

George lived a life that blessed everyone that he met and made every community he lived in a much better place. The City of Midland declared August 28 as George Koehl III Day. He is greatly missed, but his legacy will be carried on by the many people whose lives he has touched by his living example.

15TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 2001 AUMF

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

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to really challenge my colleagues to restore Congress' constitutional oversight on matters of war and peace.

Next Wednesday, September 14, will mark the 15th year since Congress passed an open-ended blank check for endless war. This authorization surrendered our constitutional authority to the executive branch.

We continue to mourn the loss and cherish the memories of those killed in these attacks and continue to support and help those who were injured and whose lives were changed forever.

Now, just 3 days after the horrific terrorist attacks on 9/11, this House rushed to pass a 60-word authorization, with little debate, that has been used to wage endless war around the globe. In the 15 years since its passage, this authorization, designed to punish the perpetrators of the brutal and deadly attacks on September 11, has allowed endless war to rage out of control.

A recent report from the Congressional Research Service shows that this authorization has been used more than 37 times in 14 countries to justify military action, and this report only looked at unclassified military actions. How many others have been authorized that the American people don't know about?

The American people and Congress deserve to know what is being done in their name. Sadly, Congress has been missing in action.

It is unacceptable that our brave servicemen and -women are facing snipers and mortar rounds, but Congress can't even muster the courage to debate the war that we are asking them to now continue to fight. It is just plain wrong.

Mr. Speaker, we have a constitutional and moral duty to debate on this war and any war. So why have you not scheduled a debate on this vital issue that affects our national security?

I have asked, the President has asked, members of your own caucus, Mr. Speaker, have asked, even members of our military forces have asked, and still you have not scheduled a debate or vote. What is the hold up?

During the amendment debate surrounding this year's National Defense Authorization Act, we got a few moments to discuss this issue. We were allotted 10 minutes, the same amount of time allotted to debate what brand of sneakers should be available to our

servicemembers. If these issues get 10 minutes of debate, one would think that our national security and the Constitution deserve more than a rushed amendment debate allotted.

Now, my colleagues and I might disagree on what specifics of an authorization should look like; and that is why we need this debate, so Members understand all of the options, the costs, and the consequences and we can advance policies that protect the Constitution and ensure our national security. The American people deserve more than a Congress that is missing in action.

In February of last year, President Obama sent a draft authorization to Congress. Mr. Speaker, it has sat on your desk ever since, with no action, no hearings, no formal debate, and not one vote.

While Congress has been missing in action, more bombs have fallen, more American servicemembers have been put in harm's way, and, yes, we have poured more than \$1.7 trillion into war-making.

Right now, any President can unilaterally wage war under the outdated 2001 authorization. The last four Presidents have bombed the Middle East. Will this Congress allow a fifth President the same unlimited power to wage unchecked war? We can't and we shouldn't. It is past time for this debate.

Now, in 2001, when I opposed this authorization, I challenged my colleagues with the words of the Reverend Nathan Baxter, the dean of the National Cathedral. He said:

Let us hope that we may not, through our actions, become the evil that we deplore.

Fifteen years later, we, this Congress, have attacked our Constitution, the balance of power, and the voice of the American people on matters of war and peace. We, yes, have surrendered the Constitution and the voice of the American people. We have ignored the advice of our Founders and have divested our Nation's war-making power from Congress, which, yes, is the voice of the American people.

So it is past time to stop this lawlessness. It is past time to restore the Constitution. It is past time for us, as Members of Congress, to live up to our responsibility we were elected to fulfill. It is past time that we do our job and repeal the blank check for endless war and have a debate and a vote on a new authorization for this new war footing that this country has embarked upon.

RECOGNIZING 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF TRI-TOWN FIRE COMPANY

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the 70th anniversary of the Tri-Town Fire Company in Potter County, located in Ulysses, Pennsylvania, with-

in the Pennsylvania Fifth Congressional District.

