

combat operations were matched only by his commitment and his passion to take care of veterans back home.

In fact, in my hometown of Santa Clarita, there is a veterans' memorial that stands today because of Bill's hard work and his advocacy. In the halls of a local veterans' support center, there are several dozen biographies of our city's local heroes, our veterans; and all of these biographies were written by Bill after he personally sat down, interviewed, and discussed their experiences with them each, individually.

Bill loved our veterans because he understood what it meant to truly serve, and he understood what it meant to truly sacrifice. In his own words he said: "America was founded on the courage to fight for freedom, and that is what the veteran community does. They take pride in that. There is no better family than the veteran community," he said.

Bill was a steward of those who protected our Nation. A warrior with a big heart and a sheepdog with a big bark and an even bigger fight, and he knew what that flag, Mr. Speaker, stood for, and he would do anything to protect it.

And underneath all the passion and fight was a kind and gentle man, one of the most soft-spoken and caring men I have ever known, a husband to Meg, a role model to his sons, and a friend to thousands.

Bill knew better than anyone that our Nation is a precious one and that its survival is not pre-ordained.

He knew that our Nation is sometimes vulnerable. It is an experiment of government still in its infancy, a developing Nation that is underpinned by goodwill and dependent on the labors of good Americans willing to serve her and to fight for her for the right reasons.

We are indeed a Nation that sometimes wobbles and, in doing so, we require the steady hands of patriots and leaders. We are a Nation that is kept stable by the exertions of great Americans. People like Bill Reynolds.

Bill was an American who cared until the very end and will continue to look over us and our precious Nation like the loyal wingman that he has always been.

May God bless Bill Reynolds and his family. And may God bless this great Nation that he gave so much and fought so hard for.

LIFE IS SACRED

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

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in memory and to honor the millions of babies killed since the Roe v. Wade decision almost 50 years ago.

There is nothing more precious than the gift of life, given to us by God, who knew us before He formed us in our mother's womb.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will suspend. The gentleman will put on the mask, please.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Mr. Speaker, there is nothing more precious than the gift of life given to us by God, who knew us before He formed us in the womb.

Mr. Speaker, life is sacred, and it is heartbreaking that there are those across this country and in Congress who reject that truth and view abortion as nothing more than a medical procedure.

Sadly, a professed Catholic who knows better has already taken steps to increase the killing of babies across the world and make innocent taxpayers foot the bill.

He has revoked the Mexico City policy, which means American taxpayers will now be sending dollars overseas to support the killing of unborn babies in foreign countries. And he is actively working to eliminate the Hyde amendment, which is a longstanding, bipartisan doctrine that prevents taxpayer funds from paying for the killing of babies in the United States.

Let's be clear, abortion is murder, not healthcare.

Abortion is not the answer to a child's mental or physical challenges. I am reminded today of the words of Frank Stephens, a Special Olympian. Many of you heard him speak here at Congress. He is now living with Down syndrome. He said this: "About abortion, I don't want to make it illegal, I want to make it unthinkable. Politicians change laws. I want to change people's hearts."

Mr. Speaker, I agree with Frank Stephens, but I believe we can do both. We can change lives and we can change people's hearts.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

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

Mr. BACON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize three "Legacy Leaders" from my district in Nebraska for Black History Month.

Every February, we celebrate the achievements of African Americans and recognize their pivotal roles in the history of our great country. This year, I recognize Ella Willis, Teela Mickles, and Bettie McDonald, who have worked diligently to leave a meaningful and lasting impact on the Omaha community.

Originally from North Carolina, our first Legacy Leader, Ella Willis, came to Omaha in 1967, right after the race riots. After seeing the damage and destruction from the riots not being repaired, she joined the Neighborhood Action and Fact Association, founded by Andy "Handy" Wright.

Around 2004, Mrs. Willis became the president of the association. She worked to secure grant funding for the beautification of 24th Street and the neighborhood garden and marketplace building. The association assisted with the painting of murals along the 24th Street corridor, including The Union for Contemporary Art.

