

Troup County Drug Court in LaGrange, Georgia. I had the opportunity to speak at their commencement ceremony last week while I was back in the district.

This program holds offenders with substance abuse and mental health disorders accountable through strict supervision and treatment, and allows them to get their lives back on track.

As a dentist, I have had the opportunity to work with those suffering from substance abuse problems through my work with Hope Harbor, a Christian recovery center in my district. I have seen firsthand that, for every addiction, there is a real human being behind the statistic. These men and women have the potential to live long, productive lives serving their families and communities, and programs like this help them do just that.

The success rate of these programs speaks volumes about their value to the community and those that graduate from the program. Seventy-five percent of drug court graduates never reoffend. This is almost 2½ times higher than the 30 percent success rate of those who serve a prison sentence and receive no treatment.

I commend the hard work of the men and women of the Troup County Drug Court.

TWO IMPORTANT ISSUES

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

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Madam Speaker, I rise to discuss two issues and to speak on their impact to the American people.

The first one is the Financial CHOICE Act, which we just debated. I oppose it for the very reason that we passed Dodd-Frank. We passed it to respond to the greatest recession in 80 years, which saw a financial crisis that caused working men and women to lose the greatest amount of wealth they have ever lost. Yet, our colleagues here believe that it is important to choose large corporate interests over working men and women.

At the same time, today we heard the testimony of Director Comey under oath. He gave a list of very troublesome acts and words offered by the President of the United States. Shortly thereafter, the President's lawyer, who was not under oath, came forward to deny, disparage, and suggest that Director Comey was not telling the truth.

That is clearly an indication that the Judiciary Committee should begin an inquiry. That is our jurisdictional duty: to begin an inquiry to discern who is telling the truth. The FBI is under our jurisdiction.

It is time for the House to hold hearings now. The truth must be known by the American people.

REMEMBERING THE LIFE OF PAUL W. PAINTER, JR.

(Mr. CARTER of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the

House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to remember the life of the respected Savannah lawyer and gentleman, Paul W. Painter, Jr., who passed away on Saturday, May 27, 2017, at the age of 71.

Mr. Painter comes from a family that has worked tirelessly to serve our country both in the Armed Forces as well as our judiciary system. His father, Paul Painter, Sr., served during World War II, and then created a successful law practice.

Paul Painter, Jr., followed in his father's footsteps, graduating from Georgia Tech, and then serving in the Navy for 4 years. After that, Mr. Painter attended law school at the University of Georgia, beginning a career that would benefit and serve many Savannahians for years to come.

Mr. Painter started his own firm in Savannah, now known as the Ellis, Painter, Ratterree, & Adams Law Firm, with which he practiced for nearly 30 years. By the end of his law career, he was known as one of the best lawyers in the entire State of Georgia and was named to the list of Georgia's Top 10 lawyers in 2014.

The Paul W. Painter, Jr., Civility and Professional Award was also created in his honor to remember his fantastic work and to reward other outstanding lawyers in Georgia.

Mr. Painter was an honorable person who did everything possible to improve our judicial system, and he gained respect from lawyers all over. He will certainly be missed as an asset to our community and the entire legal field.

OBSTRUCTION OF JUSTICE

(Mr. TED LIEU of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. TED LIEU of California. Madam Speaker, as a former prosecutor, I rise to state the obvious: President Trump committed obstruction of justice.

We have direct evidence that the President asked the FBI Director for loyalty. He demanded it. He asked the FBI Director to drop an investigation into Michael Flynn.

The President fired the FBI Director. Then, on national TV, he said he did it because of the Russian probe. Then he told the Russians in the Oval Office that he did it to relieve great pressure because of the FBI investigation. That is classic obstruction of justice.

The Washington Post today has a quote from one of the prosecutors of Watergate. He says: "I helped prosecute Watergate. Comey's statement is sufficient evidence for an obstruction of justice case."

I call on Special Counsel Mueller to investigate the President of the United States for violating the obstruction of justice statute, which is a felony.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. CHENEY). Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President.

PUTTING THE AMERICAN DREAM BACK INTO REACH

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

Mr. TAYLOR. Madam Speaker, my generation has known two very profound events: war and recession.

To some folks, a decade seems like forever ago, but for most Virginians, most Americans, the events of the financial collapse 10 years ago still haunt their memories today. Financial devastation hit the poor and middle class in this country unlike anything we have witnessed in our lifetimes: businesses shuttered, retirement plans halted, families losing many homes.

In response, Congress passed Dodd-Frank, a bill with more regulations than all other bills passed during the Obama administration.

Dodd-Frank regulations have pushed many community banks out of business. We lose one of them or a credit union every single day. Small-business lending, the driver of jobs in this country, has declined; everyday banking services have been reduced; and homeownership is increasingly out of reach.

The Financial CHOICE Act provides more accountability over unelected bodies, unlocks small-business lending, allows community banks to survive, stops big-bank bailouts with our tax dollars, will increase homeownership, and it imposes the toughest penalties ever for financial fraud. This bill puts the American Dream into reach for millions of Americans.

□ 1700

HECTOR BARAJAS-VARELA

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

Ms. BARRAGÁN. Madam Speaker, veterans shouldn't have to come home in a body bag to be recognized as Americans.

Last weekend, I went, along with some of my colleagues, to Tijuana, Mexico, where we visited veterans who have served this country, who have picked up a weapon to go and fight in war to protect our freedoms. They survived, came home, and some of them were deported.

Do you know that if you go and you fight overseas and you are not a citizen and you die, you get automatic citizenship?

One of those people we saw this weekend is my constituent, Hector Barajas, from Compton. This is a photo of him. He was proudly still wearing his uniform. He was deported to Mexico after serving 5½ years in the U.S. Army, receiving two commendations.

