

TRIBUTE TO LIEUTENANT
COLONEL EARL DEVINE

HON. MARTHA MCSALLY

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 3, 2015

Ms. MCSALLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge Lieutenant Colonel Earl Devine and to congratulate him on his recently awarded title of Greater Sierra Vista Veteran of the Year for 2015.

Earl graduated from Highland High School in New York in 1953. He went on to receive a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics from Oklahoma State University in 1958. That same year, Earl was commissioned in the Army and rose to the rank of Captain in Air Defense Artillery, where he commanded a Nike Hercules missile battery.

Earl was then assigned to the US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MAC-V), serving as an intelligence staff officer and member of the MAC-V defense force during the Tet Offensive. He was then selected to be a test director for the newly activated Modern Army Selected Systems Test, Evaluation, and Review Activity.

Earl was selected as the Operations Officer for the Current Intelligence and Indications Center, North American Air Defense Command and was responsible for threat assessment of foreign missile launches and mission determination of foreign space launches. He completed his active duty as director of administration and logistics for an intelligence organization at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

After military retirement, Earl spent 19 years with the US Army Communications Command and successor organizations receiving numerous sustained superior performance and special act awards.

Mr. Devine has been a member of the Sierra Vista Municipal Property Corporation for over 12 years and served as president for the last four. He is a member of the Southern Arizona Veterans' Memorial Cemetery Foundation, American Veterans (AMVETS), the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the USA Lodge #2065, the Coronado Chapter of MOAA, where he served as Deputy Director for the past 19 years, and the election committee of Post 52 of the American Legion for the past ten years.

The people of Southern Arizona owe him a great deal of gratitude for all he has done for Sierra Vista and the veteran community. Earl's continued efforts to honor the brave men and women who served our country, often in times of its greatest need, are exemplary. He truly embodies the meaning of the word "service" and will have a lasting impact on the community for generations to come.

Through Mr. Devine's efforts to honor those who served, he continues to go above and beyond the call of duty. For that, he has unquestionably earned the title of Greater Sierra Vista Veteran of the Year for 2015.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in honoring Colonel Devine for being awarded the Sierra Vista Veteran of the Year and thanking him for his years of exemplary service to our country and Southern Arizona.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. STEVE KING

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 3, 2015

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, on roll call no. 51, had I been present, I would have voted Yes.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. KATHERINE M. CLARK

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 3, 2015

Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, last night I was regrettably detained by a snow storm and missed votes. Had I been present, I would have voted yes on H.R. 361, yes on H.R. 615, and yes on H.R. 623.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. FRANK C. GUINTA

OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 3, 2015

Mr. GUINTA. Mr. Speaker, on roll call no. 53 I was unable to vote because my flight was cancelled due to inclement weather. Had I been present, I would have voted yes.

INTRODUCTION OF THE UPDATE,
PROMOTE AND DEVELOP AMERICA'S
TRANSPORTATION ESSENTIALS ACT OF 2015, AND THE
ROAD USAGE CHARGE PILOT
PROGRAM ACT OF 2015

HON. EARL BLUMENAUER

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 3, 2015

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, today, I am introducing two pieces of legislation to address America's growing infrastructure funding crisis and looming transportation cliff. The reason is simple: America is falling apart and falling behind. The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) rated our infrastructure as a D+ and America, which once had the finest infrastructure in the world, was ranked 25th, behind Barbados and Oman, in 2013. The funding mechanism for our transportation system has been broken for years, and the Highway Trust Fund will run dry in May. On the eve of peak construction season, the U.S. Department of Transportation will be forced to stop reimbursing states for highway and transit projects. The uncertainty is already causing states and local governments to put off or cancel much-needed maintenance, let alone new investment.

If this sounds familiar, it's because we've been here before. Since the last full six year surface transportation bill expired in 2003, Congress has passed 2 partial authorizations and 23 short-term extensions, most recently in August 2014. The federal gas tax, unchanged since 1993, has locked the Highway Trust

Fund in a death spiral, and the search for necessary revenue has derailed a traditionally bipartisan, consensus-driven policy process. Just to maintain current, inadequate transportation funding, Congress has had to borrow more than \$65 billion from the general fund since 2008, in an increasingly desperate search for revenue in all corners of the federal budget.

