

home healthcare providers, massage therapists, and acupuncturists.

I have personally met with these local providers to hear their stories, and I have convened meetings of affected stakeholders in New Hampshire and here in Washington.

Here is the bottom line: Without real progress, the MISSION Act will never fulfill its promise, and care for our veterans will be compromised.

Last week, at a hearing of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I received a promise from Secretary Wilkie that the VA will take immediate action to fix these persistent payment issues for community providers in New Hampshire and across the country. We have to hold the VA to this commitment.

My office is bringing VA leaders, veterans, providers, and third-party administrators to the table to solve these problems once and for all.

When our veterans return home, they shouldn't have to fight to receive the care that they have earned, and local providers shouldn't have to fight a stubborn bureaucracy just to get their bills paid, to keep their doors open, and to continue treating our veterans.

We can and must do better on this front.

EMPOWERING PARENTS IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

Mr. PAPPAS. Finally, Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about empowering parents in New Hampshire to develop the skills they need to pursue the American Dream.

No parent should have to choose between caring for a child and providing a better life for their families.

That is why I am introducing the American Job Centers Family Accessibility Act, which will create a competitive grant program for job centers to provide access to childcare for individuals receiving services at their centers.

In 2018, more than 5.4 million unemployed workers, including more than 500,000 veterans, took advantage of career services at job centers in their communities. But despite clear evidence that job centers are effective, barriers to access for jobseekers still remain.

In New Hampshire, State officials tell me that the number one obstacle to job training is access to childcare. No one who works hard and wants to develop new skills should be denied that opportunity simply because they can't find quality, affordable childcare for their kids.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the American Job Centers Family Accessibility Act so that working mothers and fathers aren't unfairly denied the chance to earn a better job and a better life for their families.

CONGRATULATING STACIE KONVICKA

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

Mr. CLOUD. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to congratulate Mrs. Stacie

Konvicka, who was this year's recipient of the Educator of the Year Award from the Wharton County Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture.

This award is given to a teacher who exemplifies professionalism, dedication, leadership, and enthusiasm.

Mrs. Konvicka is a fourth grade math and science teacher at Wharton Elementary School.

Having been a teacher for 22 years, she has learned the value of going above and beyond for her students in the classroom.

Wharton Elementary School is a title I campus, which means over 90 percent of the students come from economically disadvantaged homes.

Mrs. Konvicka invests so much into her students. At the end of the day, she wants to ensure that they feel cared for.

Many have benefited from her high-quality instruction as they are pushed to do their best.

American ragtime composer Scott Hayden once said: "Teachers have three loves: the love of learning, the love of learners, and the love of bringing the first two loves together."

Mrs. Stacie Konvicka has these three loves, and we, as south Texans, are thankful for her service in lovingly shaping the minds of future generations.

REMEMBERING MARIE JORDAN SPEER

Mr. CLOUD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remember Marie Jordan Speer, who passed away at 98 years of age in Corpus Christi, Texas, on October 19, 2019.

Marie's kindness and compassion touched the lives of those around her, and through her various achievements, she served her community well.

In 1942, she married Mr. Edward Jordan, but 2 years later, he was drafted to fight in World War II and heroically, but tragically, died in combat.

Marie ultimately used her suffering and loss to help others. She founded the Gold Star Wives of America in order to comfort and create a community for other widows who had lost their husbands in the war.

The first meeting she organized was a lunch with other military widows from town. This lunch morphed into a small volunteer group, which, in time, grew into a national organization that today has 35 chapters throughout the United States.

The Gold Star Wives not only provide comfort and support for families who have lost loved ones; on Capitol Hill, they fight to secure victories for the spouses and children of fallen soldiers.

We owe these families a debt that we cannot repay. Their husbands and fathers have made the ultimate sacrifice in order to protect our country.

Today, and every day, we pray for God's peace for these families.

Marie continued to work on behalf of the Gold Star Wives, eventually settling in Corpus Christi, Texas, where she started three local newspapers and became heavily involved in the Coastal Bend community.

