

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

all across the country today are celebrating. The Houston Astros have their first person into the Hall of Fame, Craig Biggio. He is called the greatest Astro because, for his 20-year career, he spent his total time with the Houston Astros. We have a number of other players in the Hall of Fame, but they didn't spend their entire career with the Astros.

The Houston Astro franchise started in 1962, 52 years ago, as the Colt .45s. In 1965, they changed the name to the Houston Astros and played in the Astrodome for many years. Now they play at Minute Maid Park. The famed Astrodome is still there, although we need to refurbish it. But it is historic.

The Astros organization and Houstonians today are celebrating Craig Biggio, who was a great mentor to a lot of baseball players. Mr. Hustle, as he was known in the Houston area, is now a member of the Hall of Frame.

OPPOSING UNILATERAL EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

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

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, over the last few weeks, many people have expressed genuine concerns about the appropriations bill that passed Congress in December. Unfortunately, many Washington-based special interest groups are confusing the matter with incomplete and sometimes false messages aimed more at fundraising for themselves than uniting behind our shared goal of stopping President Obama's executive overreach on immigration.

I am vehemently opposed to the President's unilateral executive actions granting amnesty to millions of illegal aliens. It is the responsibility of Congress to pursue reforms and ensure that a strong immigration policy is devised.

By extending funding for the Department of Homeland Security only through February 2015, the House and Senate are prepared to confront the President's unparalleled power grab without the threat of a looming, government-wide shutdown, and we will do everything we can to stop his destructive actions.

OUR LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

(Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of a Democratic legislative agenda that would improve our Nation's infrastructure and focus on job creation and support of the American people.

Instead of taking backward steps and undermining existing law that protects and helps our fellow Americans, we must concentrate on fair wages, scientific advancement, and allowing individuals to access health security. We must begin to work on reauthorizing

the highway trust fund immediately, moving beyond the all-too-familiar recurring nightmare of short-term, piece-meal highway reauthorizations.

Instead of providing giveaways to special interest groups, we must strengthen protections in public health, the environment, food safety, and consumer safety for hardworking Americans. We must support access to quality, affordable health insurance for millions of Americans instead of slowly chipping away provisions of the Affordable Care Act. And Congress must think in the long term by leading efforts to curb climate change.

SHARED ENDEAVOR ON COMMON GROUND

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

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I welcome you and all of our colleagues back for the start of the 114th Congress. I was encouraged by Speaker BOEHNER's remarks yesterday calling for all of us to begin this shared endeavor on common ground. I couldn't agree more. As someone who comes from local government, I know firsthand the music that can be made when elected leaders allow their commitments to improve the quality of life for our neighbors to guide their actions rather than partisan ideology.

My predecessor in this Chamber was also a veteran of local government. And although we had our share of partisan differences, we both like to say that we belong to the same party, the party of getting things done, a moniker to which this new Congress should aspire.

Without question, there will be rigorous battle of ideas, and we should expect nothing less in the arena of elected leadership. But at the end of the day, our constituents expect us to resolve those differences, to accomplish something on their behalf rather than on behalf of our respective parties.

Mr. Speaker, when a final tally is taken of this Congress, I hope we do prove the pessimists wrong and show we were a Congress that got things done.

□ 1230

AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE BEING MISLED AS TO THE CONSEQUENCES OF COMPANY BONUSES

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

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, from these microphones, there was more than one occasion when my colleagues would argue that somehow giving a bonus of \$1 million to the business owner or a chief executive officer of a company would somehow go untaxed; that because the company got

a tax deduction that somehow spread the burden of that across all of America.

What was left out of the conversation each and every time was the fact that the recipient of that bonus—this individual—actually puts that on their tax return and pays it at a much higher rate. In fact, that \$1 million would probably be taxed at the 43 percent rate—or 39.6, plus the add-ons that are in place.

So, over and over again yesterday the American people were misled as to the consequences of getting bonuses or paying chief executive officers. It does not go untaxed simply because the company gets a tax deduction. That employee has to put that on their tax return and pay the appropriate taxes on that.

I just wanted to set the record straight on yesterday's misguided comments with respect to how individuals who create businesses and grow those businesses are compensated, and the misinformation that that somehow is a negative impact on the rest of us.

BEGINNING OF A NEW CONGRESS

(Mrs. DAVIS of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, this week marks the beginning of a new Congress, and with it comes a new chance to move past the bickering that has characterized the last 2 years. Sadly, the leadership of the House seems poised to let that opportunity go to waste.

Since the election, we have heard that one potential area of agreement would be tax reform. That would be great. I would welcome the chance to improve our deeply flawed Tax Code. And yet, the very first act of this Congress will make it much harder for any reform bill to get bipartisan support.

That is because House leadership has quite literally changed the rules of the game, allowing them to pick and choose which tax bills the congressional budget will be giving favorable treatment.

Mr. Speaker, I am optimistic that we can move past the dysfunction of the last few years, but changing the rules of the game isn't a signal that we are heading in the right direction.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote incurs objection under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.