

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President.

HONORING JOSEPH FARINA

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

Mr. SEAN PATRICK MALONEY of New York. Madam Speaker, at a time of dysfunction and rancor, it is useful to remember a time when America led the world because of the heroism of everyday Americans. I rise today to honor the life and legacy of Sergeant Joseph Farina of New Windsor, New York.

Joe was a regular guy who ran a bowling alley in Newburgh, New York. He was a 20-year-old and a member of the National Guard when America was attacked at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. That very night, Joseph volunteered for service.

During war, he was deployed to the Philippines and New Guinea, where his service earned him four battle stars, numerous other medals, and two Presidential citations.

Joseph passed away at his home last month at the age of 97. Next to him was his wife of 76 years, Elizabeth, whom he had married in Brisbane, Australia, at the height of the war in 1942. Joseph would actually work in Australia for many years and pioneer the sport of bowling there.

But his legacy is far broader than that, not only to his country during his service in World War II, but also to the veterans community in the Hudson Valley and across America.

He was active in many veterans organizations, the Catholic War Veterans, and he helped to cofound the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor in New Windsor, New York. The Hall of Honor is dedicated to collecting and sharing the stories of Purple Heart recipients. No comprehensive list of Purple Heart recipients exists, and the hall acts as an important archive and monument to their service.

Joseph, like so many in his generation, knew what it meant to serve others. Like so many in his generation, he worked in his community and was a person dedicated to something bigger than himself. What a powerful lesson for all of us to recall today. He was a model American citizen, and he will be missed.

TRIBUTE TO MAYOR LARRY LANGFORD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Alabama (Ms. SEWELL) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SEWELL of Alabama. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the extraordinary life and legacy of late Mayor Larry Paul Langford. Mayor Langford was a beloved mayor of Birmingham and Fairfield, as well as serv-

ing Jefferson County as its first African American president of the Jefferson County Commission. He devoted much of his time to big ideas for the people whom he loved in the communities that he served.

Mayor Langford will be remembered as a larger-than-life personality who broke barriers as the first Black reporter for the region at WBCB; the first Black mayor of Fairfield, Alabama; the first Black president of the Jefferson County Commission; and as mayor of Birmingham. A Vietnam vet, Mayor Langford served in public office in multiple capacities for nearly 23 years, and he will be greatly missed by our community.

On March 17, 1946, Larry Langford was born to John Langford and to Lillian Nance Langford as the oldest of six children. He was a proud graduate of Parker High School in Birmingham, Alabama. After high school, he enlisted in the United States Air Force, serving for 5 years during the Vietnam war.

Langford returned home with a renewed sense of community and a renewed sense of service. He quickly completed his college degree at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and he became the first African American male to become a news reporter for WBCB 6 News in its region.

The importance of this role was never lost on Langford. He knew that, after the tumultuous decade before, to have an African American man reporting the news in this area was an important sign of progress in the city of Birmingham. Langford did well as a reporter, using his charisma and outgoing personality. He was able to speak with the people of Birmingham and tell their stories.

Langford decided to run for his first political office. He was elected to the Birmingham City Council in 1977, where he quickly became known as the liveliest and most outspoken of city council members, as well as the most media savvy.

During his time on the Birmingham City Council, he also worked as a radio news director and contributed to the Birmingham Times. After an unsuccessful run for mayor of the city of Birmingham against fellow Councilman Richard Arrington, Jr., in 1979, Langford temporarily retreated from public life. By 1982, Langford had moved to Fairfield, Alabama, a suburb of Birmingham, and married the love of his life, Miss Melva Ferguson. A few years later, he decided to return to public life and ran for mayor of Fairfield, handily defeating a crowded field of candidates.

Langford became the first African American mayor of the city of Fairfield in 1988, another first. After his election, he led an aggressive campaign to revitalize the city. Langford was granted more authority and helped to save the Fairfield City Schools from bankruptcy, and he pushed for regional cooperation in economic development that led to an agreement between 11

Jefferson County municipalities which joined forces in 1998 to finance and construct a \$90 million project called Visionland, an amusement park that he brought to the city of Birmingham. It was actually in Bessemer, and it was part of a regional cooperation.

