

his injuries and continued to serve with profound distinction and success. He eventually joined the Special Forces and in 1961 became one of the very first 100 Green Berets. He used his success and his knowledge of the Special Forces to great effect as an instructor for many years; and although he was seen as a natural leader, Ed was careful to remain humble while being awarded numerous medals, badges, and commendations. Following his distinguished service, he devoted himself to his wife, children, and extended family. He loved having the freedom to fish with his grandchildren and skydive recreationally periodically, but these were not the only freedoms that stirred Ed's passion.

Too often these days, Congress is overly partisan and forgets our need to focus on issues of importance and getting things done and on service. And now, more than ever, when we are facing as a country great significant issues of national importance, we should absolutely remember the leadership of people Ed Clough and his devotion, when he proudly stated, "I may not agree with every American's opinion, but I spent my life protecting the freedom they have to express it."

And now, Madam Speaker, as we approach the Fourth of July holiday and we consider our independence as a Nation and a country, we must pay tribute to citizens like Ed, who have devoted their lives to protecting our sovereignty. We are a Nation of free citizens who may speak honestly and display our beliefs proudly. But without the men and women who bravely serve in our military—men and women like Master Sergeant Clough—none of our cherished freedoms would exist today.

Master Sergeant Clough, I honor you and I thank you for your service. I also thank the family that supported you and loved you throughout your distinguished career. My hope is that today and each day in the future we will be conscious of the dedication and service of the men and women in our Armed Forces. We must always acknowledge the importance of remaining resilient and brave in the face of great challenges, just as Master Sergeant Clough did throughout his entire life.

APPOINTMENT AS MEMBERS TO COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 201(b) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6431), and the order of the House of January 6, 2009, the Chair announces the Speaker's appointment of the following members on the part of the House to the Commission on International Religious Freedom:

Ms. Elizabeth W. Prodromou, Boston, Massachusetts, for a 2-year term ending May 14, 2012, to succeed herself And upon the recommendation of the Minority Leader:

Mr. Ted Ven Der Meid, Rochester, New York, for a 2-year term ending May 14, 2012, to succeed Ms. Nina Shea

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HONORING RON GETTELFINGER FOR HIS LEADERSHIP OF THE UAW

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DINGELL. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent on behalf of my colleagues that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. DINGELL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor a dear friend to many of us and a man that many of us here admire greatly on his retirement as UAW President. I refer to Ron Gettelfinger, a great citizen, a great patriot, a great leader of labor, and a wonderful human being. Ron Gettelfinger did not want to have any recognition of his labors on behalf of working men and women and on behalf of the people at this particular time. But I think he will forgive us if we go on to say a few of the things about the respect in which he is held and why that be so.

For the last 8 years, Ron Gettelfinger has led the UAW as their president, and he has done so both loyally and ably through some of the most difficult economic times facing our Nation or facing the union. Through his hard work and dedication to his brothers and sisters of the UAW, we have witnessed the auto industry to right itself and to begin to come out of some of the worst times which it has confronted in its history. It is interesting to note that as the head of one of the most democratic unions in the world, Ron Gettelfinger was able to lead the union in a way which saved the industry and which enabled the industry to have negotiations about give-backs and other things always difficult to sell to the rank and file.

Elected in 2002 as international president of the UAW, Ron Gettelfinger rose through the ranks, beginning his career first as a member of UAW Local 862 in 1964. He worked in Ford's Louisville assembly plant as a chassis line repairman while he attended Indiana University Southeast at night, and it is the workers there who first recognized Ron's extraordinary qualities and elected him to represent them. He then went on to serve as Region 3 UAW director and UAW vice president.

Throughout his time in these roles, he fought relentlessly and tirelessly to

ensure workers had the quality of life they deserve by making health care accessible and affordable to all, ensuring new jobs in industry through the manufacturing of advanced technology vehicles, and addressing workers' rights provisions in fair trade agreements. He gave extraordinary leadership not just to the union and the industry but to the country.

As we have all known, Ron does not back down from a challenge. During the most difficult times in the auto industry, he worked together with business in a very close fashion to assure the survival of the industry and the companies which the UAW had negotiated agreements with. He negotiated a new round of contracts with The Big Three, creating voluntary beneficiary associations to provide health care to retirees in the Big Three and to save huge amounts of money to the auto companies. He was one of the leadership in not only determining that government assistance would be needed but in seeing to it that the union's voice was heard and that the saving of the auto industry was participated in very actively by the UAW and by the members that he served. He once said of himself, We did what we had to do to save the industry. And now, less than a year later, the auto industry is once again profitable and expanding production. In fact, Chrysler is hiring again for the first time in 10 years.

Fortunately, cars from the Big Three, when the companies and the unions and their members work together, are safe and reliable, and this year have earned the highest quality ratings in J.D. Power and Associates' annual Initial Quality Study, beating import brands by satisfying margins. It is the workers and the members and the leaders of the UAW who have worked so hard to ensure that through times of turmoil, our domestic auto industry continues to produce the best and the safest vehicles while increasing in extraordinary ways the productivity of the workplace.

And at a time when union membership is at its lowest in years, it has fought relentlessly to ensure that workers who want to organize can do so. Together with his other colleagues in labor, he has advocated for the Employee Free Choice Act, for legislation which will allow workers to decide if they want to use a majority sign-up to form a union, protecting them from employer coercion. But he has gone well beyond the needs and the concerns of labor. He has worked for education, for health care, for a clean and wholesome environment, for the health of our young and old, and for the protection of the rights of Americans.

Now, like Ron, I think our country agrees that these things are necessary and helpful; but he understands, as do many of his admirers, that labor's responsibilities and duties go far beyond the simple concerns of labor, and go to seeing to it that this country is the best that we, working together, can make it be.

Ron Gettelfinger and I and most of us here share the belief that the future success of the auto industry is going to be dependent on developing advanced batteries and electric and hybrid cars here at home and other technologies which will enable us to compete in the savagely competitive world marketplace. He is one who has supported training workers in these technologies not only to help the companies and the industry but also to provide workers with continued job opportunities. He has been there through ebbs and flows.

And the one thing that you can always count on Ron Gettelfinger having was honesty, integrity, and steadfastness. Whether he was delivering good news or bad, he always dealt with the facts. It is because of his honesty in his dealings with everyone, his brothers and sisters, business management, and labor join me tonight in praising and pointing out that he has properly earned the trust, admiration, and respect of all with whom he works. Ron Gettelfinger once said, We don't accept the notion that America is a country where a privileged few can live well while the rest of us struggle to meet our daily expenses. We are going to fight for something better. Ron Gettelfinger, you have led a fight for something better since the first day that you entered the labor movement, and I am glad that I was able to be your friend and partner in many of those fights.

I rise today to honor my dear friend Ron Gettelfinger on his retirement as UAW President.

