PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. BRENDA L. LAWRENCE

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 23, 2017

Mrs. LAWRENCE. Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, on March 22, 2017, I was not able to cast my votes during the second series. Had I been in attendance, I would have voted:

YES on the Democratic Motion to Recommit on H.R. 1101

NO on H.R. 1101—Small Business Health Fairness Act of 2017

YES on H.R. 1238—Securing our Agriculture and Food Act

SMALL BUSINESS HEALTH FAIRNESS ACT OF 2017

SPEECH OF

HON. DOUG COLLINS

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 22, 2017

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1101, the Small Business Health Fairness Act of 2017.

Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, providing economic opportunity and employment for millions of Americans across our country.

Too often, we have seen the economic engine stall due to intrusion and overregulation that come courtesy of the federal government. There are few places where this is more obvious than in the staggering health care costs small businesses face, costs which Obamacare have only driven up.

Obamacare's burdensome mandates have driven premiums up and insurance providers out of the market, and small employers have found themselves increasingly unable to cover their employees. The big picture for small businesses is that the ACA has smothered patient choice and patient-centered care in the process of overregulating our job creators.

In the House, we are empowering small businesses to fight back by increasing their bargaining power with insurance providers and leveling the playing field that they share with larger companies. The Small Business Health Fairness Act will help lower health care costs for employees by allowing small businesses to join together through association health plans.

Ultimately, this bill will bring relief to American employees and their families by making insurance more affordable and accessible.

H.R. 1101 is an important step toward empowering small businesses to care for their employees while prioritizing the job creation that strengthens our communities. At the same time, this bill would contribute to a patient-centered, competitive, and low-cost health care system for all Americans. I am proud to support this legislation as we return choice to our businesses and loved ones.

HONORING THE LIFE OF CONGRESSMAN ELIGIO ''KIKA'' DE LA GARZA

HON. HENRY CUELLAR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 23, 2017

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today along with Congressman FILEMON VELA Jr. and Congressman VICENTE GONZALEZ to commemorate the life of Congressman Eligio ''Kika'' de la Garza of Texas' 15th district.

Congressman de la Garza was born on September 22nd, 1927, in Mercedes, Texas and raised in Mission, Texas. When he was 17 years old, he enlisted in the United States Navy, where he served during the final months of World War II. Upon his return home, he enrolled in Edinburg Junior College, and later transferred to St. Mary's University in San Antonio. Eventually, he would serve during the Korean War as a second lieutenant with the Army's 37th Division Artillery. After his service, he went on to earn a law degree from St. Mary's University in San Antonio.

At 24 years old, Congressman de la Garza was elected to the Texas House of Representatives. He was an important leader in his community, who served as delegate in the Texas House for six consecutive terms. In 1965, Congressman de la Garza was elected to the United States House of Representatives, where he spent the next 32 years advocating for civil rights, food security, affordable health care, and access to education for all citizens. He was first a member, and later the chairman of the U.S. House Agricultural Committee. He and his committee crafted legislation focused on rural economic development, improved nutrition, and environmental protection. His legislative programs often brought together farmers, ranchers, consumers, and other interest groups. During his career in the House of Representatives, he also advocated for improved U.S. and Mexico relations including the North American Free Trade Agreement. For his efforts, he later received the Order of the Aztec Eagle, the highest honor Mexico can give to non-citizens.

Congressman de la Garza was a pioneer who paved the way for more Hispanics to participate in our nation's legislative process. For a time, he was the only Hispanic member of the Texas House, and later became the second Hispanic member of Congress from the state of Texas. His dedication to the Hispanic community is evident in his role as a founding member of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus. Congressman de la Garza was an inspiration for the Hispanic community, and has empowered others to become active in our legislative process.

His memory will be honored by his family, his friends, and the communities which he served. He is survived by his loving wife of 63 years, Lucille, as well as his three children, eight grandchildren, and one great-grand child. He will also continue to be honored at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, where they have the E. ''Kika'' de la Garza Endowed Scholarship Fund.

Mr. Speaker, we are honored to have the opportunity to remember the legacy of Congressman Eligio ''Kika'' de la Garza. His dedication to his country, and his community, will not be forgotten.