The gas tax, since it was last raised to 18.4 cents a gallon in 1993, has lost nearly 40% of its purchasing power due to inflation and rising fuel efficiency. If the gas tax had been indexed to inflation in 1993, it would be at nearly 30 cents a gallon. Instead, the gas tax is barely higher in real terms than the first federal gas tax, levied at one cent a gallon in 1932. We're trying to fund 21st Century infrastructure with a Depression Era level of investment. It's no surprise that we face Depression Era consequences.

The Highway Trust Fund will run an annual shortfall of more than \$15 billion after 2017, and unless Congress acts, we face a drop in transportation funding of 30% over the next ten years. The situation is already dire—rough roads alone cost each driver an average of \$324 a year, and the cost of time wasted sitting in traffic will top \$1000 per family by 2020. Further, the American Society of Civil Engineers estimates that our deteriorating infrastructure will restrict our national GDP growth by nearly \$900 billion by 2020.

The case for increasing our investment in infrastructure is clear. A recent S&P Ratings report suggests that every \$1.3 billion invested in infrastructure would add 29,000 jobs, \$2 billion in economic growth, and cut the deficit by \$200 million. Two congressionally authorized commissions, the Simpson Bowles deficit reduction plan, and organizations representing business, labor, environmentalists, car advocates and cyclists, all agree on the solution to solve the Highway Trust Fund crisis and increase transportation investment: raise the federal gas tax.

The UPDATE Act, which I introduced today, would increase federal gas and diesel taxes by a nickel a year, phased in over each of the next three years, and index those taxes to inflation. This would generate \$210 billion over the next ten years, enough to make up the Highway Trust Fund shortfall and increase infrastructure investment by at least \$4 billion a year. It would cost the average driver roughly \$70 a year over the next six years, or less than 20% of what every American is already paying in vehicle maintenance, lost travel time, and carbon pollution.

Increasing the gas tax is the only solution to our growing revenue crisis that is dedicated to transportation spending, sustainable for the long term, and is big enough to do the job. For the first time in years, it's also politically possible. World oil prices have fallen nearly 60% since June 2014, and prices at the pump were at a six year low last week. More than 12 states are now considering increasing gas taxes, taking advantage of low prices. 8 states acted to raise gas taxes in the last two years, including Wyoming and New Hampshire. A growing number of Senators from both parties and Democratic Leader NANCY PELOSI have signaled openness, if not outright support for raising the gas tax.

The UPDATE Act will stabilize the Highway Trust Fund, and make sure that our infrastructure crisis does not worsen. The legislation

also affirms the sense of the Congress that by 2024, the gas tax should be repealed and replaced with a more sustainable funding source. My second piece of legislation, the Road Usage Charge Pilot Program Act, provides research funding for states to explore a transition away from the gas tax to a system based on vehicle miles travelled (VMT). Such a Road Usage Charge system would be more fair, a more accurate reflection of road use, and more sustainable for the long term, as fuel efficiency increases and hybrid and electric vehicles rise in popularity. Questions remain about how best to implement such a system, collect revenue, and address privacy concerns. Congress should encourage states to answer these questions through pilot projects. This legislation, instead of tying America's transportation system to the past, paves the way for the future.

Addressing the infrastructure deficit, stabilizing transportation funding, and helping America's all-too-slow economic recovery is critical if we want a livable and economically prosperous country in the years to come. All we need to make it happen is a commitment to build the future together.

RECOGNIZING MAJOR KRISTEN
CLARK CASTONGUAY

HON. MICHAEL G. FITZPATRICK

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 3, 2015

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, today I offer congratulations to Major Kristen Clark Castonguay on her recent promotion as an officer in the United States Air Force. A graduate of Neshaminy High School in Langhorne, Bucks County, and Syracuse University, New York, Major Castonguay also holds a master's degree in aerospace engineering from Pennsylvania State University. Kristen's father, David Clark, and her uncle, Terry Clark, an Air Force veteran, inspired her to explore her interest in rockets and space exploration. Major Castonguay believes she was called to serve for the greater good of the country and wanted to be a part of something bigger than herself. She was commissioned as an Air Force officer in 2004 and subsequently served on active duty in various Air Force bases in space propulsion and engineering supervisory positions. Major Castonguay currently teaches Rocket Propulsion and Space System Lab in the aerospace engineering department of the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. I gratefully acknowledge Major Kristen Clark Castonguay's dedication and many contributions to our country. She has set an example of diligence and duty and service for others to follow. Once again, I am pleased to offer my congratulations on her outstanding achievements and wish her continued success.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JOSEPH CROWLEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 3, 2015

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, on January 28, 2015 I missed recorded votes #49–50 as

I was returning from the presidential delegation to India to support this important partnership between our two countries.

