

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. BRIAN HIGGINS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 27, 2017

Mr. HIGGINS of New York. Mr. Speaker, on March 24, 2017, I was not present for the recorded vote on roll call no. 191. Had I been present, I would have voted NAY on the motion to order the previous question providing for consideration of H.R. 1628, the American Health Care Act of 2017.

CONGRESSIONAL TEACHERS AWARD

HON. VERN BUCHANAN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 27, 2017

Mr. BUCHANAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of outstanding public school teachers in Florida's 16th Congressional District.

I was once told that children are 25 percent of the population, but they are 100 percent of the future.

And it's true. The education of a child is an investment, not only in that student, but in the future of our country.

Therefore, I established the Congressional Teacher Awards to honor educators for their ability to teach and inspire students.

An independent panel has chosen the following teachers from Manatee, Sarasota, and Hillsborough Counties to receive Florida's 16th District 2015 Congressional Teacher Award for their accomplishments as educators:

Danielle Murphy for her accomplishments as a teacher at Boyette Springs Elementary in Riverview

Carol Pelletier for her accomplishments as a teacher at Sarasota Military Academy Prep in Sarasota

Emilee Vermilion for her accomplishments as a teacher at Southeast High School in Bradenton

On behalf of the people of Florida's 16th District I congratulate each of these outstanding teachers and offer my sincere appreciation for their service and dedication.

HONORING CAPTAIN HUMBERT ROQUE "ROCKY" VERSACE ON THE OCCASION OF NATIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR DAY

HON. DONALD S. BEYER, JR.

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 27, 2017

Mr. BEYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on the occasion of National Medal of Honor Day

to recognize the heroism "above and beyond the call of duty" of Captain Humbert Roque "Rocky" Versace, USMA Class of 1959. Captain Versace, who was captured by the Viet Cong with two other U.S. soldiers on 29 October 1963, endured nearly 23 months of inhuman treatment at the hands of his communist captors. That included denial of medical treatment (for the 3 bullet wounds he sustained during his capture), insufficient daily food ration, indoctrination attempts, beatings and confinement to a cramped bamboo cage.

Portions of his Medal of Honor citation read: "[H]e demonstrated exceptional leadership and resolute adherence to the tenants of the Code of Conduct from the time he entered into a prisoner of war status . . . he attempted the first of four escape attempts by dragging himself on his hands and knees out of the camp through dense swamp and forbidding vegetation to freedom . . . Captain Versace scorned the enemy's exhaustive interrogation and indoctrination efforts, and inspired his fellow prisoners to resist to the best of their ability. When he used his Vietnamese language skills to protest improper treatment of the American prisoners by the guards, he was put into leg irons and gagged to keep his protestations out of earshot of the other American prisoners in the camp . . ."

The Viet Cong murdered Captain Versace on 26 September 1965. After more than 51 years, Captain Versace is the only U.S. Soldier who received the Medal of Honor during the Vietnam War to remain Missing in Action.

COMMEMORATING THE RETIREMENT OF BOB EPLING

HON. MARIO DIAZ-BALART

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 27, 2017

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, I, along with Representative ROS-LEHTINEN and Representative CURBELO rise to commemorate the retirement of Mr. Bob Epling.

Bob began his career as an assistant bank examiner with the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation in Washington, D.C. From there, he moved to South Florida, where he would spend most of the next fifty years. Bob worked for several banks in South Florida, and has served as the President and CEO of Homestead/Community Bank of Florida for the last forty years. Through his work at the bank, he has consistently proven himself to be an honorable, ethical man.

Bob has also been an active member of the South Florida community. He has served as the Chairman of the International Hurricane Center for the past twenty years, serves on the executive board of the South Florida Council of Boy Scouts of America, and is a member of the Military Affairs Committee of the Greater Homestead/Florida City Chamber of Commerce, among many other activities.

Bob is also a Senior Advisor to the Orange Bowl Committee, after serving as its President in 1993. In his work with the Orange Bowl Committee, he was able to break ground on a renovation of the football stadium and field at Harris Field Park in Homestead. This project is just one example of Bob's continuing commitment to making life better for his neighbors in South Florida.

We have known Bob for several decades, and have been consistently impressed with the breadth of his involvement with the community. He has been a loyal friend, and is an honest voice who can speak to the positive qualities of his community as well as the challenges it faces. We congratulate Bob on a remarkable career and a lasting impact made.

Mr. Speaker, we are honored to pay tribute to Mr. Bob Epling for his tremendous service to the South Florida community, and we ask our colleagues to join us in recognizing this remarkable individual.