For the last eight years, Ron has led the UAW as their President loyally and ably through some of the most difficult economic times facing our Nation.

Through his hard work and dedication to his brothers and sisters of the UAW, we have witnessed the auto industry right itself.

Elected as UAW President in 2002, Ron rose through the ranks beginning his career first as a member of the UAW Local 862 in 1964. He worked at Ford's Louisville Assembly plant as a chassis line repairman, attending Indiana University Southeast at night. It is the workers there who first elected Ron to represent them.

He then went on to serve as UAW Region 3 Director and UAW Vice President. Throughout his time in these roles he has fought tirelessly to ensure workers have a quality of life they deserve. By making health care accessible and affordable for all, ensuring new jobs in industry through the manufacturing of advanced technology vehicles, and workers' rights provisions in fair trade agreements.

And as we have all seen, Ron does not back down from a challenge.

During the most difficult of times for the auto industry, he has worked together with business to ensure its survival, negotiating through a new round of contracts with the Big Three in 2007, creating a Voluntary Beneficiary Association to provide health care to the retirees in the Big Three, and standing with the Big Three when it was determined government assistance would be needed.

As he has said himself, "We did what we had to do to save the industry." And now, less than a year later the auto industry is once

again profitable and expanding production. In fact, Chrysler is hiring again for the first time in ten years.

Fortunately, cars from the Big Three continue to be safe and reliable, and this year have earned higher quality ratings in J.D. Power and Associates' annual Initial Quality Study beating import brands for the first time.

It is the workers and leaders of the UAW who have helped to ensure that throughout times of turmoil, our domestic auto industry continues to produce the safest vehicles and increase productivity in the workplace.

And at a time when union membership is at its lowest in many years, he has fought relentlessly to ensure that workers who want to organize can. Together with his other colleagues in labor, he has advocated for the Employee Free Choice Act or legislation that would allow workers to decide if they want to use majority sign-up to form a union, protecting them from employer coercion.

Like Ron, I believe that this legislation is sorely needed and I am hopeful that this will be passed before November.

Ron and I also share the belief that the future success of the auto industry is going to be dependent on developing advanced batteries and electric and hybrid cars here at home. Together we both supported training workers in these technologies not only to help the auto industry, but also to provide workers with continued job opportunities.

Throughout the ebbs and flows, the one thing you could always count on from Ron was honesty. Whether he was delivering good news or bad, I always knew that Ron was giving me the facts.

It is because of his honesty to me, his brothers and sisters, business management and the Members who join me here tonight, Ron was able to earn the trust, admiration and respect of those he worked with.

Ron once said, "We don't accept the notion that America is a country where a privileged few live well while the rest of us struggle to meet our daily expenses. We're going to fight for something better."

Ron you led the fight for something better, and I am glad I was able to be your partner in that fight.

I now will yield to my good friends from Michigan and from elsewhere around the country who have a desire to express, as do I, compliments for our dear friend who is now retiring. I yield first to my dear friend, Congressman DALE KILDEE of Michigan.

Mr. KILDEE. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Madam Speaker, I rise today to commend Ron Gettelfinger on his leadership of the United Auto Workers for the past 8 years and to wish him all the best in his retirement.

Since 1964, when Ron joined the UAW as a chassis line repairman in Louisville, Kentucky, he began a lifetime of service that led him to become the international president of the UAW in 2002. As president, Ron's leadership has helped guide the organization through some of the most difficult times the auto industry has faced. With his characteristic straight talk and common sense, he has worked with a broad range of stakeholders and has been willing to negotiate to try to find solu-

tions to the recent downturn in the domestic auto industry and help protect our auto communities.

□ 1750

This has helped lead to an American auto industry that is well positioned to once again be the economic engine that drives the American recovery. Ron Gettelfinger has been a tireless advocate for American workers and has fought every day to keep American manufacturing jobs from being shipped overseas.

I congratulate Ron on his retirement and thank him for his years of advocacy on behalf of American workers. God bless you, Ron. Thank you for all you have done for the UAW, for all you have done for this country.

Mr. DINGELL. Madam Speaker, I yield now to my distinguished friend from Michigan (Mr. MCCOTTER).

Mr. MCCOTTER. I thank the gentleman from Michigan. I thank him for all of his guidance and his advice in this institution, one of which is being that on these swampy, humid, hot days, a son of Detroit can wear seersucker to beat the heat.

The other that I wish to thank him for is his constant reminder to us, through his example, that we work for the people who send us here, and that in very difficult times it is crucial that we look past our perceived differences and be able to come together on behalf of the people who have entrusted us with office to help solve problems for them.

We in Michigan went through this when we saw an entire cherished way of life endangered, and we united to come together to help solve that problem. The crisis has not passed. It continues to this day, but we are on the road to recovery.

Former president of the United Auto Workers, Ron Gettelfinger is a man who understands positions of trust, a man who understands the need to do everything he can to honor that trust. As a democratically elected president of the United Auto Workers, he did everything within his power, in an exceedingly difficult time, to ensure the union's survival, to ensure the survival of the auto industry, and to help ensure Michiganders' cherished way of life as a manufacturing State and as the former arsenal of democracy.

And I think that this is critical not only for us to remember in Michigan as we go forward, but as an example that I hope is set for many others in this country and in this Chamber that in a great and good country we learn more and show our true measure not by being merely able to see the character of our allies, but to see the character and virtues of our now erstwhile opponents.

Ron Gettelfinger's integrity and devotion to the people who trusted him with his position is something that he would not talk about because he is a humble, honest, hardworking man. It is left to us to do it for him, and in some

ways despite him. Having been on the other side of Mr. Gettelfinger, and at times being on the same side, I assure you it is more fun to be his ally than his opponent. But I will tell you this: That from this strange bedfellow, I wish former UAW President Ron Gettelfinger well in his future endeavors, and I have no doubt that whatever the Lord holds in store for him, Mr. Gettelfinger will be up to the challenge, and our country will be the better for it.

I can truly say that I am honored to have known him, and I am glad that he has done his duty to his union and our Nation.

Mr. DINGELL. I thank the gentleman, and I yield now to the distinguished gentlewoman from Michigan (Ms. KILPATRICK).

Ms. KILPATRICK of Michigan. I thank the chairman for yielding.

I rise in honor, respect, and duty to give President Ron Gettelfinger all he deserves for his 30-plus years of hard work as an organizer, as a laborer, and rising to the presidency of the United Auto Workers.

Congratulations, Ron. Congratulations for all the work you have done, for all the coalition building you have done, keeping our workers front and center, in good-paying jobs with benefits that they earned every day, building the best cars in America and around the world right through the workers of the United Auto Workers.

