

CELEBRATING DOUBLE TEN DAY

HON. BLAKE FARENTHOLD

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 15, 2016

Mr. FARENTHOLD. Mr. Speaker, Monday, October 10 is Taiwan's National Day—also known as Double Ten Day. Since this body will not be in session that day, I would like to offer my early best wishes to the people of Taiwan.

Taiwan is a close trade partner and ally of the US in the Asia-Pacific region. A fine example of the trade relationship between Taiwan and the U.S. is Formosa Plastics Corporation, a Taiwanese company heavily invested in the district I represent. They are a major employer in the region and are actively involved in the community.

Last year, Eva Air, one of the biggest Taiwanese airlines, launched the direct flight route between Houston, Texas and Taipei, Taiwan, and will soon be offering direct flights between Dallas/Ft. Worth and Taipei. These flights shore up the business and cultural ties between Taiwan, Texas and the entire U.S.

I am glad to see closer trade ties between Taiwan and the US. It is my belief Taiwan should be included in the International Civil Aviation Organization (I-C-A-O), which works to secure the civil aviation throughout the world. The ICAO's 39th Triennial Assembly will meet in Montreal on September 27. I hope that Taiwan will be invited to attend the Assembly as it was three years ago.

Again, I wish the people of Taiwan a Happy Double Ten Day, and I look forward to working closely with Taiwanese people to further enhance our bilateral relations.

RECOGNIZING ODESSA COLLEGE'S
DESIGN FOR COMPLETION PRO-
GRAM

HON. K. MICHAEL CONAWAY

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 15, 2016

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Odessa College for being named a Finalist in Excellence in Education. This honor was bestowed on Odessa College for their work in raising retention rates through their Design for Completion program.

Starting in 2011, Odessa College created a framework to provide meaningful connections and engagements between their students and faculty. Design for Completion is focused on the student and their success in the classroom and beyond. This initiative places students on a distinct and coherent pathway that provides the necessary support and resources vital to their collegiate careers.

Since implementing Design for Completion, retention and student success rates have dramatically increased across campus, especially among Hispanic students. Through this program, Odessa College has instilled confidence in their students by showing them that they can accomplish any goal that they set out to conquer. Odessa College hopes that this program serves as a model that other higher education institutions can use to help other students succeed in their academic studies.

A strong education system contributes greatly to the success and growth of our country, and is the key to not only our individual achievement, but also to our competitiveness as a nation. Programs like Design for Completion helps our nation achieve these goals and reach our fullest potential. I am honored to have the opportunity to represent Odessa College and wish them continued success.

COMMEMORATING THE 50TH ANNI-
VERSARY OF BELLEVUE COL-
LEGE

HON. SUZAN K. DELBENE

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 15, 2016

Ms. DELBENE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Bellevue College and its great work toward educating students in my home state of Washington.

Bellevue College was founded in 1966 as a small community college with fewer than 500 students. Fifty years later, it has grown into two campuses with an enrollment of nearly 33,000 students each year, becoming Washington's largest community college.

Throughout its tremendous growth, Bellevue College has remained committed to providing all students with access to affordable, quality higher education.

Today, the institution's students are able to take advantage of nearly 100 different professional and technical programs or pursue one of the 10 bachelor degrees offered by the college.

I would like to thank all of the school's faculty, staff and administrators for their hard work and commitment to helping their students and the college succeed.

Bellevue College has done a remarkable job preparing its students for the future, and I look forward to seeing what the next 50 years hold. Happy anniversary to the entire Bellevue College community.

ERITREA: A NEGLECTED
REGIONAL THREAT

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 15, 2016

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, in 1993, the citizens of Eritrea, then a province of Ethiopia, voted to become an independent nation. Ethiopia had annexed Eritrea in 1962, and its citizens no doubt believed they were well on their way to controlling their destiny. Unfortunately, their hopes would soon be dashed. Elections have been repeatedly postponed, and opposition political parties are no longer able to organize.

Those same initial hopes for democracy and good government in Eritrea also were held by the international community. In a March 1997 report on the U.S. Agency for International Development program in Eritrea, the American aid agency had high praise for its collaboration with the Eritrean government: "Over the past year, the young state of Eritrea continued its exciting and pace-setting experiment in nation-

building, and, similarly, USAID/Eritrea established itself as Eritrea's leading development partner."

