

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

(Ms. GABBARD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. GABBARD. Mr. Speaker, our troops, our country, and our communities deserve far better than the defense bill that passed today. The hidden provision in the amended H.R. 3979 to authorize training and arming the so-called moderate Syrian rebels for the next 2 years with no limit on how much money can be spent has seriously polluted this critical piece of legislation.

I could not in good conscience vote to support the so-called moderate forces who often work hand in hand with al Qaeda or ISIS and whose personnel and weapons often end up in the hands of those terrorists. This bill continues the same failed practices of undeclared war, regime change, and nation building that have held us mired in the Middle East for over a decade.

FUNDING THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

(Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, columnist Roger Simon wrote the following in one of the Capitol Hill newspapers several weeks ago:

If you spent 13 years pounding money down a rathole with little to show for it, you might wake up one morning and say, "Hey, I am going to stop pounding money down this rathole."

Unfortunately, the U.S. Government does not think that way. The U.S. Government wakes up every morning and says, "The rathole is looking a little bit empty today, let's pound a few more billion dollars down there." And when that rathole is Afghanistan, the billions are essentially without end.

He added that we have spent several billions trying to stop opium production there but that during U.S. occupation, drug production in Afghanistan has actually increased.

By one very conservative estimate, we have spent \$753 billion on the war in Afghanistan since 2001. The defense bill today contains \$63.7 billion for the overseas contingency account, meaning many billions more for the rathole in Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, when will we come to our senses?

UNITED STATES-ISRAEL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP ACT

(Mr. COLLINS of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of S. 2673, United States-Israel Strategic Partnership Act.

S. 2673 includes language from the Israel QME Enhancement Act. The Israel QME Enhancement Act is a bill that I sponsored and was supported unanimously by this body. Israel's qualitative military edge is the ability to maintain quality arms against numerically superior odds.

My bill provided for a review of Israel's QME at shorter intervals, from 4 years to 2 years, and I am honored the review language made it into the Strategic Partnership Act. Both pieces of legislation recognize Israel's residence in a neighborhood of bad actors.

Over the decades since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, it has endured several extended armed conflicts with its neighbors. From the Israeli War of Independence in 1948 through Operation Protective Edge, the latest conflict with Hamas, Israel has endured constant threats.

Another constant is that Israel has been able to depend upon the U.S. for military assistance. During the Yom Kippur War in 1973, the U.S. conducted one of the largest airlifts in U.S. history to assist Israel.

Today, we stand on the floor of the House in support of a bill to increase its military assistance and to increase the help to our friend Israel.

DAN RAAB RETIREMENT

(Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, today I want to recognize a good friend and a very important member of my hometown community of Taylorville, Illinois.

Dan Raab, the president and CEO of Taylorville Memorial Hospital, is retiring after 34 years in the healthcare industry. Dan started with Taylorville Memorial Hospital in 1995, when it was known as St. Vincent Memorial—it was also where my wife worked—and has served the community as CEO for 19 years.

With Dan's leadership and dedication, TMH has remained a staple in the Taylorville community. It is Taylorville's largest employer, and TMH has given so much back to the community. As a matter of fact, it spent \$4.9 million in community benefits just in the year 2013 alone.

TMH is one of nine critical access hospitals located in the 13th District of Illinois, and they play a vital role in ensuring that rural communities are served so that our citizens get the health care they deserve.

As Taylorville and central Illinois continue to thrive, I know that TMH will be part of that success, and that is a direct result of Dan Raab's leadership. I want to thank Dan for his 34 years of service and congratulate him on his retirement.

My wife, Shannon, and I wish him and his wife, Mary, and their two children, Joe and Emily, the best of luck in the future and with his retirement.

THE ABLE ACT

(Mr. BARR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BARR. Mr. Speaker, as a cosponsor of the Achieving a Better Life Experience Act, also known as the ABLE Act, I rise today to commend the House for yesterday passing this important piece of legislation that will help millions of Americans reach their full potential.

As the brother of a physically disabled sister who has lived with the challenges associated with being physically handicapped—over a dozen surgeries, hip and knee replacements, walking with crutches or walkers and sometimes reliance on a wheelchair—I know how difficult it can be for millions of Americans with disabilities and their families.

I also know from my sister, who graduated from college, went on to seminary, married her college sweetheart, adopted a beautiful little girl, and now serves others as a priest in the Episcopal church, that the challenges associated with being handicapped can be overcome.

The ABLE Act will help ease financial strains faced by millions of Americans with disabilities and their families and help them save for the future by creating tax-free savings accounts available to cover disability-related expenses. This provides families with a severely disabled child some peace of mind by allowing them to save for their child's long-term disability expenses.

We are better off as a Nation when disabled Americans are given tools like the ABLE Act to not only achieve self-sufficiency but to contribute and give back to our society.

THE NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

(Ms. JACKSON LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, briefly on the floor of the House today I mentioned how many times I voted for the defense authorization bill and appreciated the underlying principles in that legislation, which is to wholly support the United States military and their families. Today, unfortunately, layered down with poisonous pills on the floor of the House, the majority did not give this Congress the opportunity to debate the questions of war and peace.

So I ask my colleagues and the leadership to let us debate this issue next week, or come back, or, as we begin 2015. Whenever we put our sons and daughters in harm's way, it is extremely important to do so.

Let me change to another topic very quickly and acknowledge and give my

sympathy to the Garner family and indicate that I am going to begin an assessment of the criminal justice system that includes a review of training for our law enforcement across America that will include the utilization of stop-and-frisk citations so that racial profiling can stop, and it will be an overview of the grand jury system, which is obviously broken. My sympathy, again, to the Brown family, to the Garner family, Sean Bell, Trayvon Martin, Robbie Tolan, and many, many others.

