

Christmas present that Americans will enjoy for years to come.

THE NDAA AND MILITARY BENEFITS

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

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, let me quote from Roger Simon in a recent article, titled, "Down the Opium Rathole." Mr. Simon writes about Afghanistan:

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'm going to stop pounding money down the rathole." Unfortunately, the United States Government does not think this way.

Mr. Speaker, last week we passed a \$585 billion bill known as the defense bill, with a large percentage of that money going into overseas contingencies: Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. I question how much damage this bill causes our military Active Duty and our retirees.

Let me quote from Lori Falkner Volkman, a former prosecutor and spokesman for the Keep Your Promise Alliance, an online coalition of military families and organizations. She said: "This is the second Christmas in a row that national leaders have tried to cut military pay benefits. Earned benefits should not even be on the table when entitlement budgets soar and appropriations budgets are billions of dollars over budget."

I did not vote for the NDAA bill. It was 1,648 pages, and we did not have enough time to read and comprehend the contents of the bill. In a recent article in the Jacksonville Daily News regarding my "no" vote on this bill, Mike Hayden, a retired Air Force colonel and present director of governmental relations for the Military Officers Association of America, known as MOAA, said: "An E-5 servicemember would lose more than \$800 in purchasing power annually when the bill takes effect. This is going to cost them a loss of about \$600 a month just in pay."

In the same article, Jim Davis, a retired marine who now lives in Jacksonville and serves as a senior vice commander of the local DAV chapter, said the cuts could adversely affect military families.

Charlie Brown, a quartermaster for the VFW post in Jacksonville, agreed with Mr. Davis and said the bill doesn't accurately reflect what servicemembers actually deserve.

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Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote James Madison. James Madison wrote: "The power to declare war, including the power to judge the causes of war, is fully and exclusively vested in the legislature."

Mr. Speaker, for too long, we have not had policy debates on the floor of

this House, whether it be Iraq, Syria, or Afghanistan. When I look at the waste, fraud, and abuse in Afghanistan, I want to say to the Active Duty in the military and the retirees, I regret so much that the Congress is not debating the issues that we should be debating based on our constitutional duties.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to quote Pat Buchanan. Pat says: "Is it not a symptom of senility to be borrowing from the world so we can defend the world?" I repeat: "Is it not a symptom of senility to be borrowing from the world so we can defend the world?" Mr. Speaker, that is so prophetic. And I thank Pat Buchanan for trying to wake up Congress before it is too late.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I have a poster beside me with Uncle Sam. And Uncle Sam says: "I want you to understand that if you can't afford to take care of your veterans, you can't afford to go to war." That, again, is what Pat Buchanan is saying.

Mr. Speaker, those of us in Congress in both parties need to understand that we have a constitutional responsibility to not commit our young men and women to fight and die and be wounded unless we debate the policy on the floor of the House.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I ask God to please bless our men and women in uniform and their families, and please, God, continue to bless America.

EQUAL JUSTICE UNDER LAW

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

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, equal justice under the law—impartial and uniformly applied—has been, for more than two centuries, the ideological underpinning of American democracy.

But from the very beginning, this noblest aspiration has been intertwined with our struggle with race, a battle that has sometimes come to define our Nation and to divide it in ways that too often cleave us still today.

Mr. Speaker, 150 years since the Emancipation Proclamation and half a century after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 formally ended Jim Crow, our President, his Attorney General, the Secretary of Homeland Security, and the National Security Adviser are all African American.

Blacks are now prominent in every facet of American life. But much of this has occurred during my lifetime because people marched and sat and voted and demanded greater equality.

Yet despite the progress, equal justice under law is not the reality for too many of our fellow citizens, and injustice continues to limit their lives and their livelihoods in ways that are difficult for many White Americans to comprehend.

Inequality manifests itself at every rung of the criminal justice system, but its most deadly consequences are to be found in the encounters of young men of color with the police.

I have seen the video of Eric Garner in New York and watched the tragedy in Ferguson in the aftermath of the shooting of Michael Brown. The agony of those families and the anger of their communities have rightfully moved the Nation.

Sadly, they are not alone. The deaths of Eric Garner and Michael Brown grabbed national headlines, but decades of strife between police and many poor and minority neighborhoods have resulted in an endemic mistrust of law enforcement there.

One need only consider a phenomenon almost completely foreign to much of America, "the talk." It is a ritual that plays out in Black and Brown households across our Nation every day as parents teach their young children about the special dangers they face from law enforcement.

As a father, to hear that is heart-breaking. As someone who has long worked with and on behalf of law enforcement and who has deep respect for the bravery and integrity of so many who wear the uniform, it is a call to action.

First, in the months since the Michael Brown shooting, I have pressed for greater deployment of body-worn cameras to police departments across the country, an idea that the President has now endorsed. Cameras are not a panacea, but they are a first step on a path to greater accountability and transparency.

Second, since cameras alone will not bridge the chasm of mistrust between many communities of color and the police there to protect them, we must invest in 21st century police departments.

Effective policing requires mutual respect between the public and the police and a renewed emphasis on community policing strategies. Diversifying police forces so that they are more reflective of the communities they patrol and improving the training of officers to reduce the likelihood of violent confrontations are essential. This cannot be accomplished overnight, however, and generations of injustice have left deep scars.

