

of 1973 and reassert Congress's constitutional war powers. I have also consistently supported legislation to repeal the 2001 AUMF, which the Pentagon uses to continue to justify the 18 years our troops have been fighting in the Middle East. President Trump has sent troops to Syria, Yemen, and elsewhere without seeking a new AUMF, which in my view is a violation of the War Powers Resolution.

Furthermore, I am pleased that this legislation accelerates closure of the Guantanamo Bay detention facility by prohibiting new detainees and allowing transfer of detainees to secure facilities in the United States. This unnecessary facility costs almost \$450 million each year to house 40 prisoners and has been used as a top recruiting tool by terrorists. The prison at Guantanamo Bay has been a black eye for the United States, eroding relationships with our allies, undermining U.S. missions abroad, and putting U.S. citizens and our troops at risk of retaliation.

However, I believe this legislation could have made responsible cuts to our defense budget without jeopardizing the safety of our troops or undermining our national security. For years, Congress has continued to increase the Pentagon's budget despite overwhelming evidence of its waste and abuse of taxpayer money. This year's legislation—with its outrageous top line defense budget of \$733 billion—is yet another example of Congress's habit of increasing the defense budget every year.

I have long supported a financial audit of the Pentagon. Unlike every other federal agency, the DoD has yet to pass a financial audit. In November 2018, the Pentagon spectacularly failed its first full audit, which highlighted numerous examples of waste and abuse. While I am pleased that this year's NDAA requires an annual audit of the DoD in order to help identify waste, it is ridiculous to provide the Pentagon a massive spending increase—as this bill does—when the Pentagon cannot even account for how it spends taxpayer money.

In particular, I have always opposed the DoD's Overseas Contingency Operation (OCO) account, a fiscally irresponsible fund that is not counted in the budget, recklessly adds to our mounting debt, and has no congressional oversight. OCO is a Pentagon slush fund that gives a blank check to fund endless wars that Congress hasn't authorized. That's why I co-led an amendment to cut OCO funding in the bill by approximately 25 percent. I am disappointed that this amendment failed to pass.

The bottom line is that fiscal responsibility and accountability at the Pentagon would allow for funds to be better spent supporting the needs of our troops, meeting our obligations to veterans, and ensuring our legitimate defense needs are prioritized. I strongly encourage my Senate colleagues to keep the strong provisions included in the House NDAA and not water the bill down.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. EMANUEL CLEAVER

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 15, 2019

Mr. CLEAVER. Madam Speaker, I regretably missed votes on Friday, July 12, 2019. I

had intended to vote "yes" on vote 468, "yes" on vote 469, "yes" on vote 470, "yes" on vote 471, "no" on vote 472, "yes" on vote 473, and "yes" on vote 474.

IN RECOGNITION OF VIET BAO FOUNDATION'S 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF WRITING ON AMERICA AWARDS

HON. ALAN S. LOWENTHAL

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 15, 2019

Mr. LOWENTHAL. Madam Speaker, I rise today in honor of Viet Bao Daily News and Viet Bao Foundation to recognize and celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the Writing on America Awards.

Founded 27 years ago in Little Saigon, California, Viet Bao Daily News serves as one of the main Vietnamese media outlets representing the voice of the Vietnamese American community in the United States. Today, Viet Bao coverage has reached Vietnamese communities in remote areas including those in Southern California; Northern California; Seattle, Washington; Houston, Texas; Louisiana; and Portland, Oregon. The main editorial office is in the heart of Little Saigon in Westminster, California.

Viet Bao Foundation, a non-profit organization, was founded to support Viet Bao Daily News' mission, to promote Vietnamese culture, literature, language, and arts. The Writing on America Essay Contest is one of many programs that the foundation currently manages and run to support this mission.

Writing on America was established on September 1999, with the first Awards Ceremony held at the Richard Nixon Presidential Library in Yorba Linda, California on November 29, 2000. From there on, there has been a new story published every day on Viet Bao and Viet Bao Online publications.

A Writing on America Anthology, including 600 plus pages is published yearly. The US Congress, in its July 28, 2010 meeting, officially commended Viet Bao for the cultural and historical values achieved by the American Writing Program. In 2016, the Writing on America Anthology officially entered the Library of Congress for all Americans to enjoy and treasure.

The Writing on America Awards is an Essay Contest held annually, which draws several thousand participants. Started in August 1999, in paying tribute to America, Viet Bao asked their readers to share their "American Dream" stories.

Since then, writers from across the country have been sending in their stories retelling their early and hardship days in America as well as their successful stories in achieving their American dreams. The selected stories are published daily on Viet Bao, Vietbao.com website and on the annual anthology title "Writing on America".