During his four terms as Fairfield mayor, Langford set his eyes on the Jefferson County Commission, where he hoped to continue to develop more regional cooperation in economic development. Langford was elected to the Jefferson County Commission in 2002, defeating the incumbent.

After becoming elected to the commission, he was quickly elected by his peers to be its president, another first. During his tenure as president of the Jefferson County Commission, he proposed a 1 percent sales tax that helped build 30 new schools and generated over \$1 billion in revenue.

In 2006, Mayor Langford ran again for the mayor of Birmingham for a second run. This time, he was successful and won in a very crowded field without a runoff.

Mayor Langford was sworn into office on November 13, 2007, as mayor of Birmingham. He went on to strike an agreement with a foundation that provided computers to schoolchildren throughout the city of Birmingham. Nearly 17,000 elementary and middle school children received laptops that year.

While Mayor Langford's 23-year political career resulted in many successful public projects, his service was not without controversy. Mayor Langford's tenure as mayor of Birmingham was cut short when a jury found him guilty of public corruption on October 28, 2009, and he was sentenced to 15 years. After serving 8½ years, on December 28, 2018, due to his failing health, Mayor Langford's sentence was commuted by a Federal judge, giving him compassionate release. The next day, Mayor Langford was transferred from a Federal prison to Birmingham Hospital, where he remained until his death.

I want you to know, on a personal note, Mayor Langford was an outstanding mayor and his service will always be remembered and beloved by the community that loved him so much. I was honored to be a part of his funeral and to help him get his compassionate release. It is important that we remember the totality of his career.

I ask my colleagues to join me in remembering Mayor Larry Langford.

SENIORS HAVE EYES, EARS, AND TEETH ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Madam Speaker, as we begin this new Congress, I am proud to introduce the Seniors Have Eyes, Ears, and Teeth Act, with 78 of my colleagues. My bill would

reverse a longstanding Medicare prohibition on critical health services for our seniors.

Since its implementation in 1965, Medicare has excluded coverage for hearing aids and related audiology services, routine dental care, and routine eye exams and eyeglasses, despite the large number of older Americans who critically need these items and services.

The Commonwealth Fund reports that, among all Medicare beneficiaries who needed a hearing aid, only 75 percent did not have one. Of those who had trouble eating because of problems with their teeth, 70 percent had not seen a dentist in the past year. And of those who had trouble seeing, 43 percent had not had an eye exam in the past year. The reason for many seniors was affordability.

According to the latest statistics from the Kaiser Family Foundation, more than half of Medicare beneficiaries live on incomes below \$26,200 per year. For them to pay out of pocket creates extreme hardship.

Sadly, reliable data shows that neglect of all health, and even the lack of routine dental exams and cleanings, can deteriorate overall physical health and exacerbate serious and complicated health problems that increase with age.

It is also increasingly well documented that untreated vision and hearing loss diminishes quality of life and increases the risk of costly health outcomes, such as falls and resulting disability, depression, and dementia.

My bill would remove the restrictions currently prohibiting Medicare coverage of these basic healthcare necessities such as eyeglasses, hearing aids, and dental care. Expanding Medicare coverage for these services is a cost-effective intervention that will prevent accidents, falls, cognitive impairments, and increases in chronic conditions and oral cancer.

Madam Speaker, if we do not address these gaps in health coverage now, the overall health of our aging population will continue to suffer and the need for costly and avoidable services will increase. But most importantly, giving our older adults the gift of hearing, vision, and oral health would go a long way toward helping our seniors enjoy their golden years free from depression and social isolation.

It is time to recognize that total healthcare for our seniors must include adequate access to vision, hearing, and dental services. I urge my colleagues to cosponsor the Seniors Have Eyes, Ears, and Teeth Act, and ensure a healthier future for all our seniors.

□ 1045

PUT THE PEOPLE FIRST AND END GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Massachusetts (Mrs. TRAHAN) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. TRAHAN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak about what is now the longest government shutdown in American history, its impact on the hardworking men and women of Massachusetts, and the opportunity cost of the current impasse.