So the third leg of any law enforcement reform agenda must be enhanced oversight by the Department of Justice, which has a long record of working with State and local police agencies to modernize and improve practices and behavior.

Justice Department intervention, as in the recent release of a report detailing excessive use of force by Cleveland Police, can be instrumental in overcoming opposition to reform. And I know that Attorney General Holder's successor will make this a priority.

We ask a lot from our police, who have a difficult and often dangerous job, and we grant them enormous power, including the right to take a life under certain circumstances. It is not only proper that we insist this power is used impartially and as a last resort. It is fundamental to a just society.

In a 1951 speech to the New York Legal Aid Society, the great jurist Learned Hand challenged his audience: "It is the daily, it is the small, it is the cumulative injuries of little people that we are here to protect. If we are able to keep our democracy, there must be one commandment: Thou shalt not ration justice."

Mr. Speaker, 63 years later, on a street corner in the same city, Eric Garner hauntingly invoked Hand when he pleaded in vain: "Every time you see me, you want to mess with me. I'm tired of it. It stops today. I'm minding my business, officer. I'm minding my business. Please just leave me alone."

Mr. Speaker, it must stop today.

Mr. Speaker, equal justice under law—impartial and uniformly applied—has been for more than two centuries the ideological underlining of American democracy.

But, from the beginning, this noblest aspiration has been intertwined with our struggle with race—a battle that has sometimes come to define our nation, and to divide it in ways that too often cleave us still today.

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Blacks are now prominent in every facet of American life. And much of this has occurred during my lifetime, because people marched and sat, and voted and demanded greater equality.

But, despite the progress, equal justice under law is not the reality for too many of our fellow citizens and injustice continues to limit their lives and their livelihoods in ways that are difficult for white Americans to comprehend.

Inequality manifests itself at every rung of the criminal justice system, but its most deadly consequences are to be found in the encounters of young men of color with the police.

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It is a ritual that plays out in black and brown households across our nation every day—as parents teach their young children about the special dangers they face from law enforcement.

Even the mayor of New York, Bill de Blasio, said last week that he and his wife had to prepare their son—"as families have all over this city for decades—how to take special care in any encounter he has with police officers."

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First, in the months since the Michael Brown shooting, I have pressed for greater deployment of body-worn cameras to police departments across the country, an idea that the President has now endorsed. Cameras are not a panacea, but they are a first step on a path to greater accountability and transparency.

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Sixty-three years later, on a street corner in the same city, Eric Garner hauntingly invoked Hand when he pleaded in vain: "Every time you see me, you want to mess with me. I'm tired of it. It stops today. . . . I'm minding my business, officer. I'm minding my business. Please just leave me alone."

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TAX REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, last week, the House passed legislation to extend a number of individual and business tax provisions that expired on December 31, 2013. This legislation would reinstate the provisions retroactively and extend them through the end of 2014.

As a former small business owner, I recognize the tremendous cost that Federal policy can have on American businesses and believe the temporary extension of many of these tax breaks is necessary. However, I have long been a consistent and vocal supporter of

simplifying the Tax Code and decreasing the tax burden of hardworking Americans.

If you listen to the political discussion in our country very long, you will inevitably hear some liberal lawmakers repeat one of their favorite lines: all of our country's budget problems would be solved if only we increased taxes. But our old friend across the pond, Mr. Churchill, once said: "A nation trying to tax itself into prosperity is like a man standing in a bucket trying to lift himself up by the handle." History has shown the truth of this statement: increasing taxes increases government spending and crowds out private sector investment, diminishing our prosperity.

It is ridiculous that Americans labor, on average, 111 days just to make enough to pay the government before starting to keep what they earn for the year.

At 70,000 pages long, the U.S. Tax Code is also far too complicated. It is almost five times wordier than the Bible, minus the grace and mercy. It is so complex and intimidating that the majority of Americans pay good money just to have someone else tell them how much the government is going to take from them.

It is also important that we reduce the number of loopholes in the Tax Code, which is why I have voted for the budget proposals introduced by Chairman RYAN since Republicans regained the majority in the House of Representatives in 2011. These Path to Prosperity budgets provide for comprehensive tax reform, close loopholes, and make our country more economically competitive.

The simple truth is that the United States has the highest corporate tax rates in the developed world. Continuing to make it more expensive to do business in the U.S. than elsewhere in the world will not encourage companies to operate and keep jobs in this country.

As we move forward with comprehensive tax reform in the 114th Congress, it is vital that we enact policies that strengthen and stabilize our economy as well as give individuals and businesses long-term certainty.

RECOGNIZING MINNIE MINOSO

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

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, yesterday there was a vote by the Major League Baseball committee on who should be inducted into the Hall of Fame from a particular area. One of the players who was up for consideration—and, unfortunately, wasn't chosen—was Minnie Minoso, and it reminded me of the debt I owe Minnie Minoso.

Minnie Minoso was the first African Latin baseball player. And in 1954, in Memphis, Tennessee—a town I was born in and a town in the Southern United States that was especially a