

I represent a diverse and amazing district. These are Americans with real issues, real problems, and real dreams who are not concerned with what party we belong to or what ads we run every 2 years. They care that we care and that we are here to serve not only ourselves, but our country and them.

Our democracy requires that our time here be spent in humility, dedication, and pride: pride to fight for those who can't, pride to work for those who are unable, pride to push back against the bureaucracy that frequently stands in the way and hampers their ability to conduct their business and live their lives.

I stand here today proud of the work we did in these 4 short years, but more proud of the people who sent me here: the citizens of Arizona's Second Congressional District. Thank you for the opportunity and the honor to serve you.

To my successor, Ann Kirkpatrick, I wish you all the best as you are sworn in to serve our amazing and inspiring community.

God bless you all and God bless America.

RECOGNIZING 15 YEARS OF PEPFAR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, on December 1, we commemorated World AIDS Day, celebrating our many accomplishments in the fight against HIV/AIDS around the globe. One important program for which we are also celebrating 15 years of success this year is PEPFAR.

Mr. Speaker, before Congress enacted PEPFAR, the HIV rates were skyrocketing, especially across the developing world. New cases of HIV infection were outstripping AIDS deaths by more than 60 percent.

Serving in the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, we followed this issue closely, hearing from advocates and administration officials on what to do. There was an almost unchallenged notion that we were about to lose a whole generation in sub-Saharan Africa. It just seemed to be an utterly hopeless situation.

In 2003, our tremendous leader, President George W. Bush, called on us in Congress to take action in responding to this global crisis, and I am proud that we swiftly answered the President's call. Today, there are over 14 million people receiving HIV treatment globally, and over 2 million babies born HIV-free to HIV-positive women—simply astounding.

PEPFAR morphed from an emergency plan to a sustainable program, and I am so glad that USAID is at the helm of this lifesaving program. Since his time as Ambassador to Tanzania, USAID Administrator Mark Green has had a clear-eyed strategy to address

the challenges posed by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. What he has done has rein-vigorated this program.

We are so proud as Americans of what PEPFAR has achieved. It is something that we need in order to continue to be a global leader against the HIV pandemic.

I will never forget standing in the Oval Office as President George W. Bush signed this essential program, PEPFAR, into law. I hope that my colleagues continue to protect and strengthen this vital program.

I am also proud of the many organizations like the One Campaign that, day in and day out, are working to get us closer to our goal of an AIDS-free generation.

□ 1030

RECOGNIZING THE SIMON FAMILY

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Simon family of Key Biscayne for their exemplary work on the yet-to-be-named park located in my congressional district at 401 Hampton Lane in Key Biscayne, the first neighborhood park for their community.

I would like to thank Arielle Simon, the horticulture adviser; Brett Simon, the architectural designer; and their father, Steven Simon, the project coordinator, who worked tirelessly as volunteers to see this vision into fruition.

This is not just any park; it is not just any effort. In an editorial, the community, newspaper, *The Islander News*, wrote:

The park, put simply, is beautiful—but the story behind it is even more so.

From the beginning, Steven, who has a history of effective community leadership, saw an opportunity to work with local elected officials to tackle a problem which they inherited.

Steven brought in his daughter, Arielle, who worked at Miami's renowned botanical garden and became a certified horticulturist, and his son, Brett, who has a master's degree in architecture and craftsmanship education in furniture design, and other volunteers and seasoned professionals.

Together, they all worked as a team, drafting proposals and securing the necessary funds to see this project through.

And here is how the Simon family beautifully described and included south Florida limestone in their proposal. They said:

We incorporated that natural material in our park design so that, metaphorically, we bring the bedrock upon which this island community of shifting sands was founded to the surface. Functionally and aesthetically, limestone is an integral part of our creation of a gathering place . . . in our first neighborhood park.

The story, which is well documented in Key Biscayne's *Islander News* over the past 3 years, truly shows what is possible when people come together with a desire and a drive to do something positive for the betterment of their community. I invite all of my

congressional colleagues to come to Key Biscayne and visit that island paradise and especially to see this park for yourself.