We rise today to say, Good for you. As you go into your retirement with your lovely wife and family, just know that we appreciate all that you have done. Just know that as workers and builders and all of that of America that we might have a strong economy, that your commitment, your dedication to seeing that workers have adequate wages, that workers have clean environments in which to work, that workers are able to earn a great day's pay for the work that they do for our economy and for our country, thank you, Ron Gettelfinger.

Many have come before you as president of the United Auto Workers, and you can bet you are right there with them, having given and served as long as you have. Our recent battle together was the health care debate. You, your leadership, your dedication, working with the leaders in the House and the Senate and the Presidency for the first time to bring to our country a health care bill that will cover 95 percent of Americans, we thank you for that.

No longer will people be charged or not covered for preexisting conditions. Soon, in September, all young people over the age of 21 will now be able to stay on their parents' health care until they are 26. As we know in our economy, many young people who graduate from high school and then on to college are unable to find work. So the health care bill will help them be accessible, be able to be covered.

This health care bill—and Ron Gettelfinger, thank you for your hard

work in bringing us to this point—it's not perfect, but it's certainly better than the status quo. Our status quo health care situation in our State is not sustainable. People getting dropped for no reason when they become ill, you stopped that as we worked on this health care bill. Thank you, Ron Gettelfinger.

Our seniors will now be able to have their wellness covered, that they will have preventive health covered. Our seniors, who now because of a Medicare part D program that doesn't always cover their prescriptions as prescriptions go higher and higher, for the first time, Mr. Gettelfinger, working with the coalition and our leaders here in the House and Senate and the Presidency, will now have help paying for their prescription medications. Thank you.

Thank you for your leadership. Fighting for workers, helping to put together, finally, a health care bill that we can all be proud of, being able to be that president that your men and women of the United Auto Workers, as well as all of us, have looked to for leadership, we thank you, Ron. Your mild manner, your smile, and your strength, we will never forget you.

So enjoy your retirement, Mr. President. You have earned it. And we promise, as we work here in the House of Representatives, we will continue to work, as you have worked for all of these 30-plus years, to make sure that all Americans, all Americans have an opportunity to work in a clean environment, to receive adequate pay for a day's work and, yes, have health care benefits to protect them and their family.

Enjoy your retirement. God bless you, Mr. President.

Madam Speaker, in an era in which progressive activists are rarer and rarer, it is my honor to speak in respect, honor and praise of the three decades of service of Mr. Ron Gettelfinger, president of the United Auto Workers or UAW. For over 30 years Mr. Gettelfinger has shown his dedication to the rights and fair treatment of all workers. Rising through the ranks of the United Auto Workers union to his leadership position that he has today, Mr. Gettelfinger embodies the hard work ethic, dedication to a cause bigger than yourself, and respect for family embodied in what the UAW represents. Manufacturing, specifically the automotive industry, is the backbone of the State economy of Michigan. The UAW has been the backbone of the worker. Ron Gettelfinger is known as a fierce advocate and fearless leader in fighting for the people who make this country run—the worker.

From Mr. Gettelfinger's humble beginnings with the union as a line repairman in 1964 at Ford Motor Company's Louisville Assembly Plant, to his leadership role as president of the UAW in 2002, Mr. Gettelfinger has remained faithful to his beliefs. He believes in the fact that we are all created equal. He believes that the everyday line worker is just as valuable as the CEO of the corporations in which they are employed. He has continued to be a voice for the worker, while negotiating new union con-

tracts that were not popular to workers or management. He has championed the cause of the worker, and for that, the worker has championed him.

If not for the unwavering and unyielding belief that all Americans deserve access to affordable health care, sweeping health care reform would still be a dream in the United States of America. Mr. Gettelfinger, like me, believes that all hard working, taxpaying Americans should not face discrimination for pre-existing conditions. If you are in the hospital, you should not be dropped from your health care plan just because you are ill. We are already beginning to see the effects of health care reform, such as seniors receiving subsidies to help pay for prescriptions, children allowed to stay on their parents' plans until the age of 26, and insurance companies not allowed to drop coverage once the patient needs it most. Mr. Gettelfinger has also been instrumental in negotiating fair trade agreements that include provisions for workers' rights and environmental provisions. He has stood strong against what he called the vicious "corporate global chase for the lowest wages, which creates a race to the bottom, in which no worker can win." He has been, and still remains, a powerful, uncompromising voice for all workers.

From access to affordable healthcare, to labor protection in fair trade agreements, to keeping our manufacturing jobs right here in the U.S. by investing in technologically advanced American vehicles, Mr. Gettelfinger has been there. He not only talks, but knows and lives the values of the labor union while working with management to ensure a safe and profitable workplace. During a time in which we saw General Motors and Chrysler file for bankruptcy—two of the largest corporations in our Nation, and the world—Ron Gettelfinger always fought for the protection of workers. He saw both sides of an issue, and negotiated difficult but necessary compromises to the benefit of management and labor. Even with his retirement, this leader's legacy will not be forgotten, it will become legend. God bless and Godspeed to you, Ron Gettelfinger. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. DINGELL. I thank the distinguished gentlewoman.

And now I yield to my dear friend from Maryland, the Honorable DONNA EDWARDS.

Ms. EDWARDS of Maryland. Thank you.

It's really my pleasure to stand here with my good friend Congressman DINGELL in honoring the incredible life and career and advocacy of Ron Gettelfinger, who retired just last week after a distinguished union career that began in 1964, when I was just a kid. But I will tell you, for the benefits that all of us as Americans and as workers have received for his good work with the United Auto Workers, we are all grateful.

And you don't have to be from Michigan to understand the contributions that Mr. Gettelfinger has made. He has been a fierce advocate on behalf of workers. He understood that in his position as president of the United Auto Workers, he needed to try to address the current needs of his workers as

well as the future needs that may come up.

In 2006, Mr. Gettelfinger pushed to renew America's grasp on technology and innovation. He called for a renewal of America's industrial base through incentives to manufacture energy-saving advanced technology vehicles right here in the United States. And as a member of the Science and Technology Committee, I can assure you that there is a need for America and a desire for our workforce to do exactly what Mr. Gettelfinger has called for, to be on the cutting edge of this technology. And he has been right there pushing all the time for incentives and innovations. And this isn't new.

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Mr. Gettelfinger was one of the loud-est voices, and I was happy to sing in his choir for health care reform, for single-payer health care reform, because he understood that health care accessibility and affordability is necessary, not just for the unionized and organized workforce, but for all Americans.

Under his leadership, the UAW has continued its fight for fair trade agreements that include provisions for workers' rights and environmental protection. The union has loudly criticized the corporate global chase for the lowest wage that creates a race to the bottom that no workers in any country can win.

We have to continue Ron Gettelfinger's fight. We know that he is retiring, but we know he is not down and we know his influence will carry across this country as we struggle for the working families of America. So it is with great honor that I stand here to pay tribute to our good friend, to a career of someone who has fought for workers, for equality, justice, and for quality of life.