The company was founded in 1946, and currently serves Ulysses Borough, Northern Ulysses Township, Southern Bingham Township, Northern Hector Township, and Eastern Allegheny Township. Under the Tioga/Potter County Mutual Aid Plan, they also respond on the first alarm to certain calls in Harrison, Pike, Genesee, and Sweden Townships.

Although the fire company is located in a very rural area, they protect a large and vital part of America's national infrastructure, including the Northern Potter County natural gas storage field, compressor stations, transfer stations, pipelines, and wells.

The station is also responsible for protecting nearly 35,000 acres of Pennsylvania forestland, which is something of high importance to me as chairman of the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation and Forestry.

Mr. Speaker, as a volunteer firefighter myself, I have the deepest respect for the men and women who step forward to help their communities, to help their neighbors, putting their lives on the line and asking for nothing in return.

I wish the men and women of the Tri-Town Fire Company the best of luck in the future.

HONORING SWEDEN VALLEY MANOR

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of the efforts at Sweden Valley Manor, a nursing home in Coudersport, Potter County, serving people in that county, along with McKean, Tioga, and Cameron Counties.

In particular, I want to commend the efforts of local master gardener Bonnie Wood, who has worked over the course of the past 5 years to create what are now called "Enabling Gardens" at the facility.

As a former licensed nursing home administrator, the opportunity to visit Sweden Valley and, specifically, to visit these healing gardens—what a resource this is for the men and women and the individuals who live and work within that facility.

The gardens are designed so that residents can exercise their green thumbs. All the planters that Bonnie built are wheelchair-height, and a lazy Susan actually allows for the planters to rotate for maximum accessibility no matter what the physical mobility or orthopedic issues that an individual may be experiencing.

She has cultivated relationships with corporate sponsors, volunteers, and youth groups from across the region, and has also welcomed students involved in FFA and 4-H to work with Sweden Valley Manor's residents. Bonnie has educated staff and residents on how to take care of plants and where particular plants should be placed in a garden, dedicating her own time to get plants and vegetables started on their growth at the home.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of Bonnie Wood's dedicated service to her community and to the citizens of Potter County and the surrounding region and, certainly, to the residents who make their home at Sweden Valley.

AMERICA NEEDS A STRONG AND SMART COMMANDER IN CHIEF

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Ms. PLASKETT) for 5 minutes.

Ms. PLASKETT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight a matter of critical and immediate importance to our national security.

As we combat the growing threat of terrorism both at home and abroad, it is absolutely critical that we elect a Commander in Chief who will be strong and smart when it comes to our national security, a Commander in Chief who will work with our allies, employ diplomacy across the globe, and be thoughtful when it comes to using military force to defend the United States.

Time and again, the Republican nominee has shown that he completely lacks the temperament to lead America on the world stage. Our Commander in Chief must support our men and women in the military and our veterans. Instead, our servicemembers and veterans have weathered verbal attack after verbal attack since the Republican nominee began his campaign.

Mr. Speaker, our men and women in uniform deserve better. Those of us who have children who can be called up deserve better. For those who put themselves in harm's way, they deserve better. For Americans who rely on the Commander in Chief to make reasoned, well thought-out, balanced decisions, they deserve better.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair would remind Members to refrain from engaging in personalities toward nominees for the Office of the President.

A TRUE MINNESOTA HERO

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 honor the incredible life of General John W. Vessey Jr.

Just 16 years old when he lied about his age and enlisted as a private in the Minnesota National Guard, John Vessey quickly found himself on the front lines in World War II. It didn't take long for John to distinguish himself as a war hero, and, in 1944, he received a battlefield commission.

General Vessey's military career didn't end with his service in World War II. More than two decades later, he also served in Vietnam.

In 1982, General Vessey was chosen as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff by President Ronald Reagan, due

to his impressive reputation for high integrity and strong character.

Some of us might remember General Vessey for becoming our Nation's longest serving active soldier, but most of us will remember him for the work he did for his fellow soldiers.

