

A story of courage, will, discipline suffering, immense sacrifice and success. A tale of two great military forces, surprise, weather, overwhelming force and sheer resolve. A story marked with the graves of thousands, and that exemplifies the struggle for the very future of freedom in our world.

The story ends with the 101st Airborne Division and Patton's Armor victorious in January and February of 1945.

We must recognize the accomplishments of all the units that struggled and suffered greatly under the German siege of a small town in Belgium named Bastogne.

This past December 2014 through the end of January 2015 marks the 70th Anniversary of the one of the most significant and deadly battles of World War II—the Battle of the Bulge.

We must also remember the German units and the actions of their Soldiers committed to their nation's cause. We must recount their actions as well—the cause of their leadership, the unfortunate actions that occurred in those desperate hours and learn from that history so that we may never again have to re-endure them.

Most people know of the 101st Airborne (nicknamed the "Batting Bastards of Bastogne") and the plight of Patton's Armor as chronicled in so many stories and movies now burnished into the collective consciousness of our Nation—and rightly so. However Mr. Speaker, on this 70th Anniversary, I'm reminded of an often untold story of other heroes of the Battle of the Bulge, in the little but critically important town of Bastogne. It's the story of the American Soldiers of the 28th Division from Pennsylvania who held at all costs.

In late October to mid-November of 1944, occurred the Battle of the Huertgen Forest—described as "the meat grinder"—where the 28th Division fought a fierce and deadly battle with the German 73rd Corps. For the 28th, battle losses were 248 officers and 5,452 enlisted men, after which the battle-weary Division needed a rest and were moved to the Ardennes Forest, thick and seemingly impenetrable but quiet sector in which the 28th Division could reconstitute, reorganize and assimilate thousands of replacements into the ranks while the Division recovered. Greatly weakened by the previous battle, the 28th Division was spread out over some 25 miles along a front more than double that which was recommended in standard practice by any division at the time. On the morning of 16 December 1944, the peace was shattered by the opening barrage of the Germans in one of the largest and most deadly artillery bombardments ever—signaling the start of Hitler's last great offensive on the Western Front in WWII. For the next four days without any sleep, and often without food, elements of the 28th Division and their Allies fought tirelessly—to the last bullet in most cases—as well as to the last life, to deny the enemy success.

The day and night were punishing—freezing, wet, foggy and snow-covered—exactly what Hitler had counted on, as the winter would only add to the element of surprise and exponentially increase his chances for success. The German 5th and 15th Panzer Armies, 6th SS and 7th Army attacked the U.S. 8th Army and aligned between Aachen and Bastogne with a plan to fight as close as possible down the seam between American, Canadian and British forces in order to split

them. After crossing the Meuse River, the attacking Panzers were to turn north and capture the port city of Antwerp, thus collapsing the supply lines and the Alliance. The timetable established by the German General Staff and High Command called for the capture of the entire 28th Division sector early in the morning of 16 December, and the capture of Bastogne by the same evening. Bastogne was a major road junction that was needed by the Germans for armor and resupply units.

In the early morning hours of 16 December the 28th Division received the order to "Hold at all costs!"

"Keystoners", as they were known, were dug in and began the slow and painful art of trading space and lives for time—time enough for the 101st Airborne and Patton's Armor to get into the fight, and win it.

The 110th Infantry Regiment soon was surrounded and fought to the last bullet. From 0530 hours on 16 December, until sometime late in afternoon of the 18th and early on the 19th in some locations, men of the 110th Infantry fought and held—giving ground only when forced out—but while buying precious time for General Eisenhower to find and move reserves forward from deep inside France.

The other two Regimental Combat Teams of the Division—the 109th and 112th—did only slightly better, and the 109th ran out of ammunition on the 18th. These scattered and battered units of the 28th Division held out in the face of overwhelming odds—delaying the Germans as long as they was by any standard a miraculous feat because of the complete and massive confusion of the Battle.

However, the 110th Regiment stayed in place as they were assigned the center sector of the Division. This Regiment alone fought elements of five German divisions, outnumbering the Americans 7 to 1.

Overall the 28th Division would identify elements of 9 divisions in its sector before the Battle was over. Early on, the force ratios reached 10 to 1 in the Germans' favor, but still Pennsylvania's 28th Division valiantly held its ground.

Small determined units, low on ammunition, food, water, anti-tank weapons, and morale, continued to stand and fight until forced to retreat, captured or killed.