Celebrating its 20th anniversary, the Writing on America Awards has published a total of 22 editions, including more than 14,000 pages of stories, from thousand of writers. Writing on America anthology is known as a book of "live history from thousand writers".

In addition to the official publication by Viet Bao, thousands of articles were also repeat-

edly posted on Vietnamese and foreign language websites and books, many of which were reprinted. Regardless of the number of readers, the total impressions on Viet Bao website alone is over 800 million. Some authors have a record of over 1 million impressions. Nearly 5,800 articles of thousands of writers about America are now available on Vietbao.com. The response and support from the community over the last 20 years have been tremendously significant.

Today, Viet Bao offers annual cash prizes up to \$35,000 to the essay winners, including one first prize winner worth \$10,000 in cash, and many other category prizes worth of \$35,000 in cash.

This year, when Viet Bao celebrates its 20th anniversary, the award-winning writings enter its 12th anniversary collection, becoming the longest-standing writing contest ever in the Vietnamese literature award history of the Vietnamese community abroad as well as in the country.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 15, 2019

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, on July 11, 2019, I was unable to attend votes because I was out of town on official business. Had I been present, I would have voted: YEA on Roll Call No. 438; YEA on Roll Call No. 439; YEA on Roll Call No. 440; YEA on Roll Call No. 441; YEA on Roll Call No. 442; YEA on Roll Call No. 443; YEA on Roll Call No. 444; YEA on Roll Call No. 445; YEA on Roll Call No. 446; YEA on Roll Call No. 447; YEA on Roll Call No. 448; YEA on Roll Call No. 449; YEA on Roll Call No. 450; YEA on Roll Call No. 451; YEA on Roll Call No. 452; YEA on Roll Call No. 453; YEA on Roll Call No. 454; YEA on Roll Call No. 455; YEA on Roll Call No. 456; YEA on Roll Call No. 457; and YEA on Roll Call No. 458.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN MITCHELL

HON. JOHN B. LARSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 15, 2019

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Madam Speaker, I include in the RECORD the following Op-Ed in tribute to the late John Mitchell of South Windsor, Connecticut.

[From the Hartford Courant]

WANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE? RUN FOR OFFICE. YES, YOU.

(By Kevin Rennie)

Local political parties will nominate their slates of candidates for November's municipal elections this month. In a few communities, there will be ferocious contests for some positions. Democratic races for mayor in some of the state's largest cities, Bridgeport, Hartford and New Haven, look competitive as the September primaries grow nearer.

Those are the exceptions.

In most towns, politics is mercifully a civic good more than it is a secular religion. Some communities continue to enjoy our New England tradition of electing members

to a wide range of local boards and commissions. That requires a lot of candidates. Another tradition, minority representation, guarantees no political party gets to elect every member of a town council, board of selectmen or board of education. Our law seeks to encourage a variety of voices in local government.

Political parties in many towns struggle to find enough candidates to fill their slates. The hyperpartisanship that mars our national politics recedes in many communities seeking citizen volunteers to manage local affairs. Plenty of parties will welcome unaffiliated voters onto their tickets for municipal elections.

If you get your news from cable television, you may properly think that much of contemporary politics is an endless series of screaming matches. Town politics does not often descend into the bear pit. Go to a meeting of your local planning and zoning commission and you will not be able to tell the Democrats from the Republicans. It's a collection of citizens trying to manage or attract development to their community. If you can spot the nuances of a traffic study or possess some ideas on how a town can manage a decline in the number of school-age children it will educate in the next decade, welcome.

As a candidate for local office, you'll be more a part of a team than a member of a fire-breathing partisan tribe. The desire to serve will be your platform. In most instances, a campaign for a town office comes with few complications. Almost everyone wins. In some towns with a nine-member board of education, for example, there are only ten candidates. Minority representation rules have been adopted to give no party more than five members. Only one of the ten candidates, assuming a full slate by each party and no third party candidates, will lose. And there are plenty of other places for that person to serve in community government.

I've saved the best reason for last. You will meet wonderful people whose friendship will endure after your service concludes. I was reminded of this gift on Monday when John Mitchell, South Windsor's beloved former mayor, died. Mitchell, 84, may have been our community's longest performer of good deeds.

Born in Manchester, he lived and worked in South Windsor for most of his adult life. He started a fuel oil business as a young man, and it thrived through the unflinching melding of enterprise, knowledge and a buoyant personality. He served on the town council for more than a decade and enjoyed two terms as mayor in the 1980s, a time of historic growth in town.

