

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today during Small Business Week in recognition of the entrepreneurs and small-business owners that form the foundation of our American economy.

More than half of all working Americans either own or are employed by small businesses.

In Congress, our job is to promote an environment where small businesses grow and succeed and communities and working families can prosper. To do that, we need to educate our kids to close the skills gap too many businesses face in trying to find the talent they need to grow their companies.

We need to reimagine and renew our crumbling infrastructure for the 21st century economy. We can help small businesses invent things here, make things here, and ship them around the world.

We need to reform our immigration system to reduce the complexity employers face when trying to legally hire talented, industrious people.

I urge my colleagues to consider this week, Small Business Week, what we can do together to support American small businesses—the greatest job creation engines of our economy.

□ 1745

CELEBRATING SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

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

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that small businesses drive the American economy. Across the United States, small businesses create about two out of every three new jobs.

Since 1963, every President has designated this week National Small Business Week to celebrate these economic engines and encourage policies that allow them to thrive. When our local small businesses succeed, they create opportunity, invigorate communities, and preserve the distinct character of our local economy. That is why I have committed to visit 100 small businesses across my district this year and every year, to better appreciate the needs of local small businesses and help them create good-paying jobs in our community.

During my visits, I have heard common themes: a Tax Code that is too complex, burdensome one-size-fits-all regulations from Washington, and lawmakers too focused on partisan bickering rather than on working together to grow our economy.

As we turn our attention to small businesses this week, let's put these concerns at the forefront and get to work on solutions.

OPPOSE REPUBLICAN HEALTHCARE BILL

(Ms. KUSTER of New Hampshire asked and was given permission to ad-

dress the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. KUSTER of New Hampshire. Mr. Speaker, tonight I rise to speak in opposition to the Republican healthcare bill that is once again under consideration in this House.

Mr. Speaker, it feels like Groundhog Day all over again. The bill is back, and rather than coming to the table to discuss ways we can all work together to improve health care for every American, Republicans are again trying to jam through a misguided bill that would threaten the health care of thousands of Granite Staters and literally millions of Americans.

Just a few weeks ago, I joined with my colleagues to highlight a particularly egregious provision of this bill that would jeopardize access to health care for 7 million veterans. Weeks later, these provisions remain in the bill, and this is unacceptable. We had the time, and the Republicans failed to fix this.

It is wrong for America, and it is wrong for millions of veterans. I urge Members to oppose the bill.

AMERICAN HEALTH CARE ACT IS BETTER FOR AMERICANS

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

Mr. HARRIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about the good things that are going to happen on Thursday if we bring the House Republican plan to the floor.

For the first time in 6 years, we are actually going to lower premiums for Americans. We are actually going to take the problems with the ObamaCare bill, the failures of the ObamaCare bill, and correct them.

You just heard, for instance, about Jimmy Kimmel. I guess the comedian published a YouTube video. I suggest you watch the YouTube video and then just google about newborn coverage.

Mr. Speaker, we have the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act—it has been on the books for decades—that covers newborns. This is not an issue. We are a compassionate nation, Mr. Speaker. You and I were both physicians. We understand that we have to take care of Americans.

The American Health Care Act that is forthcoming from the Republicans does exactly that. It not only covers people with preexisting conditions, it adds two layers of protection for them.

So, Mr. Speaker, I urge all Americans look at it and just see how much better their health care will be and how much more affordable it will be after we pass the American Health Care Act.

PASS A HEALTHCARE BILL THAT WORKS FOR THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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

Ms. GABBARD. Mr. Speaker, I recently wrapped up a townhall tour across my district in Hawaii, visiting every single island. A common theme that I heard from folks was one of concern and questions about this Republican healthcare bill that we may be voting on later this week.

They are worried about their aging parents not being able to pay for their premiums and prescriptions and that newly added provisions that threaten those with preexisting conditions with skyrocketing costs will have such a devastating impact.

Every time we hear about the new versions and new changes to this bill, it gets worse than the one before. Among a host of new problems, the latest version strips away protections on healthcare benefits like maternity care, substance abuse, mental health services, while also expanding an already-crippling age tax against our seniors, against our kupuna.

No matter how you package it, this bill is a handout to insurance and pharmaceutical corporations while breaking the bank for those most in need of care. I urge my colleagues to stand in strong opposition to this bill and, instead, pass a healthcare bill that works for the American people.

RAISING AWARENESS OF MARINES UNITED OFFENSIVE FACEBOOK PAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MARSHALL). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. FRANKEL) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. FRANKEL of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the topic of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Ms. FRANKEL of Florida. Mr. Speaker, the women of the Democratic Women's Working Group are here today with other Members that we have invited to raise awareness about the offensive Marines United Facebook page and others like it.

On these pages, male marines posted nude or intimate photos of female servicemembers and veterans without their consent. This affected hundreds of women, with an audience of an estimated 30,000 marines with access to the Facebook page.

The Democratic women recently held a hearing on this alarming situation which, incidentally, began less than a month after the first Marine infantry unit was assigned women, and that was January 5.

At our hearing, we heard testimony from advocates for servicemembers, a former marine, and a journalist who

covered this issue extensively, and most importantly, we heard from Erika Butner and Marisa Woytek, two brave, resilient marines.

