

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.

□ 1045

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

was, in effect, his own Secretary of Defense.” When Defense Secretary Neil McElroy warned him that further budget cuts could harm national security, Eisenhower acerbically replied: If you go to any military installation in the world where the American flag is flying and tell the Commander that Ike says he’ll give him an extra star for his shoulder if he cuts his budget, there’ll be such a rush to cut costs that you’ll have to get out of the way.”

He would periodically sigh to Andy Goodpaster, his Chief of Staff, “God help the Nation when it has a President who doesn’t know as much about the military as I do.”

As we all know, Eisenhower made a famous statement in his farewell address warning against the excesses of the military-industrial complex. I think, Mr. Speaker, he would be shocked at how far we have gone down that road against which he warned us.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o’clock and 49 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer: God of the universe, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

Concerns about budget, taxes, immigration, among others, reveal the considerable divisions both in Congress and among the American populace as well. Meanwhile, advocacy groups of many persuasions, from the National Down Syndrome Society to the Small Arts and Crafts Association, visit the offices of Members all over Capitol Hill.

As opinions and emotions surge loudly and with little indication of easy solution, we take this quiet moment to ask Your blessing upon the Members of this people’s House.

We thank You again that we have a Nation steadied by the Constitution, and that our participative form of government, difficult as it is, continues to model for the world the values of freedom rooted in a respect for all Your children.

May all that is done this day be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day’s pro-

ceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. HILL) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. HILL led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to 15 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

WELCOMING BRANDON MARTZ

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

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to welcome Brandon Martz and his family from Jackson County to our Nation’s Capitol.

They are here with the help of the Dream Foundation, which fulfills dreams for terminally ill young people and adults. Brandon is 18 years old and has been battling Duchenne muscular dystrophy since he was a toddler.

One of the things we talked about today in my office was the 21st Century Cures Act and the need to expedite the development of new cures by prioritizing medical research and streamlining the FDA approval process.

Signed into law in December of last year, this landmark initiative will bring hope for patients and families suffering from some of the worst diseases and hopefully fulfill many dreams.

Mr. Speaker, it was an honor to spend time with Brandon, his brother, and his parents today and play a part in helping Brandon’s dream become a reality.

I hope their time in Washington offers an opportunity to create many lasting memories together as a family and fulfill many dreams.

REMEMBERING RIVERSIDE COUNTY SUPERVISOR JOHN J. BENOIT

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

Mr. RUIZ. Mr. Speaker, Riverside County supervisor John J. Benoit served his community with duty, honor, and integrity.

Last year, Supervisor Benoit passed away in December 2016 after battling pancreatic cancer. His legacy of service to his constituents lives on throughout my district.

Supervisor Benoit dedicated his life to the safety of our community as a police officer for the Corona Police Department, and then as a commander in the California Highway Patrol. He served as a board member for the Desert Sands Unified School District, as a California assemblyman and State senator, and most recently as supervisor of Riverside County.

I was honored to work with Supervisor Benoit. His dedication, respect, and devotion to his constituents is exemplary and admirable.

My thoughts and prayers remain with his wife, Sheryl, and to their two children, Ben and Sarah.

On behalf of the people of California’s 36th Congressional District, my wife, Monica, and my family, thank you sincerely for your service.

LET’S ACT NOW ON CLIMATE CHANGE

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

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, my constituents and I are so blessed to live, to work, and to play in the paradise that is south Florida. But for our kids and our grandchildren to enjoy the same positive experiences that we have had, it is vital that we act now to combat climate change.

Creating a thoughtful dialogue on Capitol Hill about the harmful impact of climate change is essential for us to be able to take proactive action toward solving the challenges brought about by this real and growing threat.

Congress can no longer dispute the fact that sea level rise has been occurring steadily over the last 100 years. I have seen firsthand how our streets keep flooding from king tides, which impacts our constituents, businesses, tourism, and our economic livelihood.

There is positive progress emerging from south Florida. We have led on sea level rise proposals with the Miami-Dade County Sea Level Rise Task Force and the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that we put partisan politics aside and tackle the inevitable threat of climate change.

BUILDING TRADES

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

Mr. VARGAS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the San Diego Building and Construction Trades Council, and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 569, and applaud the leadership of their business manager, a proud marine, Tom Lemmon.

Yesterday, these patriots stood up for something much larger than themselves when they resisted the Trump administration’s contempt for workers’ rights, misogyny, racism, and Islamophobia.