

entertain up to 15 further requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

VA ACCOUNTABILITY

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

Mr. BOEHNER. My colleagues, next week marks the 1-year anniversary since General Eric Shinseki resigned as the Secretary of the Veterans Affairs Department.

At the time, the President promised reform. He said: "The number one priority is making sure that problems get fixed."

Instead of a new day at the VA, the American people are still seeing more of the same. Last year, Congress gave the VA Secretary new authority to fire employees. While some 110 VA facilities kept secret lists to hide their wait times, just one person has been fired—one.

What the hell happened to the rest of them? Some got to retire with their benefits, some got transfers, some got paid leave, some got a slap on the wrist. All of them went on collecting checks from taxpayers. If only the Veterans Administration did half as good a job of taking care of our veterans as they do the bureaucrats, we would be in a lot better shape.

Congress also gave the VA more than \$16 billion to improve care and to shorten waiting times, yet the number of patients facing long waits is about the same. The number of patients waiting more than 90 days has doubled. At this point, the VA can't even build a hospital. Just about every project ends up years behind schedule and hundreds of millions, if not billions, over cost.

Last week, the public learned that the VA is spending \$6 billion a year illegally. An internal report exposed examples of overspending on conferences, improper gifts, inappropriate purchases, and promotional items—again, if only VA bureaucrats did as good a job taking care of our veterans as they do themselves.

The author of the report at the VA wrote, "doors are swung wide open for fraud, waste, and abuse," and that these actions "may potentially result in serious harm or death to America's veterans."

That is their own expert saying this.

This isn't run-of-the-mill incompetence. It is arrogance; and it is arrogance that allows our veterans to be lied to, ignored, and, frankly, left to die.

My colleagues, it is almost Memorial Day. This is when we slow down and reflect on the debt of gratitude that we owe to our heroes.

I commend Chairman MILLER and all of the members of the Veterans Affairs' Committee for striving every day to fulfill this obligation. Congress will continue to pass legislation to hold the VA accountable, but only the adminis-

tration can change the culture from within.

The President owes the American people a real, long-term plan to fix the VA—not a promise, not a pledge, not rearranging the chairs on a deck—a real plan to clean up this mess.

I will keep coming back to this podium until the administration produces such a plan.

VOLVO OCEAN RACE

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

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the city of Newport, Rhode Island, in my district, on hosting, this month, the Volvo Ocean Race, the world's premier sailing race around the world.

This 12-day event brought 125,000 visitors to Rhode Island, far exceeding even the most optimistic projections, as well as millions of dollars in economic activity that supported Rhode Island's tourism industry and our small-business community. Most importantly, the success of this event offered an opportunity to tell our story about the great things that are happening in Rhode Island today.

I want to thank everyone who helped make the only North American stop-over for this year's Volvo Ocean Race such an incredible success, including Sail Newport, Rhode Island's Public Sailing Center, Discover Newport, the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, the Newport Chamber of Commerce, Senate President Teresa Paiva-Weed, Speaker Mattiello, members of the general assembly, and Governor Gina Raimondo.

I want to especially acknowledge Senator WHITEHOUSE for all of his work to bring this race to Rhode Island and his ongoing efforts to enhance our State's position in the maritime industry.

Congratulations to everyone who made this such a success.

TRIBUTE TO STAFF SERGEANT ROBERT H. DIETZ

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

Mr. GIBSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Staff Sergeant Robert H. Dietz who was awarded the Medal of Honor for his courageous actions during World War II. Sergeant Dietz hailed from Kingston, New York, a proud and historical city in New York's 19th Congressional District.

In March 1945, Sergeant Dietz led his squad on an attack of a heavily fortified German position. Under heavy machine gun fire, Sergeant Dietz advanced forward, clearing enemy obstacles, providing a path for the men of his squad and platoon. This selfless act enabled the success of this attack; but in the process, Sergeant Dietz lost his life.

With strong local support, we submitted a bill to rename the post office in Kingston for Sergeant Dietz. Yesterday that bill passed in the Oversight and Government Reform Committee. I thank Chairman CHAFFETZ, his committee, and the entire New York delegation for their strong support; and I look forward to its passage in the full House soon.

Mr. Speaker, as we approach Memorial Day weekend, we pause to remember Sergeant Dietz and all those men and women who lost their lives in defense of our freedoms.

BRING BACK OUR GIRLS

(Ms. WILSON of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. WILSON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, today I, along with many of my colleagues—both women and men, Republicans and Democrats—wear red to pressure Nigerian President-elect Muhammadu Buhari into taking aggressive action against Boko Haram.

Next week, as Nigeria welcomes the new President and celebrates Democracy Day, we here in Congress want to put a spotlight on the immense threat Boko Haram poses to Nigeria's democracy and freedom.

Mr. Speaker, we want President-elect Buhari to know we will hold him accountable, just as we held his predecessor accountable. We urge this new administration to bring with it a swift and lasting change in attitude on this issue. We hope the new President will have a sense of urgency in finding the Chibok schoolgirls and defeating Boko Haram.

Mr. Speaker, we expect the new President to find the girls, whether they have been married off against their will or not, are alive or in a mass grave. Wherever they are, we want to know.

Until they are found, we will continue to tweet, tweet, tweet #bringbackourgirls; tweet, tweet, tweet #joinrepwilson.

21ST CENTURY CURES ACT

(Mrs. BLACKBURN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about the 21st Century Cures Act. This is legislation that we, at the Energy and Commerce Committee, are working on in a bipartisan basis, and we look forward to moving it to the House floor and seeing this passed and signed into law. Why are we doing it? Because we want to put the focus on cures, real cures that will enable people to live better lives.

