

is remembered by his family as a caring husband, father, and grandfather, and he will be deeply missed by his community that he helped build.

WE CAN PIVOT TOWARDS BIPARTISAN ACTION CONSISTENT WITH THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, this is really an amazing time on Capitol Hill. The Republican internal battles and inability to deliver a coherent, effective alternative to fulfill all their contradictory campaign promises on healthcare has done more than just expose their political and policy dysfunction. They are obviously flirting with a serious political backlash.

They have managed to make the Affordable Care Act, ObamaCare, with all of its shortcomings, popular with the majority of the American public for the first time ever, including so many small business people.

They made the public more aware and concerned about Medicaid, that has expanded and made such a difference in Kentucky, in Oregon, in States all across the country, providing care for people otherwise who had not had it.

They have managed to accelerate the move towards single payer by more than a decade: Medicare for all, Medicaid for more. I don't know the exact form, but we are going to be moving in that direction, and the Republicans have helped raise the awareness and accelerate that progress, but I hope that we are going to be able to take steps to make progress sooner.

In the meantime, I suspect that the Affordable Care Act, the core reforms and structure, are going to, in fact, stay in place. This is because there aren't the votes in the Senate to do anything more; and frankly, it doesn't look like there are votes to do much in the House, the so-called skinny bill notwithstanding.

But I hope that we can pivot towards modest, bipartisan actions that are consistent with the Affordable Care Act, but don't depend on it. We have a number of bipartisan initiatives that are teed up and ready to go.

I have worked for years with Congresswoman DIANE BLACK from Tennessee, on value-based insurance design. This bipartisan legislation would reward value over volume and make insurance much more effective in paying for what we need.

I have an initiative with Congressman JASON SMITH and with Senator TODD YOUNG dealing with kidney health. This would enable providers to leverage those weekly sessions for dialysis for some of our most vulnerable Americans in terms of their health. Dialysis costs 1 percent of the entire Federal budget. We should be able to use

that time and attention to deliver wraparound services, more care and less strain on people with multiple health needs.

We ought to be able to act on empowering our citizens and their families to know what they are facing at end of life. I have bipartisan legislation with my friend and colleague, Congressman ROE from Tennessee, along those lines.

Congress ought to accept the challenge from President Trump to deal meaningfully with prescription drug costs. There is support on both sides of the aisle. We can save billions of dollars for Americans and the taxpayers, and we can provide better care.

There are mental health initiatives with our friend TIM MURPHY. Bipartisan progress was made in the last Congress, but there is much more that needs to be done.

In fact, we can work together to overcome the opposition of Chairman SESSIONS and the Rules Committee denying the House the right to vote on extending our veterans access bill to allow consultation about medical marijuana. No one can listen to the heart-breaking stories of veterans and their families about what medical marijuana has done to sufferers of PTSD, chronic pain, traumatic brain injury. It is legal in 29 states, but the Rules Committee denied the right of the House to vote on extending that service to our veterans and their doctors, despite the horrible record that the VA has in preventing veteran suicide, and where the opioid addiction rate for the VA is twice the general population.

These are things we can do tomorrow, not dealing with denying millions of people care through the Affordable Care Act and the various permutations that are spinning around now.

Do our job, work together, follow regular order, deal with bipartisan initiatives that will benefit the American people, save the taxpayer money, and improve the health of all Americans.

TRIBUTE TO SARAH MEECE

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

Mr. ROGERS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to my long-time adviser and expert caseworker, Sarah Meece, upon her much-deserved retirement after dedicating more than 40 years of service by my side. When I reflect upon Sarah's career, I stand in awe of her loyalty, her unwavering patience, her persistent advocacy, and undying compassion for those in need.

As Congressman, I have the duty and the privilege of assisting the people of southern and eastern Kentucky as they grapple with Federal agencies. At the heart of those cases has stood Sarah Meece providing expert advice and staunch support for individuals in our region who need help with Social Security, disability, and retirement claims, among many other issues. In fact, over

the last 36 years, Sarah has worked on approximately 150,000 cases, representing an unmatched record of assistance for more than 4,000 individuals each year.

