

Ruth Colvin has dedicated her entire life to teaching, assisting, and empowering adult learners. She has taught thousands of people to read, trained literacy tutors in 26 countries, and developed and published effective programs to teach basic literacy and English as a second language.

Because of her efforts, hundreds of thousands of adults have learned to read both locally in central New York and around the globe. Over more than four decades, Ruth Colvin has published nine books, visited or worked in more than 60 countries, and received nine honorary doctorate degrees. She was awarded the President's Volunteer Action Award from President Ronald Reagan, received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President George W. Bush, and was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.

Ruth Colvin has given so many the gift of literacy. On December 16 of this year, she will turn 100 years old.

Please join me in honoring her tremendous life's work and her legacy as we celebrate this milestone. Happy birthday, Ruth, and many, many more.

ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

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

Mr. GUTIÉRREZ. Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned about what is going on in Israel, and I think it has implications both for U.S. foreign policy, for domestic policy, and for our own ally, Israel.

As the rightwing government of Netanyahu consolidates power and becomes, in many ways, the one-party rulers of Israel, a number of things are changing that should be of concern to all Americans. Specifically, the increasing dominance of the Likud Party as the one-party in Israel jeopardizes the two-state solution that I and many others in the United States and Israel feel is the only way to achieve long-term peace in the Middle East.

There is a retrenchment of hardline policies—aimed at solidifying alliances with smaller religious and hardline parties that keep Likud in power—that will make it harder for Israelis, their allies in America, and anyone who seeks a lasting peace to maintain progress towards a two-state solution.

Right now, the Knesset is considering legislation to legalize all Israeli settlements in Palestinian territory on the West Bank, even those constructed on private Palestinian land. Boom—400,000 people in settlements across the West Bank. It is all legal because they say it is legal, but it is not.

Israel is destroying Palestinian homes at a pace faster than we have ever seen before. It is provocative, sweeping, and designed to make it harder to ever reach an agreement with the Palestinians. The plan to restrict the Muslim call to prayer in Jerusalem has been revived, again to placate hardline religious constituents by

Prime Minister Netanyahu. There is no statement clearer to people of the Islamic faith that they do not matter, that they do not belong, and that they will not be tolerated than to restrict the Muslim call to prayer in Jerusalem—a city that has heard the Muslim call to prayer for thousands of years.

I think what is going on in Israel with Prime Minister Netanyahu presents a cautionary tale about the consequences of following a political strongman. The strongman has to keep proving that he is a strongman over and over. Like other strongmen who ride fear into leadership—when you base your political career on injecting fear and resentment into political affairs, when you use the backdrop of terrorism and the understandable fear of the Israeli people as a political tool for years and decades—this is the kind of policy that results.

There is an appetite for constant escalation of what you are doing to stand up to the enemy you have constructed—an enemy based on but not the same as the enemies that fight against the State of Israel, tolerance, and peace in real life. Strongmen construct a foil—in this case based on the Palestinians, but sometimes exaggerated beyond recognition—and they need to feed the thirst for more and more action to attack the caricature that they have constructed.

But strongman politics in Israel has the impact of making a long-lasting solution that brings peace to the Middle East even harder to achieve. The fundamental rights of Palestinians to have their own state—a state alongside the Israeli state where they have the same basic rights and dignity to govern themselves and raise their families in peace—that is what most Israelis, Palestinians, and people around the world have been fighting for.

If we are ever going to achieve the permanent peace that allows Israel to exist without fear and Palestine to exist without occupation then we must continue to fight for the two-state solution.

When I was just a freshman, almost 25 years ago, we celebrated the accomplishments of Rabin, Arafat, and President Clinton to build towards a peace that recognizes the rights and dignity of the Israelis and the rights and dignity of the Palestinian people. For decades, the United States—under different leaders in different parties from Carter to Reagan to Bush to Obama—has recognized that peace will only come with mutual respect and tolerance. That is what we have based our foreign policy on and should continue to base our foreign policy on. Having talked with average people and with leaders on both sides of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, I am convinced that is the only way forward toward peace.

