

grandchildren anywhere ever, Reed and Keira. And I thank my son-in-law, Kevin, for creating and then overseeing my blog over the years.

Finally, let me conclude with this: Despite all the rancor and controversy and partisanship that routinely goes on in this place, it was truly an honor to serve here in the people's House. This extraordinary country, the United States of America, is still the greatest country that ever existed on the face of the Earth.

Goodbye.

HONORING REPRESENTATIVE CINDY AXNE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Nevada (Mrs. LEE) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. LEE of Nevada. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the outstanding work of one of my congressional classmates, now one of my closest friends here, Congresswoman CINDY AXNE.

In 2018, less than 100 years after women gained the right to vote, we were elected as part of the largest class ever of women elected to the House—a record we broke again 2 years later. Breaking the glass ceiling was just the start.

CINDY AXNE is a true trailblazer. No issue is too big or small. As a fellow mom in Congress and a lifelong education advocate, I have seen CINDY's passion for the next generation. Even before her time in Congress, as a mom at local school board meetings, CINDY fought to make real change and to promote education equity with the implementation of full-day kindergarten across her children's school district. That passion and can-do character has followed her to Congress, too.

Congresswoman CINDY AXNE is a rare breed here on Capitol Hill. Bipartisanship is a word many of us use here in Congress, but few of us can back it up quite like CINDY. Her energy and enthusiasm are endless, and I have seen firsthand how she brings it to her work here in Washington.

As the lone Federal Democrat from the Hawkeye State, she has taken that Iowa-nice attitude to a whole new level—working with anyone, Democrat or Republican, to get the job done.

Las Vegas, Nevada, and Des Moines, Iowa, may be looking a little bit different, but CINDY and I have worked together to find common ground that transcends partisanship and works for every single American.

As the tallest woman in Congress—although Representative LORI TRAHAN might have a point of order on that—she also bears one of the tallest lists of accomplishments in her time in this House.

She personally helped her constituents recover from catastrophic flooding. She led the charge to keep our communities safe with the Invest to Protect Act. CINDY led the charge to tackle inflation with the Lower Food and Fuel Costs Act, as well.

Her legacy for Iowa lives on in the millions of dollars that she has brought home for her constituents, in the legislation she has fought to get across the finish line, and in all of us fighting to end the divisiveness and to bring the collective spirit of compromise to Congress.

I thank CINDY for everything—for her leadership, for her unwavering spirit, and, most importantly, for her friendship.

RECOGNIZING COLD WAR RADAR STATION VETERANS

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

Mr. BABIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the tens of thousands of veterans who served on radar stations across the world during the Cold War.

From 1947 to 1991, American servicemembers faced extremely challenging climates and conditions in the most isolated locations to successfully mitigate threats from the Soviet Union to ensure the maintenance of peace.

These veterans were highly trained and from every United States military branch, including the National Guard and Reserve units. They were also supported by allied forces and civilians, as well.

These brave watch guards were on a mission of the utmost importance to detect, track, intercept, and destroy hostile airborne intruders when they entered the free world airspace.

Although the protection of allied airspace was successful following the end of the Cold War, the United States never officially recognized the countless hours of surveillance that these servicemembers provided to our country and the world.

Several years ago, a dedicated group of Air Force Cold War-era radar station veterans formed a nonprofit organization to raise funds for the construction of a monument commemorating their fellow servicemembers' sacrifices.

The monument was unveiled on November 7, 2019, at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, with some 100 veterans and their family members in attendance.

Today, I thank these veterans for their service during such a tense and a turbulent time in our history. Their dedication to our security and the prosperity of peace never wavered an iota.

As a veteran stationed in Germany during the Cold War, I can relate to many of the sacrifices that these courageous individuals made, and I am forever grateful for them.

I include in the RECORD a letter by one of the United States Air Force Radar Station Veterans Monument Association founders, 1st Lieutenant James E. Muecke, which contains more information about the hard work that went into making the dream of a monument into a reality.