The old 110th, which had served the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the Nation since 1873, started to fight with just over 2200 Soldiers. When all was said and done, less than 750 officers and men could be found still fighting. Some unit strength reports have it just around 500 unit members still standing. The German Fifth Panzer Army was so ravaged by the Keystoners that many say it ultimately cost the Germans the battle.

The Division held until it could hold no more, and it never ordered a single retreat. It was a continuous fighting withdraw under fire—described as "We made the Germans pay for every yard, every road junction, and fighting house by house, floor by floor, often hand-to-hand when the ammunition ran out."

The 28th inflicted 11,700 casualties on the enemy at a cost of 3850 Americans killed and wounded, and another 2000 captured when they simply ran out of ammunition.

There are many footnotes to this intense Battle:

On 17 December, Allied prisoners of war were executed in cold blood by elements of the 6th SS Panzer Army. Some 100 prisoners

were killed where they stood at Malmédy on direct orders from German Colonel Joachim Peiper.

On 19 December, 6000 Allied Troops surrendered to the encircling German Army at Schnee Eifel.

On 20 December, the 101st Airborne Division at Bastogne completely was encircled by the German 47th Panzer Corps and the US 10th and 19th Armored Divisions completely were encircled by the German advance. After holding on to Bastogne for a full week while encircled, the 101st repelled the final German thrust with the arrival of the 4th Armored Division.

On 25 December, the 2nd Panzer Division was stopped by a combined force of British and American armor made up of General Montgomery's 29th Armored Brigade and the American 2nd Armored Division.

7 February 1945 marked the end of the battle where the German casualty count was a staggering 82,000 men, matched only by the 77,000 casualties suffered by the American Army.

While many things come to mind when we think of the Battle of the Bulge—like the 101st, Patton's Armor or Easy Company (made famous by the book and movie, "Band of Brothers"), please also remember the names and places familiar to the others that held at all costs:

The 103rd, 109th, 110th, 111th, 112th Infantry Regiments; the towns and grounds of Clervaux, Wilt, the Clerf River, Foy and Noville; and the other units like Combat Command B, 48th Armored Field Artillery, Combat Command R, 158th Engineer Battalion, 630th Tank Destroyer Battalion, 1278th Engineer Battalion and the 299th Engineer Battalion who suffered and fought to reconstitute and support this brave endeavor. These are the echoes of the 28th Division and the men and units who held at all costs and traded space for time so that the 101st and Patton's 3rd Army could get into position in time to defeat the German offensive.

Mr. Speaker, we could learn so much from these dedicated Soldiers who not only refused to surrender, but fought for what they believed in.

I remind us all of this tale of heroism, tireless and selfless service, and salute these brave Americans.

MAINTAINING AMERICA'S INFRASTRUCTURE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I wish to associate myself with the prior gentleman's commendation of those who fought on behalf of liberty at the Battle of the Bulge. We bow before them. They bequeathed liberty to this generation. It is a heavy burden. Let us hope that we can measure up to it in tribute to their valor.

At last night's State of the Union Address, passing a transportation and infrastructure bill to repair America and build forward a new century, as we create hundreds of thousands of jobs, got the broadest bipartisan applause. You could hear it on both sides of the aisle. So I come to the floor this morning to

say, Let's do it. Let's do it. Chairman BILL SHUSTER and Ranking Member PETER DEFAZIO are two Members who can get us there. We want to help them. I know the majority of Members feel that way. So my words to them are: Onward, gentlemen; lead America forward by passing that bill through us.

On another front, I rise to express deep dismay at what I believe to be Republican efforts to weaken and begin dismantling the Social Security and disability insurance program that so many Americans depend upon. The headline in yesterday's Politico reads: "Social Security disability under attack by the GOP."

As this Congress starts, Republicans have quietly and without consulting Democrats tucked into the rules of this House a point of order provision that aims to harm our Nation's 8,950,000 disabled citizens and weaken the related Social Security earned benefit program. The number of Americans on disability today in a Nation of over 310 million people amounts to less than 3 percent of our population. That is actually a very small number when you think about it. God has been good to most of us, but that isn't true physically and mentally with many of our fellow citizens.

Mr. Speaker, even though the number of disability approvals has been declining since 2010, Republicans have begun this Congress by singling out the disabled. They haven't targeted Wall Street moguls who brought our economy down and stole trillions of dollars of home equity and the very homes from our families. No, Republicans are targeting the injured, the suffering, and those not able to fend for themselves. Even to touch this subject so callously is a cruelty. It causes worry and trepidation. It makes life more uncertain.

