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In addition to their success on the court, these coaches and players are role models off the court. I especially want to acknowledge assistant coach Nikki McCray-Penson. Diagnosed with cancer 3 years ago, she has been a real inspiration to many.

Throughout her treatment, she remained totally committed to the team and never missed a day of work. Thankfully, she is now cancer free.

I also want to congratulate the Gamecocks men's team. After winning their first NCAA tournament game in 43 years, they reached the Final Four for the first time in their program's history.

Having both men and women from the same school reach the Final Four is pretty uncommon. Coach Frank Martin and his assistants are building a tremendous program. Although they came up five points short of a victory in the semi-championship game, they proved themselves a team of champions.

Mr. Speaker, although representing the University of South Carolina in this august body is a singular honor for me, I feel certain that these 2017 NCAA Final Four appearances by these young men and women are the beginnings of many more to come. Coach Frank Martin and Coach Dawn Staley are truly a dynamic duo.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate the University of South Carolina Gamecocks basketball team. It was the thrill of a lifetime to attend the NCAA women's basketball national championship game last Sunday at the American Airlines Center in Dallas, Texas. Gamecocks have electrified Columbia and the entire state of South Carolina, and we are all incredibly proud of what these coaches and players have achieved.

For Head Coach Dawn Staley, winning the national championship is the latest in a string of achievements that she has accumulated in her lifetime and in South Carolina over the last nine seasons. Under her leadership, the Gamecocks have made the NCAA Tournament six years in a row and went to the final four in 2015. This year, they finally got over the hump and are national champions. Her coaching staff, Lisa Boyer, Nikki McCray-Penson, Fred Chmiel, Melanie Balcomb, Cynthia Jordan, Freddy Ready, Ariana Moore, Hudson Jacobs, Marcella Shorty, Katie Fowler have done an impressive job, and I congratulate each of them.

The team Coach Staley has built is an incredible group of young women from South Carolina and around the country. A'ja Wilson, a Junior from Hopkins, South Carolina, won the Most Outstanding Player of the Final Four award and was named to the All-SEC First Team this season. Wilson was joined on the All-SEC First Team by Senior Alaina Coates from Irmo, South Carolina. Unfortunately

Coates missed the NCAA tournament with an ankle injury and has concluded a fantastic career with the Gamecocks. In addition to making All-SEC First team this year, she did so last season as well, and was All-SEC Second team in her first two years in the program. We wish her a speedy recovery and hope that she has as much success in the future as she has had with the Gamecocks.

The full roster of this championship team includes Victoria Patrick, Bianca Cuevas-Moore, Kaela Davis, Doniyah Cliney, Allisha Gray, Araion Bradshaw, Tiffany Davis, Mikiah Herbert Harrigan, A'ja Wilson, Alexis Jennings, Alaina Coates, and Tyasha Harris.

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Coach Frank Martin, his assistants and staff consisting, of Matt Figger, Perry Clark, Bruce Shingler, Andy Assaley, Scott Greenawalt, Doug Edwards, Mark Rodger, Jay Gibbons, Dushawn Davis, Jarrett Gerald, Brian Steele, Ryan McIntyre recruited and molded an incredible group of young men including TeMarcus Blanton, Tommy Corchiani, PJ Dozier, Rakym Felder, Hassani Gravett, Khadim Gueye, Evan Hinson, Kory Holden, Jarrell Holliman, Sedee Keita, Maik Kotsar, Justin McKie, Duane Notice, John Ragin, Christian Schmitt, Chris Silva, Sindarius Thornwell, Ran Tut are building a tremendous program.

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#### BENJAMIN FRANKLIN'S WISDOM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. McCLINTOCK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. McCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, Congress is fundamentally a deliberative institution. Deliberations take time, and they are often messy. In fact, the bigger the issue, the messier the deliberations.

The designers of our Constitution wanted a great, big, ugly debate every

time a decision was being made. They wanted the subject held up to every conceivable light and every voice in the country to be heard.

This is certainly true of the effort to replace the collapsing bureaucracy of ObamaCare with the patient-centered marketplace that we have long promised.

