

Bishop Barber is married to Rebecca Barber, and they have five children: Sharralle; William, III; Benjamin Joseph; Rebecca Eleanor; and Andrew Willard—five wonderful, delightful children.

The other sibling deceased earlier this year. He lived in Grifton, Georgia. His name was Charles Edgar Barber, and he was survived by three children: Shakile, Malik, and Quentin.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate you allowing me time this morning to celebrate and to recognize a great American who has served well over these many years.

SUPPORT FOR OUR SERVICEMEMBERS IN THE NDAA

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

Mr. CISNEROS. Mr. Speaker, last week, we passed a National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2020. Working with my colleagues for over 20 hours on the House Armed Services Committee to mark up this bill in the late hours of the night and the early hours of the next day was all worth it.

Mr. Speaker, with the passage of this year's NDAA, we have fulfilled our duties to ensure our military's readiness, strengthened our national security, and eased our servicemembers' transition to civilian life.

I am proud to have helped secure 17 floor amendments for the NDAA, with more than half of those offered on a bipartisan basis. These provisions supported programs that are critical to servicemembers living in the 39th Congressional District.

A major priority of mine is ensuring that our servicemembers have the support they need when they transition back to civilian life. I was proud to colead the bipartisan Work for Warriors provision with my colleagues, Representatives PAUL COOK, ELISSA SLOTKIN, and MARK TAKANO.

The Work for Warriors model has a proven track record of helping our veterans find jobs, providing job placement assistance to unemployed Guardsmen, Reservists, military spouses, and veterans to not only help them provide for their families, but also facilitate their successful transition back to civilian life.

Another priority of mine was to improve the quality of healthcare for servicemembers, especially mental health programs and women's healthcare services. I am proud to have secured a number of provisions that take care of military families by expanding military housing and improving access to healthcare services.

Specifically, I was proud to work with Congresswoman CHRISSY HOULAHAN to expand transition assistance for women servicemembers. This will ensure our servicewomen are better equipped with the healthcare resources they need as they leave military service.

Also, I am hopeful that the amendment my colleagues and I included to address sexual assault at all levels of our military will help our servicemembers and veterans receive the respect and justice they deserve. The high rate of sexual assault in the military is unacceptable and needs to be addressed immediately.

Even though DOD spends millions on sexual assault prevention programs, the number of assaults has jumped dramatically since 2010. We owe it to our servicemembers and veterans to determine why the current programs have been failing, and we need to create a new, effective approach to this problem.

Because, in exchange for their service, our Nation took on the responsibility to care for each servicemember's health, both physical and mental, that is why I prioritized provisions to address the suicide epidemic currently facing our servicemembers and veterans. We are losing servicemembers and veterans to addiction and suicide at alarming rates. It is unacceptable that this epidemic is only getting worse.

I worked with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to secure language that will help prevent servicemembers from reaching at-risk status and ensure that at-risk servicemembers are identified and able to receive the care they deserve.

Also, I am proud to have supported an amendment with Congresswoman JACKIE SPEIER to protect our transgender servicemembers. As a Navy veteran, I was saddened by our government's willingness to discriminate against individuals who had the courage, spirit, and commitment to serve our country in uniform.

Anyone who has the bravery to serve our country should be allowed to do so, and I stand firmly against the administration's ban on transgender servicemembers. I will continue to fight against this hateful and bigoted policy until the President and his administration understand that transgender servicemembers have the right to their dignity, and they have the right to serve.

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't mention that the NDAA reaffirms our constitutional authority over the use of military force. With this provision, Congress reasserts our congressional authority and its duty to our country and our servicemembers, and it makes clear to the President that there is no current authorization to use military force against Iran. We understand how Iran destabilizes the region, and it is our responsibility in Congress to ensure that the U.S. does not enter into a conflict without a strategy.

In closing, while I have said much on what this House has accomplished with this bill, I would like to end with this: I thank our servicemembers, civilian military personnel, and all the national security professionals who support our Armed Services in my district, in our country, and around the world.

It is an honor to represent them in Congress to ensure the promises made here are kept for our servicemembers and our veterans.

PASS OUR 2020 NDAA BILL

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

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, last Friday, the House of Representatives passed the National Defense Authorization Act for 2020, a measure which sets policy for the folks who wear the uniform of this country.

The U.S. Congress has actually passed a defense authorization act every year for the last 57 years. This year, if we all continue to work together, we can make it 58 years running.

Again, this is a measure which sets everything from military pay—a 3.1 percent pay raise for the military, the largest pay increase in the last 10 years—to setting the ground rules for military acquisition, whether it is recapitalizing our Navy or buying the new F-35 planes for the Air Force. It is a large, sprawling bill which covers, again, all aspects of U.S. defense policy for the upcoming year.

Included in this measure was an amendment that I offered for which, on Friday evening, the Iraq and Afghan Veterans of America issued a strong statement of support in the wake of passage of the bill.

What my amendment did is it offset a policy decision that was made in July of 2018 by the Trump administration which cut off the ability of long-serving members of the military to transfer their GI Bill educational benefits to a spouse or dependent. Again, the IAVA, which TIME Magazine has described as the most important organization representing a new generation of veterans—what my amendment did was it eliminated what IAVA described as a shortsighted policy change announced by the Department of Defense in July 2015, which would have limited transferability to servicemembers with less than 16 years of Active-Duty service and excluded servicemembers who had served for nearly the entirety of the war on terror.