Why should such an important change not be debated on this House floor? Republicans instead hope to pull the wool over the eyes of the American people by hiding it in an obscure rule that was part of a massive parliamentary package for this 114th Congress. But I tell you what, not all Americans have been fooled. Despite this subtle attempt to pit Social Security pensioners against disabled beneficiaries, our office has already received a great number of calls and letters from citizens sick over the possibility that a 20 percent benefit cut could adversely affect our neighbors and relatives most in need.

These proposed cuts in Social Security and disability insurance—and I underline the word "insurance"—set the stage for what Republicans truly want, and I fear: severe cuts, a weakened Social Security system, and ultimately dismantling one of our greatest American legacies, earned Social Security benefits and earned disability benefits for our old, our ill, and our disabled. Our disabled and senior citizens have the right to live out their lives with

dignity. And for so many, their lives are not easy.

I remind my colleagues who visit nursing homes and who have neighbors or relatives in their own family who endure pain every day how vital these programs are. There but for the grace of God go you.

This Congress should oppose these backhanded cuts, and at the same time we should support the passage of the transportation and infrastructure jobs bill to build our Nation forward. There are items we can agree on, and there will be items that we disagree on. But our roads, our bridges, our harbors, our airports, our rail systems, the St. Lawrence Seaway System, and navigable waters all deserve our attention. We can make it happen this year. Let's do it.

[From POLITICO, Jan. 20, 2015]

REPUBLICANS TARGET SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY

(By David Rogers)

Like Mrs. O'Leary's cow, House Republicans kick-started a bigger fire than many imagined with an opening day rules change that revived Social Security as a hot issue for this Congress—and the 2016 presidential elections.

The GOP's immediate target is Social Security's sprawling disability insurance program, which has grown at a pace far beyond its revenues and will exhaust its trust fund reserves by December 2016, threatening a 19 percent cut in benefits.

In the past, Congress has simply shifted revenues from Social Security's larger retirement account to fill holes in the disability fund. But the new House rule throws up a roadblock by creating a point of order against any such bill that does not improve the "actuarial balance" of the combined funds.

"What we want to do is not kick the can down the road anymore," said Rep. Sam Johnson (R-Texas), who promoted the change as chairman of the Social Security panel on the House Ways and Means Committee. "The rule is intended to get the Congress to at least take a first step toward solving the Social Security problem. If we continue the way we are, it's a go-broke operation."

"If all they're doing is rob-Peter-to-pay-Paul, that's going to be subject to a point of order, and rightly so in my opinion," added Rep. Thomas Reed (R-N.Y.). "We have to protect the retirement fund and the retiree."

It all sounds like "good government," but the politics are rich.

House Democrats were not consulted on the rules change, and liberals accuse the GOP of trying to cull the weak from the herd, pitting the disabled against pensioners to undermine the larger Social Security coalition.

In fact, the new rule's fine print leaves an escape hatch for Republicans to move tens of billions into the disability fund if this gambit fails. Still, the upshot could be a one-two punch Democrats most fear: a first-round debate over disability funding in 2016 followed by a bigger battle over all of Social Security in 2017, when Republicans hope to control both Congress and the White House.

"They're looking for a new weapon," said Michigan Rep. Sander Levin, the ranking Democrat on Ways and Means. "What they're doing in this rule is to use any problems within disability as a way to attack the whole system. It's dangerous doubletalk when they have been the problem, not the answer."

Adding to Levin's fears was testimony last week before Ways and Means, in which Harvard economist Martin Feldstein promoted the idea of Congress gradually raising the eligibility age for full Social Security benefits to as high as 70. That would increase labor-force participation among people older than 65, expanding the economy, Feldstein said. But raising the retirement age would add to the strain on the disability fund, which has had to cover more workers longer since the retirement age was raised from 65 to 67.

These tensions fueled a separate uproar last week over remarks by 2016 presidential hopeful Sen. Rand Paul about the disability program.

Testing the waters in an appearance in New Hampshire, the Kentucky Republican suggested that half the people on Social Security disability had no more to worry about than achy backs and anxiety in the morning. "Join the club. Who doesn't get up a little anxious for work and their back hurts," Paul said disparagingly.

After video of his remarks went online, Paul quickly backtracked: "We absolutely should take care of those truly in need of help," he said in a statement.

At this stage, the White House and Treasury show no sign of backing down from their intent to pursue a straight reallocation of funds from the retirement account, formally known as the Old Age Survivors Insurance or OASI trust fund. Given all the divisions already in Washington, adding a new procedural hurdle is "unhelpful," an administration official said icily.

Indeed, transfers between the two Social Security funds have gone on for years. Each relies on a percentage of the same payroll tax, and the disability program helped the retirement trust fund in the 1980s by reducing its own share of the tax revenue.