President Reagan once called him a "soldier's soldier," which he undoubtedly was, as he never forgot about the men who stood next to him in battle, including the ones who never made it home. This was proven by his advocacy for MIA/POW issues, for which he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1992.

General John W. Vessey Jr. was a true Minnesotan hero and he is a legend. We were lucky to have him; and while he will be missed, he will never be forgotten.

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MINNESOTA'S OWN BEST BUY TURNS 50

Mr. EMMER of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate a Minnesota company that has reached a major milestone. This past month, Best Buy turned 50 years old.

Best Buy was founded in 1966 by Richard Schulze. Originally named The Sound of Music, this store sold stereo equipment to college students in the Twin Cities area. When the stereo market began to decline, the store eventually expanded its merchandise to offer other popular products, ultimately leading to major future success.

Like any business, Best Buy has faced highs and lows. In 1981, a tornado destroyed the main store in Roseville. Instead of letting the disaster win, Schulze and his employees banded together to continue to sell great products at a great price and provide excellent customer service along the way.

Today there are now 1,600 stores located throughout North America, proving that both determination and hard work can pay off. Their success is widely recognized, so much so that Forbes magazine even named Best Buy the company of the year in 2004.

Congratulations to Best Buy on 50 years of business. Thanks for representing Minnesota so well. And here's to the next 50 years.

PROOF OF TRUE SERVICE TO OUR COUNTRY

Mr. EMMER of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Matthew C.G. Boucher of Ramsey, Minnesota. Matthew recently received a Veterans' Voices Award meant to highlight the incredible contributions of Minnesota's veterans.

Matthew is a veteran of the Army National Guard and spent 12 years courageously serving our Nation. Today he continues his service to our country and to the State of Minnesota through his work as a middle school principal.

Matthew's love for the military and his fellow veterans is a large part of what inspires him in his current position.

At Fridley Middle School, he started a Veterans Day program to teach students to recognize the many sacrifices

that the members of our military make. He also works to promote the belief within every one of his students that anything they set their minds to is possible. He is especially dedicated to helping his students pursue their education beyond high school.

Thank you, Matthew, for your brave service and for continuing to better our Nation. Our Nation and our State is a better place because of you.

A VOICE FOR VETERANS

Mr. EMMER of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Jolaina Falkenstein of Carver, Minnesota, for receiving a Veterans' Voices Award. These awards are meant to honor the outstanding contributions made by Minnesota's veterans.

Jolaina is an Army Reserve veteran who serves as a senior noncommissioned officer in the 88th Regional Support Command.

In her primary role as a lead training officer for the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, Jolaina strives to help military members prepare for deployment as well as for what they will need when they return home.

Additionally, Jolaina works as a licensed therapist for Lutheran Social Services, working with our military members and their families.

We are truly thankful to have an individual like Jolaina in our community. Not only has she served in the Armed Forces, but she continues to serve by providing our Nation's veterans and their families with the care that they not only deserve, but they so desperately need.

ZIKA FUNDING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, there was such expectation, as Members returned from their work recess in August. Many times, the American people are quizzical, inquisitive about the structure of our work.

We are constitutionally mandated; and, in fact, we have major responsibilities of oversight; but we also are the umbrella on a rainy day. The Congress must rise to the occasion in time of war. It is our authority to declare war. We must rush to the aid of those Americans in need by our oversight over executive agencies, such as Homeland Security and FEMA, as we watched the suffering of our fellow Americans in the terrible storms of Baton Rouge, of the hurricanes up and down the east coast, of what happened on 9/11 or Sandy or Katrina or Rita or Hurricane Ike and many others. Hurricanes and others, it is up to us to do our work.

Well, we are not doing our work.

We left this place having had the Senate pass a \$1.1 billion Zika funding bill—not what the executive asked, but a reasoned response to the crisis and emergency that we are facing. It is devastating in Puerto Rico, which is part of the United States. It is devastating