

a more perfect union. And the word more's inclusion is important because it implies the perpetual need to act because, in any institution governed by flawed and fallen human beings, there will always inherently be imperfection, but that does not absolve us of our duty to do the best we can.

You can judge a nation and its character by the people whose virtues it extols. And to suggest that Barbara Johns is an American hero is to understate it.

Again, a revolution to cast off a tyrannical crown, followed decades and decades later by a civil war to abolish a horrific, horrific activity, followed by a fight for generations to ensure suffrage to an entire sex, followed 30-some years later by a young girl with the courage to stand up and assert that justice should be equal for all, and that transcends even educational opportunity, inarguably.

So I hold in high regard foundational heroes like Patrick Henry, and I have spoken from this spot on this floor before and talked about his speech: "I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death."

But my favorite "Patrick Henryism" was when, on speaking on separating from the crown, someone from the back of the room shouted "Treason," and Henry said: "If this be treason, make the most of it," a willingness to stand and fight and die because something was the right thing to do.

Now, let's skip forward to a 16-year-old girl in the segregated South. She undoubtedly had the fortune of a strong family. I have had the honor of speaking on multiple occasions with her sister and an amazing uncle in Vernon Johns, a pastor first educated at Virginia Theological Seminary and then at Oberlin and, I believe, at the University of Chicago.

But Vernon Johns studied what? The classics and natural law, the Jeffersonian ideas that liberty was inherently a gift to humans, not from a government, but to be protected thereby. And so I like to imagine, and presume it is true because I asked Joan Johns, with whom I spoke last, if they ever discussed these sorts of things with their Uncle Vernon, and she said, of course; that someone had to stand up and assert these God-given rights in a land where they weren't protected by the government in accordance to its responsibility.

Who did that? A 16-year-old young woman.

Okay. What was the cost? Well, no different than Patrick Henry, who said: "If this be treason, then make the most of it," quite literally, Barbara Johns had to move away for fear for her life.

People think about the civil rights movement as many things. Many don't realize that well over 1,000 people died, a lot in civil unrest, but also in things like horrific bombings of churches based on the color of the skin of the people who attended them.

So the threat to Barbara Johns was existential and real but, in the face of that threat, she stood, and she led. And it wasn't about self-aggrandizement. There was no future political career. Barbara John's aspiration in life was to be a librarian. She became one.

But when her moment came, she led. And she led, not to take from anyone, but to give to everyone what is inherently their right and should be cherished and protected by government.

And so we have, with incredible humility, had the opportunity to serve in this hallowed institution, and this week, have filed for Barbara Johns to receive the Congressional Gold Medal. It is the highest award that can be bestowed by this Chamber.

Tragically, Ms. Johns passed from this life in 1991, but I would submit that she is well-worthy of this honor. And then if bestowing this honor upon her posthumously will lead more American young people to read and learn about the leadership and courage demonstrated by this school student from Prince Edward County, Virginia, then it is well worth doing.

I in no way, shape, or form mean to make light, but if Bob Hope and Roberto Clemente and John Wayne and Arnold Palmer and Dr. Muhammad Yunus and Louis L'Amour can receive the Congressional Gold Medal, then, by gosh, Barbara Rose Johns Powell deserves it.

This is a story that should be told. And it is not a political story, it is an American story. It is not a black or white story, it is an American story. It is not a story about a powerful woman, it is a story about a powerful human being.

We, collectively, are great because individuals have been allowed and encouraged and supported and uplifted and extolled for doing great things. And it is ridiculous that I should have studied Virginia history, American history, and then majored in history in college, grown up less than 100 miles away from where this young woman did this amazing thing, and have never heard her name.

So today, I genuinely and sincerely thank my colleague, and I hope that somebody at home somewhere is Google searching Barbara Rose Johns, because hers is an amazing story, and we stand on the shoulder of such giants. It is overdue that she be recognized for her contribution to our American family.

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

OPIOID ABUSE ACROSS THE NATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) is recognized for the remainder of the hour as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. FOXX. Mr. 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 my Special Order.

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

There was no objection.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON).

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman and my chairman from the House Education and the Workforce Committee for hosting this Special Order tonight on an issue that is impacting every ZIP Code in America.

The gentlewoman's poster says it all. This is close to home: Life beyond opioids, and stability, health, and healing.

