

HONORING SPC. JACOB D. MARTIR'S SERVICE AND SACRIFICE

HON. JOE COURTNEY

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 25, 2017

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, today, as we near Memorial Day, I rise to honor SPC. Jacob D. Martir, for his honorable service to our nation and his ultimate sacrifice during the early days of the Iraq War.

Jacob was a native of eastern Connecticut, growing up in Willimantic and Norwich. A former student of Norwich Free Academy, he enlisted in the United States Army in 2000 at the age of 17. Joining the armed services was his lifelong dream. Nearing completion of his first tour in the Army, he reenlisted for four more years in 2002, despite the added risk of serving after 9/11.

In March of 2004, Jacob deployed to Iraq with Alpha Troop, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division. On August 18, 2004, while patrolling in Sadr City, one of Baghdad's most violent neighborhoods throughout the war, Jacob was tragically killed by small arms fire. His sacrifice, coming four months after the tragic "Black Sunday" in which eight soldiers were killed in Sadr City, was part of a years-long effort to clear the area of Iraqi insurgents. He was 21 years old and left behind a loving mother, Lydia Gutierrez, and five siblings. For his courageous service, Jacob was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart and Bronze Star, and he was buried with full military honors at Maplewood Cemetery in Norwich.

Jacob's life is a reminder of the greatest American values. His call to serve was instinctive and unrelenting even through a time of great danger. At just twenty-one years old, he marched bravely into one of the most dangerous places in the world to defend and serve his nation and protect his fellow soldiers.

I would ask my colleagues to join me in solemn remembrance of Jacob Martir and his family, and thanking them for Jacob's service to eastern Connecticut and our nation.

NATIONAL POPPY DAY

HON. ANDRÉ CARSON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 25, 2017

Mr. CARSON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize tomorrow, and each Friday before Memorial Day, as National Poppy Day.

National Poppy Day encourages all Americans to wear a red poppy flower as a symbol to remember the fallen and support the living heroes who have worn our nation's uniform.

Following World War I, the red poppy became an internationally recognized symbol of the blood shed by those who fought for their countries.

Although it originated almost a century ago, the poppy is just as relevant today.

Throughout our history, countless Americans have laid down their lives to protect and defend the country and the people they love.

America's living veterans have served in WWII, Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf,

Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and many other conflicts around the world.

They fought for us and many bare scars that will stay with them for life.

As Americans, we have an obligation to remember the service and sacrifice of these brave men and women and their families, who have helped build the country we love today.

By recognizing National Poppy Day, we stand with these brave men and women and with the families of all those who did not make it home.

While we all agree with the sentiment, the symbolism behind the poppy is better known around the world than it is here in the United States.

It is worn in England and Canada, on Remembrance Day, also known as Armistice Day and Poppy Day, to commemorate members of the armed forces who have died in the line of duty.

This year the United States commemorates the 100th anniversary of its entrance into World War I.

The American Legion, our largest wartime veterans organization which has a track record of promoting National Poppy Day, is approaching its 100th anniversary.

There is no more appropriate time for us, as a nation, to recognize this historic symbol of service.

As the proud author of H. Res. 309, a resolution recognizing National Poppy Day, I urge all of my colleagues to join me in promoting this visible recognition of those who have served our nation in uniform.

IN HONOR OF THE DEEP EAST TEXAS COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

HON. KEVIN BRADY

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 25, 2017

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, today I, along with Representative BRIAN BABIN and Representative LOUIE GOHMERT, recognize the 50th anniversary of the Deep East Texas Council of Governments and Economic Development District, better known as "DETCOG."

In November of 1966, over fifty community officials and leaders, concerned with the economic growth and development of East Texas and the quality of life of its residents, gathered together to lay the groundwork for the Deep East Texas Economic Development District.

The Honorable Charles Wilson, a Member of the Texas Senate and later a Member of the United States House of Representatives, was unanimously elected Chair, and later President, of the new organization.

The Deep East Texas Economic Development District continued its meetings throughout 1967. It employed its first Executive Director in August and opened its first office in September. In 1968, the District even became a Regional Planning Commission under the laws of the State of Texas, and in 1972, it adopted the new name of Deep East Texas Council of Governments and Economic Development District.

DETCOG has facilitated the development of effective responses to such issues as community and economic development, affordable

housing, aging and disability services, public safety and emergency response, disaster recovery, information and referral services, volunteerism, transportation and the environment that have had a profound and positive impact on the Deep East Texas Region.

