

face when finding safe and comfortable housing.

They should feel confident if an issue arises it will be resolved and in a timely manner. This bipartisan bill is a step in the right direction and will improve transparency and oversight with the goal of fixing a system that has serious issues.

Given the ongoing recruitment and retention challenges in our Armed Forces, ensuring adequate housing for servicemembers and their families is an important and necessary part of the solution.

#### COMMEMORATING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF DR. NICHOLAS BALABKINS

(Ms. WILD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. WILD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the life and legacy of Dr. Nicholas Balabkins of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

Dr. Balabkins was born in 1926 in Latvia and immigrated to the United States after World War II where he received his master's and doctorate degrees in economics.

For decades, Dr. Balabkins was a staple of the Lehigh University community, known for his ready smile and colorful bow ties and recognized by awards for his teaching excellence.

He wrote a dozen books and published over 40 professional economics articles, earning worldwide recognition for his work.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Dr. Balabkins received the highest civilian honor from his home country of Latvia: Order of the Three Stars.

Dr. Balabkins will be remembered as an extraordinary professor, neighbor, colleague, and friend. We honor his lifelong dedication to shaping the lives of the students who were lucky enough to pass through his classroom.

#### RED FLAG LAWS

(Ms. STEVENS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. STEVENS. Mr. Speaker, I rise because earlier today in Royal Oak, Michigan, our Governor, Governor Gretchen Whitmer, alongside our Attorney General, Dana Nessel, Lieutenant Governor Gilchrist, our State house judiciary chair Kelly Breen, and a former Member of Congress, Gabby Giffords, stood today as the Governor signed into law a suite of bills that would allow families, healthcare providers, law enforcement, and other stakeholders to petition courts to remove guns from those judged to be an imminent threat to themselves or others.

Michigan now joins more than a dozen other States to implement red flag laws, sometimes known as extreme risk protection orders.

Our State has been rocked by each gun death earlier this year: a mass shooting at Michigan State, as well as at the end of 2021, a mass shooting at Oxford High School.

Moms Demand Action, and so many others in our community, for gun safety, the number one killer of children in the United States of America. I am so pleased to see Michigan take this step.

#### CELEBRATING THE 135TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE YWCA OF NORTHEASTERN NEW YORK

(Mr. TONKO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TONKO. Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate a remarkable milestone in the history of the capital region of New York that I represent, the 135th anniversary of the YWCA of Northeastern New York.

From humble beginnings in 1888, this organization has grown into a force in our community: transforming countless lives and promoting empowerment, racial equality, and social justice in Schenectady and well beyond.

For many years, the YWCA has stepped up to provide vital services and resources for women and families in need, from affordable housing and childcare to job training and counseling services.

Beyond that, the YWCA has long been a platform for the voices of women, nurturing future leaders, and empowering individuals to stand up for their own rights and the rights of others.

Through its commitment to eliminating racism, it has fostered understanding and built bridges of solidarity across our diverse community.

As we celebrate this momentous occasion, let us reflect on the tremendous legacy of the YWCA of Northeastern New York.

Let us honor its accomplishments, and most importantly, let us recommit ourselves to the principles of justice, equity, and empowerment embodied by the YWCA.

Congratulations on this milestone, and here is to another 135 years of transforming lives, strengthening communities, and building a brighter future for each and every one.

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#### LET'S SAVE OUR CHILDREN

(Ms. JACKSON LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, we have a serious challenge in this country, a challenge that requires us to act with broadness, swiftness, and, of course, understanding.

I rise today to introduce legislation, the Comprehensive Response to Fentanyl-Related Substances and Fentanyl-Laced Substances Act.

Mr. Speaker, 8.4 million fentanyl-laced fake prescription pills exist. The seizures were directly linked to at least 39 overdose deaths. Between 2019 and 2021, more than 2,200 adolescents overdosed. Ninety-six percent of them were between the ages of 15 and 19. This legislation will look that squarely in the eye and demand that it cease and desist.

We need to increase funding for prevention and treatment programs, programs that provide education and treatment for people who are at risk. Get them while they are subject to being enticed. We need more school-based programs and community-outreach programs. We need to expand access to naloxone, the medication that can reverse the effects, which should be in all schools. We need to crack down on trafficking the little pink pills.

Mr. Speaker, we have to save our children, and we have to save them now. Join Congresswoman JACKSON LEE and my original cosponsors to support this legislation, the Comprehensive Response to Fentanyl-Related Substances and Fentanyl-Laced Substances Act. Let's save our children.