So thank you, Ron Gettelfinger, for your service and for your career.

Mr. DINGELL. I thank the distinguished gentlewoman from Maryland.

I now yield to the distinguished gentleman from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN), the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I am privileged to join with JOHN DINGELL, a true champion of the automobile industry of this country for over 50 years, as we join together to honor Ron Gettelfinger.

As we know, he recently retired as president of the United Auto Workers. Through a period of unprecedented difficulty, and I emphasize that, for this industry of ours, Ron Gettelfinger worked tirelessly on behalf of auto workers and helped the industry and the union emerge reinvigorated and more competitive. So it is my privilege to join others to pay tribute to you, Ron, today.

A proud auto worker, Ron Gettelfinger joined the UAW in 1964 as a chassis line repairman at Ford's Louisville assembly plant. The workers at

the plant elected him to represent him as committee person, bargaining chair, and in 1984 as president of Local 862. His leadership and vigorous commitment to auto workers soon elevated him to the Ford-UAW bargaining committee; to the head of UAW Region 3 representing Indiana and Kentucky; and to UAW vice president. And in 2002, Ron Gettelfinger was elected president of the union and reelected in 2006.

His tenure as UAW president saw exceptional challenges—to understate it—that critics said neither the union nor the automakers could overcome. This indeed was a period of painful job loss for tens of thousands of families. And during this difficult time, Ron Gettelfinger's dedication to working families never waned as he fought to preserve jobs while helping to keep the industry afloat. I am proud to have been among those who worked with him during this period of great uncertainty. This was a collaborative effort. It took leadership and at times political risk. Key leaders stepped up to the plate, management and labor, and the public sector, led by the President and his administration, and Members of the House and Senate.

In the wake of immense challenge, the American automotive industry is emerging anew. Exciting new vehicle technologies, growing consumer confidence and strong quality and safety ratings offer hope for the new prosperity for the American auto industry and its workers.

Ron Gettelfinger's commitment to the American auto industry and its workers has been unyielding over his career.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join in congratulating Mr. Gettelfinger; his wife, Judy; and their children and grandchildren on the occasion of his retirement from the union he loved so deeply, the UAW.

Mr. DINGELL. I thank my good friend from Michigan, and I yield now to another distinguished gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SCHAUER).

Mr. SCHAUER. I thank you, Mr. DINGELL, and it is an honor to be here during this hour to talk about a man who has shaped our Nation's economy and manufacturing; and it is an honor to follow Congressman SANDY LEVIN, also from Michigan, who has been a fighter for jobs.

Ron Gettelfinger, from my experience I can best describe him in a couple of stories. We are here to congratulate him on his retirement and his legacy with the United Auto Workers. Chairman DINGELL and a bipartisan delegation from the House of Representatives visited the auto show, the North American International Auto Show, at the beginning of this year.

We met with the top leadership of Ford, GM and Chrysler. Ron Gettelfinger was right there. It was apparent, as these companies have worked through a very challenging time, they had a true partnership in their workers; the best workers in the

world, and their leader, Ron Gettelfinger, was there as each of the management leaders of Ford, GM and Chrysler talked about their new technology. They talked about their innovations, and they talked about retraining of their workers. They talked about more efficient and cost-efficient manufacturing processes. Ron Gettelfinger was there as a true partner with each of those companies as they talked about their exciting new products made in the United States of America by American workers that Ron Gettelfinger represented. The best products in the world, the best automobiles in the world, that is Ron Gettelfinger.

Another story hits close to home for me. I represent a lot of auto workers and a lot of families that earn their living from manufacturing. I have an automotive assembly plant in my district. It is General Motors Lansing Delta Township Assembly Plant in Eaton County in my congressional district. It is the auto industry's most modern, efficient plant in the world.

Just a year and a half ago or so, that plant was down to just one shift making a crossover vehicle. At that time it was the GMC Acadia; the Buick Enclave; the Saturn Outlook, a great, best in class, most fuel-efficient vehicle in its class. They were down to one shift. Ron Gettelfinger, in partnership with General Motors management, made some important decisions about that plant, about its products, about its company. That plant, which is represented by UAW Local 602, Brian Fredline is their president, now today is back to three shifts plus overtime. And in addition is making the Chevy Traverse. It is a world-class vehicle; and Ron Gettelfinger, through his partnership with this automotive company, has put people to work. In fact, Michigan, which has struggled with high unemployment over the years, actually saw about 450 families move from Tennessee to work in that plant. And I thank Ron Gettelfinger and I thank General Motors for that.

By the way, the Buick version of this vehicle made in my district by UAW Local 602 workers is China's number one imported vehicle.

What Ron Gettelfinger's work and career and his legacy mean to me is he is a champion for manufacturing, and in this country we must fight for manufacturing. It is a national security issue. This is the industry, the auto industry that built our middle class and that is part of Ron's legacy.

Another is fair trade. We must continue to fight for fair trade, as Ron Gettelfinger did in his career, to make sure that our workers, the best workers in the world, the most innovative companies in the world have a chance to compete on a level playing field. Ron Gettelfinger fought for fair labor practices for his workers. He helped transform America's economy. And retirees to Ron Gettelfinger were more than legacy costs, as some consider them. They are real people.

So to Ron Gettelfinger, congratulations and thank you for your commitment to the United States of America for good jobs, a middle class, for advanced manufacturing and an industry that is on its feet again. Bob King will be a very able new president. I wish him well, but I am here today, Chairman DINGELL, to thank Ron Gettelfinger for all he has done for the United States of America.

Mr. DINGELL. I thank my distinguished friend from Michigan.

I yield now to the distinguished gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE).

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And to the Speaker, whenever JOHN DINGELL raises his voice to join in honoring a leader, you always have to take his affirmation really as an honor of that leader. And so no one wants to be left out when it comes to honoring someone Chairman DINGELL has designated as deserving that honor.

I come far away from Michigan, from Texas, and to be able to say that Ron Gettelfinger is an American hero, and America thanks him, because he understood the various assets of wealth. He might have understood a family in New York or down in Houston, or maybe in Alabama who was able to get that first American-made car, made by the men and women of the United States, and in this instance those who reside in Michigan. Buying a car was a big deal, and I think this president, past president of the UAW, understood that. And I am grateful for him understanding that. That is why he fought for the men and women of the UAW.

And so I rise today to join in this Special Order to honor Ron Gettelfinger and to thank him for caring about America, for those families who work every day all the time to ensure that they might buy that first car, that family car, that they could load up a family of two, three, four, five or more in a car that they knew would work, that had all of the bells and whistles and had the investment of the hard-earning and the hardworking men and women of the UAW. We want to thank him for his hard and exemplary work with organized labor, and we want to acknowledge him at this time of his retirement.

