

thank them for their dedication to our Nation.

From the Greatest Generation who served in World War II to the veterans who traversed the harsh jungles of Vietnam, to the young people who took up the banner and persisted in the fight against terrorism in Afghanistan and in Iraq, we owe our veterans an endless debt of gratitude.

It is our responsibility to provide for our servicemembers when they heed the call to serve, as well as to care for them when they return home.

Mr. Speaker, we must fulfill our promises to our veterans and deliver on the promises, the benefits that they have earned. We need to make sure that we end veterans' homelessness. Whether it be ensuring timely access to quality healthcare, enabling the pursuit of educational opportunities, or providing the tools to start their own business, let us reaffirm to our veterans that they will have the support and the services that they need following their service.

To all our veterans, thank you for your service. May God bless you, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

□ 1715

RECOGNIZING WEST LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOL FOR PATRIOTISM

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

Mr. PAULSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the patriotism of West Lutheran High School in Plymouth, Minnesota, and their annual Veterans Day celebration.

Every day, the students at West Lutheran recite the Pledge of Allegiance, even when they did not have enough flags for their classrooms. So the senior American Government class raised \$1,200 to purchase flags that will honor their alumni who have answered the call to serve in uniform.

The West Lutheran Veterans Day ceremony is now a central part of life in the Plymouth community, and every year they recognize contributions and sacrifices made by those in uniform. This year, veterans will be treated to breakfast, the music of the West Lutheran band, and remarks by Tom Warren, Sr., a veteran of the U.S. Army and Operation Desert Storm.

So, Mr. Speaker, I commend the West Lutheran community for keeping this tradition alive, and I also thank our veterans for the selfless acts of courage that keep our country safe.

THE STATE OF AMERICA'S VOTING INFRASTRUCTURE

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

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, 17 years ago, the United States began a 2-

month-long crash course in voting machines and election infrastructure. The 2000 Presidential election opened our eyes to the fact that voting equipment in most places was out-of-date and unsafe.

We didn't learn the lessons of 2000, and in 2017, America's election infrastructure remains in a bad state. We must act immediately.

First, we need to help all local and State governments replace their outdated paperless machines with more secure systems.

Second, we need to require post-election audits of all paper records to make sure that the results tabulated by voting machines have not been hacked.

Third, we need to help election officials at the local level upgrade their database and election infrastructure to protect against all cyber attacks.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting all efforts to modernize and protect our voting infrastructure and legislation dealing with cyber attacks.

CELEBRATING MONTANA'S STATEHOOD

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

Mr. GIANFORTE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a special place: Montana.

From our snowcapped mountains to our nearly endless prairies, Montana is an awe-inspiring place of tremendous beauty. We call it Big Sky Country, the Treasure State, the Last Best Place, and we call it home.

When Montana first became a territory in 1864, it was the Wild West. Prospectors, cattle ranchers, and settlers overcame scorching sun and blistering cold to establish our Nation's 41st State.

But there is something even more special than the beauty of an eastern Montana sunset or being knee-deep in a crystal-clear mountain stream. It is the people of Montana. Montanans are kind, warm, generous, and hard-working people.

On November 8, 1889, our special place became part of something even more special, the land of the free and the home of the brave. Today, Montanans celebrate the 128th anniversary of our statehood.

OUR MILITARY OPERATIONS IN NIGER

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

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to sound the alarm about our military operations in Niger.

On October 4, four U.S. Army Special Operations Forces were tragically killed on a mission in Niger. My deep-

est condolences to the families of these fallen heroes.

This is a mission, Mr. Speaker, which Congress still knows nothing about. And as recently as last week, Secretaries Tillerson and Mattis testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on this tragedy. But one question remains unanswered: Why were our servicemembers in Niger?

It is outrageous that Congress has been left in the dark about these operations. At a minimum, we should have some basic knowledge of the missions we are asking servicemembers to risk their lives for.

Myself and others sent a bipartisan letter to the administration demanding that President Trump seek authorization ahead of any future military operations in Niger.

It is not just Niger. Speaker RYAN needs to stop blocking a debate and vote on these ongoing wars. The people deserve answers.

What is the holdup, Mr. Speaker? What are you afraid of? Why don't you want the American people to know?

Congress, yes, is missing in action. We owe it to our servicemembers and our constituents to have a debate and a vote on these ongoing wars. Congress needs to do its job.

RECOGNIZING COLONEL BEN MARGOLIUS AND MR. AL EATON, FOUNDERS OF THE SOUTHERN TIER VETERANS SUPPORT GROUP

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

Ms. TENNEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Colonel Ben Margolius and Mr. Al Eaton, founders of the Southern Tier Veterans Support Group.

Ben is a veteran of the Army, serving as the chief of joint operations for the U.S. Transportation Command and holding leadership positions at USCENTCOM, USEUCOM, and USTRANSCOM.

Al is a veteran of the Navy and, like my son, a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, having served as a naval flight officer on P-3 Orions, performing antisubmarine warfare and surface surveillance missions.

After their military service, Ben and Al saw a great need to provide help to veterans where other agencies could not. This started informally, with Ben and Al getting donations and support where they could, until the Southern Tier Veterans Support Group was formed officially in August of 2011.

Today, Ben and Al's work has brought over 70 community partners together to assist veterans and their families, with 425 veterans receiving \$65,000 in assistance since 2016.