In 2005, under Mrs. Willis' leadership, the association received the Environmental Improvement Award from the Urban Community Improvement Program. Her community advocacy started long before, when she joined the NAACP in the early sixties, while her husband served in Vietnam. She participated in the voting registration process, protesting for the right for Black women to vote and registering Black men.

Mrs. Willis thanks God for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and praises his belief in justice, hope, love, and non-violence, saying, "This is what we must learn together as brothers and sisters of God. Have love and faith in your heart."

Another Legacy Leader is Teela A. Mickles, the founder and CEO of Compassion in Action, a faith-based, non-profit organization that serves individuals confined in the State correctional facilities and families affected by incarceration.

Mrs. Mickles became a single parent to five young children after an unfortunate turn in life and later attended college, earning her associate degree in Chemical Dependency Counseling. At the same time, she developed Compassion in Action's Pre-Release Education/Reentry Preparation Program, with her motto of "Embracing the person, rebuilding the family, and breaking the cycle."

She has been recognized for her dedication and accomplishments through the years: The UNO Woman of Color Award, Heartland Family Services' Family Advocacy Award, and the City of Omaha Excellence Award, and many, many more.

Mrs. Mickles is also an ordained minister on staff at Mission Church and credits the success of her organization to her strong faith in God and belief that every person is viable. As she says: "If you're not dead, God's not done."

Our third Legacy Leader is Bettie McDonald, cofounder of Native Omaha Days, a week-long homecoming event that celebrates the community's historical and cultural legacies.

Born and raised in Omaha, Bettie belongs to the Bryant-Fisher family, hailed as one of the most prodigious Black families in Nebraska. After graduating from the Allhouse School of Beauty and Culture, she became owner of her own beauty shop of over 50 years, The Economy Beauty Salon.

The vision for a reunion of native Omahans was first arranged in 1976 and less than a year later the original founding planning members, Vera Johnson and Bettie McDonald, started a tradition of the week-long celebration. It is now known as Native Omaha Days and, every 2 years, has brought people to Omaha from across the country.

Approaching its 22nd biennial, Native Omaha Days has reached a peak, influencing cultural programming along 24th Street and adjacent North Omaha neighborhoods.

Bettie is an active member of St. Paul Baptist Church. This year she will celebrate 70 years of marriage, 70 years, to her husband, Jesse McDonald.

I personally thank these three women for making a difference and leaving a legacy of future Black leaders in Omaha. We owe them much gratitude and recognition.

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THE CURRENT STATE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as my home State of Illinois approaches the grave milestone of 20,000 COVID-19 deaths.

I am thinking of the families of each of our neighbors we have lost, and I am also thinking of everyone in our community who is currently suffering from the physical, psychological, and financial consequences of the pandemic.

The past year has been so hard for so many of us, and it is not over. We still have a long way to go until our families' health and economic well-being is secure.

Now, thanks to the work of incredible scientists, we have authorized vaccines that are safe and effective, offering a level of protection that can save lives and crush this virus.

But until we actually get shots in arms, the virus will continue to spread. This process has been difficult, and the bottom line is that our current vaccine process is not sustainable. But we can change that. We must change that.

The good news is that we can. We have a new administration laser-focused on ramping up distribution, and there are investments to be made in order to help.

Local health departments are overwhelmed with phone calls from people wondering where to go for a vaccine. Web-based appointment signups are filling faster than people can register. Immunization providers lack the resources to carry out vaccination campaigns at this unprecedented scale.

To address these challenges and carry out an efficient COVID-19 vaccination campaign that prioritizes the people who need them most, Congress needs to act swiftly and boldly. The next relief bill must include significant funding to accelerate vaccine administration with a particular focus on providing vaccine doses and outreach to ensure that nobody is left behind.

We also need to fund the workforce that will carry out vaccination efforts, as well as testing, contact tracing, and other critical initiatives to stop the spread of the virus.

I have introduced two bills, the Community Immunity During COVID-19 Act and the Health Force, Resilience Force, and Jobs to Fight COVID-19 Act, to make the investments that will be needed to end the pandemic, prevent

the next public health crisis, and ensure a strong economic recovery.