#### CBC HONORS AMERICA'S VETERANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include any extraneous material on the subject of this Special Order hour.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK. Mr. Speaker, it is with great honor that I rise today to coanchor the CBC Special Order hour along with my distinguished colleague from Illinois (Mr. JACKSON).

For the next 60 minutes, members of the CBC have an opportunity to speak directly to the American people on Black veterans and their contributions to America, an issue of great importance to the Congressional Black Caucus, Congress, the constituents we represent, and all Americans.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. HORSFORD), the honorable chairman of the CBC.

Mr. HORSFORD. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Florida for her tremendous leadership in serving as co-chair not just for tonight's Special Order hour on behalf of the Congressional Black Caucus, but every time that Representative SHEILA CHERFILUS-McCORMICK and Representative JONATHAN JACKSON are able to lead in this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise with my colleagues of the Congressional Black Caucus to thank and recognize our Active-Duty servicemen and service-women and to honor Black veterans from around the Nation, those who have returned to civilian life and those who are serving here in Congress. I also thank all of their families who also serve alongside them in the freedoms that we hold dear. I rise today to honor them for their service, their patriotism, their courage, and, of course, their sacrifice in keeping our Nation safe and free.

Unfortunately, the stories of Black veterans are too often untold. Even now, the very history of their service is under threat of being taken out of our schools. It is important that we never forget the unique history and contribution of our Nation's Black veterans, like the Tuskegee Airmen, and we cannot ignore inequities Black veterans have faced over generations, like being denied benefits in the GI Bill following World War II, something that our assistant Democratic leader, Mr. CLYBURN, and members of the Congressional Black Caucus are working to address.

Black veterans account for nearly a third of our Nation's unhoused veteran population, and Black veterans are nearly two times as likely to live in poverty.

As a Congress, we must fulfill our responsibility to repay our veterans for their service, including to the Black servicemen and servicewomen who are still making contributions to our Nation today.

Mr. Speaker, there are a few veterans from Nevada's Fourth Congressional District who represent the best that Nevada and our country have to offer whose stories I will share.

One of those constituents was a servicemember named Kelley. Toward the end of her service in the Air Force, Kelley's health began to deteriorate. After consulting with doctors, she was diagnosed with untreated fibroids, which caused her immense pain and forced her to rely on pain medications.

In the early years, there were no women's clinics and Kelley had only male doctors attending to her care. However, the VA's renewed focus on addressing the unique needs of women veterans means there is now a safe space where Kelley can feel comfortable alongside fellow women veterans who share similar experiences.

Christina is another Black woman from my district who was in the Air Force. She served from 2002 until her medical retirement in 2008. Tragically, during her service, she fell victim to sexual assault, which caused her immense trauma and impacted her mental health.

After leaving the military, she grasped her need for help and turned to the VA, where she engaged with programs such as cognitive behavior therapy, cognitive processing therapy, and dialectical behavior therapy. She was

set on a path to recovery which affirmed her strength. Her story serves as a reminder that we must ensure that we provide the support and the resources our servicemembers need.

I was recently honored to help document the story of the Montford Point marines through an interview with Henry Franklin Jackson and the family of Isaac McMickens. They were among the first Black Americans to enlist in the Marine Corps, and they trained at Montford Point. By preserving their stories for generations to come, we can ensure that we honor their sacrifices.

We will never be able to fully repay our veterans, given the sacrifices that they have made for our country; but as a Congress, we can make sure that we do all that we can to ensure that they have what they need when they return home.

Mr. Speaker, it is because of the challenges that our veterans face that I was so proud to support the PACT Act, which is one of the most significant expansions of benefits and services for toxic-exposed veterans in more than 30 years. This historic piece of legislation is helping to deliver more timely benefits and services to more than 5 million veterans, including thousands from Nevada, who were impacted by toxic exposures while serving our country.

Mr. Speaker, again, I thank my colleagues from the Congressional Black Caucus for their commitment to supporting our Nation's veterans, for recognizing the role Black veterans play in American history, and for sharing stories of veterans in their districts.

I thank our CBC colleagues who were able to join us for this important topic tonight and to our co-chairs for their extraordinary leadership and managing this Special Order hour.

Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield now to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE).

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Florida and the gentleman from Illinois, and I join Mr. HORSFORD in expressing my appreciation to them both for their continuing leadership.

