

groups, labor unions, business and military leaders, people with disabilities, school principals, civil rights leaders, and literacy advocates. Now is the time to empower the next generation and guarantee a better future for our Nation.

HONORING RON MILLER

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

Mr. RIGELL. Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege for me to be here this morning and to share with you and our colleagues the story of an exceptional American, Ron Miller, who I am proud to say lives in Virginia's Second Congressional District, the district I have the privilege to serve and represent.

Ron is 46 years old. He had always planned to go back to school; but at age 33, his life was turned upside down. He was diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease, or ALS, a devastating neurodegenerative disease that progressively affects nerves in the brain and the spinal cord. It is a disease for which, at present, there is no cure.

Ron is paralyzed from the nose down; yet he used eye-gaze computer technology to complete his associate's degree in liberal arts, with honors, in a bold and courageous effort to bring attention to ALS.

They have a wonderful staff at the Lake Taylor transitional facility where Ron lives, and where the graduation ceremony took place; and I saw tears coming down several of the staff members' eyes as they watched Ron receive his degree. Actually, the president of Excelsior College made the effort to fly down to be with us that day.

I was deeply honored to be there and to have the privilege of sharing the commencement address, but it certainly wasn't my words that inspired everyone who was there. It was Ron's words that he shared through his computer.

He didn't talk about himself. He didn't talk about how difficult things are for him. He mainly thanked all of those in his life that made the degree possible. He talked about the importance of education and the importance of finding a cure for ALS.

I want to share just a small portion of what he shared that day. I watched his eyes as they guided the cursor on the screen to the "play" button. When he hit it with his eyes, it actually started the computer to speak. He put it this way:

I ask that you all bear with me as I stumble my way through this. At least I can blame the computer if I mispronounce anything.

That got a laugh there. He has got a great sense of humor.

He said:

Thank you for ensuring I started each class not as a disabled person, but as a differently abled person.

He thanked all the nurses and the nurses' aides there. He said:

You are my heroes. First of all, it takes a lot of work for me to look this good.

He has a great sense of humor.

He thanked his family and his friends for their love and support.

Speaking of life, he said:

It isn't always easy—but life never is. I just have a different set of challenges than most.

He left us with this quote by John Wooden:

Do not let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do.

Powerful words.

To me, Mr. Speaker, Ron's courage and his remarkable achievement represent the very best of the American spirit and the human spirit. It is a strong heart that chooses to be grateful for life's simple blessings, one that values the gift of friendship, one that embraces the pursuit of knowledge, and one that does not rest in a relentless pursuit to lessen human suffering, especially for those who will follow.

So I really count it as a high privilege to know Ron and to count him as a friend. He is fulfilling his mission to ensure that Americans are educated about the challenges that those with ALS face. He has also shown us what a person with ALS can accomplish.

He and many others who are heavily burdened with ALS, and their families, are calling attention to the need for improved access. We have a wonderful facility in Virginia Beach that is a tremendous asset for those who are afflicted with a disease that affects their physical mobility and that includes many of our wounded warriors.

□ 1030

It is JT's Grommet Island. It is right there on Virginia Beach, really the first on the east coast that allows people that are mobility impaired to get down and experience the joy of being on the water and the sun and the sand and just being outside.

There is a lot more work to be done, and I am so proud of our friends, Bruce Thompson and others. His son, Josh, is afflicted with ALS, and he led the effort to build that facility that I just mentioned there. It is called JT's Grommet Island, and it is named in honor of his son, Josh, who is struggling with this, and his family is as well.

I just want to close my comments today with great respect for those who are struggling with this disease and to share with you something that Ron has said about his struggle. It is an outlook on life that I found profound and inspirational, and I posted it in my home where I see it every day. He said this: "I may have ALS, but ALS does not have me."

So, Mr. Speaker, may Ron's remarkable achievement and the spirit that he exhibits in his life inspire all of us to join him in this worthy fight to find a cure for ALS.

THE 50-YEAR WAR ON POVERTY

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

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, I am here to speak about unemployment insurance and the extension of it to my Republican colleagues. But there is no one over here to listen, so maybe they will listen to some renowned Republicans talk about what is really important.

