

There was no objection.

HONORING CONGRESSMAN JOSEPH R. PITTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. JODY B. HICE).

Mr. JODY B. HICE of Georgia. Madam Speaker, what an honor it is to join my colleagues this evening in taking a moment to honor my good friend and fellow alum from Asbury College, Pennsylvania Congressman JOE PITTS.

My friend, JOE PITTS, has spent his life literally engaged in serving those around him. In fact, early in his career, JOE and his wife worked as teachers to educate the next generation until he joined the Air Force in 1963. He answered the call of duty, serving three tours in Vietnam, where he completed 116 combat missions and earned the Air Medal with five oakleaf clusters.

Just a few years after returning home from the war effort, JOE continued his service in his State and our Nation as a member of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, spending some 24 years assisting his fellow Pennsylvanians.

In 1997, JOE brought his leadership skills and his servant's heart right here to the Halls of Congress, where he has now served for 20 years.

□ 1915

In this role and through his service as chairman of the Values Action Team, JOE has been a guiding force for bringing our Judeo-Christian ethics and moral values to Washington, D.C., and he has literally been a champion for the cause of life.

In Mark, chapter 10, the Lord tells us that those who aspire to leadership must be great servants. Further, in Matthew, chapter 7, we find that we are recognized by our fruits.

In other words, you can tell who someone is not merely by what one says, but by what one does.

JOE, I would just say to you, sir, thank you. You have been tested, and you have shown yourself approved.

We are all going to sincerely and deeply—genuinely—miss JOE PITTS.

I hope, JOE, that as you continue in your next chapter that, in your absence here, we may each have a portion of your servant's heart, and how blessed this body will be if we do so.

I just thank the gentleman so much for the opportunity to take a moment to say "thank you" to this giant of a leader here in Congress and how we will deeply miss him.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. I thank my good friend for his very eloquent remarks about our great friend and colleague, the distinguished JOE PITTS.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Alabama, ROBERT ADERHOLT.

Mr. ADERHOLT. I appreciate the time to come to honor JOE PITTS. Congressman SMITH, I appreciate your organizing this evening so we could thank JOE PITTS for his many years of service to not only this Chamber, but also to the public in general.

Madam Speaker, of course, JOE is retiring after 20 years of service to this institution and to the American people. He served, as has been said, 24 years in the Pennsylvania Legislature. The gentleman from Pennsylvania, JOE PITTS, is a hero for conservatives. He fights daily for families, for unborn children, and for persecuted Christians around the world.

I know firsthand about his work for persecuted Christians because one of the first overseas trip opportunities that I had as a Member of Congress was to travel with JOE PITTS to the country of Egypt to advocate on behalf of persecuted Christians. I had the chance to sit there with JOE as we both talked about the plight of the Coptic Christians in the country of Egypt. We sat across the table from Hosni Mubarak, who, at the time, was the President of Egypt, and we let him know of the concerns that we had and that the American people had for Christians who were treated unfairly for no other reason than because of their beliefs and their faith.

JOE PITTS has been a friend and a colleague since we were first elected. He and I were first elected back in 1996. We started here in January of 1997. He has worked tirelessly as chairman of the Values Action Team since the late 1990s. That was when Newt Gingrich had asked him to work on pro-life, pro-family issues. He has been an active, leading member of the Pro-Life Caucus, along with Congressman SMITH, since that time.

I also had the opportunity to work with JOE on OSCE issues, the Organization for Security and Co-operation of Europe. We would meet in the parliamentary assembly once a year with other parliamentarians to try to work on issues. I can tell you the pro-life issue and trying to protect the unborn and the family has been at the forefront of those issues with him as well with the OSCE.

I want to take a minute to thank his staff. Over the years, they have worked hand in glove with Congressman PITTS. They have been champions for the conservative causes over the last 20 years alone here in the House of Representatives, and we will certainly miss working with them as they go on to the next chapters of their lives.

Again, I wish JOE PITTS all the best as he moves on to the next phase of his life. I certainly pray that he and his wife, Ginny, will have, maybe, a slightly slower pace as they go back to Pennsylvania. I know that JOE, in whatever next chapter of life he is involved, will be involved in protecting families; he will be protecting the unborn—the most vulnerable—and he will be making sure that he does what he feels is in

the best interest of this country. I wish JOE PITTS and his family all the best in the many years to come.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. I thank the gentleman.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the distinguished gentlewoman from Tennessee, DIANE BLACK.

Mrs. BLACK. I thank the gentleman for yielding, my good friend, who is also very involved in protecting life and families, and I appreciate his work in this area as well.

Madam Speaker, I rise to honor my friend and colleague, Congressman JOE PITTS, on his upcoming retirement from the House of Representatives.