What's most changed now is that critics are singling out the disability fund as the profligate partner—and a harbinger of bad times ahead for all.

Without doubt, the growth of the disability program has been explosive.

In the past 20 years, the number of workers getting disability payments has more than doubled to 8.95 million last month. About \$140 billion went out the door in fiscal 2013, double what the costs were just 10 years before. And like food stamps in the Farm Bill debate, disability payments are common enough now to be a whipping boy for conservatives like Paul, playing on resentment toward people receiving government aid during hard economic times.

At one level, this is all political catnip for Democrats, eager to be seen as defenders of Social Security and its New Deal heritage. But given their history, Republicans don't come to the table with clean hands.

For example, the GOP's 2011 budget deal with President Barack Obama held out the promise of millions in appropriations to help the Social Security Administration fight precisely what Republicans complain about in the disability program: medical fraud. But for 2012 and 2013, House Republicans failed to approve the money, thereby adding to Social Security's woes.

Moreover, an analysis by Social Security's chief actuary, Stephen Goss, suggests there's less to the new House rule than meets the eye. That's because the point of order is triggered only if lawmakers exceed a "0.01 percent" threshold, which equates to a \$38.6 billion cap on what any one Congress can move from the retirement fund, Goss told POLITICO.

That leaves too little room for some long-term, multiyear reallocation of payroll tax revenues but it is enough to get past 2016, by Goss' calculations.

"We're projecting [disability] trust funds will be depleted in December of 2016. . . . The shortfall for the ensuing 12 months would come to about \$29 billion," Goss said. "What that means is that we could have a tax rate reallocation that could apply in 2016 or 2016 and 2017 that would generate up to \$30 billion or even \$35 billion transferred to the [disability] trust fund, which would at least extend its reserve depletion date for one more year."

It's a stop-and-go scenario that serves neither party's goals in the end. Much depends in the interim on Johnson and new Ways and Means Committee Chairman Paul Ryan (R-Wis.).

Ryan has boasted that Ways and Means will be "command central" for the GOP's agenda, and he has installed his own staff in Johnson's Social Security subcommittee. In the previous Congress, the disability debate among Republicans was shaped by flamboyant personalities such as the now-retired Sen. Tom Coburn (R-Okla.) and Rep. Darrell Issa (R-Calif.), who has had to surrender his platform as chairman of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee. But now, Ryan would like to be the architect for reforms in the social safety net.

There is room for compromise. The crisis is no surprise—as long ago as 1995, Social Security's actuaries were predicting 2016 as a breaking point for the disability fund. And multiple academic papers from the center-left and center-right outline changes Congress could consider.

Three potential areas of agreement: First, find a dedicated source of money for Social Security to expedite so-called continuing disability reviews, which have been shown to generate savings. Second, limit recipients' "double-dipping" among disability and other government benefits. And third, experiment with ways to help people with disabilities to stay in the workforce or return more quickly.

The past year has seen some turnaround on funding for the disability reviews. In the fiscal 2014 and 2015 Social Security budgets, House Republicans finally agreed to the extra "program integrity" appropriations that the budget deal had called for. The Social Security Administration says every dollar spent here can lead to \$9 in long-term savings, and in 2013—the latest year for which data are available—more than 17,000 workers were disqualified as a result of these medical reviews.

The administration estimates that as many as 790,000 continuing disability reviews will be conducted this year, a 50 percent increase over 2014 and double the annual average from 2009–2013. To maintain this effort, the 2016 budget that Obama proposes in February is expected to ask again for close to the \$1.4 billion provided in 2015.

The White House is also expected to come back to Congress with a set of demonstration programs to test and gather data on the effectiveness of early intervention—with workers and employers—rather than individuals simply surrendering to going on disability. The omnibus bill approved in December provided \$35 million for this purpose, far less than what the administration had hoped for.

"I think it's clear that the system needs to be improved," said Jeffrey Liebman, a Harvard professor who served in the Office of Management and Budget during Obama's first term. "I also think it's clear that we don't yet know enough about the cost and benefits of specific proposals to make wholesale changes."

Part of the challenge for policymakers is the unique nature of disability insurance.

Unlike many other disability programs, Social Security's covers only total dis-

ability—not partial or short term. Benefits are a function of how much a worker previously earned and put into the system, but on average these run under \$1,200 per month. On top of this, a worker is allowed to earn some outside income, but this is capped at less than \$1,100 a month.

The result is that many households can be locked in at 200 percent of poverty or lower once the decision is made to go on disability. That's why early intervention can help both the government and the worker. But how early to intervene—and at what cost—remain big questions.

