

a unique status: the freely-associated Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of Palau. These are island countries with which we share a long history dating back to the Second World War and before and an enduring relationship built on decades of shared interests and like values. These countries, also collectively known as the Freely Associated States, span an expanse of the Pacific ranging from just southwest of my State of Hawaii to our territories of Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands in the western Pacific, an area the size of the forty-eight contiguous States.

Under our Compacts of Free Association, our country can construct military bases on their soil and make decisions that affect our mutual security. In return, we provide financial assistance, access to some federal programs and enable free movement of their citizens to live and work in the United States.

The role these islands play in our national defense cannot be understated. For example, Palau asked our country to increase its military presence in its islands, and the Marshall Islands are home to what the Army calls "the premier missile test range in the world." In November, a Navy destroyer near Hawaii intercepted a mock ICBM launched from U.S. Army Garrison Kwajalein Atoll in an exercise viewed as an important accomplishment and critical milestone by our military. Vulnerable as this small island community is to COVID-19, it opened its closed borders to our citizens who needed to work at Kwajalein.

Given the importance of the Compacts, we must always demonstrate to the Freely Associated States and the world that the U.S. can be trusted to uphold its commitments. For example, I am very pleased that the final Fiscal Year 2021 omnibus funding bill includes \$5 million of a \$20 million debt the U.S. owes to the Marshall Islands in response to unilateral changes made to the investment tax and trade incentives in the initial version of the Compact of Free Association.

On the other hand, I was extremely disappointed that the outgoing Administration recommended providing \$2 million less for Fiscal Year 2021 than was agreed to in compensation for amending various education programs back in 2003. This underfunding erodes the trust that our allies and partners have for our commitment to the Compacts.

We must fulfill and take these obligations seriously, especially as we work to renew the economic provisions of these Compacts. I look forward to working closely with my colleagues in the coming Congress to remedy this error and address other issues that may arise relating to the Compacts.

Our alliances and partnerships worldwide, powered by shared interests and values, are America's greatest strengths, especially in this era of great power competition. Trust in our country's ability and willingness to honor our commitments must be the unshakeable foundation of these crucial relationships. We can and must do better to protect that trust.

PROTECTING SENIOR CITIZENS

HON. KWANZA HALL

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 24, 2020

Mr. HALL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to address a most pernicious side effect of the pandemic.

Indeed, Madam Speaker, one of the most troubling parts of this pandemic is that our seniors are the most vulnerable.

They are uniquely susceptible to the harmful parts of this pandemic.

Often times, our senior citizens, who have worked many decades making our country great, are on fixed incomes, sometimes many miles from other loved ones.

It is sad and regrettable that this pandemic has created so much pain and death and uncertainty to this community.

But sadly, as happens from time to time in moments of suffering, there is also an insidious group of people who seek to profit off of this pain.

Madam Speaker, if we are serious about protecting our senior citizens during this pandemic, then our help must not stop at COVID tests, vaccinations or hospital care.

We must also ensure that individuals purporting to be fiduciaries and financial advisors do not take advantage of our seniors.

But unfortunately, this is not just limited to financial advisors. There are many probate attorneys preying on the elderly and the sick and those shut-in and in poor communities in Georgia's Fifth Congressional District and all over the country. We must work with organizations and Bar Associations to prevent this abuse.

Our seniors deserve to live their golden years in peace of mind. Our body recognizes that, which is why we have never wavered to pass legislation designed to ensure this reality.

We have passed social security and passed age discrimination laws. We must do more to ensure that they are protected from some of the darker elements of society.

TRIBUTE TO THOMAS J. "TONY" FITZGERALD, III FOR HIS LIFETIME OF SERVICE TO OUR COUNTRY

HON. ANNA G. ESHOO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 24, 2020

Ms. ESHOO. Madam Speaker, I rise today on my own behalf and on behalf of Representatives ZOE LOFGREN, JACKIE SPEIER, JIMMY PANETTA, ERIC SWALWELL, RO KHANNA, JERRY MCNERNEY and JARED HUFFMAN to honor the extraordinary leadership of Thomas "Tony" Fitzgerald, III, as he retires from his position as the Director of the Veteran Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System (PAVAHCS), an office that he assumed on June 25, 2017. He ably filled the enormous shoes left by former Director Lisa Freeman, and oversaw the delivery of health care to more than 93,000 veterans at the VA's Palo Alto facility. The PAVAHCS serves eleven Congressional Districts and ten counties, and has three inpatient facilities in Palo Alto, Menlo Park and Livermore, and outpatient facilities in seven other cities.

