

harmful mandates and taxes—so that we can increase seniors' access without compromising quality of care or efficiency. It is important to improve the quality of health care in our country for our Nation's seniors.

Congress has also taken action to improve Medicare. Over the past year, the House has passed a number of bills, including the Protecting Seniors' Access to Medicare Act, the Medicare Beneficiary Preservation of Choice Act, and the Medicare Advantage enrollment bill—all proposals that would protect and preserve Medicare for our seniors who rely on it as well as to restore and expand the Medicare open enrollment period.

The House also took action and made significant reforms to Social Security and Medicare, saving millions of seniors from significantly increased healthcare costs. By working in a bipartisan fashion, Congress was able to stave off a massive premium hike for seniors who utilize Medicare part B. Without this action, approximately 8 million seniors across our country would have been subjected to a 52 percent premium hike for Medicare part B. In this bipartisan effort, action was taken to prevent a 20 percent across-the-board cut to Social Security disability benefits.

Moreover, in working across the aisle with my colleagues in the House, we were able to repeal the sustainable growth rate formula, also known as the doc fix, to prevent there being a 20 percent cut to Medicare. This action alone has been seen as the most significant Medicare reform that has taken place in years. Without this legislation, which is now law, many doctors would have simply stopped accepting new Medicare patients or would have even ceased in accepting Medicare altogether.

Congress has also been committed to passing legislation and securing funding to expand seniors' access to the most innovative technologies and treatments so that we can diagnose and treat diseases as early as possible.

Last year, the House passed the 21st Century Cures Act, bipartisan legislation I cosponsored in Congress to improve and modernize our Nation's health care. This legislation would accelerate the process for scientific advancement while providing desperately needed research funding so that we can provide the next generation of cures. It is our duty as Americans to always protect and improve the quality of life and care for our Nation's seniors.

If anyone in the First Congressional District of New York ever needs assistance or has questions about Social Security and Medicare or a Federal issue in general, I encourage you to contact my Long Island office at area code (631) 289-1097.

□ 1030

STANFORD RAPE CASE AND SENTENCING

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

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, these are the facts: Brock Turner was found on top of an unconscious woman whose clothing he had removed. He tried to run away. The woman later found pine needles and dirt in her genitalia.

This is also a fact: Brock Turner was sentenced to a mere 6 months in county jail for committing the violent crime of rape, of which Turner will probably serve 3 months. Why? Because the judge said a longer sentence would have a "severe impact" on Turner. A severe impact? What a travesty.

All I could think of was Proverbs, which says: "A righteous man falling down before the wicked is as a troubled fountain and a corrupt spring."

Our justice system must become better than this. Our educational system must become better than this. People must understand that rape is one of the most violent crimes a person can commit and not as Mr. TURNER's father said, "20 minutes of action."

I am working on several pieces of legislation to help survivors of sexual assault and harassment, including the HALT Act to strengthen prevention and enforcement efforts on campuses. But today I want to honor the courage of the woman who survived Brock Turner's violent assault. Her bravery inspires me, as I hope it will inspire you. I only have time to read an excerpt, but I encourage you to read the entire statement, all 7,000 words.

"You don't know me, but you've been inside me, and that's why we're here today."

"I was found unconscious, with my hair dishevelled, long necklace wrapped around my neck, bra pulled out of my dress, dress pulled off over my shoulders and pulled up above my waist, that I was butt naked all the way down to my boots, legs spread apart, and had been penetrated by a foreign object by someone I did not recognize."

"You are guilty. Twelve jurors convicted you guilty of three felony counts beyond reasonable doubt, that's twelve votes per count, thirty six yeses confirming guilt, that's one hundred percent, unanimous guilt."

"Alcohol is not an excuse . . . alcohol was not the one who stripped me, fingered me, had my head dragging against the ground, with me almost fully naked."

"Regretting drinking is not the same as regretting sexual assault. We were both drunk, the difference is I did not take off your pants and underwear, touch you inappropriately, and run away. That's the difference."