Sarah has gained so much notoriety in her field that staff from other congressional offices, and officials even from the administration, contact her for guidance in case work. And in this line of work, there are very few, if any, medals or certificates of honor to honor those worthy of recognition like Sarah; nonetheless, her drive and consistency has never failed.

Day in and day out, Sarah has answered countless phone calls, set up personal meetings, listened to some of the most heartbreakingly stories from families who were denied benefits on multiple occasions, those in desperate need of recouping benefits, others who lost hope in a mountain of Federal paperwork. Sarah's reward has been the simple words of appreciation from the thousands upon thousands of individuals who she has helped over the years. In my eyes, she deserves so much more.

While I wish Sarah the best in her years of retirement, the absence of her daily presence in the office will be insurmountable. When I was elected Commonwealth's Attorney for Pulaski and Rockcastle Counties in 1969, Sarah Meece was there. When I was the Republican nominee for Lieutenant Governor in 1979, Sarah Meece was there. When I was elected to Congress in 1980, Sarah Meece was there. In fact, she has been with me every day since, even volunteering her personal time for campaign work along the way, ensuring we both could continue serving the public for another 2 years.

During her tenure, Sarah welcomed U.S. Presidents and Vice Presidents to our region, befriended eight Kentucky Governors and their staffs, and assisted hundreds of local leaders across southern and eastern Kentucky as they navigated through Federal issues.

However, it is the people living in the hills and hollers of Kentucky's Fifth Congressional District who have driven her passion-filled public service. With every call and every personal visit, Sarah offered an encouraging word of hope to our constituents. Very few people can find the silver lining in every cloud like Sarah does, or bring a smile and a laugh to a broken heart. Her comical candor and illustrative storytelling have been a bright spot in everyone's day.

I am forever grateful to have such a great friend and loyal adviser over these last 4 decades. Sarah's life's work has given countless families hope in their darkest hour and comforted them through lengthy and complex Federal issues.

Simply put, Sarah is irreplaceable, both her institutional knowledge of Federal casework and her kind, enduring spirit.

Mr. Speaker, if every congressional office and Federal agency had a Sarah Meece, our Nation would operate much

better. She has been the jewel of my congressional operations and the truest friend to the people of southern and eastern Kentucky.

My wife, Cynthia, and I wish Sarah and her husband, Bud, many joyful and restful years of retirement with their children and grandchildren.

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OUR MILITARY DESERVES BETTER

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

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Speaker, when our bravest men and women raise their hand and volunteered to defend our Nation, they defend all of her people, rich and poor, young and old, Democrat and Republican, gay and straight, Americans of all races, religions, ethnicities, beliefs, gender identities.

Our soldiers do not discriminate. They do not offer to pay the ultimate sacrifice for some Americans and not for others. Their government owes them that same courtesy, that same decency in return.

Instead, this morning, our President has told thousands of American soldiers that they will fight for us, but we will not fight for them; that their deeply personal medical decisions are somehow the public's business; that although they are willing to sacrifice their lives to protect our freedom, we will not offer them the most basic freedom in return.

Today, the President of the United States looked American soldiers in the eye and dared to question their patriotism, their courage. He doubted their commitment to their brothers and sisters in uniform. He said that our military couldn't or wouldn't stand for all of us.

To the thousands of brave transgender men and women serving today in uniform, please know that a grateful Nation does not take your service, your patriotism for granted.

You deserve better from your President. You deserve better from your government. You deserve better from your country.

THE SECRET SERBIAN RESCUE MISSION OF WORLD WAR II

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, during the long, dark, lamentable days of World War II, Serbians and Americans forged a bond in a secret mission that remained classified for almost 60 years.

What was known as Operation Halyard became the largest rescue operation of American airmen in history. It would not have been possible without the courage of the Serbian people.

In 1944, as the Allies advanced into fortress Europe, American bombers based in southern Italy began to strike

Germany's vital oil supplies in Romania. The 15th Air Force launched nearly 20,000 sorties into Eastern Europe to degrade Hitler's war machine. To do this, they had to fly over Nazi-occupied Yugoslavia. As many as 1,500 pilots and airmen were shot down during these dangerous flights.