Over the last several weeks, I have heard heartbreaking stories from Federal workers and their families from across north central Massachusetts. During a meeting I had last week in Andover with furloughed IRS employees, I heard about veterans struggling to afford their prescriptions and parents worrying about putting food on the table.

One woman had just recently lost her husband and others were still recovering from last September's gas explosions in the Merrimack Valley. A few days earlier, I spoke with an air traffic controller at Logan Airport who, after hearing President Trump's assurances from the Oval Office that the budget standoff would not lead to a shutdown last month, felt comfortable splurging on Christmas presents for his wife and four children. Now, with the bills coming due and his pay stub reading zero, he and his family are confronted with anxiety and financial hardship.

Each of the over 800,000 Federal workers impacted by this shutdown, close to 7,500 in Massachusetts alone, has a story to share. I am the daughter of a union iron worker and the country's biggest union, the AFL-CIO, has a saying: A fair day's wage for a fair day's work. We gain nothing from punishing the dedicated Federal workforce, nor do we position ourselves to recruit the best and the brightest if we can't even keep the lights on.

Today, the majority in this Chamber continues to vote for legislation that reopens the Federal Government, restores critical services, and makes Federal employees financially whole again.

As we continue to wait on the President and his party's leadership in the Senate to do the right thing by approving House-passed legislation to end this shutdown, critical pieces of legislation languish as the American people wait anxiously for Congress to act on real issues and crises, not the manufactured one on the border.

Healthcare costs continue to rise. Our climate is rapidly changing as coastal communities suffer from more intense storms and more frequent flooding, while California has faced down some of the largest and deadliest fires in the history of the State.

Gun violence continues to rip apart families and communities, and more Americans died of an opioid overdose than died during the Vietnam war. There is so much more we should be focused on.

Madam Speaker, we cannot allow shutting down the government over a policy debate to become the new normal. I was here as a staffer in 1995 during Newt Gingrich's shutdown and remember feeling that it was an unprecedented event, never to happen again. Sadly, that feeling was wrong.

We were all elected to this body to debate issues that matter to the American people. It is what our constituents expect us to do. It is time to open the government and debate border security on the floor of the people's House for all to see.

Ensuring the safety and the security of the United States is among our most solemn responsibilities. I take it very seriously, but the only crisis right now is the one the President is making.

Each day that the administration keeps the government closed, it threatens the financial security of Federal workers, the people who process our taxes, inspect our food, and ensure airport security as well as all of the people who depend upon them.

Each day of the shutdown is a day lost supporting education, improving roads and bridges, and providing affordable healthcare.

We have sent bill after bill to the upper Chamber to provide border security and reopen the government. This week, we will do it again. If the President wants to improve border security, he should work with Democrats on real solutions.

Madam Speaker, I oppose a \$5 billion wall. Experts say the wall won't stop the flow of drugs or prevent visa overstays. The people who live at the border don't want it. But wherever you stand on funding a border wall, holding Federal employees and their families hostage is unacceptable.

Madam Speaker, it is time to put people first, end this government shutdown, and get back to work.

MOURNING THE LOSS OF GDANSK MAYOR PAWEŁ ADAMOWICZ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Madam Speaker, as co-chair of the bipartisan Congressional Caucus on Poland, it is with a truly heavy heart that I rise this morning to express deepest sympathy to our NATO ally, Poland, and its countrymen and women on the brutal slaying of visionary Gdansk Mayor Paweł Adamowicz.

Mayor Adamowicz had served his city since 1998 as it championed the values of liberty, equality, and democracy. I hold profound respect for his enduring dedication, perseverance, and honorable service to his community and nation. He loved Gdansk as a beacon for a free Poland and gave his life to it.

What a deep tragedy this is for his grieving family, his wife, his children, his associates, for the Polish nation, and for freedom-loving people everywhere.

Far too much blood has been shed on Polish soil for the world to ignore such a heinous crime that took his life.

I visited Gdansk in both 2009 and 2013, and through these visits, I gained an even deeper respect for its noble history and its place on Earth, including the location where Nazi shelling at Westerplatte began the cataclysmic invasion of Poland starting World War II.