Over the past half-century, DETCOG's activities have improved the quality of life for all residents in the 12-county region known as Deep East Texas, including the counties of Angelina, Houston, Jasper, Nacogdoches, Newton, Polk, Sabine, San Augustine, San Jacinto, Shelby, Trinity and Tyler.

Representative BABIN, Representative GOHMERT, and I are proud to congratulate the Deep East Texas Council of Governments and Economic Development District on its 50th Anniversary and its legacy of outstanding service to the governments and citizens of the Deep East Texas region.

IN HONOR OF ROY REESE'S 80TH BIRTHDAY

HON. PETER J. VISCLOSKY

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 25, 2017

Mr. VISCLOSKY. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I take this opportunity to recognize a fine Hoosier and my friend, Roy Reese, on the occasion of his 80th birthday, which he will celebrate on Tuesday, June 13, 2017. Mr. Reese has been a pillar of his community in Wheatfield, Indiana, for nearly half a century, and having known him for many years, I can attest to his steadfast dedication to improving the quality of life for his fellow citizens. I congratulate Roy as he celebrates this momentous occasion with his many family members and friends.

Roy Reese was born in Stevenson, Alabama, on June 13, 1937. A proud American and true patriot, Roy joined the United States Air Force in 1954 and eventually became the crew chief for large cargo helicopters before returning to civilian life in 1958. Upon his return, Roy began his career with Operating Engineers Local 150 and has been a proud union member with the organization for more than fifty-four years. In addition, Mr. Reese has also utilized his vast agricultural knowledge which has helped him to become a successful farmer.

Roy has also proven himself to be a devoted public servant, as well as an esteemed member of his church. A lifelong Democrat, Mr. Reese served on the Gilliam Township Advisory Board for twenty-four years. A proud veteran as well as a man of great faith, he is also a lay speaker at Tefft United Methodist Church and has also served as chaplain for American Legion Post 228 in Francesville, Indiana. In addition, Roy has been a member of Masonic Lodge No. 642, located in Wheatfield, for more than fifty years.

I would be remiss if I did not share one specific example of the type of person Roy Reese is. While he is well-known in his community and in his church for his selfless service, Roy truly epitomizes what it means to be a good neighbor, regardless of the season. In fact, Roy has always taken it upon himself to clear snow from his neighbors' driveways during the cold winter months, a service illustrative of his generous spirit.

However, Roy Reese is first and foremost a family man. I am certain Roy would confirm that his greatest source of pride is his loving family. Roy wed his beloved wife, Bonnie, on January 20, 1958, and the couple has spent the past fifty-nine years by each other's side. Roy and Bonnie are the proud parents of four sons, Daniel, Michael, Richard, and Roy Douglas Reese. They are also the loving grandparents of seventeen and the adoring great-grandparents of fourteen.

Mr. Speaker, Roy Reese has been a dedicated member of and inspiration to his community throughout his life, and on this special occasion, it is fitting that I take this time to honor him and to commend him for all that he has done for so many for so long. At this time, I ask that you and all of my distinguished colleagues join me in wishing Roy a Happy 80th Birthday and many more joyous years to come.

MEMORIAL DAY

SPEECH OF

HON. MATT GAETZ

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 24, 2017

Mr. GAETZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay respect to the American warfighter. As we celebrate Military Appreciation Month, it is important to convey that the words we use to honor our brave men and women in uniform must be followed up by action. The time for paying artificial lip service to the military community is over.

Next month, the House Armed Services Committee will initiate its annual markup of the National Defense Authorization Act. The NDAA is one of the few things in Washington that actually works. The NDAA has been passed—with bipartisan support—for the last 56 years.

But this year's NDAA might be the most important yet. For the last eight years, our military has been degraded, defunded, and disgraced by the previous administration's attempt to lead from behind. Today, the United States military lacks the requisite personnel and material readiness required to protect our nation against unforeseen and near-peer adversaries.

Our nation faces a litany of global threats from North Korea and Syria, to the Islamic State and Iran. Failed states and trans-national fundamentalist regimes that want nothing more than to destroy democracy and the American spirit. The United States military is America's front line defense against the plague of radical Islamic terrorism and demagogues.

There is no other way to say it. Our military is broken. Consider the following:

The Navy is in its smallest state in 99 years, and faces increased demand with limited resources (274 ships).

Moreover, the Navy can only satisfy 40% of all Combatant Commander requests due to high operational tempo and lengthy maintenance periods.

