

TRIBUTE TO KENNETH AND PHYLLIS SHIELDS

HON. DAVID YOUNG

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 17, 2015

Mr. YOUNG of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Kenneth and Phyllis Shields of Farragut, Iowa, on the very special occasion of their 65th wedding anniversary. They were married in 1950.

Kenneth and Phyllis' lifelong commitment to each other and their children truly embodies our Iowa values. It is families like the Shields' that make me proud to represent our great state.

Mr. Speaker, I commend this great couple on their 65th year together and I wish them many more. I ask that my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives join me in congratulating them on this momentous occasion.

TRIBUTE TO RUSSELL L. JACKSON

HON. BRAD R. WENSTRUP

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 17, 2015

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank Russell L. Jackson, Jr. for his many years of service to Anderson Township.

Russ Jackson has a long history of public service to Anderson Township, making invaluable contributions to its economic development throughout the last 20 years.

With over 37 years of business experience in the transportation industry, including leadership as a CEO and small business owner, Russ's input on the Anderson Township Board of Trustees has been invaluable. For five elected terms, Russ has used his business acumen to help steer Anderson Township towards economic success.

Due in part to Russ's leadership, Anderson Township has experienced sustained economic growth. More and more families are choosing to call Anderson Township home and more businesses are deciding to conduct their business in the township.

As admirable as the service Russ has provided to his community is the attitude with which he has served. Russ has worked tirelessly to improve Anderson Township over the years, devoted to the big picture and listening to the people he serves without exception.

I am grateful to have a fellow citizen in southwest Ohio as committed to service and progress as Russ Jackson is. Congratulations, Russ, on your 20 years of public service, and I wish you the best in all future endeavors.

RECOGNIZING CAREPAYMENT AND BEACON HEALTH SYSTEM

HON. JACKIE WALORSKI

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 17, 2015

Mrs. WALORSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge Beacon Health System in my district for their collaboration with CarePayment.

Beacon Health System continues to look for new, innovative ways to care for their patients.

They have partnered with CarePayment to provide a financing service that allows patients to spread out the payment of medical bills.

Oftentimes, patients face sticker shock when they discover what their out-of-pocket medical expenses will ultimately cost.

Some plans with high deductibles force patients to pay \$6,000 for an individual plan, or \$12,000 for a family plan before their health insurance kicks in to cover medical bills.

In order to provide more financial relief to patients in my district, Beacon Health and CarePayment are now providing a patient-friendly financing program.

Everyone is eligible, regardless of income or employment status, and participating in this program has no impact on the patient's credit score.

The constituents I serve are concerned with rising medical costs.

In fact, many of them face difficult decisions when it comes to prioritizing their healthcare.

I am grateful for partnerships like the one between Beacon Health and CarePayment for providing patient driven solutions to Hoosiers.

I will keep working on bipartisan reforms to move in this direction.

COAST GUARD AUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2015

SPEECH OF

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 10, 2015

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 4188, the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2015.

H.R. 4188 authorizes the United States Coast Guard, a critical component of the Department of Homeland Security, through fiscal year 2017 at \$8.7 billion per year. The bill includes provisions aimed at improving Coast Guard mission effectiveness, modernizing the Service's aging vessels and other assets, and reforming U.S. maritime transportation laws.

Since our Nation's earliest years, the Coast Guard has kept our ports and waterways secure, protected our shores and coastal communities, and responded to disasters and other emergencies. As Ranking Member of the House Committee on Homeland Security, I recognize and thank the men and women of the Coast Guard for their work, particularly their efforts at fulfilling the Coast Guard's critical homeland security missions. I am pleased to support legislation that reauthorizes the Coast Guard to ensure that it is positioned to effectively execute its eleven vital statutory homeland security and non-homeland security missions.

Modernizing the Coast Guard's aircraft, vessels, and other technology is critical to its operations. H.R. 4188 includes provisions that seek to improve the Service's acquisition process and improve the quality of assets delivered. The bill also requires the Department of Homeland Security to develop and present to Congress a strategic plan for the Coast Guard's long-term acquisition and manpower needs. This requirement will go a long way to enhancing both the DHS and Congress' understanding and prioritization of Coast Guard capability needs.

In addition, H.R. 4188 directs the Coast Guard to have a new manpower requirements plan that assesses all projected mission requirements for the next four fiscal years; the number of personnel available currently and projected; capability gaps caused by a lack of available personnel; and the steps the Coast Guard will take to address these gaps. In carrying out this requirement, it is important that the Coast Guard take into account the need to foster greater diversity at all levels of the organization. Consistently deploying broad recruitment efforts can only strengthen the Coast Guard.