The opioid epidemic is considered by many to be the worst public health crisis of our generation and, according to the National Institutes of Health, more than 115 people in the United States die every day from an opioid overdose.

This epidemic is not an urban problem and it is not a rural problem. It is a national problem. No ZIP Code, as I said, in the country is immune from this crisis. This is an epidemic that transcends all socioeconomic classes, and all of America's people, all of America's diversity of families is at risk.

Heroin and pain pill addiction doesn't discriminate on age, race, gender, or socioeconomic status. Your neighbor could be using heroin and so could their high honors high school student.

Unfortunately, the people of Pennsylvania have seen some of the worst. Last year, the crisis surged when Pennsylvania experienced a 44 percent increase in opioid overdoses. It is just tragic what this does to families and how it steals lives and futures.

Addressing this unprecedented rate of opioid-related death means that we must focus on nearly 2.2 million Americans who currently struggle with opioid addiction. No one person can beat addiction alone, and overcoming this epidemic will not only take a communitywide effort, but a nationwide effort.

The breadth of this epidemic requires us to respond with a multifaceted approach. Congress has engaged many agencies, including the Department of Justice, the Drug Enforcement Administration, National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control, and Customs and Border Protection, just to name a few, to help combat opioid abuse.

This crisis has torn apart families. It has weakened our workforce and overextended our healthcare system. As a nation, we must act with a unified urgency to help those who have fallen victim to addiction in every corner of the country, and we must not forget their families who have seen firsthand the crippling effects of this disease day

in and day out. I know we are not only prepared to do so, but we are prepared to win this fight.

I have had the opportunity to convene opioid crisis community roundtables throughout my congressional districts to hear firsthand from families, from healthcare providers, from law enforcement, from emergency medical services, from those who are involved in the treatment community, and the impact is just so significant.

After coming away from these, I have also come to the conclusion, what is important to focus on really is the substance abuse behaviors. In one community in Clarion County, the issue at one time was opioids, and then it went to heroin. But when the heroin started to be mixed with other really deadly drugs and components, and so many people died within the user community, they moved on to the new—they went actually back to—they want to Suboxone, which is what we use to treat opioid and heroin abuse. And when the Suboxone—those who were dispensing that as treatment tightened that, the community found that they now had a crisis, they went to meth.

So it is so important, as we work on this, we keep a broader perspective of dealing with the substance abuse behaviors, because the drug of choice will change, based on economics, based on availability; but this, our goal should be to increase awareness. Our goal should be, acknowledge there is a problem, and I think we have done that.

In my work in healthcare and, specifically, I worked in acute psychiatric services for a period of time, I know that until you acknowledge you have a problem, you can't really deal with it. I think, across the board, in your communities, our States, at a local, a State, and national level, we acknowledge we have a problem, and that is an important first step.

I am proud of what we have done here in Washington, legislatively and providing funding, but this is an all-hands-on-deck problem. It requires prevention. That is where education is so important. Prevention, education, treatment.

We have to equip our youngest generation with decisionmaking skills, with discernment, so they have the filters to make better decisions when they are exposed to access, when they are approached by others, when they are preyed upon in terms of those who push drugs.

We certainly need to equip our medical professionals to improve how they prescribe, how they dispense medications, and increase their utilization of alternative pain management.

As a former rehabilitation professional, there are some great tools out there to help deal with managing pain. One of the things that, culturally, we have come to the point where we try to eliminate pain, and I think that is what has pushed us with the opioids into the situation that we are in today.

And we need to equip our communities with evidence-based treatment,

something closer to home. And so I do very, very much appreciate Chairwoman FOXX's leadership on education and workforce issues, and really appreciate her putting this Special Order together this evening and leading us as we address what truly is the public health crisis of our generation.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania. We all know and appreciate his background and his experience in healthcare and the wonderful wisdom that he brings to us on the Education and the Workforce Committee, not only on this issue, but on so many issues facing Americans today.

As the gentleman pointed out, the health and stability of our communities are in serious trouble because of opioid abuse across the Nation.

Since 1999, the opioid death toll has quadrupled. There are many estimates of how many Americans die in a single day because of opioids, and we are so sorry to hear of any deaths from opioids.

□ 1730

It is heartbreaking that all of those estimates are in the hundreds. These people were fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, neighbors, coworkers, and friends. They were real people in our communities.