South Texas is a better place because of Marie. Her life truly is a testament to the power of sacrificial love, determination, and compassion.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Marie's family for sharing Marie with our Nation. We are sorry for their loss.

LEADERS DOING GREAT JOB ON CORONAVIRUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. BUDD) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BUDD. Mr. Speaker, I rise to discuss the coronavirus.

I want to reassure folks that since we first learned about this virus, our government has been very proactive in its response.

The President took charge and assembled a task force, headed by the Vice President, that brought together the best and the brightest doctors, scientists, and health experts that our country has to offer.

The President also took the crucial step of implementing a travel ban on China to slow down the spread of the outbreak within our borders.

While our government is appropriately handling the spread of the coronavirus, our citizens can help as well.

Mr. Speaker, I urge everyone to go to cdc.gov, follow the latest developments, and learn about easy ways that you can avoid getting sick.

America must always be ahead of the game on viral threats like these, and I am proud to say that our leaders are doing a great job.

□ 1030

ESSENTIAL SUPPORT FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDE FOR COMMUNITIES

Mr. BUDD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight the essential support that faith-based organizations give to the communities around them, including during times of crisis.

During Hurricane Florence, in 2018, volunteers from Samaritan's Purse were on the ground after the hurricane had devastated thousands of homes across my State.

Lorraine Jenkins, a resident of New Bern, my mother's childhood home in North Carolina, said that she "had faith but needed a little more strength" when she returned to her home to find it flooded with 18 inches of water. Thankfully, several volunteers from Samaritan's Purse were there to pray with Lorraine to give her the strength that she needed.

During Hurricane Dorian, in 2019, the Salvation Army provided over 43,000 meals, 55,000 drinks, 25,000 snacks, and 48 full cleanup kits to victims.

Mr. Speaker, faith-based organizations also provide key support services to children, many of whom are victims of the opioid crisis. This crisis has left over 92,000 children in foster care and in need of loving homes. Faith-based adoption agencies play a pivotal role in finding homes for these children.

Sadly, despite the clear benefits faith-based organizations provide to the communities around them, there remains an ongoing push to strip them of Federal funding or to even shut them down for following their sincerely held religious beliefs. That is why, this week, I am introducing the Equal Treatment of Faith-Based Organizations Act, along with several of my colleagues.

My bill codifies into law parts of the recently proposed HHS rule to ensure equal treatment for faith-based organizations. My bill reverses the discriminatory policy from the previous administration that required faith-based providers of social services to disclose their religious affiliation and refer potential clients to other providers. My bill also allows faith-based organizations to apply for Federal funding on equal footing with secular organizations.

Mr. Speaker, the Federal Government has no business discriminating against faith-based organizations purely on the basis of their sincerely held religious beliefs. I am proud to lead this legislation and to protect the good work that faith-based organizations do every day.

SENATE DEMOCRATS BLOCK PRO-LIFE VOTE

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

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. Speaker, last week, Senate Democrats blocked a vote in the Senate on two pro-life bills: the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act, which would require doctors to provide medical care to a child who survives an abortion, and the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act, which would ban abortions beginning at 20 weeks. Senate Democrats prevented a vote on both of these commonsense bills as House Democrats have already done 80 times.

I call on the Democrats on both sides of the Capitol, as Senate Majority Leader McCONNELL said last week, to take a "clear and moral stand" to protect innocent life.

SEVERE WEATHER AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. Speaker, this week is Severe Weather Awareness Week, and it is a good reminder to always be prepared for extreme weather events, which we too often face in Kansas.

Ready.gov—that is, r-e-a-d-y.gov—which is run by FEMA, is a great place to find resources related to flooding, thunderstorms, winter weather, or advice on building an emergency kit.

Similarly, FEMA offers a free smartphone app which provides real-time alerts, shelter locations, and other resources to help during and after a severe weather event.