H.R. 1259, VA ACCOUNTABILITY FIRST ACT OF 2017

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 23, 2017

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, the VA Accountability First Act of 2017 (HR 1259) represents an attack on collective bargaining at federal agencies and an attempt to dismantle the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 (CSRA, Pub. L. 95–454). The VA Accountability First Act of 2017 would strip Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) employees of personnel procedures that they developed through collective bargaining with the VA. It would also close the window of notice provided to employees facing adverse personnel actions from 37 to only 10 days. By infringing on activities authorized by the CSRA, this bill would make it easier to fire an employee without good cause.

We should remember that one-third of VA employees are veterans themselves. H.R. 1259, as written, would harm some of the very people we are trying to assist. The elimination of merit-based principles for workers facing adverse action could allow management to target the same whistleblowers who are trying to help us eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse at the VA.

The bill guts the right of VA employees to use union protest mechanisms to effectively address hostile actions. The current grievance procedure is granted by statute and included in the contract negotiations between labor and management. The bill proposes a rushed management-run appeals process that does not allow good employees who are treated unfairly enough time to develop the requisite supporting information to defend their jobs. The reduced timeframe for agency review would be even more severe for medical professionals facing adverse actions related to professional conduct or competence, particularly because their cases typically involve complex medical issues.

H.R. 1259 also strips front-line employees of their rights to appeal to the Merit System Protection Board (MSPB) by reducing the adjudication period following their dismissal and removal from the payroll. Employees lose 80 percent of the time at the MSPB and would now only have seven days to prepare their case for the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.

A thoughtful approach to these issues at the VA would strike a balance of promoting employee accountability and protecting employee rights. Unfortunately, this bill does not strike that balance, and so eviscerates employee protections that it could discourage whistleblowers from exposing waste, fraud, and abuse at the VA. I strongly oppose the VA Accountability First Act because of the destructive effects it would have on the VA workforce and veterans alike.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE JOHN CHAMPE HIGH SCHOOL WIND ENSEMBLE

HON. BARBARA COMSTOCK

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 23, 2017

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the John Champe High School Wind Ensemble on participating in the 2017 Music for All National Festival. Their dedication, hard work, and perseverance, along with the guidance and direction of their esteemed band director, Jonathan Phillips, helped earn John Champe High School its first appearance in the Music for All National Festival.

The Music for All is one of the nation's largest and most influential organizations, and only a mere 59 high school and middle school concert band and percussion ensembles from across the nation were selected to perform at the 2017 festival. Despite the fact that the John Champe High School Wind Ensemble is still in its nascent, as John Champe High School only opened in Aldie, Virginia, in 2012, they have the honor and unique distinction of being the first ensemble from Loudoun County to be invited to perform at this festival. Furthermore, in five years, the band program at John Champe has blossomed from 26 students who were in the inaugural marching band in 2012 to 230 students today. The John Champe Knights have also earned the distinction of Virginia Honor Band three times and 19 students successfully auditioned into the All-District Band this year.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in congratulating the John Champe High School Wind Ensemble on participating in the 2017 Music for All National Festival. I am proud to represent these students and wish them all the best in their future endeavors.

CONGRATULATING DR. LOREN P. GRESHAM ON HIS RETIREMENT FROM SOUTHERN NAZARENE UNIVERSITY

HON. KENNY MARCHANT

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 23, 2017

Mr. MARCHANT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Dr. Loren Gresham on his retirement from Southern Nazarene University (SNU). For the past 50 years, Dr. Gresham has devoted his time and efforts to providing students a top tier education in a Christ-centered environment.

Dr. Gresham has demonstrated a lifetime passion for education, including his own. Before becoming the President of SNU, Loren received a number of degrees. Loren earned his Bachelor of Arts degree at Pasadena College (now Point Loma Nazarene University) in 1962 and went on to receive his Master of Arts degree in international relations from the University of Southern California. In 1964, Loren married former Pasadena College classmate, Linda Brown, and together they have one child, Suzanne.

In 1967, Loren moved to Bethany, Oklahoma where he became a professor of political science at Bethany Nazarene College. He became a Fulbright Scholar and was granted leave for the 1970–71 academic year to conduct research in New Zealand. During his time as a professor, Loren continued to pursue his higher education studies at the University of Oklahoma and earned a Ph.D. in political science in 1973.

