

PORT NEGOTIATIONS

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

Ms. HAHN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my hopes that the negotiations between the Pacific Maritime Association and our dock workers will improve quickly with the help of a Federal mediator.

Resolving differences between the ILWU and the PMA is essential to the United States' economy because our west coast ports support 5 million jobs across the country and handle two-thirds of all America's trade. This represents 12.5 percent of our GDP.

Port workers have been without a contract for 7 months under tense and uncertain conditions. Reaching a fair agreement is urgent for workers and their families, for communities, for our businesses that depends on goods moving through these ports, and indeed for our Nation's prosperity.

As cochair of the bipartisan Port Caucus, along with my colleague TED POE, I will do all I can to help our ports operate smoothly and keep Americans working.

BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT

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

Mr. ROUZER. Mr. Speaker, it doesn't take an accountant to figure out that our path of more spending and more debt must change. Our national debt has increased by more than \$7 trillion over the past 6 years, now totaling more than \$18 trillion.

That is why I am proud to cosponsor H.J. Res. 1 and H.J. Res. 2. Both of these bills would amend the Constitution to require a balanced budget. Families across North Carolina and America are required to live within their means, and they expect Washington to do the same.

I came here with a clear mission: work to get a balanced budget and do my best to reduce the size and scope of government, so that our small businesses and farm families can grow and create jobs.

On behalf of the fine citizens of the Seventh Congressional District of North Carolina, I am proud to be a cosponsor of both of these resolutions, and I encourage my colleagues in both the House and the Senate to join me in this effort.

NEW CONGRESS REPRESENTS A NEW OPPORTUNITY

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

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the 114th Congress of the United States convened for the first time. This new Congress represents a new opportunity to get to work on the priorities of the American people.

We have a responsibility over the next 2 years to work together in a bipartisan way to create jobs, grow the economy, expand access to affordable education, and keep our communities safe.

Last night, Democrats offered a new legislative package to grow the economy by creating better infrastructure and bigger paychecks for hardworking Americans. Unfortunately, House Republicans voted to block action on this important legislation.

I am hopeful that this year we can cast aside partisan differences and work together to expand opportunities for hardworking Americans and their families.

This month, I will be meeting with Rhode Islanders all across my home State to hear about their priorities as I develop my legislative work plan for the 114th Congress.

By working together, I believe we can find common ground to make this Congress more productive than the last, accomplish the work that we were sent here to do, and create a brighter future for the people we serve.

BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT

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

Mr. POLIQUIN. Mr. Speaker, for generations, the hardworking families of Maine's Second District have balanced their checkbooks at the kitchen table. It is time our Federal Government does the same.

A balanced budget amendment to our Constitution will finally force Washington to live within its means. This discipline will help end wasteful spending and enable our government to start paying down our \$18 trillion national debt.

That will give job creators the confidence to expand their companies and to start new ones. More jobs, more freedom, less government dependency, that is what we all want for our kids.

Amending our Constitution will not be easy or quick, but we can start the process right now. With every Member of Congress supporting this crucial jobs bill, an institutional discipline to spend no more than we collect in taxes from American families is the commonsense, right thing to do. It will help ensure the financial security for our kids and our grandkids, and it will create jobs.

USA WARRIORS ICE HOCKEY PROGRAM

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

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, one of my greatest privileges as a Congressman has been spending time with some of our country's wounded veterans through the USA Warriors Ice Hockey

program. USA Warriors provides education, training, motivation, and encouragement for U.S. military members who have been injured while serving.

The same qualities that made them successful in the military—teamwork, perseverance, and determination—make them inspiring competitors on the ice.

Recently, I played with the Warriors and the Chicago Blackhawks at a practice at Nationals Park before the Winter Classic. Last week was particularly moving because the Warriors paid tribute to Clint Reif, Chicago Blackhawks' assistant equipment manager, who passed away on December 21st, by wearing "CR" stickers on their helmets.

Clint was responsible for getting the Warriors new equipment when they skated with the Blackhawks last season at Soldier Field, and many of the Warriors considered Clint an extended member of their team. This simple gesture was a fitting tribute to Clint and an extraordinary testament to these veterans who have given us all so much.

My thoughts and prayers are with the Reif family and the entire Chicago Blackhawks organization during these difficult times.

LAUREN HILL

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

Mr. MESSER. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to honor a remarkable young woman from Indiana's Sixth Congressional District, 19-year-old Lauren Hill.

Last year, this Lawrenceburg native was diagnosed with DIPG, a terminal form of brain cancer. Since then, Lauren has become a national symbol of courage and hope for those impacted by this terrible disease.

This selfless young woman inspired the Nation last November by fulfilling her dream of playing in an NCAA basketball game, despite having an inoperable brain tumor. Lauren not only played, but scored 4 points for the Mount St. Joseph's Lions.

She then set an ambitious goal: to raise \$1 million for DIPG research before the end of 2014. During a telethon on Tuesday, December 30th, she surpassed that goal.

I commend Lauren for her continued courage and applaud the steps she has taken to find a cure for pediatric brain cancer.

Lauren, you make your community, your State, and your country proud.

□ 1215

MARRIAGE EQUALITY

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

Mr. HIGGINS. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Florida became the 36th State to

legalize marriage equality. Now more than 70 percent of Americans live in a State where sexual orientation does not dictate who can be married.