Thank you, Ben and Al, for your service and for all that your organization has done to help our veterans.

Go Navy.

Go Army.

TAX REFORM AND CUTS TO THE WORK OPPORTUNITY TAX CREDIT

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

Mr. MCEACHIN. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise against H.R. 1, the so-called Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, and its effects on our veterans.

H.R. 1 would cut the successful work opportunity tax credit, a Federal credit available for employers to incentivize them to hire veterans.

In 2016, there were 453,000 veterans that were unemployed nationwide—16,000, alone, in Virginia.

Mr. Speaker, today, on their behalf, I call on my Republican colleagues to find solutions that do not sacrifice those who have sacrificed enough.

House Republicans have suggested that the work opportunity tax credit, at a cost of \$1 billion, is simply too expensive to keep in place. However, I cannot help but wonder why the same is not said about repealing the estate tax, a \$269 billion tax cut for the wealthy.

My Democratic colleagues and I are taking a different approach by founding the Reinvesting in Our Returning Heroes Task Force. Instead of hurting, we are helping veteran businessowners and veterans who need jobs.

Mr. Speaker, my father is buried in Arlington. He was a Korean war veteran. He said that the American GI only asked of his country what he was prepared to give, and that is his best.

Mr. Speaker, this tax cut is not our best.

CONGRATULATING MICHAEL FIRESTINE ON RECEIVING BRUNING AWARD

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Michael Firestine as he receives the prestigious Bruning Award from the American Bankers Association Center for Agricultural and Rural Banking.

Mike Firestine's leadership and outstanding dedication to providing credit and financial guidance to farmers, ranchers, and rural businesses is well known in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. He has been an agricultural banker with the same bank for more than 35 years.

Mike began his ag banking career in 1978, with the Lebanon National Valley Bank, which later merged with Fulton Bank, where Mr. Firestine is currently a senior vice president.

Over the course of his career, Mike has helped scores of young farmers establish themselves in the industry. His counsel and advice propelled many to success.

In many ways, Mike has stayed true to his roots. He was born and raised in a small town in Pennsylvania, where his grandfather was a dairy farmer. He runs a family farm, where he produces pumpkins and other crops and raises Hereford cattle.

Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to recognize Mike Firestine on this tremendous achievement and an outstanding career in agriculture.

GUN VIOLENCE

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

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, here we are again, mourning the senseless loss of life from yet another terrible mass shooting.

Last Sunday, at their church in Texas, 26 more Americans were cut down by a gunman. The oldest was 77 years old. The youngest was 17 months old.

This is just a few weeks after Las Vegas endured the deadliest shooting in our country's history and in the backdrop of ongoing violence in cities, towns, and homes across the country that claims an average of 93 lives each and every day.

The response from this Chamber is deafening silence.

Mr. Speaker, how can we face this epidemic without even a debate?

I am open to any commonsense idea to make progress on this issue, from universal background checks to limiting access to high-capacity magazines and military-style assault weapons.

I have introduced legislation to help prevent theft from the Federal Firearm Licensees, expand background checks, and close purchase monitoring loopholes.

I know there is no one single solution, but we cannot allow this epidemic to continue without even a discussion on what we can do. Together, we have the opportunity to save lives.

I urge my colleagues to act.

HONORING VETERANS DAY

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

Mr. PALAZZO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize America's veterans.

Saturday is Veterans Day, a time to recognize our bravest men and women who answered the call to defend our great Nation against our enemies. Words are not enough to say thank you for everything you have endured and sacrificed on America's behalf.

As a fellow veteran, and on behalf of the good families of Mississippi's Fourth Congressional District, I want to convey my appreciation to you and your families.

Many of us have seen the perils of war and conflict. Many have been in-

jured in the line of duty, and many have paid the ultimate sacrifice before the altar of freedom.

Because of this display of sacrifice, future generations may enjoy the blessings of what our country stands for: the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. I am proud to have had the opportunity to serve alongside such brave men and women.

So, veterans, we are a free nation because of the bravery of you and your families. Happy Veterans Day, and God bless you.

GOP TAX PLAN

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

Mr. LOWENTHAL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to join the chorus of Americans across the country who are gravely concerned about the reckless Republican tax plan.

Middle class families in my district know that this plan won't help to get them ahead, and it is not because they are doing the math wrong. The plan throws a buffet full of enormous tax cuts for multinational corporations and billionaire real estate investors, and it leaves hardworking families to fight for table scraps.

Tens of millions of middle class families will ultimately face a tax hike, and the repeal of the State and local deduction raises taxes on many families in my district in California.

For example, in Orange County, my constituents deduct an average of \$6,500 a year using the SALT provision. This proposal sends them a bill.

Republicans are asking my constituents to pay more, only to let companies that expand overseas pay less. That simply doesn't make sense.

I urge all of my colleagues, especially my neighbors in California, to reject this tax hike on middle class families.

□ 1730

THANKING OUR VETERANS

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

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to recognize and thank our veterans. We will all be doing that this coming Saturday on Veterans Day. They sacrificed so much and we are so glad to have them here to be able to celebrate and thank them.

I recommend that everybody please take part in the events that you have in your community. Go to the parades, go to the barbecues, and take a minute to thank a veteran.

Things we can do around here as legislators are like we did this week with several pieces of legislation, helping veterans with VA so that they would have more access for telemedicine, which makes technology more available and provides better doctors for diagnosing veterans and giving them what they need.