

of the estate tax exclusion, but every one will be affected by the medical insurance premium rates, which this bill will drive up.

Every one will be at risk when their minimal so-called tax cuts expire in just a few years. Mine, by the way, are permanent. Our children and grandchildren will suffer ever more greatly as we continue to balloon the Federal debt.

This tax bill may be the greatest transfer of wealth from working Americans to the idle rich in the history of our country. Mr. Speaker, this is a very sad day for the country I love.

HONORING TWO NAVAJO CODE TALKERS

(Mr. BIGGS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the lives of two Navajo Code Talkers, George B. Willie Sr. and Teddy Draper Sr., who recently both passed away in my home State of Arizona.

While both young men, Mr. Willie and Mr. Draper enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps and valiantly served in World War II in the Battles of Okinawa and Iwo Jima.

The Navajo Code Talkers used the Navajo language to transmit and receive messages that could not be translated or intercepted by the Japanese. This unique skill was a great advantage for the United States' victory in the Pacific theater.

In 2001, both Mr. Willie and Mr. Draper were awarded the Congressional Silver Medal for their service and selfless devotion to duty. The sacrifices of Mr. Willie and Mr. Draper and their families during World War II will be remembered for generations. We will be forever grateful for their dedication to our Nation.

GOP TAX PLAN

(Mr. LOWENTHAL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LOWENTHAL. Mr. Speaker, the tax bill passed by the House GOP today embodies everything that Americans dislike about Congress:

It was drafted behind closed doors where the drafters cast aside expert analysis and relied instead on special interests and faulty disproven assumptions.

The plan slashes tax rates for multinational corporations and the super-wealthy, but leaves hardworking Americans in the 47th Congressional District to pay the bill.

It penalizes taxpayers in California and other blue States for investing in our schools, in our roads, and in our public services.

It cruelly hits children, seniors, and low-income Americans by putting at risk Medicare, Medicaid, SNAP, and Social Security.

Mr. Speaker, I could not, and proudly did not, vote for this disastrous piece of legislation.

UNION COUNTY FREEHOLDER VERNELL WRIGHT RETIRES

(Mr. PAYNE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor a public servant from my district in Union County, New Jersey, Freeholder Vernell Wright, on the occasion of her retirement.

Freeholder Wright began her career in public service in 1966 as a title 1 teacher at Jefferson School in Union Township, New Jersey. For 36 years, she helped educate the county's public schoolchildren.

In 2012, the people of Union Township sent their beloved educator to represent them on the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders.

Freeholder Wright's legacy as an elected official is best characterized by her unselfish devotion to the constituents whom she represents. As recognition for her dedicated work and selfless service, she has been awarded New Jersey's Freeholder of the Year Award and Union County's Chester Holmes Humanitarian Award.

Freeholder Wright is a model for the next generation of public servants.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me and the people back in Union County tonight at a dinner to honor Freeholder Wright's lifetime of service. I am honored to be her Member of Congress.

God bless Freeholder Wright.

□ 1915

HONORING THE LIFE OF LORIMER ARENDSE, PRINCIPAL OF GRAND PRAIRIE HIGH SCHOOL

(Mr. VEASEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Lorimer Arendse, the principal of Grand Prairie High School, who lost his battle with stage IV lung cancer on December 15.

Never shy about sharing his hatred for school during his formative years, Lorimer found his passion for academics once he met and fell in love with his wife, Jeanelle, while attending Grace College in Warsaw, Indiana. Upon graduating Grace College, Lorimer continued his passion for education upon earning his master's degree in educational administration from Ashland University.

From there, he began his career in education as a math teacher and advanced to assistant principal. In 2013, Lorimer was named principal of the Young Men's Leadership Academy at Kennedy Middle School in Grand Prairie. In 2014, he was named principal of Grand Prairie High School.

Although his time with us was short, let us all be encouraged by his final lesson: treat each other with kindness. Be respectful. Be courteous. Be what a Gopher is.

At this time, I ask my colleagues to join me in extending their prayers to Principal Lorimer Arendse's family and the Grand Prairie High School community.

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF COUNCILMAN PETER BROWN

(Ms. JACKSON LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to celebrate the life of a dear friend, the Honorable Peter Brown, former council member at large for the city of Houston. Tomorrow he will be memorialized in Houston, Texas.