Congress must continue to ensure these brave men and women have the necessary authorities and resources to accomplish all that they do on behalf of our Nation. H.R. 4188 is a good step in that direction, and I congratulate my colleagues in moving this important legislation forward.

CONGRATULATING ANDREW MEKELBURG

HON. JOHN KLINE

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 17, 2015

Mr. KLINE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Andrew Mekelburg, Vice President of Government Affairs, upon his upcoming retirement after more than 36 years with Verizon and its preceding companies.

Andy began his career with Bell Atlantic and the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company of D.C. Originally from Needham, Massachusetts, Andy came to Washington to attend Georgetown University, where he majored in accounting and earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration. He also earned a Master of Science in Special Studies of Telecommunications Policy from George Washington University.

At the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone (C&P) Company he supervised a team processing telephone bill payments. Andy next served as a Supervisor and then Manager in Corporate Accounting before becoming a Manager of External Affairs, State Regulatory, Financial and Accounting Matters at Bell Atlantic, the parent company of C&P.

From 1991 to 1992, Andy was a Brookings Institution Congressional Fellow assigned to serve in then-Congressman Amory "Amo" Houghton's (NY) office. During his fellowship, Andy founded a coalition of community leaders and worked with them to develop and implement economic development activities, including the Western New York Tourism Coalition, throughout the congressional district. He also initiated and founded HealthNet, one of the first Telemedicine networks in the nation, which was comprised of twelve rural and urban hospitals and a number of technology companies that worked together to use telecommunications technologies to solve health care challenges.

After his fellowship concluded, Andy served as Director of Infrastructure Initiatives for Bell Atlantic. In that capacity, he worked with the General Services Administration, the Vice President's National Performance Review, and the City of Hagerstown, Maryland, to establish the first Federal Telecommuting Center in the Washington area. He also continued to initiate

other Telemedicine and Distance Learning projects throughout the Bell Atlantic territory.

In 1995, Andy was promoted to Director of Federal Relations for Bell Atlantic and continued to work in Government Affairs after Bell Atlantic merged with NYNEX to become part of the new Bell Atlantic. A later merger with GTE created Verizon in 2000, and later mergers with MCI and the purchase of Vodafone's interest in VerizonWireless created the current Verizon where Andy is finishing his distinguished career.

He has also served as Chairman and in a leadership capacity with Signal Credit Union for many years. Andy has continued to focus on health care and telemedicine policy but also worked on labor, immigration, environment, and other issues. He is well known and admired for his expertise, effectiveness, friendliness, and generosity as well as his ability to forge effective coalitions with diverse memberships. Additionally, he is a proud member of "Red Sox Nation" and a long-time fan of the New England Patriots.

Andy is a long-time resident of Maryland and resides in Adamstown with his wife, Linda. Together they have two adult children, Cory and Elise. In retirement, Andy and Linda are looking forward to spending time at their homes in Massachusetts and Maryland.

CELEBRATING THE 100TH
BIRTHDAY OF MS. VIRGINIA VEAL

HON. ANDER CRENshaw

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 17, 2015

Mr. CRENshaw. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to celebrate the 100th Birthday of Ms. Virginia Inez Bates Veal on December 17, 2015. Born on December 17, 1915, Ms. Veal has called Jacksonville, Florida home since her family moved from Bartow, Florida in 1918 when she was just three years old.

Virginia's life reads right out of the pages of a Jacksonville history book. As a young girl, she survived the Spanish Flu Epidemic that ran rampant through Florida in 1918. Her family endured the difficulties of the Great Depression in the late 1920's. And in 1934 Virginia graduated from Jacksonville's second oldest high school, and also my alma mater, Robert E. Lee High School.

After graduation, Virginia began working at Furchgott's, a local department store, in the Ladies Fine Wear section. After a 20 year career she retired as the Department Manager. During this time, Virginia raised two sons, Lamar Jr. and Lewis, in Jacksonville's well known preservation area of Murray Hill. Her two sons, also graduates of Robert E. Lee High School, went on to college and graduated from the University of Florida.

Virginia was married for almost 58 years to Mr. Prentice Veal. Mr. Veal managed and owned several dry cleaning plants around Jacksonville and Orange Park, Florida. Virginia today still enjoys cooking, gardening, visiting with family and friends, and is very active in her ladies' circle and Sunday school class at Riverside Park United Methodist Church.

