

## EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

### TRIBUTE TO ALVIN AND EULA BLANKENSHIP

#### HON. DAVID YOUNG

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, June 23, 2015*

Mr. YOUNG of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor Alvin and Eula Blankenship of Council Bluffs, Iowa, on the very special occasion of their 80th wedding anniversary.

Alvin and Eula's lifelong commitment to each other, their daughter, two grandchildren, six great-grandchildren and three great-great grandchildren embodies our Iowa values. All five generations were on hand to help Alvin and Eula celebrate this very special day. I salute this devoted couple on their 80th year together and I wish them many more years of happiness. I know my colleagues in the House will join me in congratulating them on this momentous occasion. I wish them and their family all the best moving forward.

### HONORING LESTER L. STROUP

#### HON. DOUG LAMBORN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, June 23, 2015*

Mr. LAMBORN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the legacy of Lester L. Stroup, a veteran, a former prisoner of war and a treasured member of the Colorado Springs community. Throughout his life, Lester proudly served and sacrificed for his country, then devoted the remainder of this life to veterans' organizations in the Pikes Peak Region.

Lester joined the Army in 1949, during the Second World War, and was assigned to the artillery outfit of the 2nd Infantry Division. Shortly thereafter, he was deployed in defense of the Busan Perimeter following North Korea's invasion of South Korea in 1950. Lester would be on the front lines only one month when his artillery battery was overrun and suffered a defeat. Wounded and surrounded by Chinese forces, Lester and his unit were captured on December 1, 1950. A brutal 400-mile march to the Puchkin Mining Camp initiated Lester's time as a prisoner of war, which lasted for exactly 1,000 days.

While imprisoned at the Puchkin Mining Camp, Lester and 750 of his fellow American servicemen were compelled to act as their own burial detail. Every day, on the brink of starvation, these gallant soldiers went out in groups of 12 or 14 to dig shallow graves for prisoners who had died. In less than one year's time, five hundred American prisoners of war perished in this camp, also known as the Death Valley Camp. When Lester was finally released, he was denied the Purple Heart Medal for lack of medical records maintained by the Chinese forces.

Lester first retired in 1969 with 20 years of service in the Army, re-enlisting in 1970 and

serving a voluntary combat tour in Vietnam. After retiring for good as a First Sergeant in 1975, he dedicated his time and energy to the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the Ex-Prisoners of War, Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Retired Enlisted Association, Disabled American Veterans, and American Legion Post 5. In 2006, Lester vigorously led the effort to erect a beautiful memorial that now stands in Colorado Springs in memory of our POWs.

Until he passed away on August 17, 2014 at the age of 84, Lester unsparingly gave of himself to his fellow ex-prisoners of war and other veterans. His legacy will now be carried on by Doris, his wife of 58 years, his children, his friends, and those with whom he associated as a volunteer. I am greatly honored to celebrate the life and service of Lester Stroup, a patriot whose uncommon and tireless devotion to his country will never be forgotten by his fellow citizens.

### HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES BY VIETNAMESE AUTHORITIES

#### HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, June 23, 2015*

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, the Vietnamese-American community is celebrating its 40th year in the U.S. We often think of 1975 as a time of tragedy and loss, as the Vietnam War ended with helicopters flying off the U.S. Embassy. But from tragedy has come hope and prosperity. The Vietnamese-American community has added so much to the American fabric. They are a shining example of an immigrant community, many who came here penniless refugees, who has made important contributions to the United States.

The subcommittee I chair has held numerous hearings on human rights in Vietnam and we have discussed a range of concerns, from restrictions on religious freedom to the jailing and torture of dissidents.

From sex and labor trafficking to the censorship of the press and Internet, the Vietnamese Government and Communist Party continues to be one of the world's worst abusers of human rights. We may want to sweep that reality under the table, paper it over by promises of security cooperation and trade deals. But that reality stares us in the face and requires us to ask whether U.S. policy really serves the people of Vietnam, people who want our liberties and freedoms as much as our trade.

The U.S. Government must continue to press the Vietnamese government on truly fundamental human rights issues, not only in human rights dialogue, but in all meetings with Vietnamese officials, at the highest levels from the U.S. President on down.

Sixty-six percent of the Vietnamese population is under 35, they don't remember the war, they want their lives to look like those of their Vietnamese cousins in the U.S., in Australia, and Canada. Our policies cannot only

be directed at the Vietnamese elite in the Communist Party, but must focus on the people of Vietnam. They are looking for U.S. leadership; they are hungry for a U.S. policy that advances the rights and freedoms of the Vietnamese people. They understand that if the U.S. sides with the Vietnamese Government, they will only receive crumbs from the Communist Party's table.