Mr. Fitzgerald earned his Bachelor's degree from American InterContinental University, and is a graduate of the Leadership VA program, and a member of the American Hospital Association and the American College of Healthcare Executives.

Mr. Fitzgerald served his country throughout his long and productive career. He was a medical non-commissioned officer in the U.S. Army for 16 years, and began his career with the VA in 1988 as a psychiatric nursing assistant in Chicago. Throughout his career he has been an ardent advocate for Veterans, their families and staff. He earned increasingly responsible positions with the VA and he moved to California and began his service with VA Northern California in 2000.

Tony Fitzgerald's accomplishments while at PAVAHCS make a very long list. Among some of the highlights are increased Veteran trust scores; high patient satisfaction scores; approval for an additional Fisher House; robust union partnerships; the hiring of 1,080 new employees in fiscal year 2020; and oversight of the largest construction portfolio in VHA's history (\$2.6B).

Mr. Fitzgerald has earned many honors including the Top Environmental Excellence Award and the Secretary of VA Alternative Dispute Resolution Award.

Madam Speaker, we ask the entire House of Representatives to join us in thanking Tony Fitzgerald for his extraordinary service to our country, and in wishing him every blessing in his well-earned retirement.

AFRICAN DIASPORA

HON. KWANZA HALL

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 24, 2020

Mr. HALL. I rise today to address the issue of the African Diaspora.

The African Union defines the African Diaspora very broadly as people of African Descent living outside Africa. The UN estimates that there are about 200 million people of African descent outside Africa in various constituencies.

In Atlanta, we are blessed to have so many members of the Diaspora in our community and that community is anchored by incredible institutions like the African Diaspora Art Museum of Atlanta.

And I am heartened to see that our youth are also engaged in this conversation, such as the Young African Diaspora Initiative.

The last dozen years have been a source of whiplash. From 2009 to 2017, we had a president whose father was from Kenya, and who used the opportunity of his administration to strengthen ties between Africa and our Nation.

For the last four years, however, we have had a president who pays no heed to the richness and vitality of the African Diaspora. This was encapsulated by his vulgar epithet about some of the countries on the African continent.

But, in November, Americans decided to turn the page far away from this hate.

The election of President-Elect Joe Biden and Vice President-Elect Kamala Harris provides an opportunity.

We need to use the occasion of the Biden Administration to strengthen the ties with Africa while emphasizing the importance of the Global Diaspora.

There are so many opportunities where we can work together, most notably with our support public projects, such as schools and health facilities.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the need to form strategic alliances are self-evident—we all have a need to work together to end this scourge.

We must encourage the Diaspora to leave commanding footprints on capital, creativity and know-how.

But there are additional opportunities, such as eradicating malaria, ensuring clean water is available in all pockets of the continent, and to ensure programs like PEPFAR, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, are funded and supported. PEPFAR has saved the lives of millions of people.

But we can do more and we must do more. We must strengthen the ties of diplomacy and of commerce, particularly through direct private investment and improved utilization of transit corridors.

There are advantages of encouraging African governments to implement fiscal incentives and policies that foster common commercial development and works to eradicate economic deprivation.

After all, it was Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., one of the most prolific servants of non-discrimination and of racial reconciliation in our nation, who advanced just causes through nonviolent protest. We must turn to this example once more to achieve further greatness for members of African Diaspora as our nation begins this new presidential administration.

We cannot let this opportunity go to waste by disregarding Africa's potential. We must seize the moment.

RETIREMENT REMARKS

HON. TED S. YOHO

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 24, 2020

Mr. YOHO. Madam Speaker, I would like to take this moment to say thank you, farewell and goodbye while issuing a warning to this esteemed body. I have had the honor and privilege to serve as a member of Congress for the last 8 years. It truly has been an amazing experience for me, my wife Carolyn and our three children. It is the American Dream come true. We will always be grateful and thankful for the many memories and experiences we've had.

This would not have been possible without the support we received from our families, friends, supporters, Team mates and constituents for allowing us this opportunity.

After all, opportunity is what gives rise to the American Dream. My wife and I, along with all in this body, are the beneficiaries of that opportunity and recipients of the American Dream. Our Constitution guarantees equal opportunity for all not equal outcomes.

I ran for Congress because I felt America was off course and moving away from the principles it was founded on. We are a Republic, a Constitutional Republic. America is certainly not a perfect country. We've had, and still have, our shortcomings but we improve with each generation. The Constitution provides a framework for that.