At Bethany Nazarene College, Dr. Gresham pursued his lifelong interest in the sport of basketball. He became assistant coach and later the head coach of the men's team. Under his leadership, the team achieved remarkable success including a national championship in 1981 in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) defeating the University of Alabama in Huntsville. As President of SNU, Dr. Gresham has continued this tradition of competition as an active advocate of the 18 SNU women and men's athletic teams.

By 1985, Dr. Gresham became provost of Bethany Nazarene College and four short years later, in 1989, the board of trustees named Dr. Gresham the president of the institution, now called Southern Nazarene University. Currently, Dr. Gresham is the longest serving president among the eight Nazarene institutions of higher education in North America. Additionally, he is the longest tenured president serving at any college or university in the state of Oklahoma.

During Dr. Gresham's presidency at SNU, the institution has had 28 consecutive years of balanced budgets, and last fall's total enrollment was the all-time high in SNU's school history. During Dr. Gresham's tenure, SNU has been ranked the number one ''Best College'' in Oklahoma and one of ''The 50 Most Affordable Private Colleges'' in the nation by Money (2016). Dr. Gresham is also credited with raising the needed funds for operating, endowment, and capital projects. The funds raised have gone to many programs that will educate the next generation of SNU leaders and enhance student life such as campus beautification projects, construction of new living centers, major upgrades to athletic facilities, and the establishment of a online campus and a satellite campus in Tulsa, Oklahoma, among others.

Dr. Gresham has served in many professional organizations to help improve education for students and educators across the nation. He has chaired the NAIA Council of Presidents as well as serving on the Board of Directors for the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities. He has chaired the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities Board of Directors, an organization that represents more than 111 Christian colleges and universities across the nation.

Dr. Gresham's wife, Linda, has also served extensively on campus ministries. Linda and Dr. Gresham have a clear passion for education and love for SNU. Together, they founded The Gresham Leadership Grant to recruit outstanding young leaders to SNU. This highly selective first-year grant is awarded to students who have clearly demonstrated leadership in their community, church, and school and possess exemplary character in all aspects of their lives.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the 24th District of Texas, I would like to thank Dr. Gresham for his 50 years of commitment and leadership to Southern Nazarene University. Dr. Gresham's work ethic, values, and integrity have set an example for those in higher education. I ask all my distinguished colleagues to join me in wishing Dr. Gresham continued success as he enjoys his retirement.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE SHIRLEY RYAN ABILITYLAB, THE FUTURE OF THE REHABILITATION INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO ON THE OPENING OF THEIR NEW FACILITY

HON. DANNY K. DAVIS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 23, 2017

Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago (RIC) on the opening of their new state of the art facility, the Shirley Ryan AbilityLab, opening on March 25, 2017.

RIC has been named the ''No. 1 Rehabilitation Hospital in America'' by U.S. News & World Report for 26 consecutive years. Their new facility will be the first research hospital in which clinicians, scientists, innovators, and technologists work together in the same space, surrounding patients, discovering new approaches and, applying research in real time.

The Shirley Ryan AbilityLab will significantly expand RIC's overall footprint of 1.2 million square feet, of which 800,000 are dedicated to clinical research. Their inpatient capacity will grow by 40 percent increasing their total beds to 242. The facility growth will include outpatient and research space along with expanding to five translational Ability Labs. RIC's applied research and therapeutic space will integrate patients in the process of discovery and innovation, providing the highest quality medical care and state-of-the art equipment for patients with Brain; Spinal Cord; Nerve, Muscles & Bone; Cancer; and Pediatric conditions.

RIC's dedication to providing the best rehabilitation care in the world and conducting cutting edge research in my Congressional District is resulting in medical discoveries and innovations that benefit patients all over the world. For that, Mr. Speaker, I applaud RIC and congratulate them as they open the Shirley Ryan AbilityLab.

RECOGNIZING THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF BELOVED DALLAS RESTAURANT WILLIAMS CHICKEN

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 23, 2017

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride and a watering mouth that I celebrate the 30th anniversary of the most famous chicken restaurant in all of North Texas—Williams Chicken. What started as one 'chicken spot' in 1987 has now become a successful chain with over 40 stores including 20 franchises, and in addition to being responsible for the best wings you can find in the Dallas area, it boasts 500 employees.

Williams Chicken's amazing growth and story is due to the entrepreneurial spirit of its founder and CEO, Hiawatha Williams. Williams Chicken's humble beginnings are only