America has been a catalyst—a constructive influence from outside, a nation based on religious freedom and de-

mocracy that has served as a model for both Palestinians and Israelis—and we have worked towards helping parties continue to move in the direction of two separate but mutually respectful countries, two nations that are not at war with each other or subservient to one another.

I fear, Mr. Speaker, that Israel herself is moving away from the two-state solution as a goal and that we, as her closest ally, must remind her, and ourselves, of what is at stake if we lose sight of this important goal.

PROTECTING PENSIONS OF COAL MINERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOONEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MOONEY of West Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge swift passage of H.R. 2403, the Coal Healthcare and Pensions Protection Act. This important legislation protects the pensions of coal workers who have spent their lives producing affordable, reliable energy for our country.

These miners were promised a pension when they signed up for the job, and, ever since the Truman administration, Congress has made sure that the commitment is honored. It is our duty to continue to uphold this promise made to our miners.

Without help from Congress this year, the United Mine Workers of America pension fund will be insolvent in 2017, resulting in massive cuts to benefits for 22,000 West Virginia mine workers and their families. The Coal Healthcare and Pensions Protection Act provides relief funding for these pensions without increasing spending of taxpayer dollars. Our country's hardworking coal miners are responsible for fueling and shaping our economy over the last 250 years. Retired coal miners and their widows deserve our respect, appreciation, and, above all else, the benefits that they were promised.

With 47 Republican and 40 Democrat cosponsors in the House, this bill is strongly supported by Members on both sides of the aisle. Again, I urge our leadership to bring H.R. 2403, the Coal Healthcare and Pensions Protection Act, to a vote immediately.

CONGRATULATING DR. TOM PRICE

Mr. MOONEY of West Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate my colleague and Budget Committee chairman, Dr. TOM PRICE, on President-elect Trump's recent appointment as the new Secretary for the Department of Health and Human Services. Chairman PRICE has become a friend to me over the past 2 years and will continue to do great things in his new job in the Trump administration.

When I was first elected to serve West Virginia's Second Congressional District in 2014, I promised my constituents that I would fight to repeal the Affordable Care Act, also known as

ObamaCare. My first month in office on February 3, 2015, House Republicans successfully voted to repeal ObamaCare. In December of that same year, the Senate passed our legislation to repeal ObamaCare. President Obama vetoed it at that time. But we will have a new President next year.

Healthcare costs are on the rise because of ObamaCare. ObamaCare adds burdensome taxes, regulations, and mandates onto American consumers. The limited choice in health insurance plans is harming families and their budgets.

ObamaCare has killed 2.9 million jobs a year, has continued to raise health insurance costs, and has also placed the Federal Government in between patients and their doctors. Who are these 2.9 million Americans? They are disproportionately low-wage workers earning well below the average annual wage for all workers, which is less than \$46,000 a year, according to the Congressional Budget Office. The people who are hurt the most by ObamaCare are the ones that ObamaCare is supposed to help the most.

Research done by the National Center for Policy Analysis found that the average monthly premium costs in every demographic rose substantially after ObamaCare was implemented.

□ 1015

West Virginians who get their health insurance through employer-sponsored programs are paying some of the highest rates in the United States. In West Virginia, premiums through employer-sponsored health insurance programs have climbed at a steady rate of about 6.4 percent annually since 2010, and it keeps getting worse. The 33,421 West Virginians who are currently enrolled in the Affordable Care Act do not need to see their rates hiked up again.

As a Republican in Congress, I want to ensure that everyone has access to health care, but it will be quality health care that people choose for themselves. That is why House Republicans have come up with a plan we call A Better Way. Our plan recognizes that people deserve more patient-centered care, not more bureaucracy. That means more choices, not more mandates.

A Better Way plan offers many improvements that will help West Virginia's Second Congressional District, including commonsense reforms to allow health insurance sales across State lines. You should have the freedom and flexibility to choose the care that is best for you. Insurers should compete for your business and treat you fair. You and your family should have access to the best lifesaving treatment in the world.

Under Chairman TOM PRICE's leadership, I believe that our healthcare system in America will thrive. Again, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to my friend, Dr. TOM PRICE.