"How fast Brock swims does not lessen the severity of what happened to me, and should not lessen the severity of his punishment. If a first-time of-

fender from an underprivileged background was accused of three felonies and displayed no accountability for his actions other than drinking, what would his sentence be?

"The fact that Brock was an athlete at a private university should not be seen as an entitlement to leniency, but as an opportunity to send a message that sexual assault is against the law regardless of social class."

" . . . to girls everywhere, I am with you. On nights when you feel alone, I am with you. When people doubt you or dismiss you, I am with you. I fought everyday for you. So never stop fighting, I believe you. As the author Anne Lamott once wrote, '+Lighthouses don't go running all over an island looking for boats to save; they just stand there shining.'

"Although I can't save every boat, I hope that by speaking today, you absorbed a small amount of light, a small knowing that . . . justice was served, a small assurance that we are getting somewhere, and a big, big knowing that you are important, unquestionably, you are untouchable, you are beautiful, you are to be valued, respected, undeniably, every minute of every day, you are powerful and nobody can take that away from you."

VOLUNTEERING THE MIDWEST WAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. EMMER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. EMMER of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Mary Gangl of Coon Rapids, Minnesota. Mary was recently awarded the Office Volunteer of the Year Sylvie, which is given annually by the National Multiple Sclerosis Society Upper Midwest Chapter.

The Sylvie award was presented to Mary for her contributions to the society which works to improve the lives of those diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Mary spends nearly 400 hours a year volunteering at the office front desk where she helps with many important tasks as well as welcoming visitors and staff.

Multiple sclerosis is a debilitating disease of the central nervous system, which affects more than 2 million people worldwide. Those affected by this disease have devastating symptoms; and, unfortunately, at this time, there is no cure.

I want to thank Mary for dedicating so much of her time volunteering to help others. Your hard work is appreciated, and you truly deserve this award.

MINNESOTA HOME TO MANUFACTURER OF THE YEAR

Mr. EMMER of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Minnesota-based company Sign-Zone for receiving a Manufacturers Alliance Manufacturer of the Year award for midsize businesses. Sign-Zone is highly deserving of this award, as it is one of

the fastest growing companies in the country as well as the Nation's leading provider in visual communication products and solutions.

Manufacturing is an incredibly important industry in the State of Minnesota. Our State is not only home to nearly 300,000 manufacturing jobs, but the industry brings billions of dollars to our economy every year, making it a key pillar of Minnesota's economy.

I commend Sign-Zone for bringing great business and excellent products to our community, but I also thank them for contributing to an industry that is so critically vital to our State.

Congratulations, Sign-Zone, and thank you for what you contribute to the great State of Minnesota.

MINNESOTA'S OWN PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLAR

Mr. EMMER of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate one of Minnesota's best and brightest, Sartell High School senior Gopi Ramanathan, who was recently named a 2016 Presidential Scholar.

Every year, up to 161 students can be named Presidential Scholars, making it one of the highest awards a high school student can receive. It is safe to say this achievement has gone to an incredibly deserving scholar.

Gopi Ramanathan has had an exceptionally successful high school career, and his resume includes a very long list of accolades and achievements. He is a two-time champion of the Minnesota State Geography Bee, and he was captain of the United States team that took first place at the 2013 National Geographic World Geography Bee.

Additionally, he is a member of the National Honor Society, a Big Brother mentor, a member of the student council, the president of the Minnesota Association of Student Councils, and a member of the Sartell soccer team.

Perhaps most notably, Gopi earned a perfect score of 36 on his ACTs, an accomplishment that puts him in the top one-tenth of 1 percent of students across this country.

It is an honor to recognize a student of such distinction here today, and I can say with absolute certainty that we will see more great things to come from this young man in the future.

ANOKA EDUCATOR HONORED AT THE WHITE HOUSE

Mr. EMMER of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Anoka High School math teacher Paul Kelley for recently being honored at the White House in a ceremony for exceptional educators.

In addition to teaching math at Anoka High School for the past 29 years, Mr. Kelley serves on the board of directors for the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Along with four other teachers from around the country, Mr. Kelley was nominated for this recognition by the staff at the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics headquarters.