Marisa is a current lance corporal. She proudly followed in her father's footsteps, and she joined the Marines because, as she stated, she wanted to be part of something bigger than herself.

Erika enlisted in the Marines for many of the same reasons in 2011, fully aware that she could be deployed to a combat zone. A lifelong patriot, she was ready, and willing to take that chance. But in her own words—little did she know that the “war she would fight would be among her very own brothers in arms.”

At our hearing, the women described harassment and exploitation at the hands of their Marine brothers, and, quite frankly, it made us feel sick to our stomachs.

Their male counterparts put up Erika's and Marisa's photographs and made lewd and derogatory comments—asking other men to vote on whether they would “smash or pass” on these women, meaning would they have sexual relations with them.

The women were threatened with rape and violence, with Facebook posts like: “We should throw marines into a tub of acid and rip-off their eyelashes.”

Sadly and shockingly, Marisa and Erika were not alone. Thousands and thousands of photos of women were shared on these Facebook pages.

I want to say to Marisa and Erika and all of these women: We share your anger and your hurt, and we are so grateful to you for coming forward with your stories.

I am a mother of a United States Marine veteran who served in both Afghanistan and Iraq—a proud mother—and I understand the selfless sacrifice a marine makes when he or she puts on their uniform. So I am outraged, as are my colleagues whom you will hear from today, that so many brave marines were subjected to this kind of harassment and exploitation while willing to sacrifice for our country. It is not only personally degrading to courageous patriots, it hurts the effectiveness of our military and the ability to recruit women.

So today's Special Order is another opportunity to amplify the voices of Marisa and Erika and to send a message that we stand with them and we will fight for their honor.

I want to thank Congresswoman JACKIE SPEIER and Congresswoman MARTHA MC SALLY, who I hope will be here with us today. They are actually, very sadly, at another hearing where the topic is sexual harassment in our military academies.

After our hearing, they went on and they introduced a bill to make it illegal for military members to share photos without consent. This is a bipartisan effort. I am proud to be a cosponsor, as are many of my colleagues, again, whom you will hear from in a

few minutes; and we owe it to Erika and Marisa and all of the other women that have been subjected to this abuse to pass this legislation and to work together to change the culture of disrespect that allowed it to happen.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE), a great leader in this Congress, a member of our Appropriations and Budget Committees and Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies.

Representative LEE, we are pleased that you are with us tonight.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, let me thank Congresswoman FRANKEL for being such an exemplary chair, and also our vice chair, BRENDA LAWRENCE. You have put together quite a team and really are raising the issues that really don't get raised oftentimes on behalf of our women.

Also, to Congresswoman JACKIE SPEIER, who I believe is in a hearing right now dealing with this very, very important issue, I want to thank her and all of our women in the Democratic Women's Working Group for organizing this very important Special Order to address the nonconsensual sharing of sexual images in the United States military.

I just have to say a couple of things.

First of all, as a member of the Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Subcommittee and as a woman, I am appalled by the sharing of these private photos. It is really disgraceful. It is disgraceful that our military continues to uphold a culture of sexual harassment and disrespect toward women servicemembers.

Now, let me be clear. The attitudes towards women exposed by websites like the Facebook group Marines United are troubling and dangerous. Not only do such actions threaten our mission, they strip our brave servicemembers who are women of their dignity. No woman should have her private photos exposed on the internet, especially not by her fellow servicemembers.

I was pleased to see the recent Navy and Marine Corps decisions to make the distribution of intimate photos a criminal offense. That is a good thing. We really must do more.

Now, when questioning members of the Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marines at a subcommittee hearing, it became clear to me, based on their responses, that the culture of the military must change.

Members of the Democratic Women's Working Group continue to try to help change this culture and are committed to ensuring that that type of activity is prohibited in all branches of our military. That is why I am pleased to cosponsor Congresswomen SPEIER's and MC SALLY's bill, H.R. 2052, the PRIVATE Act, which is a bipartisan bill that would make it illegal within the Uniform Code of Military Justice to distribute intimate images of a person if that person had a reasonable expectation of privacy.

Now, let me be clear. The Department of Defense must expand its efforts to foster a culture of dignity and respect that the military service demands. And, Congresswoman FRANKEL, I just have to mention a conversation I overheard.

I was on a plane flying from point A to point B, and there were two marines sitting next to me, and they were talking very loudly to each other.

□ 1800

That entire time that we were on the flight, their conversation was about degrading women who were serving with them in the military. It was quite shocking. This was just their conversation in the normal course of conversation on an airplane. I was, quite frankly, shocked and disgusted.

Today's report from the Pentagon shows promising progress, though. Sexual assaults are on the decline, and servicemembers are now more likely to report attacks. But the data also reveals that two-thirds of women who do report assaults face backlash in their unit. It comes as no surprise, then, that many victims choose to suffer in silence. That should not be.

We know that tech firms like Facebook have a role to play in helping address this kind of unacceptable behavior. Facebook's recent announcement to help prevent nonconsensual pornography is a huge advancement in combatting this epidemic—and that is what it is, an epidemic—and addressing these heinous acts.

While the new feature takes down images that are reported, this depends on users being vigilant and submitting reports. Too often people do not report such behavior. We must be clear that we do not condone this type of behavior and ensure that those with the courage to speak up do not face retaliation.