Mr. Speaker, this is a particularly important Special Order, honoring our veterans far and wide; and then telling the stories of our Black veterans, who often have been at the wrong end of the history of this country.

It should be noted that African Americans, some enslaved, have fought in every war since the Revolutionary War, and it is extremely important to recognize that sometimes their stories have not been told.

I was very pleased today to support the legislation that supported a veterans' COLA, cost of living increase. As I indicated previously, we all know that veterans have been victims of homelessness, been discriminated against in terms of not being appreciated for their service, taking their service where they are commanding

thousands and giving them an entry-level job. I think it is important that we recognize the importance of their work.

We also know that there have been many who have had service-related injuries who have not been fully compensated. We continue to fight for those who have had exposure to Agent Orange. Certainly, we are more than excited about the passage of the PACT Act brought in the House, where I introduced the Jackson Lee amendment, which would require a report on the feasibility of modifying the individual longitudinal exposure record. That act, of course, even without changes, was, in fact, to add to providing protection to our veterans.

Mr. Speaker, tonight I emphasize the stories of veterans who have fought and who have been in every war, and that includes the wars of the 1800s, the Civil War, World War I, World War II, the Korean war, and Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

I acknowledge our friend and colleague, the Honorable Charlie Rangel, who was a Korean war vet in the worst of time, and the coldest of time, and an ugly war. He reminded us during his tenure here that the Korean war was not a conflict. It was, in fact, a war.

We honor the generals who fought in World War II and who still came home to a segregated America, and we must remember those individuals, some who fell out of the skies in World War I and World War II.

We have come full circle. There were 50,000 who died in the Vietnam war, with large numbers of African Americans who lost their lives. General Colin Powell fought in that war. He was wounded, and I pay tribute to him tonight. He ultimately became the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and, as well, ultimately Secretary of State. He had a passion for peace. He believed in peace. Though he was a warrior and a combat leader, he understood the value of peace. We thank him for his service.

My own constituent, Sergeant Williams, he is a Buffalo soldier who fought in the Vietnam war, who lives today exhibiting the bravery of that time. I thank him for his service.

Now we have come full circle in Iraq and Afghanistan, where many African-American men and women rose to the ranks of lieutenant and major. Globally, I thank them. There are many of them who served in my congressional district.

This is an important moment, as we approach the Memorial Day weekend, for those who wore the uniform unselfishly and then lost their lives.

Also, as I supported this COLA increase for our veterans, I remind everyone that there are many homeless veterans, many of whom are Black. I particularly say to them that their status today does not diminish their bravery and service to this Nation.

It should be our commitment that we should not leave any veteran behind and not any veteran homeless. That

will be my commitment, that we continue to fight against that scourge of homeless veterans who want to be reunited with their family members who are in need of the services that will make them whole.

Finally, let me say this: As this Nation deals with default, we cannot forget the veterans who will lose 30 million healthcare appointments and will, in fact, suffer and not have a COLA. Remember what happens when there is no bipartisan effort, and our friends continue to insist on hostage taking. The people who lose out will be the people who are, in fact, our very special veterans. I thank the CBC for honoring our veterans in this way.

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Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS).

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Florida for affording me this time.

I am very pleased to join with all of my colleagues in the Congressional Black Caucus to honor the veterans, African-American, Black veterans, who have served this country so honorably.

We could talk all night about the contributions that have been made, the sacrifices that have been made, and we take this time to point out not only the contributions but individuals who have played an important role as Blacks in the military.

First, I would share that, in 1994, I introduced legislation, H.R. 3013, to create the Center for Women's Veterans. That bill became law under Sonny Montgomery, who was the chair of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs at that time. I think that overall bill was the Veterans' Benefits Improvements Act.

I am very pleased that that center has paid attention to some of the concerns that we have had about the treatment of women, Black women in particular.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize someone from my district, an extraordinary woman who happens to be a veteran.

Patricia Jackson-Kelley is a military veteran of the United States Air Force and United States Army and Navy Reserves, having served our Nation collectively for 26 years, where she rose to the top rank of lieutenant colonel after serving honorably on both Active Duty and in the Reserves.

Lieutenant Colonel Jackson-Kelley recently completed a 4-year impressive term as the national president of the National Association of Black Military Women, with chapters across the United States.

While serving our Nation in the Armed Forces and post-service, Lieutenant Colonel Jackson-Kelley served as the program manager for a 40-bed substance abuse ward and as the women veteran program manager with the Department of Veterans Affairs, West Los Angeles.