HONORING VIRGINIA STRATTON

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

Mr. LOEBSACK. Mr. Speaker, I come to the House floor today to honor one of my longtime district staffers, Virginia Stratton, who retired recently.

Virginia had been with my office, serving the people of Iowa, since I first came into office in January 2007. Since then, she has handled more than 3,300 cases for Iowans having issues with the Department of Defense, the Department of Labor, and the Postal Service; but, by far, the largest portion of her cases involved the Veterans Administration.

As I travel across my district, all 24 counties, meeting with veterans, it never fails that one of the first things I hear is about how hard Virginia fought on their behalf or on behalf of their loved ones to cut through the red-tape at the VA.

Whether it was securing medals for veterans who served but didn't receive their proper recognition, or helping expedite a disability appeal, there was nothing—and I say nothing—Virginia would not do to ensure our veterans received the assistance that they needed. I always knew that if Virginia was on the case, there would be no stone left unturned and no question left unasked. She worked every day for the past 10 years to ensure our veterans received the care they earned and rightly deserved.

As a military parent myself, I believe we have no greater responsibility as a nation than to ensure our veterans are treated with the same dignity and honor with which they served our country. There is no one—no one, folks—who epitomizes that sentiment more than Virginia. She has been one of the greatest champions for veterans, and there was no issue that was too small or too great for her to take on.

In the nearly 10 years that Virginia worked for my office, she literally personally affected the lives of thousands of Iowans. Virginia's retirement is a loss for the people of Iowa, but the efforts and hours she invested in working on behalf of our veterans will never be forgotten. On behalf of the people of Iowa and all of the veterans of America, my wife Terry and I wish Virginia the best in the next chapter of her life.

TRIBUTE TO CHAIRMAN HAL ROGERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. JENKINS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JENKINS of West Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a dear colleague, mentor, and friend as he is concluding his 6 years as chairman of the House Appropriations Committee.

I have had the honor and pleasure of serving with Chairman HAL ROGERS for

the last 2 years. Since day one of his chairmanship, he has been the driving force to revive the appropriations process. Anyone who knows Chairman ROGERS, knows his top priority is regular order.

During his chairmanship, he has managed 140 appropriations bills on the floor, and managed more than 600 important oversight and budget hearings and markups. He has worked every day to ensure that the taxpayers' dollars are being used wisely and responsibly.

He has stopped wasteful spending, saving the country billions of dollars. He has also invested in higher priority programs, those that help keep our Nation on the right track, keep us safe, keep us secure, fight against drug abuse, and promote critical rural infrastructure needs. He has never lost sight of his home in Kentucky and the people he represents in Congress. Their priorities are his priorities.

I know this well because my district is right next door. We are only separated by the Tug Fork River, a small, narrow body of water that goes through the hills of Appalachia. Chairman ROGERS and I share the good people of Appalachia. We know the greatness of our people. We know how hard-working they are. It is the coal miners, it is the farmers, it is the factory workers, it is the teachers, it is the backbone of America we both have the honor of representing.

I have been able to see firsthand Chairman ROGERS' commitment to the people of Kentucky, his fight for the coal miners and retirees, his fight of the opioid crisis that is devastating communities throughout our region and this country, his support for education, and his leadership in creating the SOAR program, shaping our Appalachian region.

Chairman ROGERS has left an indelible mark as chairman of the House Appropriations Committee. We thank him for his leadership in that role over these past 6 years. We have a better Appropriations Committee because of it and a better institution here in the House of Representatives, thanks to the leadership of Chairman HAL ROGERS.

I ask my fellow Members to join me in thanking him for his service as chairman. I am honored to look forward to working with him in his continuing capacity here in the House of Representatives.

Thank you, Chairman ROGERS.

COMMEMORATING THE LIFE OF LEONARD ROTHSTEIN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. MENG) for 5 minutes.

Ms. MENG. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the life of my constituent Leonard Rothstein, who passed away on September 16, 2016.

Mr. Rothstein bravely served in the Korean war as a private first class, contributing to the war effort as a radioman. Mr. Rothstein was honorably