There is no doubt that for his 40 years of service in the interest of the average American worker, he deserves the praise of Congress. He agreed with something I think that I wholeheartedly agree with: it is important for Americans to make things. And how proud we were that we could point to the American automobile industry as being made by the hands of those who worked hard and made good and made good products. America has got to get back to making things; and Mr. Gettelfinger, who was involved in the union and worker activities since 1964, I believe understood that well.

Ever since he was elected to represent Ford's Louisville assembly plant

as committee person, bargaining chair and president, he has tirelessly worked for the betterment of the average American worker. It should be noted as the UAW votes rose, as they improved their working conditions, and of course the contractual conditions and agreements, others likewise benefited. His organizing and people skills are legendary, as is his steadfast commitment to the American worker, all of which made him a symbol of the union movement in the United States and an icon to many Americans.

Mr. Gettelfinger first became a member of the Ford United Auto Workers bargaining committee in 1987. Since then, he has held several management positions before being elected to his first term of president of the UAW in 2002. Under his leadership, UAW was able to lobby effectively for labor protections and fair trade agreements, including provisions for workers' rights and environmental protections. He was a visionary. With the voice of the average worker as his motivational mantra, he fervently criticized corporate global initiatives designed to strip workers of their right to a living wage in the face of economic decline. In addition, he toiled to keep American jobs here. He believed in America making things.

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I hope he will leave that legacy, because we've got to get back to making things. Mr. Speaker, this is the kind of man who embodies the American spirit and symbolizes the importance of the average American worker to the success and way of life that we cherish. There is nothing wrong with working with your hands and having a decent living. He believed in technology, better ways of making cars, more efficiency, but he didn't believe in undermining the worker, the American worker. Our democracy has been made stronger by the efforts of this unique individual. It is only fitting that we honor former president of the UAW Ron Gettelfinger for his life's work and give him special praise on his retirement.

Again for these reasons, I rise in support of Chairman DINGELL's special order and would only leave you to say this: He is a great American. We would do well to follow in the footsteps of this great American and learn that America is at her best when she can make things for the American people and people around the world.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of my colleague JOHN DINGELL's special order to honor Ron Gettelfinger, immediate past president of the United Auto Workers, UAW, for his exemplary work with the men and women of organized labor, and on the event of his retirement. There is no doubt that for his 40 years of service in the interest of the average American worker, Mr. Gettelfinger deserves the praise of the Congress.

Mr. Gettelfinger has been involved in union and worker activities since 1964. Ever since he was elected to represent the Ford's Louis-

ville Assembly Plant as committee person, bargaining chair, and president, he has tirelessly worked for the betterment of the average American worker. His organizing and people skills are legendary as is his steadfast commitment to the American worker; all of which make him a symbol of the union movement in the United States and an icon to many Americans.

Mr. Gettelfinger first became a member of the Ford-United Auto Workers, UAW, bargaining committee in 1987. Since then, he has held several other management positions before being elected to his first term as president of UAW in 2002. Under his leadership, UAW was able to lobby effectively for labor protections and fair trade agreements, including provisions for workers' rights and environmental protections. With the voice of the average worker as his motivational mantra, he fervently criticized corporate global initiatives designed to strip workers of their right to a living wage in the face of economic decline. In addition, he toiled to keep U.S. jobs here in America.

Mr. Speaker, this is the kind of man who embodies the American spirit and symbolizes the importance of the average American worker to the success and way of life that we cherish. Our democracy has been made stronger by the efforts of this unique individual. It is only fitting that we honor Ron Gettelfinger for his life's work and give him special praise on his retirement.

Again, for these reasons I rise in support of my friend and colleague, JOHN DINGELL's special order.

Mr. DINGELL. I thank the distinguished gentlewoman from Texas.

I yield now to the distinguished gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Mrs. DAHLKEMPER).

Mrs. DAHLKEMPER. I would like to thank Congressman DINGELL for hosting this special hour this evening where we can pay tribute to an outstanding leader, businessman and champion of organized labor, Mr. Ron Gettelfinger.

I came to Congress with the promise of standing up for workers' rights, a mission that Ron has crusaded for since his days as an assemblyman for the Ford Motor Company. His leadership has influenced my approach to policy and enhanced the vision of organized labor.

Ron's 8 years as president of the UAW have ushered in a number of defining accomplishments for the American worker. He fought vigorously to assure worker protections in major trade agreements while understanding that a reformed health care system will better serve America's workforce and our entire country.

Ron's success is defined by a willingness to work with industry and construct bipartisan agreements that achieve results, a strategy I admire and wish we would see more of here in Congress. As we emerge from the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, Ron's leadership has been stalwart.

As Americans see thousands of jobs headed overseas, Ron made sure that well-paying jobs stayed right here in the United States of America. At a

time when workers' rights were in jeopardy, Ron never thought to back down or make concessions. That's real leadership.

Ron, on behalf of the working men and women of my district in western Pennsylvania and all organized labor, thank you. You leave a wonderful legacy that has shaped a higher standard for the American worker. I wish you the very best in your days ahead. I am proud to stand here with the gentleman from Michigan to honor you here tonight.

Mr. DINGELL. I thank the distinguished gentlewoman.

I yield now with a great deal of pleasure and respect to my good friend from New York, the Honorable EDOLPHUS TOWNS.

Mr. TOWNS. Thank you very much.

I am delighted to come and participate in this special order this evening, to be here with the longest serving member of the United States House of Representatives, John Dingell. We come tonight to say thank you to Ron Gettelfinger for 40 years of service to the UAW, and 8 years as its president. So I rise in order to honor him tonight because of the outstanding job that Ron was able to do.

It is easy to admire Ron by just looking back over his long career. From his early work as a chassis line repairman in 1964 at a Louisville assembly plant to being elected to the United Auto Workers top leadership post in 2002, where he became the face of one of the largest and most diverse unions in North America, he has shown a remarkable drive and work ethic that made him a role model as he fought for health care and so many issues that improved the quality of life for so many.

Ron was not a selfish person. He felt that if I can help somebody, then my living is not in vain. In addition to his work in the auto industry, he has had a positive effect on Federal and State public policy. Mr. Gettelfinger is a hardworking individual who has been an outspoken advocate for so many good causes.

Under his leadership, the UAW also lobbied for new technologies and environmental standards, supporting smart policies for solid jobs, and, of course, clean air. These are issues that have been and continue to be very important to me and the people of the 10th Congressional District.

Ron was once quoted as saying, "We don't accept the notion that America is a country where a privileged few live while the rest of us struggle to meet our daily expenses. We're going to fight for something better." And I want you to know he did.

And, of course, we look back tonight and we say, Ron, thank you. Thank you for the outstanding job that you did on behalf of the UAW. Thank you for the outstanding job that you have done on behalf of the people of this Nation. We thank you for the leadership; and as a result, people throughout were able to see you as a role model.