How about Newt Gingrich, who recently said, "I think every Republican should embrace the Pope's core critique that you do not want to live on a planet with billionaires and people who do not have any food?"

Or how about John Feehery, a Republican strategist who said, "What does the Republican Party actually believe in? What is its purpose? Is it just to have unbridled capitalism without any moral core?"

Mr. Speaker, this 50-year war on poverty has faced setbacks under the leadership of both parties, but the GOP-led House seems to be actively engaged in a war on the war on poverty. Congress' inaction has cut off 1.3 million people from unemployment insurance after Christmas and, unless renewed, will cut benefits for another 1.9 million who are eligible in 2014.

Some of my colleagues across the aisle have claimed that this is just politics, that unemployment insurance was "intended to be a temporary solution to a very temporary crisis." Well, here's a news flash. We have been in this crisis since 2008. This is not temporary. This is long-term and it is chronic, and it has been caused by the greed of billionaires of the likes that we have seen on Wall Street. This is a personal nightmare for many of the constituents of my colleagues across the aisle. Some of their constituents have written to my office because they think their Representative is blind to how they are struggling.

Now, Margaret Heffernan is a renowned speaker, and she talks about mindless blindness. And in many respects, that is what I think we are engaged in here, mindless blindness. So here are some of the stories of those impacted by the loss of unemployment insurance who live in districts of my Republican colleagues, because maybe they will hear me and think about who is being hurt by playing politics.

Payne Springs, Texas, resident Linda Mrosko shared her story with me on my congressional Facebook page. Linda was 60 years old when her legal secretary job was eliminated. With more than 40 years of work experience under her belt—this is not someone sitting on a couch at home—40 years of experience as a paralegal secretary, she believed unemployment insurance would protect her if she lost her job. Even while caring for her 80-year-old mother with breast cancer, Linda continued to look for work but got very few interviews. Her 91-year-old father then fell ill and died, but Linda continued to look for work, even while in

mourning and caring for her sick mother. The few interviews Linda does get, she is surrounded by people in their twenties and thirties and thinks that her age might be keeping her from securing a job.

"My unemployment ended on December 28. I have no savings. I haven't paid rent yet, or electricity, or the car payment, or the phone bill because I don't have enough money to make those payments," she wrote to me.

Well, Linda, I hope your Republican Congressman reaches out to you immediately to explain to you in his own words why you shouldn't have your unemployment insurance extended after being employed for 40 years in this country.

Unemployment isn't a temporary problem for Daniel Burrow of Beau-regard, Alabama. Daniel just hit his 26th week of filed unemployment. He lost his job in the auto industry in 2012 while he was on medical leave. The 45-year-old has exhausted all his unemployment benefits and applied for more than 50 jobs with no luck. His wife worries how the family will afford gas for Daniel to go job hunting or how the family will pay for necessities not covered by food stamps.

In Florida, 49-year-old Jim Lanzerio can barely pay his bills while he raises his 17-year-old daughter on his own. His unemployment insurance will run out in February, and he wonders why Congress cannot reach a deal on extending Federal emergency unemployment insurance. He has been looking for a job every day since early October and is "not sitting back and waiting. I would go back to work immediately if someone offered me a job."

This is more than politics for 70,000 individuals in Florida who already lost their unemployment insurance. These are just three stories. There are 1.3 million more that could be shared here today of people who have lost their unemployment insurance on December 28.

Yesterday was the 50th anniversary of President Johnson's announcing a war on poverty. The real question is: Why are our colleagues waging a war on the war on poverty?

THE WAR ON POVERTY

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

Ms. FUDGE. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to commemorate the 50th anniversary of President Lyndon B. Johnson's war on poverty.

In 1964, President Johnson stood in this Chamber and addressed a Congress that represented a nation where more than 25 percent of Americans lived in poverty. In his address, President Johnson launched an agenda that led to the creation of Medicare, Medicaid, Job Corps, Head Start, and nutrition assistance for those who struggle to put food on their table.

