

honored to acknowledge constituents who selflessly answered the call to serve and defend our freedom. A United States Navy veteran of World War II and member of the Greatest Generation, Mr. Padula served his country with honor. Self-sacrifice, personal responsibility, and humility are traits this generation embodied. The tremendous strides our country has made since World War II are a direct result of these great Americans. North Carolina is truly fortunate to have Mr. Padula, an outstanding representative of our community and country. I join with his family, friends, and the Sixth District in thanking Anthony W. Padula for his dedicated service to the United States of America.

ESSAY IN HONOR OF VETERANS DAY BY ANASTASIA TSAKONAS

HON. JOSEPH CROWLEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 13, 2017

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to include in the RECORD the words of my young constituent, Anastasia Tsakonas.

Her thanks and words of praise for our brave men and women in service ring loud and true.

Veterans Day is courage, sacrifice, and patriotism all rolled up into the uniform that an individual wore when they decided to protect this wonderful country.

Veterans Day is our reminder that we need to honor and celebrate all the men and women who have served or are currently serving in our military. Veterans are volunteers who offer their lives to protect and die for this country. It takes a lot of courage and strength to enter the military and purposely leave behind everything you love. Many Veterans leave behind their homes, families, and careers knowing that it will be a long time before they see them again. Unfortunately, with this type of sacrifice, many Veterans also know that they may never return to see any of them again.

Through a Veteran's selfless sacrifice, we as citizens receive freedom, a freedom that many people in this world would like to have but are not allowed. This freedom lets us enjoy peace, prosperity, the right of speech and religion, the right to education and most important—opportunity; all values and beliefs that this country was originally founded and built on and which continue to exist to this day because of our Veterans.

Let us take time to reflect on these men and women who receive nothing in return for protecting our country and be grateful to them that we still have our values and beliefs intact. President Coolidge said: "The nation which forgets its defenders will itself be forgotten."

Thank you Veterans, without you, I could not be me!

VETERAN URGENT ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTHCARE ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. HENRY C. "HANK" JOHNSON, JR.

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 7, 2017

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 918, the Veteran Ur-

gent Access to Mental Healthcare Act. H.R. 918 directs the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide mental health care services to former members of the Armed Forces.

Mental health services would be administered to veterans immediately after their discharge, release, or deployment, and would continue as long as necessary. These services would be excluded from those who received a dishonorable or bad conduct discharge from the Armed Services. H.R. 918 would also permit the VA to provide mental health services at a non-VA facility if necessary, eliminating the barrier to treatment for so many rural veterans who are geographically isolated from VA facilities.

It is imperative that the VA helps the men and women who served our country when they return home. Not all injuries received by our veterans are visible but that does not mean they do not exist. Many veterans return home with mental health conditions and we need to accommodate them so they can get the treatment they need. This is why I support this legislation and encourage my colleagues to do so as well.

RESOLVING THE POLITICAL CRISIS IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 13, 2017

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, last week I held a hearing on the political crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The DRC was supposed to conduct elections one year ago this month in order to achieve the required transition of political power by December 19. However, after years of stalling on making preparations for elections, the Government of the DRC failed to hold elections last year and relied on a constitutional provision that President Joseph Kabila could not step down until an election was held to select a replacement.

This interpretation is in apparent contradiction to other constitutional provisions requiring elections to be held on time and limiting Kabila to two terms. The election commission has just announced that elections cannot be held until sometime in late 2018, with an inauguration in early 2019. The prolonging of the Kabila regime has ratcheted up tensions in the country.

Polling has indicated that a majority of Congolese want the Kabila government to end and be replaced by a transitional government until a new one can be elected.

Enduring conflict hotspots in eastern DRC have seen recent flare-ups, while new hotspots have emerged in previously relatively stable areas, such as the central Kasai region and southeastern Tanganyika province. The conflicts in Kasai and Tanganyika alone have caused the displacement of nearly 2 million people since mid-2016, giving DRC one of the highest rates of human displacement in the world. Political unrest in urban centers, a string of large prison breaks, and violent attacks in Kinshasa by members of a religious sect that has declared itself in opposition to Kabila have further contributed to worsening insecurity.