THANKING THE PEOPLE OF NEW YORK'S 19TH DISTRICT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. FASO) for 5 minutes.

Mr. FASO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to give my thanks to the people of the 19th Congressional District for giving me the honor of serving them in the House over these past 2 years.

I ran for Congress focused on how I could make a difference for the people of our district. It is no secret that upstate New York has been in a long, protracted period of economic decline, with many families and businesses choosing to leave due to high taxes and few employment opportunities.

As such, my focus upon taking office was how we can make upstate more economically competitive while, at the same time, making sure that our citizens, businesses, and local governments have an active voice representing their interests before the Federal Government.

I listened to the people across the district—firefighters and emergency responders, law enforcement, educators, business owners, and average working families—who told me of the issues that we face: the opioid crisis, the highest property taxes in the Nation, the exodus of people and jobs from upstate New York.

A primary focus of mine was the opioid crisis. This issue has devastated and destroyed countless lives across our Nation. I was pleased to have become the primary sponsor of legislation in the House. Working with my colleague from Michigan, MIKE BISHOP, we successfully enacted major opioid legislation, which included the STOP Act.

This legislation will crack down on the flow of illegal drugs, such as fentanyl, coming into the U.S. from places like China through the U.S. Postal Service. The STOP Act is now law, and I am proud to have had a role in its passage.

Agriculture is another major concern in the 19th District. Serving on the House Agriculture Committee, we have lowered the cost and increased the flexibility of dairy risk management programs, fought for better documentation to protect the sanctity of organic agriculture, made it easier for veterans to transition into agriculture, and supported increased broadband and cell service, which is critically important in our rural areas.

I have also led on two initiatives which are critical to the economic health of upstate New York. My legislation, offered with other members of the New York delegation, would finally have ended our State's policy of imposing a share of Medicaid costs from Albany onto local property taxpayers.

This mandate is so significant that just the county government taxpayers in New York State pay more in State-mandated Medicaid costs than local taxpayers in the 49 other States combined.

People are fleeing upstate New York because of high property taxes, and New York's Medicaid mandate is one of the reasons for that exodus.

The second initiative which I advanced was to preempt the absolute liability standard for gravity-related construction site accidents on federally funded projects. Again, New York stands alone among the 50 States in this absolute liability standard.

The fact is, this standard doesn't protect workers and adds approximately 7 percent to the cost of every building project in our State. With multi-billion-dollar projects like Gateway needing Federal support, it is critical that we use the preemption power to finally end this waste of taxpayer dollars and use those savings to rebuild and repair more infrastructure.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I must comment on the state of our political discourse in the United States. We all need to renew our efforts to conduct our debates on public issues in a civil and respectful fashion.

There is no doubt that the fragmented media and a general decline of standards has coarsened our public debate. There is plenty of blame to go around for this situation.

I encourage all those who hold elected office to recognize that we hold a sacred trust from the American people. We should uphold this responsibility in an honorable and dignified fashion and renew our efforts to improve the quality of public debate in the United States.

In doing so, we will renew our commitment to make a more perfect union. Moreover, we will give honor to those who have sacrificed to win and maintain these freedoms which we cherish.

The Constitution is forever our guide, and we should always remain true to it. We must also continue to promote individual liberty, the rule of law, and the dignity of all of our citizens. These are the characteristics of America that make ours a truly great Nation.

May God continue to bless the United States of America.

CAESAR SYRIA CIVILIAN PROTECTION ACT

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

Mr. KINZINGER. Mr. Speaker, we have got a lot of really important issues we talk about every day out here. I want to talk about something that is happening a few thousand miles away but affects us all. I want to talk about what is going on in Syria.

Mr. Speaker, I remember back, I think, in 2011 being in Israel and stand-

ing in the Golan Heights and looking over towards Syria, and our guide at the time made the comment that there is a little disturbance over there. There was some concern about where that was going to lead, and we all know what has happened since.