Within a few years, the Government of Eritrea ended its relationship with USAID, but this decision was originally taken as a sign that Eritrea was ready to become an example to the rest of the developing world by managing its own humanitarian needs. Yet Eritrea's government instead merely became less open, and when an East African drought occurred in 2011, we knew very little about how Eritreans were faring. Today, we know that two-thirds of Eritreans live on subsistence agriculture, which has had poor yields due to recurring droughts and low productivity.

What we also know is that Eritrea's citizens are living under a regime that does not honor their human rights. In June of this year, the UN Human Rights Council released a report that accused the Government of Eritrea with a variety of violations, including extrajudicial executions, torture, indefinitely prolonged national service and forced labor, and sexual harassment, rape and sexual servitude by state officials.

In its Trafficking in Persons Report from June 2016, the State Department listed Eritrea as "Tier 3" and stated, "Eritrea is a source country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labor . . . the government did not investigate, prosecute, or convict trafficking offenders during the reporting year . . . the government demonstrated negligible efforts to identify and protect trafficking victims . . . the government maintained minimal efforts to prevent trafficking."

In their most recent International Religious Freedom Report, the State Department listed Eritrea as a Country of Particular Concern. Moreover, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom lists Eritrea as a Tier 1 Country of Particular Concern for its egregious religious freedom violations. Eritrea's government interferes with the internal affairs of registered religious groups and represses the religious liberty of those faith groups it refuses to register, such as Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses and Muslims who do not follow the government-appointed head of the Islamic community. Furthermore, the government has a record of arbitrary arrests of believers and their leaders and reportedly tortures those in prolonged detention.

As a result of the authoritarian government's actions, Eritrea is considered one of the world's fastest emptying nations, with about half a million of the country's citizens having left their homes for often dangerous paths to freedom. An estimated 5,000 Eritreans leave their country each month.

In a July 9, 2015, hearing by our subcommittee on African refugees, John Stauffer, President of the America Team for Displaced Eritreans, told us that Eritrean Government officials operated freely in eastern Sudan, arresting and bringing back to Eritrea those they considered high-value targets among refugees, such as government officials or church leaders. He also testified that refugees moving east may be kidnapped and extorted locally for a few thousand dollars, or taken off to Egypt or Libya where they are abused. That abuse often included organ harvesting.

In the past year, the world has witnessed a flood of Eritrean refugees risking their lives on

too-often unseaworthy boats bound for Europe. The prevalence of Eritreans among refugees has been overshadowed by refugees from the Middle East, especially Syria. The United Kingdom, one of the prime destinations for Eritrean refugees, apparently wanted to slow down the flow of Eritreans into the country. Earlier this year, the UK reduced the percentage of Eritrean asylum claims from 95 percent to 28 percent.

Directly addressing the root causes of the flight of Eritreans seems a better policy than trying to determine the final destination of Eritreans who feel forced to leave home. That means an enhanced level of communication between Eritrea's government and the international community. There have been quiet contacts between Eritrea's government, the U.S. Government, and civil society. A hearing I convened yesterday examined how such contacts have developed.

Can the United States form a relationship with a government it has under sanction?

Does the dire situation in which Eritrea's people live require an alteration of U.S. policy?

What would a change in policy mean for the international effort to hold Eritrea's government responsible for blatant human rights violations?

These and other questions must be answered before there is any policy adjustment toward Eritrea.

NATIONAL POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY

HON. DENNIS A. ROSS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 15, 2016

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call my colleagues' attention to a very special POW/MIA memorial dedication ceremony taking place in my home town of Lakeland, Florida.

As flags are raised across America this week in honor of National POW/MIA Recognition Day, we must stand united as a nation remembering and honoring those captured and those who have gone missing while serving our great country, as well as their loved ones. Today, as in every day, we shall live by the POW/MIA flag's creed: You Are Not Forgotten.

No other country has devoted as much energy and as many resources to account for its missing or captured like the United States of America. Our debt to American prisoners of war, those missing in action, and the families of these brave soldiers can never truly be repaid.

America's service members are the backbone of the freedom and prosperity this country has been blessed with for more than two hundred years. The sacrifices made by these courageous and selfless men and women in uniform, on behalf of perfect strangers, embodies the American spirit of patriotism.

Few among us will ever understand the pain and fear associated with knowing a loved one is captured or missing in a warzone across the globe. We as a nation must join together to honor those who have sacrificed so greatly today, and every day. Without their sacrifices, we would not be able to enjoy the liberties we are blessed with today. Let us never take for

granted their selfless protection of our great nation and its people.