But it is not enough to just communicate severe weather events to the public. We need to continue to invest in tools and encourage innovation

when it comes to weather modeling and forecasting so that we can ensure as much lead time as possible before a severe weather event occurs.

From coastal regions to the heartland, severe weather impacts us all, and the Federal Government not only needs to be working with public and private partners to improve systems, but also to encourage and incentivize innovation in the field.

Recently, the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee has taken a look at the various forecasting and modeling efforts across the country and discussed how we can better improve these systems to give people increased warning in the event of severe weather events.

Furthermore, I met with those on the front line in forecasting, such as our hardworking meteorologists back home at our National Weather Service, along with research institutions across the country, discussing the advances they are making thanks to new tools and technologies.

It is important to stay safe, informed, and prepared as we head into the severe weather season, and I hope all Americans will take advantage of the tools available to achieve these goals.

STEPS UNITED STATES IS TAKING TO RESPOND TO CORONAVIRUS

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. Speaker, the spread of the coronavirus and its dominance in the news has been at the top of my mind as well as for many Kansans.

While there is no reason to panic, it is prudent for all of us to be mindful of the ongoing challenging situation. As a physician and Congressman, I feel it is important that I convey the steps the Federal Government is currently taking to best respond.

First, we must demand more transparency from the Chinese and Iranian Governments. American experts must be allowed to get access to information on the ground in both China and Iran, particularly in Wuhan—ground zero of the outbreak. Unfortunately, these countries have a long history of misinformation and coverups, and we need to know the full truth to best protect Americans.

Some in the American medical industry are concerned about a shortage of supplies which are largely manufactured in China. Currently, the FDA is not aware of any national shortages of medical products. Federal agencies have been proactively reaching out to hundreds of manufacturers to assess potential shortages and to let manufacturers know they can provide assistance. That being said, this is an excellent time to review our supply chain for both American healthcare as well as all other industries.

I personally believe President Trump and Vice President Pence are doing everything in their power to protect Americans. Consulting with the top medical experts, this administration is moving to swiftly mitigate outbreaks of coronavirus here at home.

Attempts by the national media and Democrats in Congress to place blame on the President for these outbreaks are inexcusable—they are unprofessional; they are unnecessary; and they are actually very harmful.

Anything President Trump can possibly do to expedite the development of testing, antivirals, and vaccines is already being done—and, I might add, is being accomplished in record time.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Department of Health and Human Services have been preparing for outbreaks like this for years. We are the most prepared and the best equipped nation in the world to take on this coronavirus.

On the eve of a potentially global epidemic, this situation underscores how imperative it is for our country to be able to prevent unidentified individuals from entering this country. Border security is national security, and families in Kansas deserve a home safe from unvetted individuals who may knowingly or unknowingly be carrying contagious diseases.

I visited with the CDC over 5 weeks ago, asking what preventative measures they were taking when this virus was in the early stages of outbreak. I have been staying in close, constant contact with the White House, the CDC, and all agencies responsible for controlling the spread of this disease. The safety of Kansans is my top priority, and I will continue monitoring developments closely and communicate with officials across our State.

In the meantime, as a physician, I recommend some commonsense practices: regular handwashing, applying hand sanitizer, proper nutrition, and minimal travel outside your community. This is a time to prepare and plan, a time to make sure you have a plan for your children, for your elderly parents, perhaps, that you have a plan for your place of work and for your place of worship, wherever you might gather in your own community.

The event also underscores what an absolute disaster a government takeover of the medical system would be. America's healthcare capabilities are second to none because of competition and free market innovation. Radical socialist policies would effectively eliminate private investment in new medicines and technologies. That would be unacceptable.

OPPOSITION TO THE NEW WAY FORWARD ACT

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

Mr. COMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my firm opposition to the New Way Forward Act, a radical piece of legislation that would put American lives at risk in numerous ways.

Under this bill, heinous crimes committed by illegal immigrants would no longer result in immediate deportation, but, even worse, it would allow