So I come tonight to say thank you again and we wish you Godspeed. We know that you will be out there doing some things in a positive way which will continue to improve the quality of life.

Mr. DINGELL. I want to thank my dear friend from New York for his kindness, his fine words, and for his great patience. He is my dear friend.

Mr. Speaker, I have the remarks of many of our other colleagues which will be inserted into the RECORD paying tribute to our great friend, Ron Gettelfinger.

I simply want to observe two things: first, we are saying good-bye tonight to a giant, a patriot, a wonderful human being, a man who cared about his fellow Americans and who spent his lifetime making it the best he could for his fellow Americans, especially members of the trade union movement.

He was never afraid to give leadership to causes that were important, and he never was afraid to speak the truth, including to work with me and with the companies to address problems that those companies had here in Washington, and he was never afraid to tell the truth, even to his own members when that was necessary to be done.

I am pleased to report that in his leaving of office, he leaves behind him a great and respected trade union movement, and a wonderful union in the UAW. And I am pleased to report to my colleagues that his successor, the new president, Bob King, will serve with great distinction and as a worthy successor in all aspects of this very important leadership responsibility. I congratulate him and wish him well.

Mr. TIERNEY. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of working men and women of the Sixth District of Massachusetts, I rise today to commend Ron Gettelfinger for his extraordinary service and leadership during his recently completed tenure as president of the United Auto Workers of America.

Over the last 8 years, Ron Gettelfinger has helped steer his brothers and sisters in organized labor through one of the most difficult economic periods in history with great statesmanship and considerable care. And despite the unprecedented challenges the auto industry has faced, the UAW has emerged from the recent crisis well-positioned for the future thanks in no small measure to Ron's vision and leadership.

Ron's tenure at the UAW was marked by a string of victories for American workers and their families. An outspoken advocate to make health care accessible and affordable for all Americans, Ron played a critical role in helping to see health care reform enacted into law. He fought for children's health insurance and fair pay legislation, labor protections in fair trade agreements, and championed retaining manufacturing jobs here in the United States through investments in advanced technology vehicles. And through the most serious economic downturn since the Great Depression and the loss of thousands of jobs to companies overseas, Ron Gettelfinger always worked to ensure that UAW workers and their families were treated fairly.

Though he rose to the very top of the UAW leadership, Ron Gettelfinger never forgot where he came from. He was most proud simply to be known as a chassis line repairman. A member of UAW since 1964, it was the needs and perspectives of the workers at Ford's Louisville Assembly plant with whom he worked side-by-side for so many years that always shaped his priorities and concerns.

With profound appreciation for Ron Gettelfinger's consensus-building among business and labor leaders that has helped to preserve a vibrant American auto industry for millions of American workers and their families, I join my colleagues in thanking Ron for his service and wishing him and his family well in the years ahead.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, please allow me to express my sincerest gratitude to UAW President Ron Gettelfinger for his leadership during this extraordinary moment of transition for the U.S. auto industry. His strength, composure, intellect, and resolve have turned a new day for this bedrock U.S. industry.

Ronald A. Gettelfinger, born August 1, 1944, was elected to his first term as president of the UAW at the 33rd Convention in 2002. He was elected to a second term on June 14, 2006, at the UAW's 34th Convention in Las Vegas. A son of the midwest, Ron Gettelfinger is a 1976 graduate of Indiana University Southeast in New Albany, Indiana.

He began his union involvement in 1964 in Louisville, Kentucky, at the Louisville Assembly Plant run by Ford Motor Company while working as chassis line repairman.

The workers at Ford's Louisville Assembly plant elected Gettelfinger to represent them as committeeperson, bargaining chair and president. He was elected president of local union 862 in 1984. In 1987, he became a member of the Ford-UAW bargaining committee. Afterwards, he held other positions: director of UAW Region 3 and the UAW chaplaincy program. For six years he served as the elected director of UAW Region 3, which represents UAW members in Indiana and Kentucky, before being elected a UAW vice president in 1998.

Ron has been an outspoken advocate for national single-payer health care in the United States. Under his leadership, the UAW has lobbied for fair trade agreements that include provisions for workers' rights and environmental provisions; and the union has loudly criticized what it calls "the corporate global chase for the lowest wage which creates a race to the bottom that no workers, in any country, can win".

Mr. Gettelfinger's leadership of the UAW has led to a more competitive American auto industry. His stalwart and trustworthy negotiations gave new hope to a beleaguered industrial sector.

The U.S. auto industry, long the backbone of the American economy, reached an important milestone last week—and I think this accomplishment did not get the coverage that it deserved.

The respected J.D. Power & Associates initial quality study revealed that U.S. automakers defeated the imports in what the L.A. Times calls "a key benchmark of quality."

That's right. The American automakers are Number One again.

It has been a long, tough road, but they have gotten the job done—and they did it in extremely difficult circumstances.

This achievement involved a lot of sacrifice and a good measure of “tough love,” but it has paid off. A cornerstone industry of the American economy has turned the corner.

We congratulate the UAW, because a lot of people—including Members of this body—said it couldn't be done. A lot of people said the automakers weren't worthy of our support. A lot of people wrote them off—and the hundreds of thousands of jobs that the auto industry supports in this country.

Truly, the autoworkers, auto dealers, parts suppliers—and all the people who support this giant industry—deserve our commendation.

Mr. Speaker, this has never happened before. In the quarter of a century that J.D. Power quality surveys have been conducted, the U.S. automakers never defeated the foreign competition. Until this year.

As a J.D. Power official told the L.A. Times: “This is a landmark in the quality history of the auto industry.” He got that right. It is a landmark event, and it's a landmark event with great implications for our nation.

The day when the buying public regarded imported cars as superior to American cars? It's over.

The American automakers have been steadily closing the gap on their foreign competition for several years. And this year, they finally passed them.

If you want quality, buy American. Take it from J.D. Power.

There is still a lot of work ahead, but make no mistake: the American carmakers are back. Our confidence in them and their workers has been rewarded.

And Ron Gettelfinger, as he officially retires, can be confident his life made a difference to millions and millions of others, and to communities across our nation that depended on him to lead his great union into a new era for the U.S. auto industry.

Thank you, Ron, for your effort, your service, your patriotism and your achievements. May God bless you and yours in the coming years.

Mr. SERRANO. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to honor Ron Gettelfinger, who retired last week from being president of the United Auto Workers. Mr. Gettelfinger first joined the UAW as a line repairman in 1964 and has now spent a lifetime fighting for the best interests of working Americans.