I want to make it clear. Exploiting sexual images of fellow servicemembers online is unacceptable, and it should be a crime. Rest assured, as a woman, as a mother, grandmother, daughter of a veteran, and a member of the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee, I will work day and night to address the threats to our country and to our women servicemembers. Women in the military are critical to our national security. They should have a safe workplace free from sexual assault and harassment and intimidation.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Congresswoman FRANKEL and Congresswoman BRENDA LAWRENCE and also Congresswoman SPEIER for their leadership and for keeping this issue alive and for making sure the public understands that there are Members of Congress who have said: enough is enough.

Ms. FRANKEL of Florida. Very well said, Representative LEE. Mr. Speaker, I thank Ms. LEE for her excellent service and advocacy.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield the floor to the gentlewoman from the

State of Michigan (Mrs. LAWRENCE), my co-chair and our vice chair of the Women's Working Group, a very illustrious Member, and she serves on the Transportation and Oversight Committees.

Mrs. LAWRENCE. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congresswoman FRANKEL for her leadership on the Women's Caucus. The Women's Caucus is a bipartisan women's committee. I was honored when I was given the opportunity to serve on this committee because I know for a fact in America, for all of the strides and accomplishments that we have had as women, that we still have so many issues and challenges that we must address.

Whenever there is an issue that disrespects or an issue that is a barrier for a woman, it is incumbent upon us to step up and to speak out because silence or turning our head is condoning the behavior.

Now, we stand here today as women, but there will be men joining us and have joined us because the behavior that we have learned about in the Marines, one of our military branches, is unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the issue of nonconsensual activities in the U.S. military. It has been revealed that nonconsensual nude photos of servicemembers were posted to social media, and it was even enhanced by disturbing comments that were unacceptable and really disrespectful.

This offensive behavior strikes at the very heart of the Marines. The Marines, who we trust and admire and know that they go out and serve this country in so many ways, and we have such honor and respect for them—but this behavior, Mr. Speaker, undermines the trust and the confidence that the marines have in each other. The Marines stand up and, as a team and as a body and as a military, take a code that they will protect each other, and it compromises the respect that the American people have for our military.

Our servicemembers must have the confidence that their brothers and their sisters in uniform always have each other's back. There is simply no room in the military or in our society for behavior that humiliates and degrades women servicemembers. Women who are in the Marines have earned the respect of their brothers and sisters, and they deserve the trust. Many victims, just like in the civilian workforce, are afraid to report the assault. We want to encourage them to file their complaints.

I had, at one time, served my country as an EEO investigator in the private sector. As an equal employment opportunity investigator and having cases of sexual harassment, I would sit in a private counseling session with a victim as she relived it to tell me what happened and how so often they struggle with: Should I tell someone? I am embarrassed. Maybe I should have done more. Or why did I accept it?

And then some will say: I will just quit. I just don't want to go through

the humiliation of telling my story. Because when you file a complaint, for it to be processed, it becomes public.

I want to say to every woman that if you really understand how inappropriate, how much you do not deserve to be treated that way, and you want to make sure that no other woman ever is treated that way, I want you to know that we as Congress will stand with you to support your right to report it, to make sure we hold those accountable who did it.

I want to say to everybody that I stand here today as a Member of Congress and as a Member of the Women's Caucus to say that you have support.

In 2015, the latest year for which military assault data is available, more than 6,000 sexual assault cases were reported. Only 10 percent of men report their sexual assaults in the military. Only 40 percent of women do the same.

Sexual assault is wrong, whether it is for a man or a woman. According to the Human Rights Watch report released in 2015, the rate of retaliation for reporting a sexual assault in the military is 12 times higher than the rate of report resulting in a conviction for the predator. We understand the problem, and we want to be a part of the solution.

Mr. Speaker, I will close with this. We stand here today knowing that we have a problem. But I am confident in my belief and trust in our military, and I am confident that the women and men in this Congress will stand together and we will fix this problem so we can continue to have our military brothers and sisters serve together without being attacked by their own.

Ms. FRANKEL of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Representative LAWRENCE for her excellent advocacy today.

Mr. Speaker, I now want to yield the floor to the gentlewoman from New Hampshire (Ms. KUSTER), my very good friend. She is the ranking member on the Veterans Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, and chair of the bipartisan Task Force to End Sexual Violence.

Ms. KUSTER of New Hampshire. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be here tonight for this Special Order on the Marines photo sharing scandal.

I am pleased to be with you but disturbed about the underlying incident. I don't think there is anyone in this country who is watching this evening who doesn't share our sentiment. This is shocking. It is disturbing. And most importantly, it is degrading to the women in the Marines.

I have to just imagine what it would take to become a marine and to be a woman in the Marine Corps. The training, the dedication, the commitment that these people have set their lives toward serving our country.

I am very pleased to join my colleagues today to express my disappointment and, indeed, outrage at the conduct of literally thousands of

marines who violated the standards of the Marine Corps and displayed dishonorable conduct and terrible judgment by distributing sexually explicit photos of Active-Duty and veteran women marines online.

The behavior on the Facebook page Marines United is wholly unacceptable and is not only morally repugnant but undermines the safety, the security of female marines and, indeed, our national security.

Women marines were, in some cases, identified by name, rank, and location. These women who are bravely serving our Nation in uniform were put at risk of blackmail, of violence to themselves, or worse. This cannot and will not be tolerated by the United States Congress, by the leadership of the Marines, and by Americans across this country.