Mitchell's service to others was not limited to elective office. He remained active in the local chamber of commerce and was a stalwart in the Rotary Club for decades. He loved community events. Almost 40 years ago, he thought that since so many strawberries grew on the shrinking numbers of South Windsor farms, there ought to be a June festival, and local Republicans ought to create it. I can attest to the amount of work a strawberry festival requires. Mitchell's enthusiasm made it impossible to do anything but enjoy the challenge. The strawberry festival has long been what he envisioned: an annual June Saturday that thousands have enjoyed.

Mitchell was active in providing college scholarships to local students as recently as last month. We'll never know the vast number of people he lifted and encouraged with his private generosity. We helped with a few

local campaigns in the past decade, and I was reminded of his joy in the battle. His sense of humor grew sharper, and he displayed a rare wonderment at growing older.

So think about running for something. You will help your town. If you are very lucky, you will get to know someone like John Mitchell.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JOHN H. RUTHERFORD

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 15, 2019

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Madam Speaker, I was unavailable and missed Roll Call Vote 465. Had I been present, I would have voted Nay on Roll Call No. 465.

IN RECOGNITION OF JOHNNY (SAL) GARDNER

HON. MIKE ROGERS

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 15, 2019

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize Mr. Johnny (Sal) Gardner and his coaching career.

Starting in 1967, Coach Sal has devoted his life to his community coaching the city's youth in football, baseball and basketball.

During his years as the head football coach at Oxford, he achieved over 225 wins and had a 49-game winning streak from 1999 to 2005.

He also coached baseball for 47 years where he won or tied for the area championship four times, had numerous playoff appearances and coached over 550 athletes, including my children, during his tenure there. He won two state championships in youth baseball in 1985 and 1990.

Madam Speaker, please join me in thanking Coach Sal for his dedication to our local youth.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 15, 2019

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, due to an error, I voted "nay" on Roll Call 460 (Amash of Michigan Part B Amendment No. 50 to H.R. 2500). I intended to vote "yea".

RECOGNIZING THE LIFE OF THE HONORABLE ROSS PEROT AND HIS MONUMENTAL IMPACT ON OUR NATION

HON. RICHARD HUDSON

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 15, 2019

Mr. HUDSON. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the life of the Honorable Ross

Perot and his monumental impact on our nation.

Mr. Perot is well known for being a wildly-successful, self-made businessman who ran for President twice, the first time receiving a recorded-breaking 19% of the vote as an independent candidate. Today, I would like to recognize him for his unparalleled service and sacrifice on behalf of our country's military.

Mr. Perot is a graduate of the United States Naval Academy. Following his service, Mr. Perot joined International Business Machines (IBM), which led him to create the extremely successful company, Electronic Data Systems. Mr. Perot was responsible for many other breakthroughs and innovations in the industry. Mr. Perot made a point to hire former military personnel and based his management style on his military training. Mr. Perot continued to be an active advocate for our servicemembers and veterans, becoming one of the most outspoken advocates for our Prisoners of War (POWs). In fact, Mr. Perot was asked by then-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to lead the fight on behalf of our POWs, a project he spearheaded by personally chartering two jets filled with medical supplies and the wives of POWs still in Vietnam. His efforts directly led to many POWs being released in 1973 and returned to the United States.

Over the course of his life, Mr. Perot received countless honors for his work. In 2009, he was recognized by the Department of Veterans Affairs for his tireless efforts on behalf of our nation's veterans, and received honorary status in the Army and Marine Corps. Mr. Perot was also named an honorary Green Beret and is one of only fourteen honorary members of the Army's famous 75th Ranger Regiment.

Of personal note, I'm especially grateful for all Mr. Perot did for our soldiers and families at Fort Bragg, the largest military installation in the world, located in North Carolina's 8th Congressional District. Mr. Perot donated millions of dollars to the Airborne & Special Operations Museum, and has donated his time, resources and devotion to assisting projects at the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School at Fort Bragg.

While we mourn his passing, Mr. Perot will be remembered for his impeccable character, determination and generosity. I have a deep admiration and profound appreciation for all he accomplished and I am inspired by his example to ensure we take care of those who so bravely served our nation.

Madam Speaker, please join me today in recognizing the life of the Honorable Ross Perot.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. KEVIN BRADY

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 15, 2019

Mr. BRADY. Madam Speaker, on July 12, 2019, I was unavoidably detained and was not able to vote. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on rollcall No. 472; "nay" on rollcall No. 473; and "yea" on rollcall No. 474.