The conflict in Kasai, which reportedly was first sparked in 2016 by the murder of a traditional leader by state security forces, has become a catastrophic humanitarian crisis, featuring severe atrocities and the widespread recruitment and abuse of children. Meanwhile, the ongoing conflict in eastern DRC at one time saw violent activity by two dozen militia groups and an out-of-control national army, resulting in the systematic rape of about 50 women and girls each hour.

The hearing intended to look at possible solutions to a political stalemate that could very well lead to further violence and upheaval in a large African country bordering on nine neighbors. It followed a successful resolution on DRC that I introduced and was passed by the House last year and new legislation that Ranking Member BASS and I are introducing soon.

We understand that there are no easy solutions to the current crisis in DRC. A negotiated transition likely could be achieved if President Kabila were convinced that neither he nor his family would be prosecuted for human rights violations or corruption. However, that would reward them for abusing their citizens and plundering the country's resources, and that is even if members of his government were not covered.

A palace coup might take place to oust Kabila. That is not unknown in the DRC. Kabila's father, Laurent Kabila, was assassinated in office in 2001. Mobutu Sese Seko, who the elder Kabila had overthrown, had himself overthrown an elected government in 1965. He was chased from power and fled into exile in 1997. However, a coup would not support international efforts to instill democratic practices in the DRC and could lead to protracted in-fighting and national chaos.

The status quo, as detailed earlier, is already leading to growing violence and will not lead to a peaceful solution the longer a transition is delayed. In fact, it is more likely violence could escalate and spill over into neighboring countries as did conflict in 1996 through 97 and 1998 through 2003.

Over the past year, we have heard many promises by the Government of the DRC about when elections would be held. There have been several dates given for when voter registration would be completed during this past year. The current government timetable calls for voter registration to extend to a point at which elections couldn't be held in the DRC until late 2018 with an inauguration early in 2019. That would mean that Joseph Kabila would have had an extra half-term in office, when the constitution precluded him from going past December 2016.

Consequently, we heard last week from the State Department on our government's diplomatic efforts to resolve the transition stalemate and the U.S. Agency for International Development on our government's programs on the ground to promote democracy and free and fair elections.

Our second panel last week consisted of scholars and activists who gave us their informed suggestions on how we can break this political stalemate and prevent more bloodshed in the DRC.

Again, no solution will be easy or without cost, but non-action would have an even higher cost in human lives. That we must not tolerate.

HONORING ISAAC A. WASHBURN

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 13, 2017

Mr. GRAVES of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Isaac A. Washburn. Isaac is a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 121, and earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Isaac has been very active with his troop, participating in many scout activities. Over the many years Isaac has been involved with scouting, he has not only earned numerous merit badges, but also the respect of his family, peers, and community. Most notably, Isaac has become a member of the Tribe of Mic-O-Say. Isaac has also contributed to his community through his Eagle Scout project.

Mr. Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Isaac A. Washburn for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

IN RECOGNITION OF LIEUTENANT COLONEL DALE GLENN DERR

HON. PATRICK MEEHAN

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 13, 2017

Mr. MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, today I recognize Lieutenant Colonel Dale Glenn Derr of Berks County, Pennsylvania. Lt. Col. Derr served our country in the U.S. Air Force for two decades during which he received many honors and awards.

Lt. Col. Derr decided to commission into the Air Force after receiving his teaching certificate. His mentor, Samuel Gundy—World War II bomber pilot, POW, and esteemed naturalist, was a major influence in the future Lt. Col.'s life and his decision to join the military. This decision began an illustrious 20 year career of service to our nation.

Lt. Col. Derr quickly became known for his keen operational and scientific talents during his tours of duty in Europe. Here he received Distinguished Graduate honors at the prestigious NATO School in Oberammergau, Germany. Upon returning home, the Lt. Col. was selected to be an instructor on weapons of mass destruction at the Interservice Nuclear Weapons School. He would go on to again be awarded the Distinguished Graduate Honors while at the Technical Instructor School. Eventually, he was named top instructor for the Technical Training Group in 1990.

Since retiring from the Air Force, Lt. Col. Derr has continued his dedication to our country and those who have served it by directing the Department of Veteran Affairs for Berks County. In this capacity he works to ensure the county's 27,000 veterans have access to the department's many services and benefits.

I commend Lt. Col. Derr for his dedication to our country and community through his teaching and service. He is a leader in his community and continues to do his most to help those around him.