During the ceremony at the White House, Paul had the chance to meet hundreds of other extraordinary teach-

ers as well as the Secretary of Education, John B. King, and Deputy Assistant to the President for Education, Roberto Rodriguez. Mr. Kelley also heard from President Obama, thanking the educators for their roles in educating today's youth.

A good teacher molds minds, sparks creativity, and gives students keys that can open all of life's doors. Congratulations, Mr. Kelley, on your recent achievement, and thank you for helping Minnesota students achieve their full potential.

THE STATE OF HOMELESSNESS IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MAXINE WATERS) for 5 minutes.

Ms. MAXINE WATERS of California. Mr. Speaker, today I rise once again to discuss the harsh realities of homelessness in America and to call attention to the Republicans' so-called poverty agenda that simply ignores the fact that men, women, and children are sleeping on the streets of America, eating out of garbage cans, and using our sidewalks and streets for restrooms.

Homelessness is one of the most tragic and disappointing reminders of the overwhelming poverty in this country. According to the latest estimates, almost 600,000 Americans are homeless. It is a problem in virtually every district, and it affects people from very different walks of life: 37 percent of the homeless population are represented in families, 15 percent are chronically homeless, 8 percent are veterans, and 6.5 percent are children.

While there is a claim that some progress has been made to decrease homelessness in some communities, a lot more needs to be done, especially in some of our largest cities where homelessness is, sadly, increasing exponentially: in my hometown of Los Angeles, homelessness increased 20 percent between 2014 and 2015; in New York City, homelessness increased 11 percent between 2014 and 2015; and in Chicago, there was an 8 percent increase in that timeframe.

As public policymakers and Members of Congress, we have a responsibility to deal with problems and circumstances that undermine and harm our way of life. We are a people who cherish religion. In every religion, there is a reference to feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, and clothing the naked.

Where are the Republican Members who regularly hold prayer meetings, who attend church on Sunday in their districts, but yet they are supporting this fake poverty agenda that does not even mention homelessness? Where are the Members who claim to honor our veterans, yet walk past them on the sidewalk in their tents and sleeping under our bridges?

We know that we can functionally end homelessness and alleviate poverty in this country. We know that Federal

resources and the social safety nets are incredibly effective at lifting up struggling families. We know that if we properly support the Department of Housing and Urban Development and other Federal agencies that we could create the necessary housing units and provide the social services that our neighbors need to get off the streets.

What we need is, simply, the political will to get it done. Unfortunately, we do not have the support from Republicans whose sham of a poverty agenda released this week would only exacerbate homelessness and punish the poor.

Take the Republican approach to housing assistance, for example. For years, they have cut funding for HUD programs, leaving more than 75 percent of eligible families without any housing help at all. And their latest poverty plan recycles some of the most harmful changes Republicans have sought for our housing programs. They refuse to acknowledge the realities of unaffordable rents that require families to earn almost triple the minimum wage to be able to afford a modest two-bedroom apartment.

And they want to impose these so-called work requirements that simply don't work if you ignore the already high unemployment rates in certain areas as well as the need to invest in job training, education, child care, and other social services to make it possible for individuals to obtain stable employment. What the Republicans have put forth is truly the wrong way forward.

Fortunately, Democrats know what it takes; and when we talk about issues of homelessness in particular, there is a very simple solution to this very real problem. That is why I have introduced H.R. 4888, the Ending Homelessness Act of 2016.

Now, a lot of people will say: Oh, my goodness, did you see how much money is in that bill? This bill would devote over \$13 billion over 5 years to housing assistance programs and create the housing units and services that we so desperately need to get people off the streets.

□ 1045

So while others will point to this bill and talk about the cost of it, the fact of the matter is, this is the richest country in the world, and we spend money on so many other things that are not as important as taking care of our most vulnerable population.

So, yes, this is a \$13 billion bill. We have to stop playing with this issue and thinking it is going to go away simply because we don't want to acknowledge it. We have to pay for the possibility of ending this homelessness. I cannot bear the thought of children sleeping in their cars every night and getting up and going to school the next day.

ADDRESSING THE NATIONAL DEBT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. CURBELO) for 5 minutes.