Finally, as we continue to confront a once-in-a-century health crisis, it is absolutely unacceptable that millions of Americans continue to lack access to affordable healthcare.

That is why I introduced H.R. 369, the Health Care Affordability Act, which would increase the dollar amount of premium tax credits across all income levels.

It would eliminate premiums for lower-income households; reduce premium costs by hundreds or thousands of dollars for middle-class families, including those who currently make too much money to qualify for the tax credit; and ensure that everyone would be able to buy a plan for no more than 8.5 percent of their income. For families in northern Illinois who currently pay 15, 18, or 20 percent of their income for healthcare, this is real savings that matters.

This was included in the President's American Rescue Plan, and I urge my colleagues to support its inclusion in the next relief package.

At this challenging moment in history, the decisions we make will be felt for generations. If our ideas are too small, the consequences not only mean a protracted pandemic but a stunted economic recovery.

But if we pursue solutions that meet this moment, we can not only get to the other side of the pandemic, we can emerge from it stronger than before, with evidence-based public health investments that prevent future crises; with career pathways that usher in a new era of economic growth; and with a healthcare system built on a foundation of equity, where access to quality care is not the privilege of a few but the right of all.

I believe that this future is possible, and I know that the decisions we make today will shape it. I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle are ready to do the work we were sent here to do.

CONGRATULATING ETHAN KNARR

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Ethan Knarr of DuBois, Pennsylvania. Ethan recently accepted a fully qualified appointment to the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland.

Ethan is the son of Christopher and Danielle Knarr and the grandson of Daniel and Linda Schaffer of DuBois, Leona Knarr of Troutville, and Doug Grube and the late Elizabeth Ann Grube of DuBois.

As a student at DuBois Area High School, Ethan has been an active member of the National Honor Society and the cross-country team, and he served as captain of the tennis team.

Outside of school, Ethan has been heavily involved in the Boy Scouts of America, having served as historian, assistant senior patrol leader, and eventually senior patrol leader of his troop. Ethan became an Eagle Scout in March 2020.

I would like to thank Ethan for his commitment to service and wish him the very best as he embarks on this exciting new phase of life in Annapolis.

RECOGNIZING PETE RICKARD

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Pete Rickard of Strattanville, Pennsylvania, for accepting a fully qualified appointment to the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado.

Pete is a student at Clarion-Limestone High School. During his time at Clarion-Limestone, Pete has been a member of the Academic Decathlon team, lettered in basketball, and active in FFA, or Future Farmers of America.

He is now a senior member of the Civil Air Patrol Clarion Composite Squadron 504 and is active in the Greater Pennsylvania American Red Cross.

Pete credits his success to the love and support he has received from family and friends, including Rod and Debbie Frampton, as well as his four sisters, Lucy, Ann, Katie, and Bonnie.

Undoubtedly, Pete's academic success and experience with the Civil Air Patrol will serve him well as he starts this exciting new chapter at the Air Force Academy.

Best wishes to Pete, and I look forward to seeing all that he achieves.

RECOGNIZING LISA WINGER

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Lisa Winger of Oil City. Lisa was recently recognized by the Venango Area Chamber of Commerce as the 2020 Citizen of the Year.

According to the chamber, nominees are those who, "in the face of danger, combat adversity through feats of ingenuity, courage, or strength, and those who perform great deeds or selfless acts for the common good."

Susan Williams, executive director of the chamber, noted nominations for Lisa mentioned her impeccable character and that she was highly respected, a leader, and selfless.

Lisa works at the AseraCare Hospice, where she counsels residents and their families by providing compassion, comfort, and advice.

She truly lives a life of service. Outside of her work with AseraCare, Lisa has also established an Alzheimer's support group at the Oil City YMCA, and she leads the county's Toys for Tots program.

A friend of Lisa's said in her nomination that Lisa "works tirelessly for Venango County and dedicates herself to everything she does."

I would like to congratulate Lisa on this much-deserved recognition and thank her for her commitment to serving her community.