Mr. Speaker, I hope you will join me in wishing Jacksonville native, Ms. Virginia Veal, a very special happy 100th birthday.

CONGRATULATIONS TO JORDAN
SMITH

HON. HAROLD ROGERS

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 17, 2015

Mr. ROGERS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Harlan County's own Jordan Smith for winning Season 9 of The Voice, NBC's nationwide vocal competition.

Jordan's superior talent impressed all four superstar judges during the blind auditions, igniting a competition for Jordan's team choice. From the moment the world heard Jordan's vocal debut, his powerful gift was undeniable. However, it was in the conversations following his performance that Jordan shared insight to his outstanding character, his determination and humility, as well as his faith in God. His courage and boldness has inspired people across the country, and especially in the hills of Eastern Kentucky. Coach Adam Levine said it best, noting Jordan as "the most important person that's ever been on this show."

Jordan has received applause and the utmost praise from some of the most talented, award-winning artists across the nation, affirming that his vocal gymnastics have impressed the best of the best artists. Coach Pharrell Williams even expressed to Jordan, "God has signed your voice." Jordan quickly became more than a singer in a televised competition, but arose as a leader and inspiration during a critical time in our nation. The celebration of Jordan's personal victory comes during a time when hope is desperately needed in his hometown and across the country. With the looming threat of terrorism at an all-time high and as Jordan's hometown region suffers from devastating job losses in the coal industry, he chose encouraging songs of hope and faith to transcend shared feelings of despair and fear. Additionally, Jordan's performances shined a spotlight on the compassionate and talented people of Harlan County, evoking much-needed positive news stories about our region.

It is his courage of conviction that makes Jordan so much more than a vocalist on stage. He is a leader of hope and faith for our nation and the people of Eastern Kentucky are deeply proud of his accomplishments thus far.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in applauding Jordan Smith on his monumental win on The Voice. I look forward to following the career of another talented artist from Eastern Kentucky.

TRIBUTE TO JIM AND JOLENE
NELSON

HON. DAVID YOUNG

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 17, 2015

Mr. YOUNG of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Jim and Jolene Nelson of Anita, Iowa, on the very special occasion of their 55th wedding anniversary. They were married on November 20, 1960, at the Lutheran Church in Greenfield, Iowa.

Jim and Jolene's lifelong commitment to each other, their daughter, Janet, and their

granddaughter, Emily, truly embodies our Iowa values. It is families like the Nelsons that make me proud to represent our great state.

Mr. Speaker, I commend this great couple on their 55th year together and I wish them many more. I ask that my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives join me in congratulating them on this momentous occasion.

FIRST RESPONDERS PASSPORT
ACT OF 2015

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 16, 2015

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, as the Ranking Member of the Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security, and Investigations, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 3750, the "First Responders Passport Act of 2015."

I thank Representative DARRELL ISSA and the House Foreign Affairs Committee Leadership, Chairman ROYCE and Ranking Member ENGEL for shepherding this legislation along.

This bill amends the Passport Act of June 4, 1920 to waive passport fees for an individual who has contracted with the U.S. government, including a volunteer, to aid a foreign country suffering from a qualifying natural disaster.

As the African proverb goes, "in moments of crisis, the wise build bridges—" this is what our first responders do: they build bridges for those caught in natural disasters.

In today's world fraught with natural disasters from Storm Desert that our friends in the U.K. are facing to cyclones, hurricanes and tornadoes across the globe, more than ever, it is very important that we build bridges by equipping our first responders dedicated to aiding countries across the globe suffering from natural disasters.

According to scientists, the first half of this decade featured deadly climate-related disasters, among them the great floods in Thailand in 2011, Hurricane Sandy in the United States in 2012, and Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in 2013.

Moreover, the year 2014 was the earth's warmest in 134 years of recorded history, and 2015 could well turn out to be even hotter.

According to some scientists, it is difficult to not draw a nexus between climate change and some of the natural disasters we have suffered on planet earth in this decade alone.

In the end, climate related and natural disasters have cost the world a lot in lives as well as economically.

In fact, according to the World Meteorological Organization, 1,300 climate-related natural disasters have been recorded in Africa between 1970 to 2012.

In this time frame, these natural disasters in Africa have caused the loss of 700,000 lives and caused economic damage worth U.S. \$26 billion.

Experts inform us that in 2012 there were 99 natural disasters in Africa—twice the long-term average.

The passage of H.R. 3750 is very timely, especially in light of recent talks in Le Bourget, France at the Conference of Parties (COP 21), with the objective of achieving a legally binding and universal agreement on climate, from all the nations of the world.