Mr. Gettelfinger was elected to the Presidency of the UAW in 2002 and provided excellent leadership through a difficult time in the history of the auto industry in the United States. The auto industry faced great hardships during his tenure and as a whole needed to make a lot of changes. Mr. Gettelfinger recognized the great changes that needed to be made and ably defended his members while working hard to address the long term needs of the industry. He understood that the automakers and the unions needed to work together to insure that they both could go forward stronger than before.

During his time as President he worked hard not only for his own members, but for the rights of all American workers and of all workers around the world. In addition to his efforts working for workers, he understood the importance of universal health care to having a healthy and competitive workforce and he spoke out in favor of health care for all Americans. While I think that he and I would both have liked to see even more extensive reach-

ing reform, we have taken an important step and I applaud his efforts on behalf of health-care reform.

Mr. Gettelfinger has spent a lifetime of serving working Americans and making sure that they are given a fair chance at a fair wage and fair work. I wish him the best of luck in whatever he does next, which I am sure will include continuing efforts to defend the rights of workers and all Americans.

Mr. GONZALEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to salute Ronald A. Gettelfinger as he steps down after eight years as president of the International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America. Since 1964, Mr. Gettelfinger has been a part of the American automotive industry. When Bob King assumed the presidency of UAW on June 15, 2010, it marked the end of an era.

As a chassis line repairman, after his election by his fellow UAW members to represent the workers at Ford's Louisville Assembly plant, and his during his twelve years in the leadership of UAW, Ron Gettelfinger has worked to ensure that his workers, American workers, get a fair deal. He has fought to protect a strong manufacturing sector in the United States of America, so that the Arsenal of Democracy could continue to lead the world, not just through our production but through the standards we hold dear. His priorities have been a just and decent wage for honest work. Recognizing the importance of ending our dependence on foreign and fossil fuels, as President of UAW he pushed for a national investment in new technologies to produce energy-saving vehicles.

These past 44 years have seen great changes in the automotive industry. There have been good times and bad. Through it all, Ron Gettelfinger never forgot for whom he worked. The past two years may have been some of the toughest. But the reorganizations of General Motors and Chrysler have marked a turning point and things are looking up. The new GM is leaner and tougher than we have seen in years, with the Chevrolet Volt leading the way into a bright future. We all look forward to that bright future, and I trust that Ron Gettelfinger looks to it with pride in the role he played in making it possible.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Ronald Gettelfinger, president of the United Auto Workers, and longtime advocate of workers everywhere. I stand to recognize him for his vision for America.

Mr. Gettelfinger's first experience with Ford Motor Company's labor unions occurred in 1964 when he started working as a chassis line repairman at the Louisville Assembly Plant. After a few years, his co-workers elected him committeeperson, bargaining chair, and president of the local union. He worked his way up through UAW Region 3, was elected national vice president in 1988, and president in 2002. His second term as president will expire with the election of a new president at the UAW convention in Detroit later this week.

Mr. Gettelfinger's down-to-earth personality has been a huge asset to him as UAW president. He has stood by the Union's mission to secure economic and social justice for all people, and believes that every person and every job is important.

Mr. Speaker, Ron Gettelfinger's leadership as president of the United Auto Workers and

advocate for health care reform should not go unrecognized. I wish him the best of luck in his future endeavors.

Mr. DOYLE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a man of great dedication and loyalty to the working men and women of America. Mr. Ron Gettelfinger recently retired from his position as President of the United Auto Workers and I want to take this opportunity to honor him for his longtime advocacy for the American worker.

Mr. Gettelfinger began his union involvement in 1964 as a chassis line repairman at the Ford Motor Company's Louisville Assembly Plant in Louisville, Kentucky. Twenty years later, following his election as committeeperson and, soon thereafter, bargaining chair, he was elected president of Local Union 862. He took on greater and greater responsibility in the UAW, serving as director, vice president, and starting in 2002, president of the union. He was reelected for second term in 2006. However, in 2009, he announced he would retire at the end of his second term as president.

Mr. Gettelfinger's accomplishments include, but certainly are not limited to, his steadfast determination which aided him in his fight for both labor protection in fair trade agreements and affordable health care for all. Most notably, Mr. Gettelfinger proved himself a strong leader during the most serious economic downfall in decades, when he negotiated tirelessly with corporate leaders in order to protect his workers' rights.

Mr. Gettelfinger has served the working men and women of the UAW with skill and dedication for decades, and I want to take this opportunity to commend him for all his efforts as a determined advocate for American workers. I want to congratulate Mr. Gettelfinger, and extend to him and his family best wishes for a well-deserved retirement.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Ron Gettelfinger for his tremendous leadership and to congratulate him on the good work he has done representing the members of the United Auto Workers (UAW). Ron served the UAW as President, Vice President, and as a member of the Local 862. I wish him all the best retirement has to offer.

Since 1964, Ron Gettelfinger has been a proud member of the UAW, and served as President since 2002. During this time he advanced the rights of working men and women by securing fair wages, better working conditions, and fairer trade deals. Ron Gettelfinger also guided the UAW through the tough times of the past several years, when the auto industry was struggling and our nation's economy was in a deep recession. He made sure that his workers were treated fairly during these difficult times.

As the son of a lifelong iron worker, I am a strong supporter of a worker's right to engage in collective bargaining through membership in labor unions. I have, and will continue to assist them in achieving common goals such as fair wages, safe workplaces and enhanced job opportunities.

I ask my colleagues to join with me in congratulating Ron Gettelfinger and wishing him all the best in his retirement.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer my sincere appreciation of the enormous contributions that Ron Gettelfinger has made to our nation and to the labor movement as President of the United Auto Workers

(UAW). Thank you, Ron, for your unmatched record, and your superb service as an effective labor leader.

As a result of your tireless and dedicated leadership, you succeeded in making our vital domestic auto industry able to compete in the global auto marketplace. Your vision to secure a sound future for the auto industry was not limited to just your membership; your skilled efforts also benefitted our steelworkers on the Iron Range in Minnesota who work in the taconite mines to produce the ore for our domestic steel industry. I am profoundly grateful for your contributions that will never be forgotten, and your quote “We did what we had to do to get to tomorrow” is a testament to your lasting legacy of leadership.

I hope your retirement is filled with many years of continued growth and good health, and that you never cease to share your ability to lead and inspire. I know that you will continue to apply your trademark dedication and energy to all your endeavors in the future.

It is indeed a pleasure to send my very best wishes to a man who has touched the lives of so many people in as many ways as you have.

Congratulations, Ron, on your retirement and your extraordinary work for working men and women.

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join my colleagues in paying tribute to a great man much beloved around the country, including in my home state of Wisconsin: I speak of Ron Gettelfinger.

Anyone who has ever needed a friend knows the difference between the fair-weather friend and the friend who stands by you in your time of need. Ron Gettelfinger has stood by his UAW brothers and sisters in their time of need.