During her term on executive staff, she was instrumental in implementing

programs, and she increased funds and resources for women veterans. During her time at the veterans hospital, she also served as one of the initial board members during the inaugural formation of U.S. VETS.

Patricia Jackson-Kelley is also a commissioner for the County of Los Angeles, Second District, Military and Veteran Affairs, and commander for The American Legion Jackie Robinson 252 Post.

Most recently, she was appointed by the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs Sexual Assault and Harassment Prevention Task Force Working Group, covering national concerns and issues.

Lieutenant Colonel Jackson-Kelley has received awards and commendations from President George Bush, the California Governor's Office 2006 to 2009, NAACP, Blacks in Government, and many top community organizations.

In 2010, she was selected as Southern California Women Veteran of the Year by the California Department of Veterans Affairs, and she was the inaugural recipient of the PFC Gladys Schuster Trailblazer Award in August 2012.

Jackson-Kelley was recognized by former Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert McDonald for her service on the National Center for Minority Veterans committee from 2015 to 2017.

In 2017, Lieutenant Colonel Jackson-Kelley was awarded the Lifetime Legacy Award by Connected Women of Influence.

In 2018, she received the Crystal Eagle Award from Los Angeles County African American Employees Association. Also in 2018, Lieutenant Colonel Jackson-Kelley was honored with the Holean Community Development Corporation Quiet Champion Award, the City of Los Angeles Hall of Fame Award, and was named UCLA Veteran of the Year.

In 2019, she was the Hollywood Business and Professional Women Black History Month honoree.

Lieutenant Colonel Jackson-Kelley was one of the honorees of the National Daughters of the American Revolution Women in American History, 2021 to 2022.

On August 20, 2022, she received the prestigious African Focus Goodwill Lifetime Achievement Award.

Mr. Speaker, I highlight that she is one of many African-American women who have served this country honorably, and she deserves to be recognized.

This evening, I hope that by giving her this recognition, she will understand that we appreciate her so very much.

Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) for her remarks.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Wisconsin (Ms. MOORE).

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yield-

ing me the time. I also thank Representative CHERFILUS-McCORMICK and Representative JACKSON for hosting this Special Order hour.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that as a member of a family whose relatives and brothers and dad and uncles have served in the service, Memorial Day weekend is very important to me.

As our Nation prepares to celebrate this Memorial Day, I am so pleased to join my colleagues in the Congressional Black Caucus on the floor to recall the great sacrifice of all that we ask of those who put on the uniform.

Memorial Day is a stark reminder of the cost of that service and the sacrifice that comes with taking that oath. There are few other callings in life as humble or as selfless as the sacrifice of a member of the military. We owe them so much.

Because of this sacrifice, this distinguished body is able to gather today, tomorrow, and the next day under the "E pluribus unum" in this Chamber. Because of their sacrifices, there are so many more who are inspired to put on the uniform and will do so in the coming days.

Mr. Speaker, while Memorial Day reminds us to celebrate those who have given the ultimate sacrifice, Memorial Day also urges us to do something active for those veterans that are serving now, that are standing up for our freedoms and liberties. I am so tremendously proud of the work that House Democrats have done to continue in this regard—efforts like the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics, the Honoring our PACT Act, that is being aggressively implemented by the administration to ensure it fulfills a promise to provide generations of veterans with the care and benefits that they have earned and deserve.

This new law creates a strong framework for expanding and extending eligibility for VA healthcare for veterans exposed to toxic substances during their time in uniform. For too long, Mr. Speaker, veterans have had to fight just to get benefits that they earned for exposure to some dangerous toxins while they were in uniform.

More than 3.3 million veterans have received the new toxic exposure screening set up by this new law, and I am grateful that while many of them have passed on, those who are alive will get some remuneration for their suffering.

On this day, I especially want to remember other veterans who did not necessarily die in combat but died even so as a result of their service—someone like my constituent Corey Adams.

Corey Adams wanted to serve his country and follow in his father's and grandfather's footsteps, so he joined the Air Force right after high school. This week, I intend to introduce a bill named after him.

Corey served 4 years on Active Duty, and then he joined the Air Force Reserve. He had overseas deployment, including 6 months in Afghanistan in 2009.

Sergeant Corey Adams was later diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and moved into his parents' home in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, a very fragile veteran.