HONORING THE LIFE AND CAREER OF ART DOUCETTE

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 13, 2017

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and career of Art Doucette. Art is a science teacher at Sequoia High School, a community day school in Merced that provides second chances to at-risk students. Art's passion for teaching and the enthusiasm with which he relates scientific concepts to even his most challenging students has made him a classroom favorite at Sequoia and a model for teachers throughout Merced County.

Born in Arkansas to a military family, Art moved over seventy times across the United States and abroad as a child. One of his childhood homes was in Merced County, a community that would greatly benefit from Art's work in the years to come. As a young adult, Art worked as a finish carpenter until a serious injury prompted him to attend Cuesta College in pursuit of a new career. It was there that Art met the love of his life, Holly, whom he married in 2000. After studying chemistry and biology at Stanislaus State, Art began his teaching career. He eventually found himself back in Merced County, where he has now taught and inspired countless students for over a decade.

Teaching at Sequoia High School offers a unique set of challenges not found at most high schools. Sequoia students often come from adverse backgrounds and struggle with a wide range of behavioral problems. It is in this environment that Art has flourished as an engaging and dedicated educator, characterized by a genuine passion for his subject and unwavering faith in his students.

Not long ago, Art was diagnosed with cancer and has since had to spend much of his time outside the classroom, seeking medical care. It has not been an easy road, and the pain and heartache associated with such a diagnosis is only made more acute by the absence felt by Art's students and colleagues. However, with his wife, Holly, and son, James, by his side, Art is courageously undergoing treatment and hopes to be back at Sequoia soon. In his honor, Sequoia High School and its affiliated network of schools are celebrating Art's devotion and lasting contributions to his community with an Art Doucette Honor Square Dedication Day. I stand with the students and staff of Sequoia High School in my support and encouragement for Art and his family during this difficult time, and in our shared gratitude for the difference he has made in Merced.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in honoring the life and career of Art Doucette. Art's relentless positivity and eagerness to resume teaching—even in the face of immense personal hardship—is both humbling and inspiring. Though the impact Art has made on the community has not waned, his presence at Sequoia High School is greatly missed. His colleagues, his students, and I all look forward to his return to the classroom.

VETERANS INCREASED CHOICE FOR TRANSPLANTED ORGANS AND RECOVERY ACT OF 2017

SPEECH OF

HON. HENRY C. "HANK" JOHNSON, JR.

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 7, 2017

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise to support H.R. 2601, the Veterans Increased Choice for Transplanted Organs and Recovery (VICTOR) Act of 2017. This is an important piece of legislation and I am pleased to support it.

The Veterans Health Administration has provided solid organ transplants since 1962 and bone marrow transplants since 1982. Currently, there are fourteen locations across the country that provide these services. However, if a veteran does not live near one of these facilities, the difficulty of travel could prevent veterans from getting the medical care they need. Also, even if veterans are able to get to a facility, they still face the risk of getting waitlisted. We need to provide more options to veterans who require life-saving organ transplant operations. H.R. 2601 provides the solution to this problem by amending the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 to allow eligible veterans to receive health care from any facility which is related to the Department of Defense, the Indian Health Service, federal health centers, or any other health-care provider who participates in the Medicare program. The conditions of this program apply to veterans who need an organ transplant operation, live more than 100 miles from a Veterans Affairs transplant center, and need care related to an upcoming transplant.

Since the closest Veterans Affairs transplant center to my district in Georgia is almost 150 miles away in Birmingham, Alabama, this bill would have a major impact for the nearly 45,000 veterans who live in my district. Should anyone require a transplant surgery, they would first be able to explore their options in Atlanta instead of being forced to travel to a different state, which is why I support H.R. 2601.

RECOGNIZING LARRY G. COX

HON. JOHN J. DUNCAN, JR.

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 13, 2017

Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, a distinguished business owner and close friend of mine from my district, Larry G. Cox, will be honored by the North Knoxville Business and Professional Association at an event that benefits the Boys and Girls Clubs of Tennessee Valley on November 14th 2017.

Larry has one of the biggest hearts of all the people I have known in my lifetime. Larry has served the people of Knoxville for many years by giving his time and effort to the Emerald Youth Foundation, Kiwanis Club, and his church. He also helped make our city a better place through his tenure as a Knoxville city councilman for two decades.

Father of Shane and Brooke, Grandfather of Brielle and Kingston, and Husband of Brenda, Larry Cox has created a legacy that few can