Let's take just one disease, Alzheimer's. There are 5 million Americans that currently have Alzheimer's. The cost to the Nation is \$215 billion a year. When you look out several decades to 2050, the cost is estimated to be

\$1 trillion a year for one disease. Yes, we need to focus on finding cures.

And there are other disorders and diseases that need that attention. Take autism, diabetes, ALS, cancer, the list moves on.

It is time for us to encourage and support young scientists, to put the focus on our most challenging health conditions, and we want the regulatory agencies to be there to encourage this effort, and I encourage support for the 21st Century Cures Act.

RECOGNIZING NHTI, CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE'S COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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

Ms. KUSTER. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to underscore the importance of increasing access to higher education, including crucial workforce development programs that help our students gain the high-tech skills they need to succeed in our 21st century economy.

In New Hampshire, we are blessed to have some of the very best community colleges in the country, and I am proud to have visited every single community college in my district.

Today I would like to recognize one institution, the New Hampshire Technical Institute, the community college in our capital of Concord, which was just ranked number one in the country for value added by the Brookings Institution. That means that NHTI students are meeting and surpassing expected outcomes after graduation, and many of them are going on to extremely successful careers.

Every student should have access to this type of opportunity, and I am pushing for a number of initiatives that will help business partners join with community colleges to provide specific job training. Let's all join together to make sure that students across the country can access the kind of value-added programs offered at NHTI. And together, we can move forward so that every American can realize the American Dream.

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VETERAN HEALTH CARE, FIGHTER ACES

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

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, one of my top priorities is standing up for our servicemen and -women. That is why I am proud to reintroduce the Help Veterans Save for Health Care Act, because right now the IRS makes a veteran choose between receiving VA care or continuing to fund their health savings account. That is wrong. My bill fixes that.

In addition to this bill, today Congress will recognize America's fighter

aces with its highest honor—the Congressional Gold Medal. Last year, Congress passed this resolution honoring these patriots who are simply the best of the best.

We are the land of the free because of all our troops and veterans who have put their lives on the line for us, and I salute them today as we remember their sacrifices on this Memorial Day.

DAVID LETTERMAN

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

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I want to take this occasion to thank David Letterman for 33 years of late-night television and giving his genius to America. I want to thank him on behalf of my friend Warren Zevon for being the best friend his music ever had, and for helping so many other musicians get an opportunity to play for America; as a Memphian who attended the Andy Kaufman-Jerry Lawler match, for Dave giving Andy Kaufman the opportunity to give his zany sense of humor to America, and so many other comedians that he gave a forum to.

Dave was in the Ed Sullivan Theater, but he should have been in the Steve Allen Theater, Ed's rival, because he was more like Steve Allen, the first late-night host. The "Man on the Street" interview with Steve Allen was like "Stupid Pet Tricks."

Dave Letterman was a genius. Tonight I will be watching his last show—we all will—the 6,028th. We will all watch it.

Dave, don't stay away. Come back. We thank you for all you have given us.

HONORING MONTANA VETERANS

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

Mr. ZINKE. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in honor of Montana veterans and all the men and women who have fallen in defense of our great Nation.

I would like to recognize one in particular, Private 1st Class Nicholas Cook, from Hungry Horse, Montana, who was killed in action in Afghanistan. He bravely sacrificed himself to save his fellow paratroopers by exposing his position, providing suppressive fire. His valor earned him the Silver Star.

Mr. Speaker, no veteran should ever be forgotten. Today I would like to also recognize the following Montana veterans for their service to our Nation:

James Dighans, Carl Nordberg, Kenneth and Christopher Bogner, George Lacher, Charles Pickard, Michael Kallas, James and Gary Jacobson, Benjamin Balducke, Nicholas Cook, Willard Purkett, James and John Hantz, Robert Emrick, Dennis Morkert, and Edward Kinney.

God bless the United States, and God bless the troops that defend her.

CELEBRATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF HEAD START

(Ms. SCHAKOWSKY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Head Start program.

Head Start is near and dear to my heart. I began my career as a Head Start teacher in the Chicago public schools. I have never forgotten how the program made a monumental difference for its students, and this Congress should not forget those kids either.

Since its inception, Head Start has served 32 million children in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. territories. Last year, in my home State of Illinois, there were 130 early Head Start and Head Start providers providing quality teachers.

And there is an economic impact. Head Start accounted for more than 7,950 jobs in Illinois last year. Yet sequestration cuts have done serious damage to the programs in Illinois and around the Nation. In my State alone, more than \$16.5 million in funding has been cut, 1,900 children went unserved, and 549 jobs were lost.

Certainly none of us was elected to keep young children in need from getting an education. We should celebrate the 50th anniversary by fully funding Head Start and eliminating the sequester because every child in our country deserves a quality education and a good start.

VETERANS DESERVE ACCOUNTABILITY

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, this week, an internal report from the Department of Veterans Affairs revealed that the Department annually spends \$6 billion on illegal contracts and out-of-control spending. This fraud is unacceptable, an insult to the men and women who have risked their lives in service to our country. Unfortunately, this lack of accountability at the Department of Veterans Affairs is all too common under President Obama's failed leadership.

Our veterans deserve the best care, and I will continue working to give our veterans the treatment they have earned as promoted by Veterans' Affairs Chairman JEFF MILLER of Florida. Congress has worked to promote change at the VA. For example, this week, we passed the Ensuring VA Accountability Act, sponsored by Congressman RYAN COSTELLO. This bipartisan effort clearly demonstrates meaningful reforms for our veterans and military families.

I hope President Obama can live up to his commitment to end delays and denial of services to our veterans.