AMERICAN HEALTH CARE ACT OF 2017

SPEECH OF

HON. LUKE MESSER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 24, 2017

Mr. MESSER. Mr. Speaker, in Indiana, we keep life simple. We love God, country, family, and basketball. And, this time of year, during March Madness, not necessarily in that order. Certain principles are sacred, like you do what you said you were going to do. Some want to make today's debate complicated, but the truth is it's pretty simple. For seven years we've told the American people we would repeal Obamacare. Today we have an opportunity to do that. It's not a perfect bill—no bill is. But President Trump has said this is our best and only chance to get this done.

There is some strong policy in this bill. It cuts taxes by hundreds of billions of dollars and government by hundreds of billions. It keeps pre-existing condition prohibitions and lets 26-year-olds stay on their parents' health plans. Most importantly, however, it unshackles American families from a government forced mandate costing them thousands of dollars each year. This bill represents an enormous change away from an era of taxes, mandates, penalties, and government bureaucrats defining what health insurance plan you are allowed to purchase, and into an era where the patient, the consumer, is back in charge.

Despite today's rhetoric, the choice is clear: you can vote to keep Obamacare or vote to end it. It's really that simple. I urge my colleagues to support the bill, keep your promise, and do what you said you would do.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT FOR
MITIGATED PROPERTIES ACT OF
2017

HON. BRIAN BABIN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 27, 2017

Mr. BABIN. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor today to introduce the Community Empowerment for Mitigated Properties Act of 2017.

When the Federal Emergency Management Authority (FEMA) buys up repeatedly flooded—and uninsurable—residential lots, the houses are demolished and these properties become permanently barred from development. The properties become open lots and give flood waters a place to be absorbed, but the strict requirements and regulations on development of the land can leave a patchwork of empty spaces and an uncertain future about their upkeep and maintenance.

This legislation would ensure that FEMA provide notice to municipal land maintenance authorities that a flood mitigation purchase has been made inside their jurisdiction, and how disagreements between local government's competing land maintenance standards can be mediated. Enactment of this legislation would help communities in my district and around the country to better deal with these situations, and I look forward to advancing it through the Transportation and Infrastructure committee and this House.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge a former member of my staff, Daniel Amico, for his hard work on this legislation. Daniel has moved on to pursue a new opportunity, but I wish him well and thank him for his efforts on my behalf preparing this bill.

THE MIDDLE EAST

HON. FRANCIS ROONEY

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 27, 2017

Mr. FRANCIS ROONEY of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share with my colleagues several articles that I have written over the years regarding the Middle East. As a Member of the Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats Subcommittee on Foreign Affairs, these pieces serve to outline and inform discussions that our Committee will cover in the 115th Congress.

ISIS, ISLAMIC EXTREMISM, AND THE LONG WAR

Regardless of various opinions about the United States' military engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2001, I would argue that President Bush's words to a joint session of Congress on 20 September of that year ring just as true and valuable now: "We are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom" against an onslaught by terrorists practicing "a fringe form of Islamic extremism".

Recent unconscionable acts of violence by Islamic militants, including beheadings and burnings alive not heard of for hundreds of years, demand broad and possibly unique means of response and concerted action by the modern world. Certainly the "overseas contingency operation" with which the Obama Administration replaced the "Global War on Terror" in May 2009 has failed to accomplish the task. Now ISIS leaders openly

threaten to "conquer your Rome, break your crosses and enslave your women."

Not since the Communist state of Stalin, or perhaps the Third Reich, have we faced such a potential, or at least self-proclaimed, existential threat to the modern world. It required a half century of containment to mutate the former and a brutal world war to eradicate the latter.

The religious inspiration behind ISIS, Taliban, Al-Qaeda, and affiliated groups add a different face to the movements which call for responses broader than purely military activity. Recalling President Truman's unsuccessful effort to draw the world's religions into the fight against communism, we need to draw religious leaders from all traditions—especially the vast majority of Muslims who do not align themselves with the medieval barbarism of the terrorists—into open and concerted action in opposition to the threat posed here.

In the early 1950s, Truman found only one group, the Catholic Church, willing to broadly and openly attack communism. In 2006, it was Pope Benedict XVI who spoke out more clearly and aggressively against the evil of using religion to inspire hatred and violence—and of the fundamental incompatibility of the Prophet's command to "spread the word by the sword" with the way of life in the modern 21st century. He urged the Islamic world to reconcile the Koran with modernity, to bring reason to its interpretations just as the Enlightenment did for theocratic monarchies in the 18th century. He made it clear that moderate Muslims must take responsibility for their own religion.