His war, and its resulting programs, helped move millions out of poverty.

From 1967 to 2012, the poverty rate fell from 26 percent to 16 percent, largely because of the strong safety net programs initiated by President Johnson's agenda.

Yet here we are today, 50 years later, and too many Americans are still living on the outskirts of hope because the war on poverty has now become a war on the poor. In the last year alone, Congress has agreed to indiscriminate, across-the-board cuts known as sequestration in an effort to balance the budget, and the House passed a farm bill that cut SNAP by \$40 billion. Sequestration hurts the very people who need help the most by greatly reducing critical funding to programs like WIC and Head Start.

Congress drastically cut one of the most powerful antipoverty programs, SNAP, better known as food stamps. That is absurd when, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, SNAP kept 4.9 million Americans out of poverty in 2012 alone, including 2.2 million children.

Congress has also chosen not to extend unemployment insurance. Even though our country continues to lift itself out of the recession, many Americans still need our support. Turning our back on the 1.4 million Americans who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own is unconscionable.

In an interview yesterday, I was asked to respond to a quote regarding unemployment insurance by a Republican, and this is what he said. He said:

We have to introduce the blessing of work to people who have never seen it.

And let me just say, to be clear, he could not possibly have been talking about unemployment insurance, because you have to have worked to even receive it. So he obviously doesn't know what unemployment insurance is.

And to my colleague, I say that the American people know that they should be blessed with work, but they need meaningful work with a living wage.

I will continue to be a voice for the poor and will always fight on behalf of the 46 million Americans trying to survive in households with inadequate incomes. Americans need us to open the gates of opportunity so they can eat properly, get a quality education, and find good-paying jobs.

So on this 50th anniversary, I am making it clear that the war on poverty might be over, but the fight for the poor is not. We must reinforce the plans of President Johnson that would ensure all Americans can support themselves and their families and have better chances to contribute to our economy and our society. This is the way we build upon the progress we have made over the past five decades, not by taking action to reverse it.

To paraphrase Dr. King, he says, we have an obligation to those who have been left out of the sunlight of opportunity.

FOOTBALL SUCCESS IN NORTH CAROLINA'S TENTH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCHENRY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, last month was a big one for North Carolina football. You probably are well aware of the exploits of Cam Newton and the Carolina Panthers having clinched a playoff berth, but it was actually in my district, the Tenth District of North Carolina, in western North Carolina that was really the epicenter of football in North Carolina in the month of December.

First, there was Crest High School in Cleveland County representing the Boiling Springs and Shelby area. Crest is a perennial powerhouse in North Carolina high school football. This year's Charger team was under the guidance of Coach Mark Barnes. They rode a 14-game winning streak on their way to winning the North Carolina High School Athletic Association 3AA West title. While they were upset in the State championship game, it was another very impressive season for Coach Barnes and his great team.

While the Crest defeat was disappointing, all was not lost for Cleveland County, as another traditional power, Shelby High School, also played for a State championship. The Golden Lions went 12-4 this year, and capped the season with a 29-7 victory to win the North Carolina 2A State football championship. Coach Lance Ware and his team continued the proud tradition at Shelby as this marked the school's 12th State championship—pretty incredible, considering my high school has had a hard time just getting one or two.

Finally, the football success in North Carolina 10 continued in Catawba County, where Lenoir-Rhyne University, their football team enjoyed their best season in school history. The Bears, coached by Mike Houston, won a school record 13 games on their way to earning a spot in the NCAA Division II championship game in Florence, Alabama. While they lost the championship game, this year's Bears team finished the season ranked second in the Nation and provided a thrilling ride for the Lenoir-Rhyne campus and Hickory, as a whole. Both the faculty and alumni were very excited, and they had a great rally before that game. And it actually brought Lenoir-Rhyne onto the national stage for some attention as well. It is a great university.

So I want to congratulate Crest, Shelby, and Lenoir-Rhyne on their great successes this last football season. Now it is up to Cam and Luke to keep it going for North Carolina football. And, hopefully, the Panthers will win.

Go Panthers.