lost overseas before Congress decides to act? We cannot continue to waste American money and precious lives in this manner. It is time to end the abuse of the American resources in Afghanistan.

With that, I will ask God to continue to bless our men and women in uniform and their families, and ask God to please continue to bless America.

EXPRESSING MY APPRECIATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. ANDREWS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning in appreciation.

Next week, I am leaving the Congress to pursue the chance to build a career in the private sector. I wanted to take a few minutes this morning to offer appreciation and thanksgiving for a lot of people who have helped make this wonderful experience possible.

I start with, as in all things in my life, my wife, Camille, and my daughters, Jacquelyn and Josie, without whom nothing good would be possible and through whom all good things are.

□ 1030

I look forward to many, many more happy years, God willing, with them and thank them for their support and sacrifice.

I thank my staff. Over all of these years, these men and women are overworked, underpaid, and underappreciated, sometimes by their employer. These are true public servants. They are inspirations, and I assure you that I have learned much more from them than I have taught to them.

I want to single out, in particular, in the present staff, our chief of staff, Fran Tagmire; our general counsel, Amanda Caruso; and our legislative director, J.Z. Golden, for their excellence, and for many, many others over many, many years.

I want to thank my colleagues. I thank Speaker BOEHNER for his friendship and leadership.

I especially thank the first woman Speaker of the House of Representatives—in my view the best Speaker of the House of Representatives—NANCY PELOSI, who has taught me strength and principle and doggedness and focus, and whose inspiration will guide me, my daughters, and others’ sons and daughters for many years to come. I thank her profoundly for her influence and service.

I thank all of my colleagues. I want to come back to that in a minute.

I most especially thank the people of the First Congressional District of the State of New Jersey, who have been the best employer one could possibly have for these last 24 years. And, yes, I would include the people who stop us in the supermarket and complain about a vote that we have cast or wonder why we haven’t solved a problem. There are a few of them.

There are many, many more whose words of encouragement have lifted us up for all these years, and I assure you that we appreciate you, and we are staying in our community and looking forward to new ways that we can serve our friends and our neighbors.

I especially, though, do want to come back to the men and women with whom I have had the privilege of serving for all these years. We have done a lot of things that are good together. Some of us have not always agreed on what is good together, but we passed the Affordable Care Act, which I believe will withstand the test of time and will stand together with Medicare and Social Security as pillars of middle class prosperity and American opportunity.

We have opened the door for college students with the direct student loan program that has helped many, many millions of students get an education.

We have improved our environment. In our district at home, there are con-

struction workers building transportation projects today because of our work. There are police and firefighters and teachers on the job because of our cooperation.

There are two veterans health clinics. We can simply not say thank you with our words to our veterans, but by our deeds. And I must say this morning that I especially remember young men and women on duty around the world serving our country, and I express my deepest appreciation to them.

But to my colleagues, I would say this, that I have had 150,000 constituents over the years come to our office with various issues and problems, and they are certainly an inspiration. But so, too, ladies and gentlemen, are you, my colleagues.

The House is a rambunctious and energetic place. I suspect we will see some of that rambunctiousness even later today. We have seen a little bit this morning. People should not confuse debate with division. Healthy, passionate debate is the elixir of American democracy. It is the fuel that makes the country better. And for those who look at the House and say, well, all they ever do is argue with each other, I would certainly hope so. I would certainly hope we would bring to this Chamber deeply held beliefs, deeply held convictions, and express them in the course of debate.

Of course, there is time for compromise, and there is always a season to get the job done; but may this place never lose the strong convictions of people, right and left, Republican and Democrat, north, south, east, and west, because that is what makes democracy go.

I would also say this, that we, in this Chamber, should never confuse a difference of opinion with a difference of intention. I have served here for nearly 24 years, and I can safely say I have never met a fellow Member who does not love this country, who was not here for the purpose of improving this country as he or she sees that improvement. I have certainly disagreed with the definition of “improvement,” but I have never questioned the motivation or motive of any of the men and women with whom I have had the privilege of serving.

So my admonition would be: Keep the energy flowing. Those who misunderstand debate, let them misunderstand it. Keep the passionate beliefs that occupy this place going. And when we do, I believe with great confidence that the institution will continue to lead the way to a country that is more prosperous, more safe, more free, and more generous than any nation in the history of the face of the Earth.

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve. I thank each of you who has given me this privilege.

RUSSIAN OCCUPATION OF THE COUNTRY OF GEORGIA

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

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, as ROB departs the Chamber, let me thank him for his service and for his family's service. As, obviously, the first Republican Member to be able to respond to your comments, let me say what most of us always know, that although many of us disagree on public policy, no one has ever questioned your commitment, your sacrifice, your focus, and your tenacity, and I think I value that more than almost anything we do.

Your words are very important for us and for the American people to understand that spirited debate is not bad. It is a part of this process. As a former high school teacher in government history, we would relish this in our classrooms, to have this type of exchange between our students. So thank you for that, and I am just fortunate to be here when you made your comments.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to focus and turn my comments to Sochi, Russia. As the world focuses on that area of the world, let me talk about what is going on on the southern side of the Caucasus mountain range.