I have had families from the Fifth District come to see me to share their heartbreaking stories of family members, often adult children, who have died from opioids. My own heart breaks for them and the pain they are feeling for their tragic loss.

There are newspaper stories and obituaries in newspapers reporting on opioid abuse and deaths and its devastating impact every day.

As opioids continue to claim the lives of Americans in cities and towns across the Nation, it is our responsibility to work together to find solutions that will bring relief to American communities.

The Committee on Education and the Workforce has recently held two hearings on opioids, and we have learned from employers, educators, local leaders, and addiction experts about how chronic and rising rates of opioid misuse and abuse are impacting families, schools, workplaces, and communities as a whole. We have heard about how the epidemic's societal burden on households and the private sector exceeded \$46 billion in 2016.

In schools, many principals attribute a recent decline in attendance to parents not getting up and having their students attend school because the parents are using drugs and they are not able to either take the children to school or have them ready to ride a bus.

I am pleased to share the floor tonight with my colleagues from the Education and the Workforce Committee, who have not only had hard conversations with their constituents about the toll opioid abuse has taken

on their communities, but they have been having productive and helpful conversations with each other about possible solutions.

There is no single answer to solving the opioid problem, but if we are to bring this deadly chapter to an early close, we will need collaboration across the aisle, ingenuity, and a uniting commitment to bringing peace and healing to our communities.

I will once again yield to my colleague Mr. THOMPSON for any closing comments he would like to make.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman's leadership on this.

The fact that we had two great hearings, which were on top of a lot of the work that we have been doing as a Congress, this really is an all-hands-on-deck public health crisis, and we know that because of the work that we are doing in Education and the Workforce.

This transcends education. It impacts the workforce in a significant way at a time when we have an estimated somewhere between 5 and 6 million jobs available in this country; and we have increasing job growth, and we have an aging workforce which is retiring, a significant number each and every year.

This is an issue that impacts our national security because it takes individuals out of the workforce not able to pass that drug test, not able to be able to qualify.

This is obviously an all-hands-on-deck because we see so many different committees and their members across both sides of the aisle who have been working on this, the amount of legislation going back.

One of the more memorable ones is the CARA Act, the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, that was like 16 individual bills—16 or 18, I don't remember exactly how many—that we debated on this floor and we passed on this floor. We rolled it into one package, and it was actually passed by the Senate, and the President signed it.

It dealt with things from little unborn babies who were born addicted, a terrible situation with the suffering of those new babies because they were born to moms who were active addicts, to veterans that VA physicians—and there are some really great VA physicians. I don't want to paint them with a broad brush. But there were some that were referred to as the candy man because they dispensed the pills like Skittles is what it looked like, and their solution to everything was to medicate, and everything in between.

Also, providing resources to our local communities so our local communities could engage in this, great programs that have been around for very long time like the Drug-Free Communities moneys that are used by parents and kids and teachers and community leaders who come together to deal with and confront this epidemic in their communities.

I have a community up in Erie County, Iroquois School District, and it is a

school district that has been devastated with overdoses. Most of the children in that school, a middle school—and it was heartbreaking—either had a family member or knew someone who had died of an overdose.

Some of the stories you hear, and one that really stands out with me because I have talked with this mom who was in my congressional district, her son, unfortunately, had a disease, Crohn's disease, and had to go through some surgery as a small child and endured that rather well. It worked out well. But when this young man turned about 16, 17, 18 years old, he had to go back and do surgery as a result, and this time, the painkillers they gave him he used basically one time and his life spiraled out of control.

This was an athlete. This was a kid who did so well in school, but his life just went into almost a death spiral, and he wound up being incarcerated—and all because he wasn't wired to be able to handle these painkillers.

That is a part of this battle. We need better science. We need better medicine so we can determine who can tolerate certain medications and who cannot, whose life would be transformed in such a negative way by using a painkiller one time. But that certainly is all a part of this battle.

Mr. Speaker, once again, I thank the gentlewoman for her leadership on this and thank her for hosting this Special Order tonight.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congressman THOMPSON, and I know the people of his district are well served by him. I thank him for his service on our committee, on the Agriculture Committee, and all that he does to help us write good legislation and pass good legislation.

As Congressman THOMPSON said, unfortunately, this problem with opioids affects people at all ages and in all walks of life, at every income level, every category of people—male, female, old, young—but we particularly grieve over the young people.

We have heard about babies becoming addicted because their mothers were addicted and of the work that is done to help those babies become free from opioid addiction.