On March 20, 2017, the Adams family was changed forever. Sergeant Corey Adams was missing, and they knew he was vulnerable. His family tried to file a missing report soon after he went missing. It took 8 days before the police determined that he met the criteria of a missing person, a crucial delay.

Mr. Speaker, 18 days after his disappearance, Sergeant Corey Adams' body was found in a pond and recovered from Dineen Park, 1 mile from his mother's home. Last month marked the sixth year since his body was found.

Mr. Speaker, no family should suffer like this. Out of this tragedy, his family took action and went to the Wisconsin Legislature. Therefore, due to their advocacy, Wisconsin became the first State to enact a green alert system to find veterans who are reported missing. That system has already worked to help successfully locate missing veterans.

Delaware, Tennessee, and Texas have since enacted laws to do the same, and other States are currently looking to do the same.

The legislation that I will be introducing this week in his honor will help establish a national program at the Department of Justice to help create a strong and robust green alert network across our country to help ensure that when a veteran goes missing, we do all we can to find them. We will leave no soldier behind.

With legislation like the Corey Adams Searchlight Act, the Honoring our PACT Act, and so many other thoughtful bills that have been introduced so far by my colleagues in this Congress, we make sure that Memorial Day is also a time to act and to make sure that we enact policies that make clear to our veterans and our servicemembers that we will always have their backs—always.

Mr. Speaker, I thank each and every one of the men and women in uniform today and all of our veterans.

Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative MOORE for her remarks.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE).

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Florida for the opportunity to speak tonight in this Special Order, and the gentleman from Illinois, for showing great leadership in what is a wholesome and honorable responsibility to lead these Special Order hours.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor our fallen African-American veterans in the week before Memorial Day and discuss what the Honoring our PACT Act will do to help all surviving veterans.

Almost 200,000 Black Americans died while fighting to protect U.S. free-

doms. They fought in every major U.S. conflict, from the Revolutionary War to the Iraq war. In fact, the first person to die in the Revolutionary War, our war for freedom, was Crispus Attucks, an African American.

The names of the regiments are emblazoned in American history, names like the Buffalo Soldiers, the Tuskegee Airmen, and the Harlem Hellfighters. In my district, they continue to make a difference in local industry and local politics.

Black soldiers are America's forgotten heroes. They fought in foreign wars to protect our Nation, then they fought oppression, racism, and hatred when they returned home—not welcomed in the restaurants, not welcomed in the hotels, not welcomed to drink from certain fountains, but fought far and wide away from this Nation.

They deserve more than the usual “thanks for your service” they receive across the country, and I am proud to support a law that helps them get more support.

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The Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act, or the Honoring our PACT Act, could be the largest veterans' healthcare and benefits expansion in American history.

The Honoring our PACT Act expands and extends eligibility for Veterans Administration healthcare to veterans who have suffered toxic exposure, and it does the same for veterans of the Vietnam war, Gulf war, and other post-9/11 conflicts that we have engaged in. That means five million veterans could be eligible for benefits, thanks to this act.

Also, the Honoring our PACT Act adds more than 20 health conditions to the list of eligibility for VA health benefits, such as exposure to Agent Orange, burn pits, and other toxins. It requires the VA to provide toxic exposure screening to every veteran enrolled in the VA healthcare system.

But local veterans and advocates are excited about more than these benefits. They are telling district veterans that the Honoring our PACT Act will allow them to get physicals in order to find service-related ailments and disabilities. These physicals could allow more eligible veterans to enroll in VA healthcare and help them register as an American veteran for health-related or other benefits nationwide.

But the VA has to do a better job in contacting veterans to encourage them to participate. Some veterans in my district said the VA has a version of the notorious don't ask, don't tell policy. They say, if you don't ask the VA about the benefits directly, they won't let you know, and that seems to be a theme that runs across the Federal Government.

There are so many projects and plans and opportunities for people across this Nation, just everyday, normal Americans, but if you don't know the right

question to ask, the information is not forthcoming.

Now, nobody will mislead you, but you have to ask the right question and then they are forthcoming with the information. That has to change.

As we honor our Nation's fallen heroes, we must do more to support veterans and other American heroes. That way, our dedication to the men and women who protect our country and keep us safe will be more than words. It will be a direct action. I am just delighted to be here to raise this issue.

There shouldn't have to be an acknowledgment separately of African-American veterans, but this country, in some ways, has forgotten them and so we have to raise the issue. We don't want it. We want to be a part of the collective of this great Nation, but there are so many instances where the contributions of this population are left out. So we are here to make sure it is clear, and to correct the history.

Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor our Nation's brave Black servicemembers. I rise not only for our veterans who served our Nation with honor and integrity, but also for those who gave the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our country.

Black soldiers have fought and given their lives in every American conflict since the Revolutionary War fighting for democracy at home and abroad, while being treated like second-class citizens on American soil.

In 1944, this very body passed the GI Bill to provide free education, unemployment pay, and home loans for millions of veterans returning from World War II. These benefits helped to expand our American middle class after the war, but Black veterans were excluded from these benefits due to our Nation's original sin.

This exclusion helped to widen the already existing wealth gap between White and Black Americans, the same gap that we feel and see today. The wide disparity in the bill's implementation increased wealth, education, and civil rights gaps. The inequitable implementation of the GI bill shut the door for 1.2 million Black people, veterans who bravely served the country during World War II in segregated ranks.

The willingness on the part of African-American soldiers to serve and sacrifice their lives for a country that treated them as second-class citizens is beyond remarkable. It wasn't until President Truman's executive order 9981 that the Armed Services were forced to desegregate, but by this time the damage had already been done.

In the South, the GI bill exacerbated rather than narrowed the economic educational attainment of Black veterans. After World War II, Black veterans who wanted to attend college in the South were restricted in their choices of about 100 public and private institutions. Only 6 percent of African-American veterans of World War II earned college degrees, compared to 19 percent of White veterans.

For over 200 years, Black soldiers have endured individual and institutional racism while fighting for their country. It is time to honor every Black veteran and soldier who paid the ultimate sacrifice while fighting for a more perfect union at home. May their memory be a blessing, and may this Congress rectify injustices committed on this very floor.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. JACKSON).

Mr. JACKSON of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I thank my distinguished colleagues, the Honorable SHEILA CHERFILUS-McCORMICK and the Honorable GWEN MOORE for their comments.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to give special consideration to the contributions and bravery of Black soldiers and veterans.

Veterans in this country deserve far more than we have thus far been willing to give them and, certainly, Black veterans are more than eligible for the kind of dignity and respect too long denied to them, both in and out of the armed services.

Let us never forget that, in several instances, the enemies of America were treated better than Black soldiers fighting for America. I remember my grandfather today, Charles Henry Jackson, who was working three jobs for a man in South Carolina who, after having been disrespected, told the man he could keep his jobs; although our family needed the money, needed the work so that we could feed the family.

The young man then went on to turn my grandfather into the Army recruiting office and had him enlisted, drafted into World War II.

Having fought in World War II and being honorably discharged he recounted the story for me when he came back from New York City, down on the train in first class, down to Union Station, not far from here. By the time they were heading down south to the Jim Crow era of the south, he had to go to the second class coach cars in the back of the train so that Nazi POW prisoners could sit in first class, right here in Washington, D.C., right here in America.

Let us never forget the kind of bigotry and hatred the Black soldiers had to endure simply because of the color of their skin.

It would be a tragedy of the worst kind for us to no longer remember the intrinsic, systemic evils that prevented African Americans from receiving equity in healthcare and the distribution of benefits, once again, simply because of the color of their skin.

There have always been gross inequities in how Black veterans have been treated and, regrettably, this has always been the case.

A recent internal document from the Department of Veterans Affairs obtained by NPR revealed that Black veterans are less likely to get approved for benefits associated with conditions like PTSD.

According to NPR, an internal report developed by the Veterans Administra-

tion found that Black veterans who filed claims for PTSD were rejected, on average, 12 percent more often than their White counterparts. Thankfully, the VA's equity task force has been alerted to this problem and is dedicated to making improvements.

This is not the first time Black veterans have been treated with indifference and disrespect. Black soldiers were never allowed to have full and unfettered access to the benefits enshrined to them in the GI bill.

In some cases, Black veterans could not take advantage of the GI bill simply because they were not granted an honorable discharge. In other cases, even when Black veterans properly qualified for the full range of benefits, they were denied them because of segregation and anti-integration policies.

In fact, one Congressman I researched in particular, Congressman John Rankin, a southern Dixiecrat, did everything in his power to exclude Black veterans from receiving the unemployment benefits enshrined in the bill. We were thick on words and thin on deeds.

When those benefits could not be legally denied in the legislation itself, local postmasters conspired in an effort not to deliver the forms Black veterans needed to fill out in order to receive their unemployment benefits.