However, some people want to fundamentally change our system from a Republic to a

socialist state and to end the legacy we have been blessed with. There are those in government, and the citizens who support them, who don't understand the basic foundational principles of this nation. There are leaders in the Democratic Party, who a few short years ago, would not acknowledge they were promoting socialism. Yet their ideals and actions were telling a different story.

Now today, we have leaders in the incoming administration who proudly espouse that this will be the most progressive, socialist administration ever formed in the United States.

Their desire to change a country that has created the most successful lifestyle in the world for generations is a travesty. It's a travesty to those that paid the price in blood to preserve our Republic and its ideals.

As the Chairman of the Asia-Pacific subcommittee on Foreign Affairs I've had the honor of traveling all over the world, meeting world leaders from many countries. I had a very impactful conversation with an Ambassador from an ASEAN nation that had a lasting impression upon me of what America means from an outside perspective. I would like to share this with you and issue this warning.

He said when his country fought to get independence their founders could have chosen any form of government to set up in their new independent country. They looked at the British, French, and German system of government but chose the American form of government for their new country even though none of them had been to America. They did this because they were very well studied in our founding principles enshrined in the U.S. Constitution. Specifically, the notion that government derives its power from the consent of the governed and without that consent no legitimate government can be formed.

The affect on me was this. You see America is larger than any president regardless of who sits in the White House and is much bigger and more significant than a political party, whether it be Democrats or Republicans. It is our founding principles, core values and the U.S. Constitution which holds it all together. These are what has set the gold standard in self governance that other nations want to emulate. That is why people from around the world risk everything to reach our shores and become Americans.

Our founding principles say our rights come from a creator, not government, and government is there to protect our God-given rights. Our core values state that all men, women and every child are created equal and have equal opportunity. The Constitution is the glue that binds all this together. It's these three things, founding principles, core values and the Constitution that makes up the American Ideal. And that ideology, "is the shining city on a hill", as President Reagan proudly spoke of in his farewell address. It is our duty to preserve and make better, not destroy what previous generations have built.

I caution those who want to change America into a socialist country to rethink what they are really asking. Do you really want to change the principles of America with all of the successes the people of this nation have experienced? What will be your excuse when you explain to the next generation, your children perhaps, why you allowed the opportunity to be taken away from them. Opportunities afforded to you and millions of others, only to allow it to die on the vine.

I hear promises of free education, free health insurance or Medicare for all. Some say everyone should have a living wage whether you work or not. This utopia they espouse is a fallacy. The utopia they promise is actually Hugo Chavez and Nicholas Maduro's Venezuela we see today. To achieve in America all one must do is embrace the opportunity, work hard, and play by the rules. As Frederick Douglass said in his self made man speech, "Success is the result of opportunity plus one's desire, self reliance and work".

So I challenge my colleagues with this. Will you fight to preserve and improve our Constitutional Republic or will you allow it to become a socialist country? What country will you pass on to your children and future generations?

Please, choose wisely.

IN RECOGNITION OF VIRGINIA PENINSULA ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS

HON. ROBERT J. WITTMAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 24, 2020

Mr. WITTMAN. Madam Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the 100th Anniversary of the Virginia Peninsula Association of REALTORS. This year marks the centennial of the VPAR and commemorates 100 years of hard work and dedicated service to the Commonwealth of Virginia and the surrounding region.

The Virginia Peninsula Association of REALTORS is known for their vision of being the voice for real estate on the Virginia Peninsula. In December 1920, the VPAR was founded and organized as the Newport News Real Estate and Insurance Exchange. Throughout the long history of mergers and transition, 1990 marks the year the organization took on the name Virginia Peninsula Association of REALTORS. VPAR has grown from only 19 members in 1920, to more than 1,200 members today, marking 100 years of prosperity and growth.

From the beginning, VPAR has been a voice for real estate on the Virginia Peninsula. VPAR supports the areas of Hampton, Newport News, Poquoson, Isle of Wright County, and York County, and provides public policy and advocacy, education and training, and industry resources to real estate professionals throughout the Virginia Peninsula. The missions and goals of VPAR are strong and steadfast. The organization stays true to their important mission of supporting fair housing and strives to make home ownership achievable for all.

Virginia Peninsula Association of REALTORS use community outreach and engagement as a key tool to support the region, and they devote hundreds of volunteer hours each year to contribute to the overall success and prosperity of their community. This engagement and care for the community has greatly improved and strengthened the region's economy and standard of living. This care and engagement speaks directly to the kind of organization that the VPAR is, and is why the VPAR has been, and will continue to be successful.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, I ask that you rise with me to commemorate the centennial