As a former teacher, Congressman PITTS spent years investing in the next generation of leaders, and as an Air Force captain, with three tours of duty in Vietnam, he was on the front lines of protecting the freedoms that we talk about in this Chamber every day.

His service in Congress, now spanning nearly 20 years, will be marked by a quiet strength and a steady leadership that always sought solutions over attention, and that ran towards answers instead of running to the cameras. Congressman PITTS was never the loudest person in the room, but oftentimes he may very well have been the wisest.

As the founder of the Values Action Team, Congressman PITTS created a platform to build stronger relationships between value-oriented Members of Congress and grassroots organizations that shared those same principles. Through his appointment as the chairman of the Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee, Congressman PITTS worked to advance real-world healthcare solutions that empowered patients, not bureaucrats.

I will always be most grateful to Congressman PITTS for his fearless, unflinching defense of our Nation's unborn. From his own legislation, like Protect Life Act, to his invaluable leadership in the fight to pass the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act, to his work on the Select Investigative Panel on Infant Lives, Congressman PITTS has been a champion for the voiceless and vulnerable at every turn.

I thank Congressman PITTS for his service, for his friendship, for his guidance. I wish him and his wife, Ginny, and his beautiful family all the best in the next chapter of their lives.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. I thank the gentlewoman very much for those very, very eloquent remarks.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Illinois, RANDY HULTGREN.

Mr. HULTGREN. I thank my very good friend, CHRIS SMITH, for doing this.

Madam Speaker, it is such a privilege to serve in this amazing place. Some of us have the opportunity—really, the blessing—to be able to meet our heroes. Some of us have the greater blessing of being able to actually not only get to meet them, but to work with our heroes; and those very special few get to

become friends with our heroes. That is the feeling I have with JOE PITTS.

JOE PITTS is truly a mentor to me, a hero to me, someone who has served so well in every step of his lifetime. I am here to honor him tonight, to thank him for his service, and to let him know that we are forever grateful.

JOE PITTS is known for many things. Clearly, he is a man of faith. Faith is such a part of his life—his love for God, his love for Jesus Christ. His passion for serving Him influences everything he does. I also love JOE PITTS' commitment and love for his family. JOE and his wife have had a long tradition—for many years—of having grandkids camp, where they will have grandkids—no parents allowed—come and be with them for a week. They will take special trips, do special training, raise up the grandkids to love God, to love this Nation, and to share the values that are so important to JOE and his family.

I am also so grateful for his service here in this Congress. JOE has been faithful over his years. He was tapped early on to be the leader of the Values Action Team so as to recognize that our values are so important. We need champions every single day to be looking out and to be making sure that we are passing legislation that reflects our values—the values of our Founders, the values of so many who have led throughout our Nation—and to be making sure that we are going in the right direction as we go forward. JOE has been faithful there as well—a champion for life, a champion for the persecuted, especially for the religious persecuted around the world. He has been fighting for them, stepping up for them, making sure that their voices are heard. Fighting for the unborn is something that is a passion—a big part—of JOE's life as well.

I am forever grateful to have had the privilege not only to meet JOE PITTS, to get to know JOE PITTS, but to say that JOE is a friend of mine.

JOE, thank you for your service to America. Thank you for your love for your God and for your family. Thank you for all that you have done to make America this wonderful place and for leaving not only a heritage, but such a rich challenge as we go forward to protect the wonderful values that we enjoy. We appreciate you. God bless you, JOE, and God bless America.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. I thank the gentleman from Illinois.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. LAMALFA).

Mr. LAMALFA. I thank Mr. SMITH. I really appreciate his efforts in honoring JOE PITTS here tonight and all of the gentleman's efforts over the many years in sticking up for the values that really are important; so I thank the gentleman for that.

Madam Speaker, indeed, it is a night to recognize our leader of the Values Action Team, Mr. JOE PITTS, and all of his dedication to these important causes for our values, which are the

things that, I like to say, are going to be remembered long past all the other stuff we do—the fiscal-related things and some other things—that nobody will remember. I like to think they will remember that we stood up for the things that were truly important to families, to the things that endure over time; so being able to join in tonight in recognizing our friend from Pennsylvania is a privilege for me as it was to be able—and it is—to work with JOE.

Over the few short years I have been in the House, I have gotten to know what he is about, and I respect him greatly as a man of faith and courage in standing against the tide that is pretty unpopular these days, a lot of times, in this era of political correctness where what is up is down and what is down is up. He stood in there on some very difficult issues—on life, on basic liberties, on moral conscience, and even on religious conscience. He joined in on some issues from crazy California sometimes, where I come from, in helping to fight a battle there that would allow people to have religious freedom and freedom of conscience. Again, I think a cornerstone of the founding of this country has been lost a lot of times here, in recent reinterpretations, as to what I think true, traditional values are.