We have heard about the veterans who become addicted because of the treatment that they have received. We know nobody is attempting to get anyone addicted to opioids or anything else, for that matter, but we realize that over the years, we have had stronger use of these drugs than we probably should have had used.

There are many ways to approach pain relief and pain management, and, unfortunately, in the past, too often it has been the path of least resistance.

We do hear over and over the stories about young people who suddenly get addicted because of surgery or an injury, and it happens sometimes very, very quickly.

As Representative THOMPSON has said, it has a huge impact on jobs. We

have, right now, 6 million unfilled jobs in this country, and the reasons are very many; but some of the reason is because we have so many people addicted to opioids and other drugs, and they are simply unable to pass drug tests.

We hoped, by this graphic here, to illustrate that the problem with opioids is very close to all of us at home, very close to us; and what we are hoping for is to find ways at the Federal level to get beyond opioids, to help people who are addicted have some stability, regain their health, be healed of their addiction.

But this cannot all be done at the Federal level, and we know that. In fact, too many people look first to the Federal Government for an answer. The Federal Government usually is the worst place to come for an answer. It usually has to be done at the local level, then at the State level, and, last, the Federal level.

But I know, as Representative THOMPSON has pointed out, many Members—in fact, I believe all Members of Congress now—are concerned about this problem we are facing with opioids, and we will answer the call to do something. My only hope is that we put everything into perspective.

As we have learned from our hearings and talking to other people, much of this work needs to be done in the family to start with, in the medical communities, and once people become addicted, then in the local communities as people collaborate, work together to help people not become addicted to opioids, and once they do get off of the addiction, to get back to a normal life.

I know that all of us pray for those who are addicted and pray that they will find a suitable program to help them become free from opioid addiction, and for those who have never become addicted, to be in a great environment so they never seek out drugs as an answer, because they are not an answer.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for being here tonight, I thank the staff, and I yield back the balance of my time.

RUSSIAN INTERFERENCE INVESTIGATION

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

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend Representative FOXX for bringing up a subject on opioids that is obviously plaguing so many places in America. It is a very topical and important discussion to have.

I want to change the subject, Mr. Speaker, and talk about a number of things that really concern me and many Americans across the country. That concern is:

Why has the President not released his tax returns?

Why is he so concerned about the Mueller investigation into the interference by the Russians in our elections? What is it that is being hidden? What are people afraid of? And why continue to threaten the FBI, threaten Mr. Mueller, threaten Mr. Rosenstein, threaten the Department of Justice, and, really, the police that are trying to get to the bottom of the interference by Russia in our elections.

□ 1745

And so I think we have got to take a look at exactly what has happened so far in that investigation. And that investigation with Special Counsel Mueller has resulted now in the guilty pleas of Michael Flynn, National Security Advisor; Rick Gates, former Trump campaign adviser; George Papadopoulos, former foreign affairs adviser to the Trump campaign; Richard Pinedo, a gentleman who committed identity fraud in the Russian probe; and an attorney named Alex van der Zwaan.

Currently under indictment are Paul Manafort, former Trump campaign chairman, 13 Russian nationals, and three Russian entities.

Now, why is this important? Congresswoman FOXX was talking about opioids. That clearly is important. Jobs and economic security of this Nation is something that I like to be talking about, or doing away with the opioid epidemic. But what is important about this comes down to the very pillars of America, the pillars of freedom, liberty, and independence.

Because if another nation is directing the outcomes of our election, those key pieces of who we are are threatened. We broke away from England to become a sovereign nation and not to be affected and ruled by some other country. So at the heart of this, it is about who we are as Americans, who we are as a country, to get to the bottom of Russian interference in our elections.

What they did was unprecedented and is something that is bigger than the election of 2016, maybe the election of 2018. It is about our ability to govern ourselves without interference of somebody else, some other nation.

In Congress, we passed an act that provided for additional sanctions against Russia because it is becoming more and more apparent of their interference with our elections. But the administration was reluctant to impose those sanctions. The question is, why?

The Ambassador to the U.N., Nikki Haley, just recently with respect to sanctions said: We are going to increase sanctions because Russia may have had some role in Syria with the different chemical weapons that were used.

And she went out so far as to say, we are going to impose some additional sanctions, but then had the rug pulled out from underneath her by the White House saying: Oh, wait a second. Even