Mr. Speaker, let me finally say this Congress cannot turn its head away from a broken criminal justice system.

EXPRESSING MY GRATITUDE TO SERVE MICHIGAN'S EIGHTH DISTRICT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. ROGERS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. ROGERS of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to be here. I don't often come to the well of the House for 2 or 3 minutes, let alone 60 minutes. But today is special, certainly for me, for my family, my extended family, and staff who are here today. This is my chance to really say thank you, and I had a heck of a good ride serving the people of the Eighth District back home, and some thank yous upfront to my wife, Kristi, who is here, who is both my best friend and the love of my life. Thank you for being here.

Boy, this is going to be harder than maybe I imagined. To my family, Erin and John, thanks for weathering the storm for a Member of Congress who is more often gone at times when they should be home. As a matter of fact, I remember I knew I was getting in trouble when my daughter, who was going into the fifth grade, and because I would fly out to Washington from Michigan every week, I had scheduled Mondays as lunch day at her local school for years, and so I got the lecture going into her fifth grade year that I would have to stay within a zone of her when I came to lunch. I was no longer able to sit next to her at the lunchroom tables because that, after all, would be god-awful to have your father at lunch with you in the fifth grade. So I did get to sit across from her for about one more year. And going into sixth grade, by the way, that was pretty much done.

To everybody who had the great privilege to walk these Halls, including the visitors and folks at home, I hope you still have that reverence for this building and for this institution for what it means not just to America but to the world. I know I did every single day that I walked these Halls. This morning when I came in I still got that little tingle about what it meant to be a Member of Congress in this great institution.

I know I felt that with the members of my staff throughout the years. Every chief of staff, every legislative director, every staff director, and every other staff member that I have ever had, fellows and interns, stepped up to the plate and certainly I know helped me become a better Representative for the people of the Eighth District. And all the things that we were able to accomplish—all of them—happened because we had people who cared a little bit more about something bigger than themselves. They cared enough to sacrifice probably better careers with higher pay and shorter hours in the private sector. They chose to come to Washington, DC, or work in the district offices to plow through and represent really average Americans to a big Federal bureaucracy that sometimes seems so intimidating they had nowhere else to go. They were the friends on the other side of those phone calls.

Many of these folks have graciously showed up today: Chris Cox, Matt Strawn, Andy Keiser, Andrew Hawkins, Allan Filip, Heather Strawn, Mike Ward, Diane Rinaldo, Kyle Kizzier—thanks, Kyle, for not killing me on the highway on the way to meet the Turkish newly elected prime minister, I appreciate that a lot—and Michael Allen and Darren Dick.

I think of my first crew that was right in the district office fighting it out: Tony, Penni, Katie, and Stuart, all of those folks who were so committed, again, to getting it right on behalf of the people that they represented. To my campaign team—and by the way, there were so many more people, I could take the whole 60 minutes and thank them all—a campaign team who fought it all, beat every odd, and beat every pundit's prediction that I would never stand and walk these Halls as a Member of Congress: Terri Reid, Val Tillstrom, RJ Johnson, John Nevin, Katherine Van Tiem, Joe Rachinsky, Mike Gula.

I want to thank someone who is special in all of that to me, somebody who has been with me 22 years, from the very high points to the very low points, Anne, I couldn't have done it without you. Thanks for being here today. Wow. I said I wasn't going to do this. I think of all the things that as a staff you were able to accomplish, from cancer care legislation to protect rural patients to medical devices for children, and biodefenses. We even figured out a way to make server farms more efficient without mandates. That was clever.

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To all of the constituents that picked up the phone and found a friend at the other end, I think of the time that we all gathered up to help keep a soup kitchen operating through the holidays by getting private donors to step up for people they had never met or organizations they had never heard of to help those folks get fed through the church kitchen.

I think about all of the time we huddled all the staff in because we had one of the great, successful, painful IRS issues where, after years of trying to get this thing straightened out and, certainly, the anxiety and problems that are faced when dealing with a bureaucracy like the IRS, we got to make that phone call.

Not only did they not owe money, the IRS had made a significant mistake, and they were going to get a pretty sizable check back. There wasn't a dry eye in the room when they made that call as the staff together.

From all of the folks that we helped with Social Security or the folks who got their medals that they earned, to see that room filled with individuals who teared up because it was the first time that they heard their loved one tell the story of how they earned those medals fighting for the defense of the United States of America—you know, it is pretty a fantastic thing that I got to be here, so the work that I did on the Intelligence Committee, I have to tell you, was some of the biggest and best privilege that I have had the opportunity to participate in.

Someone asked me at the time: "Why did you go from being an FBI agent to wanting to serve and go through the political process that we all do?" I recall a story, as a fairly young agent, we were working a case, trying to locate a young girl who had gone missing from a Western State.

She had come to Chicago. I was on the organized crime squad. We had a tip that would hopefully lead to this girl's return to her parents. They were very concerned. She was young at the time, 15 when she left home.

The long story—the fast forward of that story is we were able to locate this particular young lady. She was operating in a house of ill-repute that was run and really protected by the local police, run by Chicago organized crime.

The proprietors of this particular establishment kept all of the ladies completely hooked on heroin. They would gather them up at the end of the night and take them to a building that they owned and lock them up, feed them heroin, and get them back the next day for their night's work.

When we took this young lady out, she was probably 17 by the time we found, located, and started to disrupt these types of activities. I will never forget—we got her into the car. We had arranged counseling. There was a great agent, a senior agent who was always very valuable to me, a guy named Richard Davis.

As she was coming out, she didn't have a coat, so he expropriated the money I had in my wallet when we had an opportunity to get her a coat, which we did. In the back of the car, she was immensely quiet. She didn't say a word. Again, our goal was to get her to some counseling and try to get her life back on track.