The Marines represent the greatest fighting force in the history of the world, and actions like this cannot be allowed to undermine their effectiveness and unit cohesion. As the founder of the bipartisan Task Force to End Sexual Violence, I join my colleagues from both sides of the aisle to understand the persistent challenges that the culture of sexual violence poses on school campuses, in the workplace, online, in the military, and throughout our society.

We are beginning to change the conversation around sexual violence and intimidation, but there is much more work to be done. I strongly support the bipartisan legislative action to back up the cultural change that we know is starting to take place.

The PRIVATE Act, led by Representative MARTHA MCSALLY, would amend the Uniform Code of Military Justice to ensure that the type of explicit sharing that was seen in the Marines United scandal is expressly prohibited.

Mr. Speaker, I want to particularly thank Representative MCSALLY and our Democratic colleague Representative JACKIE SPEIER for their leadership on the Armed Services Committee in protecting the interests of women in our military.

I know that leadership within the Marines and the Armed Forces is taking the issue of sexual harassment and sexual violence very seriously, and I appreciate their commitment to improving safety for all our servicemembers, regardless of gender. This is an issue that transcends politics. I have been encouraged by the bipartisan support that this issue has received.

I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues to end sexual violence and intimidation in the military and, indeed, throughout our society.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just take a moment to share with you the testimony of Lance Corporal Marisa Woytek, as indicated by our leader today, Representative LOIS FRANKEL. She quoted some of the testimony, and I wanted to share a few other parts with you.

These are two marines who came and spoke to our bipartisan Women's Caucus, and they described what had happened to them; that these personal explicit pictures had been shared on the internet, that their names, their rank, their duty station, had all been shared without their consent.

□ 1815

I want to talk to you about the backlash since they had the courage to speak out, because as we investigate further in the Bipartisan Task Force to End Sexual Violence—whether it is in high schools, whether it is on college campuses, whether it is in the military—when someone has the courage to identify the harassment, sexual assault, intimidation, there is an incredible backlash on social media.

She writes:

"Within the past 24 hours alone, I have had former Marines harass me online, and say and state that they actively look for sexually explicit pictures of me. One of the former Marines who has been harassing me has also been a predator to many women online denigrating women in Marines United, and has even gone as far as saying he would throw an Active Duty female Marine 'into a barrel of acid.'"

These are our best and brightest. These are the people that we rely upon to keep our country safe, to uphold the dignity of our values overseas.

She continues:

"Another Marine stated to me directly that he was 'passing my info around to Marines, so far the rough estimate is 3,000. Good luck ever being able to show your face again.'"

This is a woman who has trained, who has dedicated her life, and whose family is proud to call her a marine. And I, as a Member of Congress, am proud to call her a marine. She does not deserve this in the workplace.

One last quote:

"Another former Marine asked 'Who has this bitch's pictures, I want to blast them all over.'"

I have to ask my colleagues for a bit of personal privilege to even use that word on the floor of the House of Representatives. That is not a word that should ever be used for a marine in the United States Marine Corps.

So I think you can tell this is deeply troubling to us as Members of Congress, deeply troubling—it should be—to the leadership of the Marine Corps, all the way up to and including our Commander in Chief. This is simply unacceptable.

As members of the Bipartisan Task Force to End Sexual Violence, as members of the bipartisan Women's Caucus, as Members of the United States House of Representatives, we will not let it stand.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD testimony of a female marine.

TESTIMONY OF LANCE CORPORAL MARISA WOYTEK

My name is Marisa Woytek. I am a Lance Corporal in the United States Marine Corps. I enlisted, like many of my brothers and sisters because I wanted to be part of some-

thing bigger than myself. I joined to follow in my fathers' foot steps who served honorably in the Marine Corps.

Over the past few years of being active duty, I've experienced the amazing things the Marine Corps has to offer. I experienced, brotherhood and sisterhood, I experienced comradeship, and I have many fond memories that I will carry with me until the day I die. But with the good, comes the bad. Since my first few weeks in the Marine Corps outside of boot camp, I have seen on numerous occasions the denigration of Marines, especially female Marines by fellow Marines. Some active duty and some former Marines have been posting picture women for the so called game of "Smash or Pass", and some have included personal and explicit pictures including these women's names, ranks, and duty station without their consent.

Since speaking out, I've received backlash on social media. Within the past 24 hours alone, I have had former Marines harass me online, and say and state that they actively look for sexually explicit pictures of me. One of the former Marines who has been harassing me has also been a predator to many women online denigrating women in Marines United, and has even gone as far as saying he would throw an active duty female Marine "into a barrel of acid". Another Marine stated to me directly that he was "passing my info around to Marines, so far the rough estimate is 3,000. Good luck ever being able to show your face again". Another former Marine asked "Who has this bitch's pictures, I want to blast them all over".

My brothers and sisters are why I am here today. The majority of Marines are intelligent, well rounded, and respectful people. Those Marines are who the world should be praising. The disgusting actions of a few do not define an entire branch. We must remember that the Marine Corps is an institution that prides itself in honor, courage, and commitment. Most Marines practice these values everyday, and those who do not bring disonor to themselves and to the United States Marine Corps.