May God continue to watch over our valiant soldiers, and return them safely home, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

PRESIDENT OBAMA ENDANGERS U.S. CITIZENS BY CLOSING GITMO

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 15, 2016

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, sitting in Guantanamo Bay are cold-blooded, calculating terrorists that have either already killed Americans or had planned to do so. The high-security prisoners that remain at GITMO committed some of the most repulsive crimes known to all of us.

Despite this fact, this Administration—since literally day one—has promised to close GITMO all together and release these terrorists back into the world. Mr. Speaker, why would we do that?

Many of the terrorists we have released have re-entered the battlefield. The Administration even admitted earlier this year that at least 12 former detainees were implicated in attacks overseas against Americans and our allies—and those are just the ones we know of. So why would we continue to let terrorists go?

Mr. Speaker, I have been to GITMO. Most Americans would be surprised to know it's actually nicer than most facilities we have here in the states. GITMO has soccer fields, volleyball courts, table tennis, you name it.

It also has new medical facilities and new dental facilities. When I visited GITMO, I ate the same meal the prisoners did, and the food was good.

But the Administration is more concerned with the President's legacy than global safety and the potential victims of these prisoners' attacks. I do not think the White House has its priorities straight.

That's why I'm happy to support Congresswoman WALORSKI's efforts to prohibit the transfer of any detainees from GITMO. Transferring detainees from Guantanamo endangers American citizens, and it endangers our national security. Put simply, it is a bad idea.

And that's just the way it is.

HONORING THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE OF LTC CHARLES S. KETTLES

HON. K. MICHAEL CONAWAY

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 15, 2016

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a recent Medal of Honor recipient, LTC Charles S. Kettles. LTC Kettles will be honored at the Fort Wolters Historical Park's Medal of Honor Day in Mineral Wells, Texas on September 17, 2016. This ceremony recognizes the lives of individuals who were stationed at Fort Wolters at some point in their career and received our nation's highest military commendation.

On May 15, 1967, Charles was serving as the Flight Commander of the 176th Aviation Company in the 14th Combat Aviation Battalion, American Division near Duc Pho, Republic of Vietnam. On that day, an airborne infantry unit came under heavy enemy fire and suffered casualties. Charles immediately volunteered to lead a flight of six UH-1D helicopters to carry reinforcements to the embattled force and evacuate his wounded brothers. Upon arriving at the landing zone, Charles and his crew faced a savage barrage of enemy fire that inflicted heavy damage to their fleet. Despite all of this, Charles refused to depart until all helicopters were loaded to capacity. With his aircraft severely damaged and leaking fuel, Charles skillfully guided his helicopter back to base.

Later that day, the Infantry Battalion Commander requested immediate, emergency extraction of the remaining 40 soldiers that were stranded after their helicopter was downed by enemy fire. Again, Charles volunteered to lead a flight of six evacuation helicopters to return back to the deadly landing zone, making this his third trip that day. During the extraction, Charles was told that all personnel were accounted for and he, along with his team and Army gunships, left the battlefield.

Shortly after departing, Charles was informed that eight troops had been unable to reach the evacuation helicopters due to being pinned down by intense heavy fire. With complete disregard for his safety, Charles passed the lead to another helicopter and reversed course back to the landing zone. Without any artillery and tactical support, enemy forces concentrated all firepower on Charles' helicopter. His aircraft was immediately damaged by a mortar round that shattered his front windshields and the body of the helicopter was riddled with small arms and machine gun bullets. Despite these circumstances, Charles was able to buy enough time to allow the remaining eight soldiers to board the helicopter. Once in the air, Charles was able to safely guide his severely mangled aircraft back to the base.

Without LTC Kettles' heroic deeds that day, the dozens of soldiers he had saved would not have come home to their loved ones. His selfless acts of valor exemplified the values of honor and service that makes our nation's military the finest in the world. It is with great pleasure and honor that I am able to share his story with all of my colleagues in the House.

HONORING SHELLEY KESSLER, RETIRED EXECUTIVE SECRETARY-TREASURER, SAN MATEO COUNTY CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL

HON. JACKIE SPEIER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 15, 2016

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the retirement of an outstanding woman leader in San Mateo County, Ms. Shelley Kessler. She is leaving her position as Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the San Mateo County Central Labor Council, a position that she has held—and honored through her exemplary leadership—for twenty years. I am honored to call Shelley a trusted friend.

She is a remarkable leader in public policy. She is a person who is willing to listen and to