It saddens me that I will not be able to join him and his family and the many, many Houstonians and friends who will come to honor him. The reason is because Peter Brown was Houston's chief champion. He loved Houston. He loved to talk about mobility in Houston. Even before most Houstonians understood the value of the light rail system, Peter Brown was on the forefront.

He was an architect, and he understood beauty and planning. He had a humorous and wonderful touch, but he also was serious and stern when it came to planning and the environment. Peter Brown wanted to see Houston as it is and as it continues to be a world class city. Before we spoke of greenery and all the things that make a city great, the parks, green space, Peter Brown was doing so.

Peter Brown was also a dear friend to me, my family, and so many others. He lost his battle just about 10 days ago to a terrible and vicious disease. But as I visited Peter, I can assure you that on the occasions I went to see him, he was always thinking about others and thinking about the city, thinking about our State and the Nation, always sharing, but fighting his fight.

To his family and his children and to the people who love him, I just simply want to say: tonight and tomorrow we honor a great American, a friend to us all.

He may be from Houston, Texas, but if you got a chance to know him, you would love him, too.

Mr. Speaker, I ask for a moment of silence in honor of the Honorable Peter Brown.

HEALTHCARE AND LITTLE LOBBYISTS

(Ms. KAPTUR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to defend our Nation's children.

The GOP tax scam repeals the provision assuring all families have health

insurance access. Nonpartisan experts estimate 13 million fewer Americans will be insured because of the Republican repeal, including millions of children.

Yesterday I met with families from the Little Lobbyists. I was struck by Laura Hatcher's story of her child and her emotion when she learned about the passage of the Affordable Care Act. She burst into tears. She knew her son, who has cerebral palsy, could gain insurance with no fear of discrimination due to preexisting conditions.

Ms. Hatcher urged yesterday that America must turn from its destructive and immoral path. She said: We are here to show what access to affordable, quality healthcare and programs like Medicaid mean for our families. These programs that the Republican Congress intends to cut to fund tax breaks to wealthy heirs and corporations are the difference between our children having a future or being forced back into institutions reminiscent of a Dickens novel. This is wrong.

Mr. Speaker, Members of Congress were elected to protect and defend the American people, not put families like the Hatchers at risk because of the Republican's billionaire tax bill.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD Laura Hatcher's remarks:

LAURA HATCHER REMARKS

Thank you Leader Pelosi for inviting the Little Lobbyists here today to speak on behalf of families of children with complex medical needs.

It's the holidays and the Muppet version of "A Christmas Carol" has been on repeat at my house. We're all big Muppet fans and my 11-year-old son Simon loves music, silliness, and a sweet story. I also think another reason Simon likes the movie so much is because he identifies with the character "Tiny Tim." It's easy to see the resemblance. Like Tim, Simon is sweet and kind, he loves Christmas, he even sits by the fireplace and sings sometimes.

Dickens doesn't identify Tiny Tim's diagnosis, but I imagine he might have had cerebral palsy like Simon. Simon has trouble walking and like Tim, he wears braces to support his legs. Though I miss him being little enough to carry on my shoulders the way Bob Cratchit carries Tiny Tim, Simon still loves to be held and hugged. And I do hug him all the time, as often as I can. Because, like the Cratchits, due to another rare disease we don't yet understand, we Hatchers don't know how long we'll have Simon with us.

I also find it's strikingly easy to draw another analogy between "A Christmas Carol" (Muppet version included), and what's happening in our lives right now. In the story, the miserly Ebenezer Scrooge is warned that his decisions have far-reaching consequences that impact many people. The same can be said of the decisions being made by Congress today. The choices they're making, like whether or not to pass this tax bill, have far reaching consequences for us all.

It is for this reason my family has been coming to Capitol Hill with the Little Lobbyists since July. Our government seemed to turn away from protecting people with disabilities and complex medical needs, like my little boy, and began trying to take away the legal protections and programs my son's life and my family's future depend on. Lately it seems like everything is under threat—accessibility, education, and health care.