Ms. FRANKEL of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative KUSTER for that forceful advocacy.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE), one of our greatest fighters for human rights, for women's rights; the ranking member of the Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security, and Investigations.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congresswoman FRANKEL, our chair, our leader, and all of my colleagues that appeared today. What a powerful force of women who are standing by our Marines.

Now, let me be very clear: All of our men and women in the United States Marines have earned and deserve our respect and trust. All of the women in the United States Marines deserve our trust and our respect.

So it saddens me today to have to rise and bring to the attention of so many this unbelievable abuse of the men and women—men because their reputation is tarnished, through no fault of their own, who are not affiliated with Marines United; and women who feel that their service to this Nation has been denigrated.

Let me cite for you the words of 23-year-old Erika Butner:

"As a Marine Corps veteran, I am disheartened and disgusted with this scandal."

Victim blaming and the excuse that some are giving that boys will be boys needs to stop.

Butner says she first heard of the group in August when a friend of hers was posted to the page without her consent. In January, she notified the Naval Criminal Investigative Service and Google about a shared drive posted to the group that contained naked photos of more than two dozen service-members. Comments posted to the group described the victims graphically and, in some cases, advocating that they be raped or sexually assaulted. Names, ranks, and duty stations of the victims were also shared. The Marines United page has been taken down, but there are supposed to be some 30,000 users of that site.

Can you imagine that this is my story for America: that young women marines who put on the uniform and, therefore, are willing to lay down their life and bleed for this Nation and die will be subjected to this?

So I join my colleagues in standing against it, and I ask my friends in the United States Marines—and I have many. I have staff persons who have been members of the Marines and a wounded warrior on my staff right now who loves his Marines. But enough is enough. We will not tolerate the objectification of women, we will not tolerate the nonconsensual pornography, and we will not live with sexual assault.

That is why, for starters, I am proud to be a cosponsor of Congresswoman SPEIERS' resolution for claiming April as Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month. Also, I am very pleased of the privacy bill that is being put forward to never have this occur again. Every 98 seconds another American is sexually assaulted, and there are an average of 321,500 victims per year.

So this ties very clearly into what these United States Marines, who happen to be women, are facing. This is a horrendous reality for women here in the United States, but it is a reality for women in uniform who are defending our freedom abroad. That is what I want to focus on as I complete my remarks.

These female marines go to faraway places and are in the battlefield and the battle lines, standing alongside with their male counterparts. They are expected to go through basic training without any waivers. They are expected to carry that gun without any waivers. They are expected to wear that uniform in dignity without any waivers.

Nude photographs of female marines and veterans across the military were shared on Marines United, and those photographs showed women in various stages of undress, and they were grossly obscene. Some posts on Marines United suggested sexually assaulting women marines and that women did

not belong in the United States military or this particular branch.

Once again, these photos were posted without the knowledge and the consent of the women whose photos were posted. This conduct, as I said, is unacceptable.

The Marines Corps' creed of good order and discipline is being undermined when it cannot police Marines who use social media to promote anti-Semitism, sexism, and racism. These messages of hate are oppressive and demean human dignity.

Let me close by saluting our United States Marines because I do know that they have decades and centuries of laying their lives down. That is not the issue here as I stand before you today.

What the issue is, of course, is that United States Marines deserve the dignity and the respect, even if they are women and, I might say, especially because of what has occurred because they are women. They ask for no deference. They ask for no waivers. They ask for no apologies in terms of them being United States Marines. They simply want that dignity and respect that we all owe them.

I salute them and we stand alongside them.

Ms. FRANKEL of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I think we have made it clear that when a member of the military is unfairly abused, we are all abused, we are all dishonored.

This is not a Democratic issue. This is not a Republican issue. This is an American issue.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BACON), one of our great Americans, an Air Force veteran who serves on our Armed Services Committee.

Mr. BACON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this bipartisan effort to protect victims of nonconsensual sharing of intimate media in the Armed Forces and to hold those who engage in this dishonorable practice accountable under the military law. This is a bipartisan effort, and I appreciate that. It should be. This is a terrible thing that we have to fix.

I am a five-time commander. I was on the front lines fighting this as a commander. I court-martialed those who abused others. I proudly did so. I was recognized as having the best Sexual Assault Response Program in the Air Force back in 2008 and 2009.

Also, I am proud to stand here in this bipartisan effort as a husband, a father of a daughter, and a grandfather of three little granddaughters. We have got to do better, and we stand in this together to make a difference.

Last month we observed Sexual Assault Awareness Month, and I spoke to the body on the obligation we share as elected leaders to support those who have been victims of sexual violence and exploitation. It is, therefore, fitting that we continue this campaign by turning our good words into legislative action. I want to thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for inviting me to speak on this subject.

As members of the Armed Forces, we are taught the values of honor, integrity, loyalty to our Constitution, to our flag, and to the Republic for which it stands. From our earliest days in uniform, we are also imbued with an unbreakable commitment and trust in each other as warriors and teammates. These are not abstract concepts of quaint notions of a bygone age. Rather, they are the foundation of combat readiness and competence under fire. Mr. Speaker, I submit these ideals are the very essence of our strength of arms as a nation.

That is why when someone in our midst betrays this trust and dishonors our code, the consequences go far beyond an individual act of depravity. It strikes at the heart of our core values and threatens the foundation of our combat readiness. And when the victims of these crimes perceive they are condoned by the very institution they serve, the damage is greater still.