I would like to reflect how I would have voted if I were here.

On Roll Call #49 I would have voted yes

On Roll Call #50 I would have voted no

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. PETER J. ROSKAM

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 3, 2015

Mr. ROSKAM. Mr. Speaker, on roll call no. 51 I had an unavoidable conflict. Had I been present, I would have voted aye.

HOUSTON, TEXAS RECOGNIZES IN-
AUGURAL MISSING PERSONS
DAY

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 3, 2015

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, today, February 3, 2015, we recognize Missing Persons Day in Houston, Texas.

There are few situations harder than when a family member or friend disappears.

We cannot forget each and every person missing from our community.

And help families, law enforcement, and community organizations raise awareness.

Today, we keep the hope alive that young people like Ali Lowitzer will return home.

Today is Ali's 21st birthday.

She went missing almost 5 years ago in April 2010 nearby her home in Spring, Texas.

She got off the bus after school and headed to work.

And she hasn't been heard from since.

Her family will not stop until she is found.

We join them in staying vigilant.

Citizens should report sightings and suspicious activity to law enforcement, Crime Stoppers or the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

All of these groups are partners in solving crimes.

One never knows when a report will end in a missing person returning to their family.

Ali's mother, Jo Ann, and her family are to be commended for raising the profile on this serious issue in Houston and providing support to other families.

We pray that Ali's mother, father, and brother and all those whose loved ones are missing will soon be reunited as a complete family.

And that's just the way it is.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ANNA G. ESHOO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 3, 2015

Ms. ESHOO. Mr. Speaker, I was not present during roll call vote numbers 51, 52, and 53 on February 2, 2015, due to a flight cancellation.

I would like to reflect how I would have voted:

On roll call vote no. 51 I would have voted YES.

On roll call vote no. 52 I would have voted YES.

On roll call vote no. 53 I would have voted YES.

INTRODUCTION OF THE VETERANS
EQUAL ACCESS ACT

HON. EARL BLUMENAUER

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 3, 2015

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, today, I am introducing the bipartisan Veterans Equal Access Act along with my colleagues DANA ROHRBACHER, WALTER JONES, JUSTIN AMASH, TOM REED, RICHARD HANNA, DINA TITUS, SAM FARR and JARED POLIS, which will allow Veterans Health Administration physicians to recommend medical marijuana to their patients in states where it is legal.

Twenty-three states and the District of Columbia have passed laws that provide for legal access to medical marijuana. As a result, well over one million patients across the country, including many veterans, now use medical marijuana at the recommendation of their physician to treat conditions ranging from seizures, glaucoma, anxiety, chronic pain, and nausea.

There are also nine states and the District of Columbia that now allow physicians to recommend medical marijuana for the symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS), due to a growing body of anecdotal evidence suggesting that marijuana offers relief when nothing else has.

While outdated federal barriers often prevent the research necessary to develop marijuana into an FDA approved drug, states have heard from their citizens, including veterans suffering from PTS, that marijuana is helping them now, and have adjusted their laws.

Despite this growing state availability of medical marijuana, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) prohibits VA medical providers from completing forms brought by their patients seeking recommendations or opinions regarding participation in a state marijuana program.

The Veterans Equal Access Act would require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to authorize physicians and other health care workers employed by the VA to provide recommendations and opinions regarding the participation of a veteran in a state medical marijuana program. This includes authorizing them to fill out any forms involved in the process of recommending medical marijuana.

Veterans should not be forced outside of the VA system to seek a treatment that is legal in their state. VA physicians should not be denied the ability to offer a recommendation they think may meet the needs of their patient. I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting this effort.