RADAR STATION VETERANS MONUMENT

Several years ago, three Air Force veterans who served on various radar stations during the Cold War began discussing how to honor their service and others who held the same job. A monument was suggested, but they lacked funding and a location. Washington, D.C., was thought to be the most obvious location choice, but given how long it took to construct the World War II Memorial, they decided to look elsewhere. After many discussions with their fellow veterans, they formed a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization called the United States Air Force (USAF) Radar Station Veterans Monument Association. Five veterans volunteered to serve as officers for the association, and 26 agreed to become board members.

Once the association was formed, donations were sought from many Cold War-era manufacturers and suppliers of radar equipment. Unfortunately, most were out of business or had merged with other companies. As a result, the association contacted as many radar station veterans as possible to ask for their donations for the monument. Eventually, the National Museum of the United States Air Force at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, was selected as the location for the monument's placement. The museum indicated that the project would cost approximately \$30,000. After much aid from their fellow veterans, they raised \$43,000.

When designing the monument, their goal was to educate the public in an appealing way. They decided on a monument made from black granite stone, with images of 23 radar sites etched into it. A mission statement and description of the radar station operating conditions were inscribed on the front, and a globe sat on top, symbolizing worldwide involvement. The monument was completed and placed in section two of Memorial Park at the National Museum of the United States Air Force. The dedication ceremony was held on November 7, 2019, with some 100 veterans and family members in attendance. It was an outstanding program; the Air Force honor guard members gave a flag presentation. After the program, the USAF Radar Station Veterans Monument Association members formally turned the monument over to the museum.

Following the ceremony, an evening banquet was held, and the association's officers were recognized for their work in commissioning the monument. They received a standing ovation. All officers were presented with a framed picture of the monument, the USAF Radar Station Veterans Monument Association's logo, and a statement of appreciation.

This is just one example of what it means to be a United States veteran: We are loyal, are proud to have served this great country, and can still stand tall for a monument dedicated to this purpose. We give a proud hand salute to all who attended, to those who could not attend because of distance or health, and especially to those who served but are no longer with us.

1ST. LT. JAMES E. MUECKE.

Mr. BABIN. May God bless these heroes and may history remember them.

CONTINUED DELAY OF FLOOR ACTION ON THE MAJOR RICHARD STAR ACT

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

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I must take the

floor in frustration regarding the continued delay of floor action on the Major Richard Star Act.

H.R. 1282 would expand eligibility to certain military retirees for concurrent receipt of veterans' disability compensation and retired pay or combat-related special compensation.

In the past, military servicemembers found to have endured a service-connected disability could not collect their pension and disability pay in unison. This was unfair.

To receive VA disability compensation, veterans had to forfeit their retirement benefits and pay back dollar-for-dollar the amount that would have been owed to them if they had received both benefits.

In the fiscal year 2004 National Defense Authorization Act, Congress created the Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay program. In doing so, veterans who are 100 percent disabled were authorized to receive both earned benefits—which is right—known as concurrent receipt, for the first time ever.

Since then, the law has expanded the eligibility to receive military retirement pay and their VA disability pay concurrently to military retirees with 20 or more years of service and a 50 percent or higher disability rating.

Under current law, concurrent receipt for military retirees who have a disability rating of 50 percent or higher was phased in through 2014.

While that certainly marked tremendous progress, medically retired veterans with less than 20 years of service who were wounded in combat must still offset their DOD retirement pay by their VA disability compensation. So unfair. So unjust.

Many of these veterans had the full intention of serving 20 or more years and gain full retirement benefits, but through no fault of their own, were unable to due to their service and sacrifice in the line of duty. They were injured.

This group of retired veterans, also known as Chapter 61 retirees, are arguably the most at-risk because of their complex combat injuries and are just as deserving as those who served greater than 20 years of service.

By creating the CRDP, I firmly believe that Congress admitted that the offset required of disabled veterans was wrong. Approximately 550,000 military retirees are eligible to receive both military retired pay and VA disability compensation but are prohibited under the current guidelines of this program. We must change that.

In my view, I see these veterans as essentially being taxed for their service and sacrifice because they were deemed service-connected disabled. What an injustice that we must correct.