Serbians who had been resisting German forces since 1941 risked their own lives to rescue American airmen and hide them from patrolling Nazis. One of them was Serbian George Dudich, the father of Elaine Dudich, my chief of staff when I was a judge in Texas.

For months, George Dudich and the other Serbians aided downed Americans, caring for and protecting the pilots, and then smuggling the airmen back to Allied lines.

By August 1944, hundreds of other downed airmen were being sheltered by the Serbian guerillas. The OSS, the predecessor to the CIA, devised a plan to evacuate the Allied pilots in a daring mission coordinated with the Serbian resistance.

On August 10, unarmed American C-47s flew numerous sorties deep into enemy territory and landed at an improvised airfield built and protected by local Serbians near the village of Pranjani. By the 18th, more than 500 Allied airmen had been secretly rescued and flown back to Italy.

Here on this poster you see the Serbian resistance, along with American airmen that had been downed, moving them to hiding from the Nazis that were patrolling the areas. For over 60 years, this bold, unbelievable secret operation was kept classified.

Our alliance with Serbia and the Serbian people goes back even further to the First World War. One hundred years ago, Serbia stood up to the aggression from the larger Austrian-Hungarian empire. We should admire such defiance against overwhelming odds.

Serbia's stand against tyranny also set events in motion that would lead the U.S. to take up the cause of freedom in Europe in World War I. That common devotion to liberty and the spirit of the Halyard mission still lives today with the close ties between the United States and Serbia.

As was the case in both World Wars, Serbia and the United States still face shared threats. We work together now to preserve each others' security. Serbian soldiers serve along with U.S. forces in fighting terrorism in Afghanistan, and Serbia is a partner in keeping terrorism from spreading in Serbia and in Europe.

However, Russian propaganda efforts in the country are particularly strong and anti-Western. We must be vigilant to thwart the Kremlin's efforts to poison our relationship with Serbia.

Fortunately, Serbia's integration into the West has continued to move in spite of Russian disinformation. In 2006, Serbia joined NATO's Partnership for Peace and, in 2015, signed an Individual Partnership Action Plan with the alliance to strengthen cooperation.

Serbia has no stronger supporter for increased integration with the EuroAtlantic community than the United States. So for more than 100 years, we have been friends with the Serbian people. And as co-chair of the Serbian Caucus, along with the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLEAVER), I want to welcome Serbian Ambassador Matkovic and his staff to the House Chamber today.

With our shared events in Operation Halyard, our combined history, and our fight for freedom, the American people are forever grateful for those Serbs who came to America's rescue during those bleak days of World War II.

And that is just the way it is.

HONORING THE STRUGGLE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS IN AMERICA

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

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1927, which is on the floor this afternoon, the African American Civil Rights Network Act. This is to honor the sad, yet heroic struggle for civil rights in America, a struggle for those who participated in the civil rights movement, a struggle for people that were, in fact, soldiers in a war for justice and democracy.

We appropriately and regularly honor the soldiers who wore uniforms and went to Europe and Asia to defend our country, and we appropriately and properly give them benefits that they deserve for what they did to protect democracy and justice.

But what we forget is those citizens in America who had to fight their own government and their own country for those same rights of justice and democracy.

Enslaved for over 250 years, and then treated in a netherworld of segregation for 100 years, and then slowly creeping in after Brown v. Board of Education in 1954 and the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act of the sixties and to this day, those who fought for civil rights deserve to be recognized as soldiers for justice and democracy, and this bill will honor their work with the Civil Rights Network Act in our country.

They used protests to gain public attention and, eventually, to spur judicial and legislative action. It goes all the way back to W.E.B. DuBois and others who fought when they weren't so popular and on television.

H.R. 1927 would establish a Civil Rights Network to commemorate and honor the history of the civil rights movement. And I want to encourage that the proposed sites include the Memphis Heritage Trail, which has applied for funding as part of that historical network.

It was in Memphis, unfortunately, in April of 1968, where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was slain. Dr. King gave his last speech in Memphis the night before at the Mason Temple, the "I Have