And while there have been some encouraging comments, inter-religious dialogues, and op-eds to this effect, we are still in the early stages of a protracted struggle for the minds of heretofore not radicalized Muslims. The "soft power" of religious opinion makers is an important factor. In fact, some have argued as Ambassador Charles Freeman (USFS, Ret.) has that "only a coalition with a strong Muslim identity can hope to contain" the terrorists. He argues that the doctrines of ISIS cannot be successfully refuted by non-Muslims because the U.S. "lacks the religious credentials to refute" Islamic terrorist groups as "a moral perversion of Islam."

The lack of cultural integration in different nations' societies also presents a major challenge. Whether it is European "multiculturalism," or an affirmative prejudice, the lack of alignment of many Muslim groups with the national identities and cultures of their countries has created a breeding ground for radicalization. Here is where our unique American "exceptionalism" can show the light. Our "melting pot" tradition of assimilation of diverse peoples has created—despite some bumps in the road—a uniquely broad and culturally tolerant society. And the related concept of citizenship based on residence and personal actions rather than blood and lineage can serve as a powerful model.

As the world gropes for solutions, it has become clear that concerted action by the modern world, akin to the Allied Powers' collaborative actions to confront the Axis, is absolutely necessary. Spain and France recently passed bi-partisan laws granting expansive powers to the authorities to monitor and interdict internet connectivity with radical Islamic sites, to isolate and track down "lone wolf" terrorists, and to restrict and contain travel to and from places of known terrorist activities. Modifying the Schengen visa program and putting in place tightened border security are issues to consider as means of improving tracking of known terrorist suspects.

Lastly, we should consider a "containment" and isolation program to ring fence

the terrorist geographies, turn them onto themselves and limit their capacity to export murder beyond their borders. In so doing, perhaps we can help assure that their neighbors who are our allies in all this (especially Jordan) are reinforced and protected. Turkey has a powerful role to play both because of their long land border with Syria and Iraq, and due to the complexities presented by the PKK in Turkey and the evolution of Kurdistan and its Peshmerga, which are capable fighters and allies of the West. Only a comprehensive strategy can turn the tide and lead us to ultimate victory in the Long War.

IS THIS WAR YET?

Contrary to the constrained and parsed language that the Obama administration uses to describe the terror radiating from the Middle East, we are at war. The terror attacks in France only underscore this reality. This is a struggle for the values and freedoms the Western world holds dear. The modern secular state where all religious faiths are respected, and the rights of all men and women are to be protected, is under siege. These attacks are neither sporadic "episodes," nor are they merely criminal. We confront a locally and regionally organized movement with a unifying ideology and global ambitions.

While the Islamic State, Al-Qaeda and their ilk are in some ways more complicated than traditional nation states, the underlying ideology has echoes of mid-20th Century fascism. There is tyranny in the beating heart of both movements.

Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton correctly noted that the enemy are "jihadists," but shied away from conceding that it is unmistakably and by its own description Islamic. You can argue whether the wave of terror that began with the Iranian Revolution and reached new heights with the Islamic State attacks on France is truly inspired by a perverted interpretation of Islam, or rather the cynical and calculated manipulation of religion for the purpose of hegemonic conquest. Either way, the result is largely the same. The Islamic State, Al-Qaeda and the constellation of Islamic extremist groups that orbit around them have spread fear across the world. They have imposed a significant "security tax" on free societies. And they have seized significant territory across North Africa and the Middle East.

The question confronting all free societies targeted by these extremists is whether to declare war against those who are waging war against us. If so, what is the best means to mount the kind of wartime response traditionally associated with nation state conflicts?

One possible measure would be an embargo that cuts off extremist held territory in Iraq and Syria from the rest of the world: No cross border movement, no flights in and out, no connection with the global commons. This would essentially treat extremist held territory as a belligerent nation, and it might well entail recognizing the already de facto partition of Iraq and Syria into their Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish regions. Islamic State leaders believe they occupy a Caliphate, so why should they avoid measures that traditionally constrain aggressor nations?

More punishing measures could also target any governments or non-governmental organizations that nurture or support the terrorists, including the governments of many of our Sunni allies in the Middle East. Even indirect or private support for a radical movement that has declared war on the civilized world should carry a heavy cost, one that creates an incentive for these nations to become part of the solution to a problem that