"They are really only biting at the outer edges of the issue. Their idea of early intervention is way too late," said Richard Burkhauser of Cornell University and the University of Melbourne. Burkhauser argues that the U.S. must look to European countries like the Netherlands that "have really done major things that have fundamentally altered their system."

The Dutch model, for example, requires employers to cover more of the first two years of disability costs, thereby encouraging more management involvement in trying to help employees rehabilitate themselves and stay in the workforce. Yet selling this to a pro-business Republican Congress may take more than a little doing.

"The Dutch still spend more of [gross domestic product] than we do on disability benefits," Liebman said. "They came from spending a lot more than we do to spending more than we do."

Johnson is certainly not eager for big new expenditures. But for all his famous crustiness, the Texas conservative was not unsympathetic to people who depend on the current system.

"We want to work to protect the disability program, but we want to consider how to help those who can and want to work," Johnson said. "And those who can or want to work ought not to be sentenced to a lifetime of near poverty with no way out."

For all the partisanship now, the disability insurance program was born in the mid-1950s under a Republican president, Dwight Eisenhower. Ronald Reagan triggered bitter fights 25 years later when he sought cuts in the early 1980s. That sparked a backlash from Democrats in Congress, which led to changes making it easier for more people to qualify.

But the enrollment numbers really took off in the mid-1990s, as more baby boomers moved into their late 40s and began applying during an otherwise strong economy. The Great Recession accelerated this trend as workers turned to disability as a last resort after unemployment benefits ran out. But the prime mover for the past 20 years has been demographics—changes set in motion generations ago.

These include not just the baby boom, but the fact that women have worked long enough now to qualify for disability benefits. All this comes, most importantly, at a time when the drop in birth rates has left fewer younger workers to help absorb the costs.

If all these forces make disability insurance the black sheep now, it will soon have company: The retirement side of Social Security is feeling the same forces, while new enrollment numbers suggest the spike in disability has peaked. Data show a steady drop in the number of new disability awards since their high in 2010.

"The increasing effects of [disability insurance] are over. We're done with that," Goss said. "The bad news is now the boomers are moving to the higher ages and once they get there, they'll have the lower-birth-rate generation below them. . . . This is unfortunately kind of like the tide."

As the waters recede, rural low-income states like Kentucky, Arkansas, Mississippi

and Maine face a larger concentration of disability cases as a percentage of the population. Workers complain of a slow, almost Dickensian application process that can put their lives on hold for months. This same environment can attract aggressive attorneys, who boast in phone book ads that this is their briar patch—just call.

Fresh indictments this past week in Puerto Rico are a reminder of the risk of fraud—and collusion among doctors, lawyers and administrative judges. Government Accountability Office reports have raised questions about workers double-dipping, by stringing together payments from Social Security disability along with jobless benefits or non-combat-related disabilities covered by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

None of this alters the 2016 deadline.

"The trust fund programs really are special because they cannot borrow. The reserves deplete. Congress has to act," Goss said. "We'll still have revenue come in, but our projection is we'll only have 81 cents of tax revenue coming at that time for every dollar of benefits."

But under the new House rule, Goss said, any single piece of legislation can give the program at most "a one-year or slightly more than a one-year extension of the reserve depletion date."

Does that mean Congress should do more than one year?

The actuary chuckled. "The good news," he said, "is that given we have 535 members of Congress, we'll hear lots of arguments and that will likely be one."

ENDING THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, I am sure that my colleagues would agree that we have many needs in our districts. For example, my district has an inlet that cannot be dredged, which causes an economic problem. And the reason it cannot be dredged is because of lack of funds. We continue to spend billions of dollars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but there is no money for necessary infrastructure projects back here in North Carolina and across the Nation.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, I have been outspoken on the continuation of war in Afghanistan. I would like to recite a segment from Rudyard Kipling's poem, "Epitaphs of the War," as Ron Paul did when we went into Iraq: "If any question why we died, tell them because our fathers lied."

Mr. Speaker, a recent letter to the editor of the Marine Corps Times echoed the same sentiment. Bryan Chou wrote:

"Remember the part I said about ending the Marines' presence in Afghanistan? I lied," said every politician.

I assume Mr. Chou was referring to the President's recent statement that the war in Afghanistan is over.

How can the war be over when we just committed to a 10-year bilateral security agreement with Afghanistan to keep thousands of troops there while spending millions of dollars? The Afghan Parliament voted on the bilateral security agreement while we in Congress had no discussion and no debate.