Our Nation was founded on basic principles of freedom and equality, and no law should discriminate against individuals on the basis of who they are. We have come a long way since 2004 when Massachusetts became a pioneering State in the fight for marriage equality. But the fight is not over.

I am a proud to be an original co-sponsor of the Respect for Marriage Act, reintroduced in the House yesterday. This legislation will allow same-sex couples to receive equal and fair treatment under Federal law regardless of their State's marriage laws.

As we begin the 114th Congress, I look forward to working with my colleagues in the House to make sure that we have laws in place to end discrimination toward individuals, regardless of their gender, race, religious background, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

FIRST RESPONDER APPRECIATION WEEK

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

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, this week is Florida's First Responder Appreciation Week. Every day, law enforcement, firefighters, and EMTs put their lives on the line to keep our communities safe.

Sadly, in my district, Tarpon Springs police officer Charles "Charlie K" Kondek was shot and killed right before Christmas as he patrolled the streets on the midnight shift while the rest of us slept securely in our homes.

There is no such thing as a typical day for first responders. On average, an officer dies in the line of duty every 58 hours—150 deaths per year.

This week, and every day, we should be thankful for the first responders serving our communities. Let us never forget the sacrifices of Officer Kondek and others who have fallen in the line of duty. These brave officers and their families are in our prayers. They are remembered.

VOTING RIGHTS OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in their first votes of the 114th Congress, the majority used their first vote to eliminate the vote in the Committee of the Whole of the residents of your Nation's Capital. That vote on some, but certainly not all, matters had been approved by the Federal courts. The District of Columbia has used this vote in three Congresses, but not when Republicans controlled.

With their large majority, Republicans showed themselves to be small

in principle when they voted to eliminate the vote of D.C. citizens, who pay the highest Federal taxes per capita in the Nation.

HONORING DAVID FRANK GEER

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

Mr. DENHAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge and honor the life of a beloved leader in the Modesto community. Former Modesto City Council member David "Dave" Frank Geer died at the age of 72 on Sunday, December 28.

He followed in his father's footsteps and became a paratrooper in the United States Army and served for many years in the Reserves after Active Duty. For 27 years, Dave worked at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory for the U.S. Department of Energy and the Nuclear Security Administration. He was a Federal security police officer with a Q level security clearance.

In 2009, Dave decided to get more active in politics and ran for the Modesto City Council District Two. He won handily. He was a strong advocate for his largely Latino district, which includes some of Modesto's poorest neighborhoods, which he lived in for more than a quarter century. He understood politics without being political. He did his homework on issues facing the city. And while he treated people with respect, he did not shy away from asking very tough questions.

In addition to serving on the city council, he was involved in many aspects of our community. And he was very involved with many of us in addressing all problems, not just from a city perspective, but from a county, from a State, and from a Federal perspective. Dave Geer was a man who was very involved in his community and wanted to strengthen his Nation. He will be missed. We will miss his leadership.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in honoring and recognizing Dave Geer for his unwavering leadership and many accomplishments and contributions. He had a long history of service to his Nation and community, and he had a genuine love for the people, community, and Nation he worked so hard for.

HONORING STEPHANIE RILEY

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

Ms. KUSTER. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor Lieutenant Colonel Stephanie Riley of the New Hampshire National Guard, a courageous Granite Stater who recently passed away after a long battle with cancer. In addition to her work as an occupational nurse for the Army and her dedicated service to the National Guard, Steph touched so many lives with her energy and compassion.

Steph leaves behind a wonderful husband, Shawn, and two terrific kids, Shane and Sammie, as well as countless friends and admirers all across New Hampshire. She was a tireless advocate for veterans, serving as secretary of our State's Veterans Advisory Council. She was devoted to the next generation of leaders.

When Steph was diagnosed with cancer, she refused to be discouraged. She was open about her disease, fighting on behalf of cancer research. I had the honor of walking with her on her team, Steph Strong, in an event to raise cancer awareness. As always, she was kind and vivacious, joking with friends and family. I consider myself very lucky to have been her friend. Steph was a wonderful, brave Granite Stater.

STANDING AGAINST CASTRO REGIME

(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, President Obama's statement that he will reestablish diplomatic relations with the communist regime in Cuba takes away leverage that could have been used once that island nation one day begins to move towards democracy and freedom. But the Castro brothers have taken no such steps, nor will they. Raul Castro already stated that he will not change anything about his regime. That was Castro's official response to President Obama's unilateral concessions.

The U.S. has given away the store, and it has not helped the Cuban opposition at all.

Is there freedom of expression in Cuba now? No.

Are there political parties in Cuba? No, just one party, the Communist Party.

Is there freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, respect for human rights? No, no, and no.

Will President Obama's sellout help bring about such freedoms? No. Quite the opposite. Mr. Speaker. It will provide an economic lifeline to the decrepit regime.

The President has stated that he has asked for an official U.S. Embassy and a U.S. Ambassador to Cuba. This would lend legitimacy to a dictatorship that continues to pose a threat to U.S. national security.

Let's work to stop this reckless and unwarranted action. Let's stand with the Cuban opposition and not with the Castro regime.

CRAIG BIGGIO VOTED INTO BASEBALL HALL OF FAME

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

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, Houstonians and baseball fans