He has given that voice to the unborn. He stood side by side with the Little Sisters of the Poor in their direct fight for religious liberty. He defended the conscience of Americans who should never be forced to finance something that goes against one of the very principles our Nation was founded on—life—with their religious convictions.

JOE PITTS, when it comes down to protecting conservative values in our government or outside of it, there was no issue too small, too insignificant, or anything that he would shy away from. Indeed, he inspires us to be bold, to stand up for those who can't always speak for themselves or who have been beaten down by political correctness to even be able to speak for themselves. We need these conservative values. We need visions like JOE PITTS has always exhibited. To have been able to have worked beside him these years I have been here in the House, it has been a privilege, and I appreciate his work and his courage in being fearless against a tide that sometimes I can't understand.

At the end of all of this, I think some of the most rewarding words and the ones that we can try and express here tonight—but that will be expressed in a bigger place—is: well done, good and faithful servant.

God bless JOE PITTS. Again, we thank him for his service on the Values Action Team and for all he has stood for, and I am proud to be able to stand beside him.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. I thank my good friend from California for his very, very fine remarks.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, as there are a number of Members who would like to submit, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to insert extraneous materials on the topic of this Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, it is hard to imagine a Congress without the incomparable JOE PITTS—a remarkable and highly accomplished lawmaker, a distinguished statesman, a man of principle and bedrock moral conviction and a Christian, who faithfully seeks to do God's will on Earth as it is in Heaven no matter the cost, no matter the sacrifice, no matter the hardship.

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As I think some of my colleagues know—particularly those who know him well—JOE was born in Kentucky into a family of strong Christian faith, a faith that has been passed on to his own three children; Carol, Karen, and Daniel.

JOE's father was an Army chaplain during World War II, serving in the South Pacific after the war. The elder Pitts returned to the Philippines with his wife and children to serve as a missionary in a war-ravaged country. It was there that JOE saw the after effects of war; and that so profoundly affected him, he developed a heart there for human rights and a commitment to a strong national defense.

After high school, JOE attended Asbury College in Kentucky, as my friend and colleague earlier pointed out. He met Virginia—Ginny, as we know her—a wonderful lady. My wife Marie and I and JOE and Ginny have traveled and have been together many times. She is just a wonderful wife of a half a century. Again, they not only have three children but a number of grandchildren as well.

JOE taught math, science, English, and physical education, as well as coached basketball. He served 5½ years in the United States Air Force, including three tours in Vietnam. He was the EW officer, electronic warfare officer, on a B-52 and completed 116 combat missions and earned the Air Medal with five oak leaf clusters.

Here in Washington, JOE has worked hard helping political prisoners, including people like Saeed Abedini and other Christian and non-Christian—Jewish and other religious and political prisoners around the world.

He has been tenacious in promoting prayer breakfasts all around the world so that members of parliaments and congresses from many countries would know the blessings of fellowship and prayer and being in touch with God.

He even traveled to Mongolia for the first prayer breakfast in the late 1990s.

JOE leads an ambassadors' prayer breakfast fellowship at the Cedars, right nearby in northern Virginia. I have had the privilege to join him for those breakfasts on occasions. It is a time for ambassadors to get together from all over the world—different regions meeting at different times, sometimes many from many regions—to break bread, to talk about the Scriptures with some emphasis on policy but mostly about how God does minister to us, how forgiving He is, and how all of us are in need of reconciliation. And JOE PITTS is there leading that fellowship and has been doing it for decades.

JOE has been a leader in the fight against ongoing human rights abuses in Western Sahara and elsewhere. He is co-chair of the Lantos Human Rights Commission. And in Congress, of course, we know he has served in a number of key leadership positions, including his current position as chairman of the Health Subcommittee of the Energy and Commerce Committee, obviously working on so many important issues on diseases and disabilities. Top officials from the healthcare system present themselves before his committee for his review and oversight. He has been a problem-solver—he and his staff, working across the aisle to try to find solutions to these often vexing issues of health care.

On the greatest human rights issue of our time—protecting unborn babies and their mothers from the violence of abortion—JOE PITTS has not only saved countless precious lives and fostered reconciliation and hope for post-abortive women, but he has also been an extraordinary inspiration to all of us in Congress.

The way he comports himself. He never gets angry. He deals with the issue in a way that reaches out to people who may have a different view in the hopes that they will see the wisdom of protecting the innocent and most vulnerable.

JOE has been a leader on every pro-life congressional policy—bills, amendments, administrative actions—since he won his seat in Congress in 1996. We are grateful for his powerful voice and vote on ending the hideous method called partial birth abortion; enacting multiple annual abortion funding bans; proscribing sex selection abortion, which is the ultimate violation of women's rights to say: you are susceptible to killing because you happen to be female; protecting pain-capable unborn children as well as born-alive infants; and enforcing the conscience rights of pro-life Americans has been remarkable. His leadership has been remarkable.