There is a lot of attention focused on Yemen right now, but in Syria there are 500,000 Syrian civilians who have been killed by a brutal dictator, Bashar al-Assad, 50,000 of which are children. Some of those children, in spectacular displays, were murdered by the use of chemical weapons, and I give great credit to our President and this administration for responding, as an America that believes in morals and strength should, by bombing and destroying some of the facilities that did that and holding to our red line.

But the war hasn't stopped, and the egregious nature of the war continues. I actually believe that the nature of that war is creating another generation of terrorists, people who feel that they don't have hope, people who feel that they don't have opportunity. And when hope and opportunity don't exist, people turn to extremes, and this is one case.

I want to talk specifically, though, about a really sad situation, a lady from Chicago, an American citizen, Layla Shweikani, who was murdered by the Assad regime. She was Chicago born and, a few years ago, basically made the decision that she had a passion for the people of Syria and decided to go and be an aide worker in Eastern Ghouta.

Two years ago she disappeared. We know that she was put into Assad's prison camps and tortured for 10 months—an American, by the way—before being transferred to a military court.

Unfortunately, a few weeks ago our worst fears were confirmed: Miss Layla was actually tortured to death and executed on December 28, 2016, the first American we know who was tortured and killed by Bashar al-Assad.

We know there are other Americans in captivity, and we know this is something that needs to be addressed.

Mr. Speaker, there are some in our Government, in this Chamber and in the other Chamber, that express sympathy to Bashar al-Assad and believe the antiquated theory that oppression of civilians is the only way to prevent terrorism.

I would argue that, in an age of information, in an age of knowledge, oppression only leads to more terrorists. Oppression leads to hopelessness, to a lack of opportunity, and to turning to the only option they know at that time, which may be ISIS or al-Qaida, because they don't see any other opportunity or hope.

Mr. Speaker, these people in our Government who express sympathy, while I believe that is something they have to answer with their creator ultimately someday, I am curious now what the response of everybody is when we find

out that an American woman was tortured and killed in the prison camps of Assad.

We have a bill called the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act. Caesar was a brave hero from Syria who took tens of thousands of pictures of torture victims of Assad, smuggled them to the United States, brought them in front of my committee in Foreign Affairs, and showed some of these pictures.

There was an act that would sanction many members of the regime that was passed unanimously out of Foreign Affairs, passed out of the House, largely supported in the Senate, and is being held up by a junior Senator from Kentucky.

I call on the other side of this blessed Capitol to pass the Caesar Syrian Civilian Protection Act. I call on the administration—as they said they support this—to sign this, put this on the Resolute desk.

We talk a lot about the importance of women and equality, and I couldn't agree more; but in that debate, I think it is important to remember that, in Syria, an American civilian woman was tortured to death.

We look in places like Afghanistan and know the oppression of women that occurred there. We know that America stands for something greater, and it is not just through the use of the military but through what we believe and what we stand for and the light that we shine.

Mr. Speaker, this is a terrible situation, Miss Layla's death, but let us learn from it and let us go forward, and let the people of Syria be free.

ONE DAY AT A TIME

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

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, once again I rise, and still I rise, a proud American, always proud to have the preeminent privilege of standing in the well of the Congress of the United States of America.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today reflecting upon the words, the lyrics, if you will, of a song that many of us have heard. The lyrics, as I paraphrase them, are:

One day at a time, one day at a time, sweet Jesus. One day at a time. Just help me to make, just help me to take, one day at a time.

Many of us who are sons of the segregated South survived, to a certain extent, understanding the lyrics of "One Day At a Time," knowing that, if you just take one day at a time, it can become a lifetime.

Sons of the segregated South learned early that they had to compromise.

I saw something on television yesterday that caused me to reflect on all of these things, Mr. Speaker, when I saw a President who was born into plenty, not poverty, a President who was born with a pat hand, a President who was born into a life unlike that of the sons of the segregated South who were African American, who understand how to