In the country of Georgia, a small country, people have to understand that the Russian Federation occupies two provinces of the country of Georgia, actually, with military troops: one for a long time, South Ossetia, one relatively recently in Abkhazia.

That kind of changes the understanding of this great show that the Russian Federation is putting on with the treatment of their neighbors in occupying provinces. That would be like a country occupying one or two of our States and occupying one or two of the provinces in Georgia.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is important to just remind the public of this, especially when the world's focus is there. And I want to specifically talk about what has happened with the Olympics and the Abkhazia region, using Olympic security as an excuse.

Russia has actively created a so-called buffer zone between Abkhazia and Georgia, pushing the cease-fire line established in 2008 7 miles further into Georgia territory. So here we have an international peace agreement that kind of sets a line allowing the occupation in Georgian territory of Russian forces, and then the Russian Federation decides, based upon the Olympics, to push that line further into the country of Georgia 7 more miles.

It is a very troubling extension of Russia's earlier efforts to enclose South Ossetia, this other province, in a barbed wire enclave. And this new incursion of Georgian territory is a violation of Georgia's sovereignty as it stands in stark contrast to Russia's many commitments under international law.

According to the cease-fire signed on August 12, 2008, Russian military forces

were to return to their pre-war positions, yet they have now established militarized security perimeters on the Georgian side of the administrative border with both South Ossetia and Abkhazia. This is a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights, to which Russia is a signatory, and a violation of customary international law.

Russian President Putin claims that he must close borders within the internationally recognized territory of Georgia to prevent security threats in Sochi. This move is nothing more than a power grab. I will continue to support Georgia's sovereignty and urge my colleagues to do the same.

HONORING AMELIA BOYNTON ROBINSON DURING BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2014

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Alabama (Ms. SEWELL) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SEWELL of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to continue my commitment to honoring influential African Americans from Alabama during this Black History Month. This week, we honor the heroines of the movement for civil rights and voting rights. These courageous women had tremendous roles in our Nation's fight for justice and equality, and I am honored to share their stories.

Today I honor the tremendous life and legacy of Mrs. Amelia Boynton Robinson. Amelia was a key figure in the voting rights movement in Selma, Alabama, and she is often remembered for her historic role in Bloody Sunday, on that solemn day on the Edmund Pettus Bridge. At 102 years old, she is an American treasure whose story is a testament to her commitment to serving as a conduit of change.

Amelia Boynton Robinson was born August 18, 1911, in Savannah, Georgia. Her mother was an activist during the women's suffrage movement. After the passage of the 19th Amendment, she and her mother would distribute voter registration information to women from the family's horse and buggy in the 1920s.

Her mother's tireless efforts to secure the right to vote for women would have a lasting impact on Amelia. It also paved the way for the young activist to claim her own place in history. Fueled by the same passion, Amelia began her own service to mankind when she and her husband, Samuel Boynton, fought for voting rights and property ownership for Blacks in the poorest rural counties of Alabama.

She was later named the only female lieutenant to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. during the civil rights movement. In this role, Amelia would travel alongside Dr. King and often appear in his stead for various events and gatherings during the movement.

Amelia is best known for being on the front lines during Bloody Sunday in Selma, Alabama. During the protest,

she was gassed, beaten, and left for dead at the foot of the Edmund Pettus Bridge.

Despite the violent attacks, this heroine was committed to staying the course. Her direct involvement in the movement led to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Amelia was such a valued part of this process that some of the contents of the bill were drafted at her kitchen table in Selma.

On May 5, 1964, Amelia Boynton Robinson broke yet another barrier when she became the first woman in the State of Alabama to run for Congress. She garnered 10.7 percent of the vote during a time when very few Blacks were registered voters. Her historic run further solidified her impact on the movement for human rights, civil rights, and voting rights in Alabama.

When this extraordinary woman wasn't contributing her time to the causes of her generation, she worked as an educator, a home agent with the Department of Agriculture, an insurance agent, an income tax preparer, as well as a real estate agent.

She attended Georgia State Industrial School, which is now known as Savannah State University, and Tuskegee Normal, which is also known as Tuskegee University.

I am certain that I would not stand before you today as Alabama's first Black Congresswoman without the tremendous contributions of this amazing woman. It is indeed humbling to experience and pay honor and tribute to the first African American woman to pursue this office in my great State.

Her compelling story is one that reminds us of the undeniable power of courage. She refused to be silent and even risked her life to blaze trails for future generations. And at 102 years old, Amelia is still alive and still with us today, and she is still dispensing her wisdom.

As we celebrate Black History Month and the notable contributions of African Americans to this country, I ask my colleagues to join me in saluting Mrs. Amelia Boynton Robinson, an Alabama gem and an American treasure.

□ 1045

TRIBUTE TO PENN STATE LUNAR LION SPACE TEAM

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, Penn State University's Lunar Lion Team will make history as the first-ever university-led space mission to the Moon.

This group of talented young minds is competing in the Google Lunar XPRIZE competition to land a robotic spacecraft on the Moon in December of 2015. The mission, which the team began preparing in January of 2013, includes a launch onboard a commercial