It was less than 10 years ago that the passage of the Affordable Care Act made sure that people with preexisting conditions, like my Simon, would always have the right to health care. It promised families like mine could not be cut off by insurers and forced into bankruptcy because our child's health care was just too expensive. It expanded Medicaid, including waiver programs, so more kids like Simon can have access to the therapy, health care, and inclusion programs they need to survive and thrive in their communities.

I remember the exact moment it passed—I was in the grocery store and I burst into tears of relief when my husband texted me with the news. After years of worrying every single day about how we'd be able to care for our sweet boy in the future, it finally seemed like things were going to be okay. Living with that knowledge has been a huge gift for a family like ours, who routinely deal with life and death situations most families can't imagine.

But since this summer there have been multiple attempts to repeal the ACA, including as a part of this Tax Bill. Non-partisan experts have told us that 13 million people will lose access to health insurance if it passes. Once the ACA is weakened, protection for people with pre-existing conditions will become too costly to afford.

Very soon, I could once again be facing a future where I don't know how I'll be able to care for my child. This is a thought I simply find too difficult to bear.

And all of this is happening against the advice of experts. Without the input of those it will impact. It makes one wonder who our government is listening to, if not us. According to lobbying disclosure forms, this tax bill was written with the input of over 6,000 (real, not little) lobbyists. Some representatives have even said publicly that their donors have told them to "get it done, or else."

Or else. We parents of medically complex kids understand consequences. We know what will happen if this tax bill passes, if our country does not turn from this destructive and immoral path.

And so, here we are. We are the ghosts of "Christmas present." We are here to show legislators what access to affordable, quality health care and programs like Medicaid mean for our families. These programs, that Congress intends to cut to fund tax breaks to wealthy heirs and corporations, are literally the difference between our children having a future in their homes and communities, or being forced back into institutions reminiscent of a Dickens' novel. This is wrong.

We're also here to show everyone that kids with complex medical needs and disabilities are just kids. They love to play, they love to learn, they love the Muppets. And as Americans they deserve to have a government that protects them. Today, as a mother and as a voice of conscience, I'm asking everyone that can hear me that can see these children—please protect them. Help us make sure that Christmases yet to come are even more joyful than those past.

God bless us, everyone.

THE INFAMOUS TRUMP TOWER MEETING

(Mr. HUFFMAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, June 9, 2016, was the date of the infamous Trump Tower meeting with at least five Russians with Kremlin ties. That date is about the only constant in a

tangled web of lies we have heard from Team Trump.

When Donald Trump, Jr., was first asked about this meeting, he said it was just about adoption, not a campaign issue. But he changed his tune when the New York Times revealed emails showing it was all about the campaign; in fact, an offer to get damning information on Hillary Clinton as "part of Russia and its government's support for Mr. Trump. . . ."

Now, Donald Trump, Jr.'s, response to this illegal offer says it all: ". . . if it is what you say, I love it. . . ."

We may never know how much collusion was set in motion at this meeting, but we do know two things:

First, Team Trump has repeatedly misled us, concealing it from security clearance forms, issuing a false statement dictated by President Trump himself.

Second, the Russians did go on to produce a massive cache of stolen emails and helped the Trump campaign in other ways.

These are damning facts, Mr. Speaker, and there are many more to come. We need to find out what else they lied about and what else they are hiding.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KUSTOFF of Tennessee). Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President.

CONGRATULATING AMSTERDAM RADIO LEGEND SAM ZURLO ON HIS RETIREMENT

(Mr. TONKO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TONKO. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Amsterdam radio legend, Sam Zurlo, on his retirement this week.

For over 60 years, Sam's voice has greeted the residents and visitors of Montgomery County, New York. Sam has been working in broadcasting since 1953. Now at 82, he hosts the longest-running talk show in the history of the county.

Sam's broadcasting career was born from his service with Armed Forces Radio in Germany, where he delivered a nightly broadcast for 3 years. Sam also worked as a print journalist for the Schenectady Gazette for some 35 years.

Decade after decade, his distinctive voice has been the catalyst for free and open debate. He has brought an air of familiarity and of community to our humble corner of upstate New York. Listening to conversations about current events with Sam has always made the abstractions of politics a little more real. Sam's personality has inspired many and brought light, comfort, and connection to countless neighbors and friends.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Sam Zurlo for his years of exceptional work and a legendary career in local journalism. I wish him the best for an equally special retirement.