50% of the civilian workforce working in Navy shipyards have less than five years of experience, and such inexperience impacts the on-time delivery of new ships, and increases the cost of the American taxpayer

Prior to 1992, the Air Force purchased about 200 fighter aircraft per year; today the Air Force buys less than 20; that is a 90 percent reduction of new fighter aircraft

And of the 58 Army Brigades stationed around the world, only three—three—are prepared to fight in an armed conflict tonight, meaning they require no additional training, manpower, or equipment

I am honored to serve as the elected representatives of one of the largest military districts in America. No district in this entire country has more military retirees, military veterans, and military dependents than Northwest Florida.

Few districts can lay claim to Northwest Florida's operational and training footprint. My district is home to the Army's 7th Special Forces Group; the Air Force Special Operations Command; The Joint Gulf Range Complex which provides supersonic air combat training and hypersonic weapons testing for frontline warfighters like the F-35 and the F-22; and Pensacola Naval Air Station, the cradle of Naval Aviation.

But the time for honoring the brave men and women of the military with just words is over. They need more than free dinners at Applebee's and free milkshakes at Dairy Queen to feel truly appreciated. We need congressional commitment to end the scourge of sequestration. We need to right the wrongs of the previous administration's systematic dismantling of military readiness. We need the 115th Congress show its true military appreciation by providing the American warfighter with the tools, training, and long term funding to protect the homeland and sustain America as the preeminent global superpower.

400 YEARS OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY COMMISSION ACT

HON. DON BACON

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 25, 2017

Mr. BACON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1242 entitled, "400 Years of African-American History Commission Act." As a co-sponsor of this legislation, I worked with my colleagues to pass this act in the House and look forward to the Senate also passing this bill. I believe it is important for all citizens of the United States to recognize the unique history, sacrifices, and remarkable contributions that African Americans have made to build our great nation.

I am invigorated by this legislative intention to identify and educate the public on the arrival of Africans and their role in building this great country. It is equally important to understand the generational impact that slavery and laws that enforced racial discrimination had on the United States. While there have been many successful and inspirational African Americans with enumerable contributions, we must address ongoing racial disparities in employment and education by focusing on achieving six universal milestones for success.

These six universal milestones include:

1. Entering school ready to learn;
2. Reading at grade level by third grade;
3. Graduating from high school ready for college or career;
4. Completing post-secondary education or training;

5. Successfully entering the workforce; and
6. Reducing violence and providing a second chance for returning citizens.

I applaud the many organizations actively working to address persistent opportunity gaps faced by African Americans. In my community of the 2nd Congressional District of Nebraska, I appreciate the efforts of Willie Hamilton, president and founder of Black Men United. He is a true grass roots leader. In addition, I want to highlight some other organizations, and work ongoing in the district I serve to implement a coherent cradle-to-college-and-career strategy for improving the life outcomes of all young people. These organizations include Urban League of Nebraska, The START Center, the Omaha Empowerment Network coordinated by Willie Barney, Eastern Nebraska Community Action Partnership, 100 Black Men of Omaha, Malcolm X Foundation, Operation Youth Success, Members of the Midlands Mentoring Partnership, the efforts by the City of Omaha through the Black Male Achievement program previously coordinated by Cameron Gales. Like all complicated issues facing Americans, we need this type of strong community support along with smart bipartisan legislation to address any problem.

As the African-American History Commission develops programs, I hope they will consider inspiring communities to continue building partnerships between local organizations, government, businesses and foundations. This will connect young African American men and women with support networks, mentoring programs, and the skills training they need to succeed in the classroom and in the workforce. While we learn from and celebrate the past, we must also look to a much brighter future for all Americans.

INTRODUCTION OF THE VOTE BY MAIL ACT OF 2017

HON. EARL BLUMENAUER

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 25, 2017

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, we are in the middle of national civics lesson, with unprecedented levels of citizen and grassroots activism driving political and policy conversations in communities across the country. It is ironic, then, that many states are trying to make it harder for Americans to participate in our democracy. On November 8, 2016, according to the Brennan Center for Justice, fourteen states had new restrictions on voting in place for the first time in a presidential election. Restrictions like these have historically targeted minority and low-income voters. This disturbing trend in state action has mirrored the weakening of campaign finance restrictions and voting rights laws by the U.S. Supreme Court in recent years. Even as we witness a growing civic engagement, legal and political barriers rise to unjustly diminish individual voices.

Expanding vote by mail is a clear and cost effective measure to make voting easier, not harder. Mail-in voting states Oregon, Washington, and Colorado saw among the highest voter turnout in the 2016 general election, especially notable for Oregon with nearly 250,000 new automatically registered voters. The Vote By Mail Act of 2017 will build on Oregon's successful reforms at the national level