

THANK YOU TO STAFF AND JO-MARIE ST. MARTIN

(Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, this has been a busy month for all of us. We have passed more major legislation in a few weeks than we have in a few years. And now I want to thank all of the people who made it possible. I am talking about all the committee staff and all the people behind the scenes here in the Capitol who make this work. Thank you very, very much.

In particular, Mr. Speaker, this includes, of course, our legislative counsel. I don't think you could find a group of people more dedicated to their jobs. These people work late nights every night. They work weekends. They are always on call.

So I want to put into the RECORD a statement thanking every one of them by name. They were a part of history, and history should know their names.

I also want to thank one person in particular, and that is Jo-Marie St. Martin. Today is Jo-Marie's last day on the Hill. She has been working for this House for over 20 years, most recently as general counsel and chief of legislative operations for the Speaker. I could not even begin to list everything that she has accomplished.

We all know her so well. She is a legend in her own right. But as her colleagues will tell you, what is even more impressive than her career is her character. She is simply unflappable. When everyone else is on edge, she is calm. When they are flustered—and, believe it or not, some people get flustered around here from time to time—she is steady.

And though other people might like to show off their brains and their know-how, she is the definition of kindness, of humility. I have never heard her dismiss a question, no matter how small. She is always eager to help people understand. And her enthusiasm is nothing short of infectious. You can see it when she walks into a room. She has an effect on people. Everyone feels more at ease. The word that comes to mind is Zen—except, of course, when she is at a Caps game.

She knows the law backwards and forwards because she loves the law. She cares about the law. She cares about this House. For over 20 years, she has done her part to uphold its rights, to make sure that every voice was heard. Everyone here owes her a debt of gratitude.

If I could use an old-fashioned word, I would say she is a true patriot. We salute her.

So please join me one last time in thanking our friend Jo-Marie St. Martin.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), the distinguished minority whip.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of those who have been flustered by Jo-Marie.

Jo-Marie, as all of you know, has been with this institution for over two decades. She started as an intern in the Committee on Rules, unfortunately, because she got to know the rules very, very well.

And as majority leader for 4 years, as Jo-Marie ran the opposition—the constructive opposition, I will say, the friendly opposition but, nevertheless, the opposition—her intellect, her judgment, her tenacity, her focus was always a challenge. But it has always been good for this institution, because she made sure that the minority was heard. Unfortunately, for us, she has also made sure that the majority was loudly heard when the Republicans were in the majority.

Jo-Marie, as some of you know, is a mathematician by training. She is also a lawyer. She is also a scholar. She is also somebody who cares deeply about this institution.

Jo-Marie is my friend. Now, that does not mean that Jo-Marie and I always had an even-keeled relationship. Sometimes, as I said, she flustered me and us by her skill and by her devotion and loyalty to the Republican Party. But more than that, as the Speaker has said, she had a loyalty to this institution and to our country.

Jo-Marie, you have been an extraordinary representative not only of your party, but of this House. You have been an extraordinary friend of mine and so many.

I know Alexis Covey-Brandt, my chief of staff, and you have worked together a lot. Sometimes you agreed, and sometimes you didn't. Two brilliant women who cared, however, about this institution and making it work for the people.

We call this the people's House. Jo-Marie, you have been one who has always kept that uppermost in your mind. We, on this side of the aisle, share a great respect and affection for you, and we wish you the very best. As a young woman, you still have a lot of contributions to make, and we know you will make them.

We have mixed emotions about your leaving. To some degree, frankly, we think we are advantaged by your leaving. But as an individual and as someone who is your dear, dear friend, I will lament your not being on the floor and ever present, for your advice and counsel, always honest; sometimes in opposition, but always positive. Thank you for all you have done.

God bless you.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 4246. An act to exempt for an additional 4-year period, from the application of the means-test presumption of abuse under chapter 7, qualifying members of reserve components of the Armed Forces and mem-

bers of the National Guard who, after September 11, 2001, are called to active duty or to perform a homeland defense activity for not less than 90 days.

The message also announced that the Senate has agreed to without amend a joint resolution and a concurrent resolution of the House of the following titles:

H.J. Res. 76. Joint resolution appointing the day for the convening of the second session of the One Hundred Fourteenth Congress.

H. Con. Res. 102. Concurrent resolution providing for a joint session of Congress to receive a message from the President.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed with an amendment in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 2576. An act to modernize the Toxic Substances Control Act, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed bills of the following titles in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 284. An act to impose sanctions with respect to foreign persons responsible for gross violations of internationally recognized human rights, and for other purposes.

S. 2261. An act to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to improve the way beneficiaries are assigned under the Medicare shared savings program by also basing such assignment on services furnished by Federally qualified health centers and rural health clinics.

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CONGRATULATING PROSSER AND OKANOGAN HIGH SCHOOLS

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

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to congratulate two high school football teams that continue to establish central Washington as the football powerhouse of Washington State.

On December 5, the 13-1 Prosser Mustangs rolled over the Tumwater Thunderbirds to claim the Washington State 2A high school football championship. Led by a stellar defense, the Mustangs amassed four interceptions for the third time in the playoffs. This is Prosser's fifth State football championship.

Not to be outdone, the also 13-1 Okanogan High School Bulldogs pulled off an amazing nail-biter win, a win you usually only see in the movies. Rallying from a 27-14 third quarter deficit, the Bulldogs pulled off a late fourth-quarter touchdown to defeat the Napavine Tigers 36-34. This was Okanogan's second straight Washington State 2B high school football championship.