Had the Senate adopted the House-passed Pitts-Stupak amendment, ObamaCare, with all of its egregious flaws, would have at least been abortion-free.

JOE PITTS has been the greatest friend and ally of persons with disabilities, including his robust defense of Terri Schiavo.

His service in the Pennsylvania General Assembly from 1973–1997, including

his chairmanship of the powerful Appropriations Committee, to which he was elected by his peers, was filled with accomplishments, including his bold leadership in enacting the Abortion Control Act.

Someday future generations will look back on America's culture of death and wonder how and why a seemingly enlightened society, so blessed with civil rights protections, wealth, educational opportunities, information, medical breakthroughs, a free press, and a strong and diverse faith community could have allowed 60 million unborn children to be killed by abortion.

When the day comes and legal protections for the weak and the most vulnerable are restored, I believe future generations of Americans will remember and celebrate the tenacious heroes, the human rights heroes of today, people like Henry Hyde, compassionate women like Mother Teresa, and JOE PITTS, who persevered, prayed, and worked tenaciously on behalf of the least of these.

St. Francis once famously said: Always preach the gospel, and when necessary, use words.

By his example, by his perpetual radiating of Christ—just look at his eyes; there is kindness and compassion and empathy in JOE PITTS' eyes—he has inspired all of us to strive to do His will on Earth, as it is in Heaven. And it is a distinct privilege and honor to be known as one of JOE PITTS' friends.

I yield back the balance of my time. Mr. ROTHFUS. Madam Speaker, JOE PITTS is a man whose faith and values, I believe, animate him to protect life in all its stages. Through his decades of service both in the military and public office—and as a dedicated husband and dad—Congressman JOE PITTS has nurtured, protected, and preserved the lives of others.

First, as a young married man and a public school teacher, he nurtured the intellectual life of his students.

Then, so that he could better support his wife and children, he signed up for Officer Training School.

As an Air Force Captain, he did three tours in Vietnam over a five and a half year period, completing 116 combat missions throughout that time, and earning an Air Medal with five oak leaf clusters. Once again, JOE risked his own life to protect the lives of others.

After retiring from military service, JOE returned to teaching, and in 1972, he commenced his 24-year tenure as a PA State Representative, where he was known for being a key advocate of the 1990 Abortion Control Act.

In 1997, JOE became a member of Congress, and understanding that from the family springs new life, he was asked to chair the pro-family Values Action Team.

Throughout his service at the state and federal level, he has worked to improve the lives of others by exercising fiscal responsibility. As a member of the House Armed Services Committee, he fought to improve our military readiness, so that our service members can better protect American lives.

I know that each of us here today honoring JOE feel that he has touched our lives, both as a colleague and as a friend. He has touched the lives of countless others through his service.

I wish him all the best in the years to come, and, after decades of serving the lives of others, that he enjoys time with his family, especially his grandchildren.

RETIRING MEMBERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LOFGREN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. LOFGREN. Madam Speaker, I am honored to be here this evening to talk about the remarkable records of five individuals who are retiring from the Congress. I have had the honor of chairing the California Democratic delegation for many years; and these five Members—Representative SAM FARR, Representative LOIS CAPPS, Representative LORETTA SANCHEZ, Representative MIKE HONDA, and Representative Janice Hahn—are going home to California after serving distinguished careers here in the House.

THE HONORABLE SAM FARR

Ms. LOFGREN. Madam Speaker, I will start with my near neighbor, who has served since 1993. He came in in a special election, and that is Congressman SAM FARR. He has honorably represented the central coast of California for more than 40 years and here in Congress for the last 23.

SAM was born and raised in the Monterey County area. Before his service here in the House, he early on served in the Peace Corps in Colombia, and his wonderful fluent Spanish is a product of his Peace Corps service in Colombia. To this day, he has a special soft spot for that country.

As the ranking member on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies, he has championed safe and nutritious food for consumers, farmers, and producers. He has made sure that the need of getting fresh food into school lunches has never been far from our thoughts, and he has had remarkable success there, which has served the health of children across the country.

After serving in the Peace Corps, SAM represented his constituents on the Monterey County Board of Supervisors for 6 years. As a member of the Board of Supervisors, he continued to fight for environmental issues and for people who were disadvantaged. After that, he served in the California Legislature.

SAM founded the bipartisan House Oceans Caucus and authored the Oceans Act, which created the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy.

He is the longest serving Democrat on the Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies. And while he served on that subcommittee, he did something simply remarkable. We all know that