That is why Congress has an obligation to act and to remove any doubt that those who traffic in intimate pictures of their teammates and wrongfully share them not only violate the bonds of human decency, but are breaking the law.

That is why I am proud to stand in a bipartisan effort and also with Representative MCSALLY and colleagues on both sides of the aisle as an original cosponsor of H.R. 2052, the PRIVATE Act, to amend the Uniform Code of Military Justice to prohibit the wrongful broadcast of intimate visual images. This is important to change the UCMJ. It will protect the victims of this crime, hold those who engage in these acts accountable, and make absolutely clear—zero doubt—to every member of the Armed Forces that such conduct is unacceptable and will be prosecuted under the law.

Those of us in the House who have served in uniform and have been entrusted with the responsibility of command know firsthand the importance of disciplined adherence to standards and of creating a climate of mutual trust that treats all members with dignity, fairness, and respect.

For those of us who have fought to enforce our laws and protect the victims of all forms of sexual assault and exploitation in the military, this is not just what is right; it is also very personal.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand with my fellow Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle in support of this important legislation, support for our military, support for our culture, support for the defense of our country. I thank those who are leading the effort tonight.

Ms. FRANKEL of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative BACON, first, for his service to our country and for speaking from the heart. We are very pleased to join him in this effort.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. TORRES), who serves on the Foreign Affairs and the Natural Resources Committees.

I want to say that Representative TORRES is, like myself, the mother of a military veteran. Her son is a member of the Air Force. In bringing the gentlewoman up here, she probably experiences a lot of what I did. I think for parents whose children are in the military, man or a woman, there are so many of those times where you just dread that knock on the door.

□ 1830

You have seen your child put on uniform, and the pride that they feel. Now, could you imagine having gotten a call from your son that someone had posted a nude picture of him on a Facebook page and he was being humiliated? It is just hard to believe.

I know you are going to share some of your insight into all this. I am pleased to have you here.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. TORRES).

Mrs. TORRES. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congresswoman FRANKEL and Congresswoman JACKIE SPEIER of the Democratic Women's Working Group for hosting tonight's Special Order and for their constant advocacy on behalf of the victims of the Marines United scandal.

The gentlewoman is correct. While I was not blessed with a daughter, I was blessed with three sons, one who I am proud to call a veteran of the United States Air Force.

My son Christopher was the first one to leave home, and I can't imagine, as a mother of a child who is leaving him for the first time going into basic training, receiving the types of calls that these parents must have received, completely heartbreaking.

One of the stories that my son shared with me was of a suicide that happened that involved one of his classmates, and how the parents found out about her suicide through a Facebook post because everyone was sharing a condolence note.

So these things happen; and while we cannot and may not be able to always control the actions of these young men and women, there is a basic understanding and expectation from parents like myself that when we send our boys, and our young men and our young women, daughters and sons, to the military, that they will be taken care of; and when they file a complaint, that those complaints will be taken seriously and fully investigated. They deserve nothing less.

Sexual harassment in the military certainly isn't new, but this scandal is a wake-up call that we cannot afford to ignore. The victims of Marines United don't just deserve our sympathy and our support, they deserve a commitment to doing everything that we can to finally bring an end to sexual harassment in the military in all forms.

This isn't a case of boys being boys. This is a disgusting violation of women who have taken an oath to defend our Nation.

I would like to read part of Erika Butner—corporal, U.S. Marine Corps,

2011 to 2016—part of her testimony here today.

She begins by stating her name and thanking you for the opportunity to testify at the August 8, 2011, hearing.

And she states: ‘I enlisted in the United States Marine Corps knowing I could have potentially deployed to a combat zone. If presented the opportunity, I would have given my life for this country without hesitation. Never once did I think the war I’d fight would be among my very own brothers in arms.

“During the time I spent in the Marine Corps, various clothed photos of me were taken from my personal social media accounts without my consent and shared on sites that are like Marines United with great frequency. They would post my photo and caption it, ‘Smash or Pass,’ in other words, ‘Would you have sex with this woman or not?’ followed by extreme vulgar, degrading, and repulsive comments, including rape talk. My so-called brothers in arms shared clothed photographs of me on Marines United, posted my contact information, and discussed all the unspeakable things they would like to do to me.

“Comments I saw on other posts of the site included how female marines aren’t ‘real’ marines and belong in the kitchen. One post suggested friendly fire to the women who are now being integrated into the infantry units. Another male veteran described how he would rip off an Active-Duty female’s eyelashes and then throw her into a tub of acid. Many veterans think because the UCMJ does not apply to them, they’re immune from legal action.

“This culture of sharing photographs has been going on long before Marines United, and even before Facebook. With the use of social media and other file-sharing sites, this behavior has developed into something that has led to harassment and the degradation of men and women servicemembers. If this behavior had not come to light, I believe it would have continued as a dark secret of the military.”

Her statement goes on. I will not read the rest of it but continue by saying that these aren’t faceless strangers. They are our daughters, our sisters, and our friends. They are American heroes who volunteered to serve our country.

As a mother of a veteran, I know that our military is better than this. Our men and women in uniform represent the very best of this Nation, and I am proud to stand with my colleagues this evening in support of bringing about the changes we need to put a stop to the sharing of nonconsensual pornography in the military and, ultimately, bring an end to sexual and gender-based violence and harassment in our Armed Forces.