This is a very popular and desired policy fix, Mr. Speaker. The Richard Star Act has 335 cosponsors in the House and 66, and growing, in the United States Senate. Most veteran

service organizations, including the American Legion, the VFW, DAV, VVA, which is the Vietnam Veterans of America, AMVETS, Military Officers Association of America, Fleet Reserve Association, American Ex-Prisoners of War, and the Association of the Navy, strongly support this bill.

Given this support, why hasn't there been any action on this bill? The Richard Star Act got the required cosponsors necessary to get added to the Consensus Calendar back in September, but why has there been no action on this bill?

These are not just questions I have—it is not just me—but the cosponsors of the bill as well, and questions that many in the public have, including our heroes and their families that were affected.

Let's ask the Democratic leadership in the House and the Senate to consider the overwhelming public and congressional support for the Richard Star Act. Do not let this injustice continue. Please do not let this injustice continue.

We have a real opportunity, Mr. Speaker. Do right by these national heroes and include the Major Richard Star Act in the end-of-year omnibus. I can't think of a more worthy cause than honoring our commitment to our Nation's heroes.

□ 1100

CONGRATULATING ORLAND HIGH SCHOOL BOYS' FOOTBALL TEAM

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

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, first, I want to congratulate northern California's Orland High School. Their boys' football team just won the California State championship with a grueling 20-7 win, on a very muddy field at Orland Stadium, over Shafter High School.

Indeed, the muddy field affects both teams equally, and Orland was able to dig it out with a great running effort—159 yards by the quarterback in order to pull the victory off. He scored all three touchdowns.

It was, indeed, the first in many years of a State championship for Orland as they pulled this off in an amazing fashion after a lot of rain in northern California.

Congratulations to Orland High School boys for a great effort, going 15 and 0, and winning the CIF championship for all of California.

CALIFORNIA'S WATER SUPPLY

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, this is a topic I have spent a lot of time on here on this floor talking about. It is where our food supply comes from in this Nation. With the shortsighted efforts we have had by our regulators at the Federal and State levels, food is shorter in this country than it ever has been in quite a few years, and for no good reason.

As I point out on this chart here, my home State of California, many of our food products are grown in California that the U.S. relies upon. These products you see here, over 90 percent, some of them 100 percent, come from California.

If they weren't grown in California, they would have to come from somewhere else. We would have to import them. We would have to do without. We would have to switch to some other type of food product that we didn't like as well, or just have less choice.

Why is this happening? In part because the water supply for these farms has been around for decades and, indeed, the water systems in California, the Central Valley Project, which is Federal, the State water project, which is State level, were developed with harnessing the water that we have so plentiful in the north and using it throughout the State.

Indeed, in drought periods, these systems were designed to hold us through drought for up to 5 years when the dam was full beforehand in order to do what people need to farm their crops and take care of the needs of the cities, manufacturing, et cetera.

In California, of the 100 percent water pie, 50 percent goes for environmental needs. Fifty percent goes to keep fish colder and wetter, to let water run out to the Pacific, to keep the saltwater intrusion in the delta at bay, so to speak. Forty percent, traditionally, has gone to agriculture, and 10 percent is what has gone to urban and domestic use.

That 40 percent that agriculture has received has had a big bite taken out of it. Hundreds of thousands of acres have been idled in California, just in my area, in the north. At least 250,000 acres of rice crops alone, as well as other water supply that goes toward almonds, walnuts, prunes, and many other crops, has been taken away.

We want to blame the drought. Yes, we have had some level of drought. But in 2021, I would also remind you, we had a huge amount of rainfall in October and a vast snowpack in December 2021.

This year, we are enjoying a good amount of rainfall already in November and December, which will help replenish our lakes.

But what are the water managers, so to speak, in the Federal and State governments doing? Are they indeed keeping the water in the lakes so that we would have the ability to draw upon that water and continue farming crops in California?

Again, this isn't just for California farmers, for the California economy. This is something all Americans rely upon for these food products that are more numerous than I can even list on this chart here.

What is happening in my northern part of the State, the Klamath Basin that I also share on the Oregon side with my good colleague, Mr. BENTZ?

The last few years they have taken the water supply from the farmers up