

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.

□ 1045

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.

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF MAXY
HUGH HAMMOND

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

Mr. NORMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the accomplishments and life of a true family man and public servant, Maxy Hugh Hammond. Maxy was born in Lancaster, South Carolina, on October 19, 1956.

Maxy was from a family that was heavily involved in every facet of service. His father, Maxy Sr., was very active in serving in the Lancaster community, having served on the Lancaster School Board and Lancaster City Council for years and “whetted the appetite” for his son to serve the public, which he did for many years, including serving on the Lancaster County Council, United Way, Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, Economic Development Board, Boy Scout Council, school improvement councils, and many more boards and commissions.

Maxy began his work career 45 years ago, including 7 years with the Catawba nuclear plant; Springs Industries for 12 years, where he worked in the engineering department; Kanawha Insurance in sales for 15 years; and vice president of Founders Federal Credit Union for 10 years, retiring on December 31, 2020.

Maxy has been married for 42 years to Jennifer Starnes Hammond and has two children, his son, Garrett, and his wife, Elizabeth; and his daughter, Holly, who is married to Matthew Whitley.

The joys of Maxy and Jennifer’s life are their two granddaughters, Avery Oak, who will be 2 years old in June, and Maryn Reese, who will be 1 year old in April.

I had the privilege of viewing and listening to a series of testimonials posted on Facebook about Maxy and what he and his family have meant to the greater Lancaster community, which included heartfelt comments by his family, his friends, and his coworkers from all walks of life.

Those who knew him the best had this to say:

“Our office is like a six-pack, and Maxy is the plastic ring that holds our office together.”

“He never puts himself first. It is about everyone else.”

“If this building was burning down, he would circle the building two to three times before worrying about himself.”

“Maxy doesn’t care about titles, accolades, or recognition. It is all about others.”

“If Maxy can make everyone else happy, that is all he wants.”

Maxy Hammond is a true public servant who has lived his life for his God, his family, and his country.

On behalf of the Members of the 117th United States Congress, I wish you Godspeed in your retirement years as you spend time with your family and

your many friends on the heavenly beaches of the Carolinas.

MIDDLE OF IT ALL

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

Mr. MANN. Mr. Speaker, I am humbled to deliver my first speech on the House floor today and discuss the future of our great Nation.

I grew up on a farm south of Quinter, Kansas, that my parents and brother still operate. The house my parents live in, and the house I grew up in, is the same house my great-great-grandfather ordered from a Montgomery Ward catalog in the early 1900s.

Growing up there meant I spent thousands of hours on a tractor working in the fields and on horseback doctoring cattle in the family feed yard. Those hours turned into love of country and lessons about the value of hard work.

My Kansas roots run deep, and my desire to serve our country is wider than a country mile. I ran for Congress to advocate for agriculture and our conservative Kansas values. Kansans are good people who carry a pioneering spirit with them, in the same way those who settled my State did over 160 years ago.

The people of Kansas 1, the Big First, know each other, look out for each other, and sacrifice for each other. The district is home to more than 60,000 farms and is made up of farmers, ranchers, feedlot managers, nutritionists, ethanol producers, ag lenders, and agribusiness owners who feed, fuel, and clothe the world.

As Congress becomes increasingly more urban, the distance from farm to fork has never been greater, and the Big First depends on strong voices for agriculture in Congress. That is why I am honored to serve on the House Agriculture Committee.

At the very top center of the Big First sits Lebanon, Kansas, a seemingly ordinary small town. About 2½ miles northwest of Lebanon is the exact middle of the contiguous 48 States. A few months ago, a group of us met in Lebanon and prayed for our Nation and that God’s will would be done and that our future would be bright.

There is something about being in the middle of the country where farmers pray for rain, parents drive 30 miles one way to take their kids to school, and communities shrink and grow with oil and gas prices that gives you a great perspective. To really be in the middle of it all, though, we must demand results.

I have received many calls from family farmers in the Big First gravely concerned with President Biden’s executive order restricting travel from countries like South Africa, where many of our legal farmworkers come from during harvest. I will tell you, if an issue matters to a Kansan, it matters to me.

I worked with a number of my colleagues here to issue a letter to President Biden, asking that he exempt essential workers, like those in agriculture, from his travel ban. Soon after, we were told the President would grant the exemption. But to me, an exemption to an overreaching executive order is not enough.

After watching President Biden issue 25 executive orders in his first 10 days as President, more than the last seven Presidents combined during their first 10 days, I decided I could no longer sit idle and watch executive orders dictate the direction of this country with no input from Congress. The executive branch was not created to legislate—Congress was.

We are now up to 42 executive orders from the Biden White House. That is why, earlier this week, I introduced the More Accountability is Necessary Now acts, six pieces of legislation promoting accountability and transparency to the administration’s future executive orders.

The MANN acts require that the executive branch notify the American public and Congress of its intent to issue any new executive orders pertaining to agriculture, energy, the environment, pro-life provisions, the Second Amendment, and immigration.

The short-term impact of legislation like this would be to hold our elected leaders more accountable. But for the long term, we must never forget that America is the greatest and most noble experiment that has ever been endeavored.

When our Founding Fathers used the three words “by their Creator” 245 years ago, they unleashed freedom on humanity, because for the first time in history, people stood up and declared that freedoms do not flow from a king or government; they flow from God.

The power of that truth can never be stomped out because it rings loudly in the hearts and minds of Americans from coast to coast and certainly in the Big First, which in many ways is the pilot light of America. In my district, the basic values of faith, family, and freedom are alive and well. It is our responsibility to never let that light go out.

□ 1100

I believe that when we get into the middle of issues, roll up our sleeves, get to work, and do the heavy lifting, we gain better perspectives and better results. Being in the middle of it all instead of being stapled to our desks in Washington, D.C., makes us all better and is good for America.

Get in the middle of it. Stand face to face and engage. Spend time to think, pray, and reflect, like I did that day in the exact center of the country. I promise you will gain a better understanding of where we need to go as a nation.

I did not run for Congress to be a caretaker in the slow demise of America. I ran so I could fight and work to