These deliberations must continue until they bear fruit because there is no excuse for failure. ObamaCare is only getting worse.

Last year's average 25 percent premium increase is likely to be followed by even bigger increases this year. The flight of healthcare providers from the system is only going to accelerate. The rapid expansion of Medicaid, which could exceed defense spending by next year, is not only fiscally unsustainable, it doesn't even guarantee care.

Dwindling Medicaid providers and lengthening waiting lists means that many Medicaid patients have no recourse but to flood emergency rooms.

The original Medicaid population, the elderly, the blind, the disabled, who were only reimbursed an average 57 cents on the dollar, are pushed to the back of every line by able-bodied ObamaCare expansion patients who are reimbursed at 90 percent.

The American Health Care Act is far from perfect. I have argued vigorously for a comprehensive bill rather than the current piecemeal approach that we are following.

Now, I lost that debate, but I haven't lost sight of the ultimate goal: to restore our healthcare system as the best in the world.

I could list a lot of things that could be made better by the current bill, and perhaps they will be in our extended negotiations, but those who expect perfection in our legislation fundamentally misunderstand our system.

Congress was never designed to make perfect law. It was designed to make the best law that is acceptable to the most people. And it is pretty good at that when we let it be.

When the Constitutional Convention seemed hopelessly deadlocked, Benjamin Franklin declared that he didn't entirely approve of our Constitution, but he had learned, over the years, to doubt a little of his own infallibility and to recognize the limitations of making decisions with others.

He noted that when you assemble a group of people to benefit from their collective wisdom, you also had to accept their collective shortcomings and realize that a perfect product is never possible from such a process.

In another speech, he recalled being an apprentice tradesman trying to fit together two pieces of wood. It was often necessary, he said, to shave a little from one and then a little from the other until you had a joint that could hold together for centuries. In this same manner, he urged them to each join together in each part with some of our demands.

Compromise is not an end in itself. It is a means to an end. As long as that

end moves us forward toward better policy, more freedom, greater prosperity, whatever perfections the measure may include are often precisely what are required to bring it to fruition. I fear we are losing sight of these simple truths.

Ironically, factions within the House who are the most adamant in opposing ObamaCare have become, as a practical matter, its most effective defenders. I know they don't intend this to be, but the reality is that ObamaCare survives today solely because of their actions in this House.

Benjamin Franklin was right. In deliberations of this magnitude, it is essential that we each doubt a little of our own infallibility and that we each part with a few of our own demands, in order to join together and produce the reforms that our country depends on us to enact.

A political minority doesn't need to compromise. It has the luxury of standing solely on principle. But the majority, entrusted with making the actual decisions to guide our country to better days, must compromise if it is to make law that will hold together for the centuries.

Lincoln once reminded Congress that we can succeed only by concert. He said: It is not can any of us imagine better, but can we all do better. He urged us to rise to the occasion, to disenthral ourselves, for only then could we save our country.

I hope that some of our colleagues will consider this advice during the Easter recess.

#### AWARD WINNERS FROM CITGO INNOVATION ACADEMY FOR ENGINEERING, ENVIRONMENTAL & MARINE SCIENCE AT MOODY HIGH SCHOOL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FARENTHOLD) for 5 minutes.

Mr. FARENTHOLD. Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Corpus Christi students from the CITGO Innovation Academy for Engineering, Environmental & Marine Science at Moody High School for winning two awards at the Marine Advanced Technology Education International Remotely Operated Vehicle competition recently held at NASA's Johnson Space Center's Neutral Buoyancy Lab in Houston, Texas.

This competition was the final round in a series of science fairs and challenges focusing on underwater technology that can adapt to harsh ocean and space environments.

The AquaBot Technicians robotics team won the Aloha Award for team spirit and friendliness. Natasha Sanchez was named the competition's MVP.

The CITGO Innovative Academy provides students training to become the next generation of science and technology professionals by offering upper level engineering, math, and science courses.

A thank you is due to CITGO for supporting STEM education in Corpus Christi and other areas where they operate.