In 1947, only 2 of the more than 3,200 VA guaranteed home loans in 13 Mississippi counties went to Black veterans. This was not just a southern problem. In New York and in the northern New Jersey suburbs, fewer than 100 of the 67,000 mortgages insured by the GI Bill supported the home purchases of African-American veterans. That is 100 out of 67,000. It means that less than .15 percent of the loans in that area went to Black veterans.

The list goes on and on. The kind of inequalities, inequities and indignities that Black soldiers and Black veterans have had to endure amount to a cacophony of slights, the full list of which I do not have the time to fully mention.

Yet, Black people have fought in every major war that this country has ever had because we are a brave and an honorable people. And when we fought, nobody was doing us a favor.

I will call the roll: from the Revolutionary War, to the Battle of 1812, to the Civil War, to the Spanish American War, to World War I, World War II, the Korean war, the Vietnam war, the war in Iraq, and the war in Afghanistan, Black people have always been willing to serve.

Today, we honor Black veterans because of their bravery and what they had to endure, and because of what they accomplished in spite of it all. We honor their sacrifices and their service. We honor their dignity and determination.

Without Black veterans, there could be no Colin Powell. Without Black veterans, there could be no Lloyd Austin. Without a long history of brave Black

veterans, there is no such thing as a Black Commander in Chief.

The Governor of Florida can act like Black history isn't important to America, but there would be no American history without Blacks in our history.

Our thoughts are with Black veterans today because history remembers the men and women who put their shoulders to the wheel of progress and push until one dies and another world is born.

We will never forget the contribution of Black veterans because they did what racism said could never be done. They proved to the world that Black people are as brave and innovative as anyone else. They proved to the world that when the game is fair, and the rules are public, and the playing field is even, Black people can do anything.

I must tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I am proud to be a part of a caucus and a party that does more than just send thoughts and prayers to our veterans.

During the last Congress, under the leadership of the Honorable NANCY PELOSI, and the Honorable STENY HOYER, and the Honorable JIM CLYBURN, and our current leader, the honorable HAKEEM JEFFRIES, Democrats in the House of Representatives led the way to passing the Honoring our PACT Act. This important law expands VA healthcare benefits for veterans exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic substances.

I am grateful to be a part of a party and an institution that continues to find ways to honor its commitments to our veterans. It should not have taken us this long to decide that if we expose the brave men and women of our armed services to toxic conditions, the least we could do is make sure they have access to all of the healthcare they need to recover.

From the Vietnam war to all of our post-9/11 conflicts, our soldiers have been exposed to all kinds of horrific substances and, yet we could not find the political will to dedicate specific resources to this particular aspect of modern war.

The devastating effects of dangerous toxins have been an albatross around the necks of our brave men and women for far too long.

□ 2015

But as the old saying goes, better late than never. Several members of the Congressional Black Caucus, who were part of the 117th Congress, were instrumental in the passing of this restorative law, and that is how I view the PACT Act.

This law widens the path that leads to greater restoration for the men and women we ask to risk their lives in defense of this country. This law deepens the validity of the promise we made as a country to these honorable soldiers. Call me a dreamer, but I just may happen to believe that when we ask people to do extraordinary things, it is altogether fitting that your response and our response collectively should be to

make sure that they are treated equally and in an extraordinary manner.

We can simply never do enough for our veterans. We love our soldiers, but we turn our backs far too often on our veterans. It is with the best of intentions that we call on the Veterans Administration to make sure that Black veterans are not excluded from the important care and restoration they need afforded to them in the PACT Act.

We call on the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Denis McDonough, to personally commit his attention and time to making sure that none of the past injustices and disparities reveal themselves in the practical application of this law.

I must say to all my colleagues, my Democratic colleagues, and my fellow members of the Congressional Black Caucus who were members of the 117th Congress, on behalf of all of the veterans, and particularly of all the Black veterans, who make their home in the First Congressional District of the State of Illinois, I extend to you my most sincere gratitude for your hard work in making this law a reality.

Millions of people will be positively affected by what you have accomplished. Millions of people find relief and some measure of restoration because of what you have done in the 117th Congress. Millions of veterans will be able to sleep a little sounder at night from the care that they receive because of what you did in the passing of this law. Future veterans will owe much of the improvements we will make in taking care of them to all of you.

Well done, good and faithful servants. You have honored this country by caring about the people of this country and nothing is greater than that.

Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK. Mr. Speaker, may I inquire as to the time remaining.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Florida has 14 minutes remaining.

Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise, again, today to be the voice of Black men and women who have selflessly dedicated their lives to the country, but now find themselves on the street.

These veterans represent the heart and soul of our Nation, serving a country that did not always serve them, and yet we are failing to help them again. Homelessness is felt acutely by Black veterans. Black individuals made up around 12 percent of Active-Duty military personnel in 2018 but were 33 percent of the homeless veteran population.

Throughout the pandemic, the VA reduced veteran homelessness by 11 percent and permanently housed over 40,000 veterans. This decrease can be directly attributed to the flexibilities that were found because of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, but now with the PHE having ended, many veterans may soon find themselves out on the street.

Unfortunately, Republicans decided to vote against my proposal, H.R. 645, the Healthy Foundations for Homeless Veterans Act, which would have helped put roofs over veterans' heads. It is shameful.

Our brave veterans willingly stepped into the line of fire and accepted the looming shadow of danger all to safeguard our cherished liberties. To honor that sacrifice, it is our duty as a Nation and as Members of Congress to ensure they return home to a Nation that provides opportunities for them and their families.

We must equip our VA with the necessary tools to directly engage with and provide care for Black veterans grappling with housing insecurity. This isn't a partisan issue.

For each day that we, as Congress, fail to authorize and address veterans' homelessness, we condemn another veteran to a night of needless suffering on the street. The time to act is now. For every night delayed is a night too long for those who have worn our Nation's uniform.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues from across the aisle to work with House Democrats so we may serve those who served us. A Nation's greatness is not measured by its military might or its economic power but by how it treats its most vulnerable citizens, especially those who have served our country so bravely.

My Democratic colleagues and I will not leave our veterans behind on this very soil they volunteered to protect and defend. As a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee and ranking member of the Subcommittee for Modernization, I ask all of us to think about this Memorial Day not in the same reference, but to pledge ourselves to do more for our veterans and to ensure that they are not living in homelessness or housing insecurities and that they are having access to their benefits.

Mr. Speaker, I rise, again, today to pay tribute to the brave men and women who have dedicated their lives to serving our great Nation. As a member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, I pledge to fight for our veterans from all walks of life. Their stories of courage, resilience, and commitment demonstrate a legacy of service and sacrifice.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, post-9/11 veterans are becoming more and more diverse than previous generations. Today, women represent a remarkable 17 percent, while African Americans make up 15.3 percent of our current veteran population. We recognize the trailblazers who have not only served our Nation, but also enriched the diversity of our Armed Forces.

I am fortunate to count among my constituents many such heroes. One of Florida's 20th Congressional District heroes is Ms. Shenetria Moore, a resident of West Palm Beach. A United States Army veteran, Ms. Moore is a beacon of self-discipline and leads a life guided by her deeply-held principles.

Ms. Moore graduated with a diploma from the prestigious Academy of Health Science at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, and was later honored with an Army accommodation award by her commanding officer.

Once retired from Active Duty, she continued to serve by launching a non-profit, Sha's Community Initiative, Inc., which provides mentorship and scholarships for young Black men. Ms. Moore's service-oriented philosophy has its roots in her family military experience.

Today, as a proud veteran and a dedicated community advocate, she continues to serve with the same excellence she displayed while she was in uniform. I thank Ms. Moore for her service to this great Nation and to Florida's 20th Congressional District.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to recognize my father-in-law, Corlie McCormick, Sr., who is no longer with us, who served as a Vietnam vet.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

#### 2023 SPECIES WEEK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. NEWHOUSE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on the topic of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Washington?

There was no objection.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Mr. Speaker, you probably didn't know this, but 50 years ago, President Nixon signed the Endangered Species Act into law, which was designed to do two very important things: Prevent species from going extinct and promoting their recovery.

Mr. Speaker, since then, hundreds of plants and animals have joined the endangered or threatened species list, spurring conservation and recovery efforts at all levels of government. While well-intentioned, this law, unfortunately, has been abused and twisted so much that it doesn't even begin to achieve its goals. In short, it is a failure.

Although there have been some successes in the past 50 years, only 72 of the 1,389 listed species have been recovered and removed from the list. That is a 5 percent success rate. Only in the Federal Government would anyone consider 5 percent a passing grade.

The Congressional Western Caucus has long advocated for improvements to modernize the ESA and make it more effective for our species and more transparent for the American people.

We have advocated on behalf of the rural communities that we represent