I am proud to cosponsor H.R. 1405, which would allow noncitizen veterans who have been deported to come home and come back to the United States. I hope that he gets to come back, too.

IN RECOGNITION OF LIEUTENANT COLONEL LISA L.A. EPPERSON

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

Mr. BACON. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Lieutenant Colonel Lisa L.A. Epperson on the occasion of her retirement from the United States Air Force, the best Air Force in the world.

Colonel Epperson has given a great deal to this Nation through her service. Her assignments include Wright-Patterson, Tyndall, Los Angeles, Hill, and Nellis Air Force Bases, and finally here at the Pentagon. Colonel Epperson has influenced mission systems from Defense Satellite Communications System and Minuteman III, an ICBM, to the F-15 and F-22. Most importantly, she impacted our warfighting operations in Operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom, and Iraqi Freedom.

Throughout her distinguished career, Colonel Epperson represented our country with honor, and I am privileged to pay tribute to her. On behalf of Congress and the United States, I want to thank Colonel Epperson; her husband, David; and their children, Trevor and Cassidy, for their 20 years of service. I wish them Godspeed and continued happiness as they start this new chapter.

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

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

GENERAL LEAVE

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.

Mr. SMUCKER. Madam Speaker, tonight I am honored to lead a bipartisan Special Order on career and technical education. We have several Members joining us here this evening to highlight CTE programs in their districts and the upcoming reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act.

I would like to start the order by yielding to my colleague and colead, Congressman KRISHNAMOORTHY, who has been working hard with my Pennsylvania colleague, Congressman THOMPSON, on H.R. 2353, the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act.

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY. Madam Speaker, I thank Representative SMUCKER for yielding. I really appreciate his leadership. I thank Congress-

man G.T. THOMPSON from Pennsylvania as well for his leadership. It is an honor to be here.

Madam Speaker, in recent years, global economic trends have led to an ever-growing skills gap. While unemployment has fallen to 4.4 percent in my home State of Illinois, there is still a widening gap between the jobs that are open and the skills workers need. This has become apparent as I have traveled throughout my district listening to community representatives, businesses, parents, students, and higher education officials discuss the local state of the economy.

I have been particularly concerned with the feedback I have received from businesses, who continue to report that there is a gap between the talent and skills they need in employees and what they can actually find. Shortages in skilled fields like machinists, technicians, operators, cybersecurity, and healthcare are impairing their ability to grow their businesses.

There is much Congress can do to improve the skills of our labor force, which is why I was proud to partner with my good friend and fellow member of the Education and the Workforce Committee, Congressman G.T. THOMPSON, in introducing H.R. 2353.

Our bill reauthorizes the Carl D. Perkins grant program through fiscal year 2023 and gives States and local governments the tools to better equip workers for higher paying middle class jobs in the 21st century.

The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act addresses one of the underlying causes of the skills gap: what is being taught in classes does not necessarily sync up with what is needed to get a job. H.R. 2353 requires a strong buy-in from local businesses in developing State plans.

With more local stakeholders involved in the process, it will better equip students with the technical skills they need to find success in local in-demand careers.

Finally, I believe it is important that we start to shift the culture surrounding career and technical education. Every student, no matter his or her career goals, should participate in some form of career education. I believe that every student needs to graduate, not just with a diploma but with another piece of paper, namely an offer letter.

Some students will find success in a traditional 4-year college program; others, however, will learn the skills they need through a 2-year community college or on-the-job training.

I look forward to working with my colleagues from both sides of the aisle to ensure its passage, and I look forward to sending this bill to the President later this year for signing.

Mr. SMUCKER. Madam Speaker, I would like to thank Congressman KRISHNAMOORTHY for his leadership on this issue. The Congressman is a fellow member of the freshman class. I really

appreciate the opportunity to work with him, particularly on this very important topic.

Madam Speaker, I yield to Congressman THOMPSON, the sponsor of H.R. 2353, who, for many years, has been leading the charge here in the House to strengthen career technical education.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I thank my good friend from Pennsylvania, Representative SMUCKER—he is doing a great job representing his congressional district and being a strong voice for Pennsylvania—for hosting this important Special Order tonight focused on career and technical education.

I appreciate my good friend, Representative KRISHNAMOORTHY, who is with me and is leading the charge with the piece of legislation that I hope we will see on the House floor in the weeks to come.

As co-chair of the House Career and Technical Education Caucus, I often say that a high quality career in technical education can help restore rungs on the ladder of opportunity. Now, this statement is one I truly believe in.

For many Americans, those rungs have been displaced for different reasons, whether it is training that they have had, access to training, access to quality, effective training; whether it has been poverty; whether it has been unemployment, underemployment, all things that take away rungs on the ladder of opportunity, this career and technical education can truly restore rungs on the ladder of opportunity.

It is undeniable that career and technological education has helped many Americans obtain the knowledge and skills they need to break the cycle of poverty and achieve a lifetime of success.

The first step to increasing access to CTE programs, as we refer to them, across the United States is modernizing the Federal investment in these programs, and it has been more than a decade since Congress has updated the Federal law governing CTE programs. This is problematic, due to the fact that so much about our society and our Nation's workforce has changed during this time. Since the last time the Perkins Act was reauthorized, we have new skill sets, new jobs, new industry, new opportunities, new technology.

So, for example, today, more than 1 million positions remain open in the trade, transportation, utility sectors, and an additional 315,000 manufacturing positions are currently unfilled. If we are to embark on a new era of American manufacturing and improved infrastructure, we need a qualified and well trained workforce to fill these positions. That is the number one asset of any business. It is not the location; it is not the compliance; it is not the marketing. It really is a qualified and trained workforce.

With all this in mind, I have worked with my colleagues in introducing the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act