Our economic, security, and freedom interests must be linked. The Vietnamese Government needs U.S. security cooperation and economic benefits more than the U.S. needs Vietnam. We have leverage to bring about concrete changes in Vietnam. We must not give up or ignore this leverage.

If human rights issues are not explicitly linked to our economic and security interests, we risk having discussions on trade and defense moving forward, while human rights conditions go backward.

Trade between the U.S. and Vietnam has exponentially expanded since Vietnam was granted normal trade relations in 2000. If this expansion is to continue under the Trans-Pacific Partnership, or TPP for short, then the American people should at least be assured that Vietnam, currently our 15th largest source of imports, is protecting basic freedoms.

If the past is any indicator, Vietnam will regress from political liberalization as soon as it gains preferential trade status. In 2007, after the United States lifted its long-standing objection to Vietnam's membership in the World Trade Organization, Hanoi responded by launching the first of three waves of arrests that jailed over one hundred dissidents and introduced sweeping new laws restricting freedom of association, assembly, and the Internet. In short, Vietnam's WTO accession allowed the Communist government free license to jail, torture, and abuse.

Further, when the State Department removed Vietnam from the list of Countries of Particular Concern as a gesture of goodwill in 2006, we once again saw backsliding. Despite the State Department's decision in 2006 to remove Vietnam from the list of Countries of Particular Concern as designated pursuant to the International Religious Freedom Act, Vietnam, in fact, continues to be among the worst violators of religious freedom in the world.

According to the United States Commission for International Religious Freedom's 2015 Annual Report, "The Vietnamese Government continues to control all religious activities through law and administrative oversight, restrict severely independent religious practice, and repress individuals and religious groups it views as challenging its authority . . ." I agree with USCIRF's conclusion that Vietnam should be designated a CPC country.

I met courageous religious leaders during my trips to Vietnam who were struggling for fundamental human rights in their country. Unfortunately, many of them, including Father Ly and the Most Venerable Thich Quang Do, remain wrongly detained today. There are disturbing reports that Father Ly is suffering poor

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

health. There are over 150 prisoners of conscience in Vietnam. We should not forget them.

Some have made the case that Vietnam has made progress in recent years with respect to human rights, especially in regard to joining international agreements like the United Nations Convention Against Torture. In order for there to be real progress, the Vietnamese Government needs to back up its words with actions. The Vietnamese Government can show that it is serious about respecting and protecting human rights by crafting a new religion law that rolls back some of the many constraints on religious activities, but early indications the new law will actually be more restrictive. Vietnam can lift its draconian Internet restrictions and allow for independent labor organizations. Labor protections and Internet freedom are critical economic as well as human rights issues.

Despite the dismal status for human rights in Vietnam, we can exert pressure on the Vietnamese Government to cease these abuses. I have reintroduced the Vietnam Human Rights Act. The Vietnam Human Rights Act of 2015 seeks to promote the development of freedom and democracy in Vietnam by stipulating that the United States can increase its non-humanitarian assistance to Vietnam above FY2012 levels only when the President is able to certify that the Government of Vietnam has made substantial progress in establishing human rights protections. The United States should not be rewarding the Vietnamese regime with taxpayer dollars when it continues to violently repress its own people.

Swift Congressional action on this bill will send a strong message that U.S. will not tolerate continuing human rights abuses in Vietnam. Its enactment will send an unmistakable message to the Government of Vietnam that human rights improvements are fundamental to better relations, critically linked to our mutual economic and security interests, and cannot be ignored or bargained away.

Those intent on passing TPP should also be concerned with maximizing leverage over Vietnam, with the Vietnamese Government making true and lasting concessions on human rights, before we agree to provide them with the benefits of trade.

In fact, we heard from a witness at a recent hearing I held, the Reverend Nguyen Manh Hung of the Mennonite Church of Vietnam, how a religious leader has been threatened by security forces who told him that once TPP is passed, his house of worship will be torn down. This is a message that Congress, and the American people need to hear, before we continue to debate TPP in the abstract: There should be no trade deal with Vietnam without milestones being met on human rights on a permanent and sustainable basis.

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**RECOGNIZING THE WAYNESBORO, PENNSYLVANIA YMCA FOR 100 YEARS OF HISTORY AND SERVICE**

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**HON. BILL SHUSTER**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, June 23, 2015*

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Waynesboro Area YMCA on the

occasion of its 100th year of service to the Waynesboro community.

The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) was first established in 1844, and has grown into a worldwide organization that represents the pursuit of a healthy body, mind, and spirit. The Waynesboro community has been fortunate to have the Waynesboro Area YMCA since 1915, and today I congratulate the organization for 100 years of positive impact on the community.