The next letter that I write to one of the academies recommending a young lady from my district, I want the reassurance from our military that her

safety, her personal safety, will be taken seriously. And I need to have a commitment that she is just as American as any male of our military.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for this opportunity.

Ms. FRANKEL of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her son’s service and for her service, too. I know what it is like to be the mother of a military person.

Mr. Speaker, we are waiting for Representative MCSALLY is going to be with us in a few moments, and I thought, as we wait for her to join us—as I said, she is at a hearing now. Unfortunately, the hearing is on the topic of sexual harassment in the military academies.

I wanted to just state for the RECORD the folks who participated at our Democratic Working Women’s Group hearing that we had a couple of weeks ago, we talked about Lance Corporal Marisa Woytek. We talked about Erika Butner, who is a Marine Corps veteran, and both, unfortunately, were victims of this Marines United scandal.

We also heard from James LaPorta, who is a journalist for The Daily Beast and a former U.S. Marine Corps sergeant who has covered Marines United extensively. His work has appeared in The Washington Post and the Chicago Tribune, among other national publications. During his 8 years on Active Duty, Mr. LaPorta served within the infantry and intelligence communities, deploying multiple times to the war in Afghanistan.

We also heard from Miranda Peterson. She is the executive director of Protect Our Defenders, which she joined in 2013. Protect Our Defenders’ mission is to uplift and support survivors of military sexual assault, and to improve and reform the U.S. military’s process for addressing rape, sexual assault, and sexual harassment.

Prior to joining Protect Our Defenders, Mrs. Peterson worked on the historic lawsuits against the Department of Defense filed on behalf of military sexual assault survivors who experienced abuse and retaliation after reporting, and which were the subject of the Oscar-nominated documentary film, “The Invisible War.”

We also heard from Elizabeth Hillman, and she is the president of Mills College. She was invited by Representative BARBARA LEE. Elizabeth Hillman has conducted extensive research on the history of sexual violence in the military organization’s culture. She is a director and past president of the National Institute of Military Justice, a nonprofit that promotes fairness in and public understanding of military justice worldwide.

She previously served on the Response Systems to the Adult Sexual Assault Crimes Panel, an independent panel chartered by Congress to study and make recommendations about sexual assault in the U.S. military.

And of course we heard from Gloria Allred, who is a nationally renowned

women’s and victims’ rights attorney. She was the lawyer representing Marine Corps veteran Butner and Active-Duty Marine Lance Corporal Woytek.

What treasures these activists are. They are patriots in their own way because they are defending and standing up for our patriots; and how sad that they have to spend so much of their time to do that.

Now, since this scandal broke up, there have been numerous articles written. I want to share one as we wait for Representative MCSALLY, who, herself, is a military veteran.

Thomas Brennan actually broke this story. He wrote that: “The U.S. Department of Defense is investigating hundreds of marines who used social media to solicit and share hundreds, possibly thousands, of naked photographs of female servicemembers and veterans.” That is just so shameful.

“Since January 30, more than two dozen women, many on Active Duty, including officers and enlisted servicemembers, have been identified by their full name, rank, and military duty station in photographs posted and linked to from a private Facebook page.” Again, very shameful.

Mr. Speaker, I am now pleased to welcome Representative MCSALLY. I would say to you that I have been talking about you in your absence. First of all, I told the Speaker that you were, unfortunately, at a hearing on sexual harassment in the military academies.

But we are so grateful for your—first of all, for your service to our country and for your advocacy in standing up for what is right for our military men and women. Ms. MCSALLY is our lead sponsor on this PRIVATE Act, which we have had many speakers talk about.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Arizona (Ms. MCSALLY).

Ms. MCSALLY. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague. And yes, I just came over from a hearing on the Armed Services Committee; first panel with some victims, and second panel with the superintendents of the different military academies.

□ 1845

As the only female veteran on my side of the aisle, and having been an academy graduate myself, I thought it was very important for me to be there and continue to help to lead on these issues that are near and dear to my heart. I know there has been much discussion. I want to say thank-you for helping to organize this and manage it and all the people who came down to speak on this very important issue.

As was likely mentioned before, we came upon this issue on Saturday, March 4. The Marines United Facebook page discovered individuals linked with this private group were posting nude, intimate photos of women, as well as personal information, their names, and duty stations, without their consent or their knowledge.

The next day, the NCIS started to launch an investigation and, 1 week

later, discovered, unfortunately, this was not an isolated activity. Sharing intimate photos without a consent is a problem that now we are seeing in the other branches of the military.

Such degrading behavior from troops in uniform is disgusting. As a veteran and a former commander myself, it is infuriating. In some ways it is not surprising, but it is intolerable, and we rise on both sides of the aisle today to say that we are standing together to help on our part, in our appropriate role to stop this.

Our servicemembers enlist to serve this country and protect it from our enemies. They should not have to watch their backs among individuals who are to be their teammates. Sharing explicit photos of fellow servicemembers undermines women and destroys trust and morale. It decreases effectiveness of our Armed Forces, and it embarrasses America. United States troops must be warriors. What it means to be a warrior is to embody courage, commitment, honor, trust, and respect. In all the services we have our core values. They are on and off duty. That is what it means to stand up. We stand in the gap for others. We are not the perpetrators. We are supposed to be the protectors. We are supposed to be the ones who are embodying and leading in those values that we hold dear.