#### PRaising THE VETERANS CHOICE PROGRAM

Mr. FARENTHOLD. Mr. Speaker, since first being elected to Congress, I have been fighting for our veterans to get the care they were promised and earned.

After hearing veterans tell horror story after horror story of long wait times, canceled appointments, and having to travel miles to distant cities to get treatment, Congress got something right when they passed the Veterans Choice and Accountability Act in 2014.

It created the Veterans Choice Program that allows any veteran who is unable to obtain an appointment with the VA within 30 days or has to travel more than 40 miles to a VA facility for care to see a private doctor who can see them faster and closer to home.

Though the implementation of the Veterans Choice Program has not been without hiccups, it is proving very helpful for getting veterans faster, more quality care.

I hear time and again from veterans in the district that I represent that this is working for them.

Soon, in fact later today, the House will vote on H.R. 369, to eliminate the sunset of the Veterans Choice Program and ensure the program continues after August 7.

I encourage all my colleagues to vote "yes" on this bill to continue Veterans Choice. I look forward to continuing to hear the great successes it provides for our veterans and for our doctors.

#### THE COST OF DEFENDING OUR COUNTRY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, defense spending was \$348 billion in 2002. Now it is well over \$600 billion a year, and this total does not include the military construction budget which has totaled more than \$181 billion over the last 10 years, and many billions more in supplemental appropriations. There is presently a request for another \$30 billion supplemental appropriations for the military.

On top of all this, almost every year for the 29 years I have been here, there has been an end-of-the-year omnibus appropriations bill which always contains even more for the Defense Department.

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I have always believed that national defense is one the most important, most legitimate functions of the Federal Government. But I am also a fiscal conservative.

With our Nation \$20 trillion in debt and many trillions more in unfunded future Social Security and pensions liability in the years ahead, we desperately need some fiscal conservatives in the Pentagon.

I realize that the easiest thing in the world to do is to spend other people's money; and you can never satisfy any government's appetite for money or land. They always want more. But it is a myth to say or think that the Defense Department is underfunded when defense spending has doubled since 2002.

Yet, even though this spending has gone way up, most people around the country seem to believe it has gone way down. We hear some saying the military has been decimated or has undergone drastic cuts. This has been a masterful public relations job, I assume, by the Pentagon, working with defense contractors and think tanks funded by the defense industry.

Last year, we spent \$177.5 billion for new equipment, tanks, planes, weapons of all sorts. Most of this equipment does not wear out after just 1 year, yet we keep spending similar amounts on new equipment every year.

I mentioned that the military construction funds are in a separate bill, not in the regular Defense Department appropriations bill. The \$181 billion we have appropriated over the last 10 years in this bill means you probably cannot find any military base in the world without new construction going on, and much more than that is only 3 or 4 years old or even newer.

We have a \$20 trillion national debt. Last week, I read in *The Washington Times* that the estimate now is that we will be \$91 trillion in debt 30 years from now. Obviously, if we allow that much debt, we will be printing so much money that our Social Security and military and civil service pensions will be worth very little.

In the biography, "Bonhoeffer," about the famous theologian, by Eric Metaxas, it says that, in 1921, the currency exchange rate was 75 German marks to the dollar. The next year, it was 400 marks to the dollar. Then inflation really took off, and, by early 1923, it was 7,000 to 1.

Metaxas wrote: "The resultant economic turmoil would make the bleak conditions of a few months earlier look like the good old days."

By August, a dollar was worth 1 million marks. The book says: "By the end of 1923, things had become impossible. In October, Dietrich wrote that every meal cost 1 billion marks."

Germany, in the early 1920s, was one of the most educated countries in the world. It is hard to imagine what could happen here in the United States if we continue to spend money we do not have and run trillions more into debt.

With the exception of a brief downturn in 1958, President Eisenhower gave the Nation 8 years of peace and prosperity and balanced budgets, and he looks better with the passage of time. He spent most of his career in the military and loved and respected that institution.

But in a new book called "Ike's Bluff," by Evan Thomas, is this very interesting observation: "Eisenhower