Both teams have proudly represented their schools and demonstrated a level of skill, teamwork, and tenacity that will prepare them well for future seasons and for future success in life.

Congratulations to both Prosser and Okanogan on well-played seasons.

HONORING OUR MILITARY

(Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor all the brave men and women who have served and are currently serving our country today in the Armed Forces.

Today over 70,000 servicemembers are overseas protecting America and Americans. These men and women sacrifice their lives fighting wars overseas so that the wars don't come to our shores. This year many American families have endured the tragedies of war through the loss of their family members. We must never forget their service.

As we celebrate this holiday season, let us remember all of our military servicemembers and their families as they continue to serve our country and fight for our security and freedoms. Too many American soldiers, sailors, marines, airmen, and airwomen will be away from their families at this holiday season. I would like to express my gratitude for their service and wish them all happy holidays.

QUESTIONS FOR THE WHITE HOUSE

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

Mr. STUTZMAN. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to warn my colleagues and my constituents about the latest in a string of White House distractions that will not make Americans safer.

This time the President is reportedly planning to unilaterally establish new restrictions on private gun transactions, and he may act while Congress is out of session.

Mr. Speaker, the President knows he was elected to lead all Americans, even the ones he disagrees with. Thus, I call on him to answer the questions my House colleagues and I are sending to the White House on Monday:

First, consider that Washington Post fact-checkers have confirmed their agreement with the sad truth that none of the recent months' and years' major shootings would have been prevented by stricter gun control laws. Why would the President think his proposal would be any different?

Second, if this is good policy, why wasn't it included in the executive actions announced by the President in January 2013?

Our remaining questions ask whether the President relied on appropriate data to choose this executive order and how it would be enforced.

Mr. Speaker, this kind of secretive, unilateral action is not just wrong; it

results in bad policy. I call on the President to answer our letter as quickly as possible.

PROUD MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

(Mr. COHEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, this is the last day of the first session of the 114th Congress. I have served here for 9 years. I am proud to be a Member, and I look forward to continuing to be a Member in the future.

In the last 2 months of this year, we have gotten a lot accomplished by working together. The omnibus and tax extender bills weren't unanimous, but they got a majority of each caucus. I was proud to support each. We got a transportation and an education bill passed, which was very important.

This House does work. It worked under Speaker RYAN, working with Leader PELOSI. I thank all of the leaders and all of the people involved in getting these last two bills together and everyone who supported them.

I also thank the people for allowing me to be a Member of this House. I am proud to be a Member of the House of Representatives.

HUNTINGDON SALVATION ARMY FIRE/DONATIONS

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, this is the season of giving. Today I rise in recognition of a community in Pennsylvania's Fifth Congressional District, which banded together after a fire destroyed the home of a local charity.

On the evening of December 12, flames ripped through the Huntingdon Salvation Army Church, destroying everything inside. Toys and clothes donated for the holiday season were left ruined by smoke and water damage. These items would have made the holiday season a little better for around 300 local families. Meals would have been provided for more than 100.

Like so many of us know, small towns often come together in times of hardship. The people of Huntingdon and the surrounding area have risen to the task. In fact, Salvation Army Church officials say donations in the form of both monetary gifts and supplies have been coming in nonstop since last weekend's fire.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the people of Huntingdon for stepping up to the plate and brightening the holidays for their friends and neighbors.

RETURN CONFISCATED PROPERTY

(Mr. ROHRABACHER asked and was given permission to address the House

for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Speaker, at the height of the cold war, Ethiopia fell to the Communists in 1974. Shortly thereafter, an Ethiopian family—the Berhane family—ended up in Huntington Beach, California, and for a long time they have been proud Americans and good citizens.

After the Communist regime in Ethiopia collapsed in 1991, thanks to Ronald Reagan's global efforts to undue the Communist establishment, the government in Ethiopia, which was replaced in 1991, has refused to return the confiscated property the Communists took from the Berhane family.

I rise in support of my constituents. I ask my fellow colleagues to join me in opposing any aid or activities helping the Ethiopian Government until they have returned the property of American citizens confiscated by the Communists.

It is our job to stand up for American citizens, whether they come from Ethiopia or are born in Brooklyn. They are now proud Americans. We need to stick together and refuse to give support to regimes like Ethiopia that refuse to turn confiscated property.

EPA SHOULD BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE

(Mr. GIBBS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GIBBS. Mr. Speaker, recently the Government Accountability Office reported findings from their investigation of the EPA regarding their waters of the United States rule that drastically increases their authority at the expense of States. The GAO report is plain and simple: The EPA broke the law.

By using social media tactics the GAO called "covert propaganda," the EPA undermined the integrity of the rulemaking process and violated the trust of the American people. They conspired to influence and skew the public comments during the open rulemaking process to promote and justify an agenda that the majority of the States oppose and have sued to stop.

The EPA should be held accountable for their unlawful actions, and the people responsible should be dismissed and prosecuted.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERY—CITY OF DAVID, JERUSALEM

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

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, for quite some time there has been an effort at the U.N. to delegitimize the Jewish State of Israel and to try to whitewash the Jewish people's historical and biblical connection to Israel.

Denying the historical connection of the people to Jerusalem is false, and