The unearthing of this widespread problem has highlighted the difficulty in prosecuting Active Duty military members, though, who do this, who share private, intimate photos of their teammates without consent. This action is harmful, and it destroys the bonds of trust in the unit that are so critical for our warfighting capabilities.

So to look at the UCMJ, the Uniform Code of Military Justice, again, I am pretty familiar with this having been a commander and a retired colonel. We have a couple of articles, article 133 and article 134. Article 133 is conduct unbecoming of an officer. Article 134 is what we call anything that is prejudicial to good order and discipline. This is one I would say as a commander we often use as the catchall article. When we could not prosecute someone under another article, we go to article 134 because we knew their behavior was degrading good order and discipline.

Civilian law faces challenges in prosecuting this crime. Thirty-five States and the District of Columbia have statutes against sharing private, intimate digital media without consent, but the State laws vary in their proof, the elements, and the punishment.

The Marines recently created a regulation where they can charge these Neanderthals who commit these violations, but creating regulation isn't the same thing as strengthening the law. That is why I introduced the PRIVATE Act. Again, this is a bipartisan bill. My bill provides clear, unambiguous charge that gives commanders a sharper tool in the UCMJ for targeting and

prosecuting this behavior. It clearly defines this behavior as a crime, and it also addresses the issues of intent and free speech.

These actions are a symptom of a larger issue: why we must change the culture that promotes this behavior. While these blatant, disrespectful actions have been committed by a specific subset of our military, this is indicative of a larger cultural problem. I just came from speaking about that in our Air Force Academy hearings—I'm sorry, not just Air Force, all the academies.

This is not the first time that behavior like this or culture like this has really been addressed, nor will it be the last. Myself, as the first woman in the U.S. to fly in combat in a fighter aircraft and to command a squadron, I have personally experienced, confronted, and overcome sexist behavior in the military. I have been there, I have seen it, I have lived it, and, quite frankly, I am sick of it.

We need to do what we can together to stop it. We must confront the underlying issues that inculcate resentment toward women in our services. We need to address the topic now and send a clear message this behavior has no place in our military. The issue is developing at the speed of broadband, but our solutions are often stuck at the speed of bureaucracy.

I have met with the commandant of the Marine Corps, General Neller, immediately after this news broke. We had a very productive conversation, and I look forward to continuing work with him and the other service chiefs to address this issue.

We also can't allow this to turn into victim blaming, though. According to one victim who tried to have a video removed:

‘I went to the police to get them to take it down, and they told me, because I didn't live in North Carolina, they couldn't do anything. I then went to his command, and they said: Why don't you stop making sex tapes?’

This is not a matter of free speech on the internet. This is a matter of military members who have infringed on the rights, the duty, and the basic respect of others. We can't afford to let another military member become a victim of this crime.

I appreciate everyone stepping up for this Special Order today. I appreciate the bipartisan support of the PRIVATE Act. It is not going to solve it by itself, but it is going to give the commanders another tool. I promise I am going to tirelessly be working and leading on this issue to protect our troops and make sure we have the best, most respected, and most trusted warfighting force.

I want to thank my colleague for giving me the opportunity to speak.

Ms. FRANKEL of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative MCSALLY. We have come to, I think, a perfect ending here today—those of us who were here today. I know, on a bipar-

tisan basis, we look forward to fighting for the gentlewoman for what is right and to get this bill passed.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

OUR TIME

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. FORTENBERRY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, before I begin my own remarks, I want to commend my colleagues for continuing to aggressively address the deep wound that so many people have experienced with this form of abuse in our military. Our military prides itself on its clear goal of protecting our Nation and doing their duty even to the point of self-sacrifice. So to think that certain members of the military would abuse others in this manner is not only unconscionable, but demands that this body act. So I want to commend my colleagues for their leadership in this regard.

Mr. Speaker, our Nation recently watched in horror as flight staff at a publicly traded airline, having failed to motivate volunteers with sufficient compensation, then called Chicago Aviation Police to forcibly remove one of the randomly selected passengers so they could seat their own employees instead. After the bloodied but unbowed victim was dragged from the flight, aircraft and airport personnel claimed they acted out of concern that they would lose their own jobs if they had not removed the passenger. The stated motive—that was later proven to be false—was that the flight was “oversold.”

Now, Mr. Speaker, bizarrely, the airline CEO initially defended these actions. The corporation's airline personnel could have offered more money to find volunteers, but they did not choose to use that option. As a result, this airline-specific issue mushroomed into something far larger as Americans unleashed long-buried resentment against distant corporate structures that too often treat them just as incidentals.

Here is the problem, Mr. Speaker: in technocratic bureaucracy, one size fits all. Management and optimization replace the art of human interaction. When entities grow too large and too distant from the persons they are designed to serve, when technical procedures rule over prudential judgment, when process is improperly elevated to an unyielding standard, persons are not only treated like cattle by airlines, but individuals—in this age of information—sense that they no longer matter.

When you treat people as abstractions, it is easier to push them around, like data points on a spreadsheet. The broken-nosed, busted-teeth, and concussed passenger could only mutter the words: “Just kill me, just kill me.”