From the momentous laying of the original building's cornerstone to today, the Waynesboro Area YMCA's Board of Directors, staff, and community members have put an impressive amount of work into continually growing and improving the Y's impact on the community. Countless renovations, fundraising efforts, and hours of work have enabled the Waynesboro Area Y to reach a community presence of which its 1915 founders would be proud.

Today the Waynesboro Y has a membership of nearly 3,600 people and offers more than 100 different programs. With a true communal spirit, it financially assists over 300 youth and 150 adults for membership and programs, providing over \$90,000 in scholarships annually. Though much has changed about the Waynesboro Y, it has remained committed to the principles by which it was founded—the pursuit of a healthy body, mind, and spirit with a Christian basis.

I am privileged to congratulate the Waynesboro Area YMCA for a century of history and service to the Waynesboro community, and to thank all who have helped this YMCA continue its success.

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**IN HONOR OF KEITH ISRAEL**

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**HON. SAM FARR**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, June 23, 2015*

Mr. FARR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the remarkable public service career of Keith Israel, who is retiring as the General Manager of the Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency (MRWPCA), after 27 years. Under Mr. Israel's leadership, the MRWPCA has grown to serve 250,000 people and treat 18.5 million gallons each day.

After obtaining a Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering and a Masters in both Environmental Engineering and Business Administration, Mr. Israel worked for five years as General Manager of the Victor Valley Wastewater Reclamation District. In 1988, Mr. Israel came to the Monterey Peninsula and immediately began to revolutionize the work of the MRWPCA. In the 1990's, MRWPCA constructed the Regional Treatment Plant (RTP) near Marina under his leadership. The efficiency and new treatment plans spearheaded by Mr. Israel and brought about by the RTP's development led to increased economic opportunity and business and housing development in the Monterey region. Also in the 1990's, Mr. Israel began collaborating with the Monterey County Water Resources Agency to begin a project to reduce groundwater withdrawal and allow for the use of recycled water for 12,000 acres of farmland in the Salinas Valley.

Throughout his tenure at the MRWPCA, Mr. Israel has served as a visionary, coordinating

the Salinas River Diversion Project and Pure Water Monterey Project, all while working tirelessly to facilitate collaboration between local leaders to advocate for sustainable water resources. Because of Mr. Israel's dedication to reducing the MRWPCA's carbon footprint, the agency has made great strides in the implementation of environmentally progressive processes, leading to recognition such as the Breathe California Central Coast Clean-Air Award and a partnership with ENERGY STAR. Mr. Israel has also built a personal reputation of excellence in the industry; throughout his career, he has served on the Boards of American Water Works Association and WaterReuse Association and maintained leadership positions in the California Association of Sanitation Agencies.

Mr. Speaker, I know that I speak for the whole House in sharing our gratitude to Keith for a job well done and extend our best wishes to him and his family this next chapter of life. I know that even in retirement, he will still find himself involved in the community and continue to better the Monterey Peninsula just as he has done through his work at the MRWPCA these last 27 years.

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**RECOGNIZING LT. CHRIS MILLER**

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**HON. JULIA BROWNLEY**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, June 23, 2015*

Ms. BROWNLEY of California. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize Lieutenant Chris J. Miller, Commanding Officer of Coast Guard Station Channel Islands Harbor, on the special occasion of his transfer to the Coast Guard District Eight New Orleans District Response Advisory Team.

During his time as Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Miller expertly managed 51 active duty and reserve personnel while directing the safe and efficient completion of over 3,000 underway hours, conducting more than 1,400 missions and sorties in support of 176 Search and Rescue cases and 300 recreational and commercial boardings. His leadership resulted in the saving of 53 lives, the preservation of over 4.5 million dollars in property, and significantly improved boating safety along the coast of California.

Under his command, Lieutenant Miller regularly held annual National Safe Boating expos, each hosting between 800 to 1,000 visitors annually and provided an average of 420 tours of station boats including hosting 22 marine supply vendors, fire rescue, police, Red Cross and local maritime organizations. The Expo continues to issue over 90 new lifejackets and promote rescue demonstrations that are highly successful and showcase the efforts made by the United States Coast Guard.

Additionally, Lieutenant Miller's outstanding leadership has resulted in his receipt of numerous awards and accolades to include the Coast Guard Commendation and Coast Guard Achievement Medals, Commandant Letter of Commendation Medals, Coast Guard Good Conduct Medals, as well as a number of other personal and service awards.

Along with his exemplary service in the United States Coast Guard, Lieutenant Miller is an active leader in the community balancing a rigorous work schedule with serving community needs in several local organizations. He