In 2008, we changed the GI bill, recognizing, again, that we have an all-volunteer force and that the GI Bill, which goes back to Franklin Roosevelt signing it 75 years ago, had deteriorated over time. We restored the value of the educational benefit, and we created, for the first time, the ability of a servicemember to transfer, on a one-time basis only, the educational benefit to a spouse or child.

Again, what this did was it took the burden of those who were serving particularly long periods of time in our military at great economic sacrifices the ability to at least take one family member's educational benefits for higher education.

Again, my amendment, which was part of the bill that passed last Friday night, would restore the full intent of the Congress in 2008 and reverse the Trump administration's decision to cut off that transferability, which was issued last July.

Again, we still have work to do. We have a conference to build with the Senate, and we, obviously, have to get it to the President for signature. We have done it for 57 straight years, and we should make it 58 this year by passing the 2020 NDAA bill.

PUBLIC SERVICE LOAN FORGIVENESS PROGRAM

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, there are also things happening over at the U.S. Department of Education regarding higher education which are of great concern.

On Thursday, the American Federation of Teachers filed a lawsuit in the District Court of Washington, D.C., basically asking the court to rule that the Department's foot-dragging in terms of discharging student loan debt through the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program has got to come to an end.

In 2007, we passed the College Class Reduction Act which set up a mechanism for those who serve in critical public service occupations, such as teaching, nurses, doctors, police, prosecutors, social workers, veterinarians, and people who work in nonprofit organizations. If they make their student loan payments consistently over a 10-year period, under the College Class Reduction Act, they could apply for a discharge of the balance of their student loan, recognizing that these are people who are going into occupations for which the payment of student loan debt can be too onerous.

□ 1215

So, 2007 was the year that this program was supposed to kick into effect. As the Government Accountability Office determined, since that period—and these are our figures from 2019—7,555 borrowers have submitted applications to have their loans discharged. Only 864 have been approved, and only 516 borrowers, less than 1 percent, have had their loans forgiven.

Again, the loan servicers working for the Department of Education, as determined by GAO, are giving bad information and are not crediting the monthly loan payments that teachers and nurses and others have been faithfully making, relying on this program. They built their employment history around the opportunity, knowing that that student loan debt could be discharged.

Again, what we are seeing are shocking figures from the Department of Education that have not followed through and implemented this law.

Not a great surprise to those of us on the Committee on Education and Labor because the Trump administration, for the last 3 years, has submitted budgets that would eliminate the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program.

We have to change this administration's policies toward higher education.

We did it on Friday, and we have to do it with public service loan forgiveness to reward the good guys, the people who are out there doing critical work for our Nation.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 16 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. GARCIA of Texas) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian, Armenian Apostolic Church of America, New York, New York, offered the following prayer:

Heavenly Father, Your children gathered here, in this sanctuary of democracy and freedom, thank Thee for Your providential care full of visible and invisible blessings.

Lead this august assembly in Your spirit to accomplish the mission vested upon her.

Grant Your wisdom and love upon the Members of this assembly to follow Thy will and fulfill their awesome responsibility toward the "land of the free" and the world at large.

May justice and peace be forthcoming from their decisions, as well as prosperity and joy to prevail among mankind.

Let this and every day be marked as a masterpiece in the lives of all those who serve the people for Your glory, so that they may be worthy of hearing Your calling: "Come you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House her approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from New York (Mr. BRINDISI) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. BRINDISI led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Repub-

lic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

IN CELEBRATION OF 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF COLGATE UNIVERSITY

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

Mr. BRINDISI. Madam Speaker, I rise today to join our community in celebrating the 200th anniversary of Colgate University's founding. Located in Madison County in upstate New York, Colgate was officially established by New York State in 1819.

For 200 years, the university has exemplified all the best American higher education has to offer. It has produced many graduates of national acclaim, including business professionals, community leaders, Members of Congress—including two current Members of Congress—and other government officials.

Colgate has taught some of the brightest minds in our country and now educates more than 2,900 students each year in 56 different majors. I am proud to represent this excellent institution in Congress, and I join the Colgate community in celebrating their bicentennial.

LET'S END THE WIDOW'S TAX

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, last week, House Democrats had the chance to bring the Military Surviving Spouses Equity Act on the floor to repeal the widow's tax.

Roll Call described, today, the bill as a "broadly supported bipartisan bill" with 365 cosponsors. This was the first legislation to achieve the Consensus Calendar and would have received a standalone vote, having 86 percent cosponsorship.

Roll Call said: "Wilson's bill, the Military Surviving Spouses Equity Act, would end a disparity between government payments made to surviving spouses of servicemembers who die on Active Duty."

"The 'widow's tax' . . . requires the surviving spouses to forfeit much of their DOD Survivor Benefit Plan annuity when they receive Dependency and Indemnity Compensation from the VA."

"The Rules Committee did not give Wilson a heads-up that they were going to put language in the NDAA rules to remove his bill from the Consensus Calendar."

This was a partisan political gimmick. It is not too late to bring it back up as a standalone bill to help the spouses.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September the 11th in the global war on terrorism.