When my constituents talk about Ron, they talk about him as a fighter for working men and women. Over the past 8 years, while he served as the president of the United Auto Workers, Ron saw the auto industry challenged as never before. He saw its workers beaten down.

Hundreds of my constituents lost their jobs when the GM plant in Janesville, Wisconsin closed down. Ron and the UAW stood by those workers, providing them with support, assistance and advocacy to bridge the gap to new employment.

But Ron didn't just stand by the workers without jobs—he knew something needed to be done to stop the bleeding and help save the auto industry. So he did the unpopular thing, and helped renegotiate General Motors contract with the auto workers. It was such a difficult decision in a difficult time—but we are beginning to see the positive results from it now. The auto industry seems to be turning around.

As president of the UAW, Ron has been a champion for all American workers. He has worked tirelessly for labor protections in fair trade agreements, accessible and affordable health care for all, and protection of American jobs through investments in advance technology vehicles.

So my gratitude and my admiration go to Ron, on behalf of the thousands of Wisconsinites he represented so bravely and ably for the past 8 years.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join my good friend, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL) in recognizing Mr.

Ronald A. Gettelfinger on his well-deserved retirement.

A few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to be with Mr. Gettelfinger and the UAW members to celebrate their 75th anniversary. They have been stalwart partners in the movement for civil rights and social change. It was truly a homecoming, and I was proud to be with Ron during one of his last official acts as UAW president.

For nearly half a century, Mr. Gettelfinger has dedicated himself to the rights of American auto workers. Ron began his career as chassis line repairman in 1964. When his colleagues at Ford's Louisville Assembly plant elected him as their committeeperson, bargaining chair, and president, he rose to the challenge and went on to serve in various leadership positions for the United Auto Workers (UAW) membership for the next 26 years.

During his tireless years as a UAW leader, Mr. Gettelfinger constantly recommitted himself to the values that were so important to—as he would say—my “sisters and brothers”. Through trials and tribulation, the UAW has defended human dignity in the auto industry and been a strong ally in the struggle for social justice both in the United States and around the world. Mr. Gettelfinger embodied these values and was a constant, vocal advocate for health care, workers' rights, and trade policy reforms. I thank him for his service and for his commitment to the forgotten, the underserved, and the backbone of our global economy—America's workers.

Again, let me congratulate Ron, his wife Judy, and their family on this momentous occasion and exciting new chapter in their life. Mr. Speaker, Mr. DINGELL, as you know, his leadership will be missed, but never forgotten.

Mr. HARE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the achievements of Mr. Ron Gettelfinger, President of the United Auto Workers, and to thank him for his unwavering commitment to the American worker. His retirement is surely a bittersweet moment for us all. Through his eight years as President of UAW, Mr. Gettelfinger navigated some of the most difficult and trying times that the labor movement has faced in recent history. During the economic downturn and with countless jobs moving overseas, his steadfast leadership has helped restore faith in our auto industry and has helped workers feel secure during this period of great instability and change. I am deeply moved by Mr. Gettelfinger's unwavering resolve in his fight for labor protections, accessible and affordable health care for all, and his push for keeping manufacturing jobs in the United States.

I speak today on behalf of the Illinois members of the UAW in thanking Mr. Gettelfinger for all of his work. Workers throughout Illinois have played a large role in supplying our automakers and are one small part in a much larger supply chain. Because of this connection, the UAW itself has deep roots in Illinois, and Mr. Gettelfinger's work has touched countless Illinois families. I would like to thank Mr. Gettelfinger for his efforts to make life better for workers across my home state of Illinois and across the United States. The people of Illinois will not soon forget what Mr. Gettelfinger has accomplished for them.

Mr. Speaker, it is with pride and admiration that I offer my thanks and recognition to Mr. Ron Gettelfinger for his service to the UAW and to our nation.

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Ron Gettelfinger for his leadership at the United Auto Workers, UAW, and to congratulate him on his retirement after a lifelong dedication to the auto industry. He is a former chassis line repairman at a Ford factory in Indiana and a former director of UAW Region 3 which represents Indiana and Kentucky. A member of the UAW Local 862 since 1964, Mr. Gettelfinger was the right man to lead the UAW during the worst economic downturn in recent years for the automobile industry and our country. He is proof that optimism and dedication during tough times can yield positive results.

Ron Gettelfinger was first elected president of the UAW at the 33rd Constitutional Convention in 2002 and re-elected to a second term in 2006. During the economic downturn of 2006 and 2007, he had to make tough and sometimes unpopular decisions to ultimately save America's Big Three auto companies. He reached agreements to provide buyouts and other retirement incentives for tens of thousands of workers, forfeited holiday pay and bonuses, and applied overtime pay only to work weeks exceeding 40 hours as opposed to work days exceeding 8 hours.

In a continued effort to save the auto industry and foreseeing the effect of globalization on manufacturing wages, Mr. Gettelfinger agreed to job layoffs and contract concessions that would make it easier for the Big Three to secure the help they needed. In 2008 and 2009, he made the tough decision to end lifetime job guarantees, traditional pension plans and carefree retiree health insurance plans. He also agreed to end the UAW's job bank program which allowed laid-off workers to continue collecting almost full pay—a program that was often seen as paying workers for not working. As a result of these and other measures taken to address the effects on wages, a study by the Center for Automotive Research concluded that the Detroit Three will achieve “labor cost superiority” by 2015 and will hire thousands of new workers.

Ron Gettelfinger worked tirelessly on behalf of automobile manufacturing workers and felt a sense of responsibility to them and the country as a whole. He advocated for incentives to manufacture energy-saving advanced technology vehicles and their key components in the United States. He fought for fair trade agreements that included provisions for workers' rights and environmental protections. He was also critical of “race to the bottom” practices whereby corporations sought to maximize profits by paying the lowest wages possible.

Mr. Gettelfinger was a supporter of accessible and affordable health care for every man, woman, and child here in America. In order to save the financial books of GM and Chrysler and still provide pensioners' health care coverage, UAW assumed the health care cost through a trust known as Voluntary Employees' Beneficiary Associations, VEBA.

While in my hometown of Memphis, Tennessee, Ron Gettelfinger spoke at the conservative Economic Club of Memphis in early 2009. He was introduced by his cousin, Mr. Tom Gettelfinger—a practicing ophthalmologist in Memphis. Ron Gettelfinger acknowledged the important role shared by the auto industry and Tennessee, which ranks 9th in the United States in terms of auto industry employment with an annual \$2.8 billion payroll. While in the

lion's den, Mr. Gettelfinger spoke on U.S. banks and investment firms as the foundation of the global system and the disarray they were in. He spoke on the need for the government to jump-start the economy and to address the thousands of Americans losing their jobs and their homes to foreclosures. Mr. Gettelfinger told attendees that President Obama and Congress did the right thing by passing the economic stimulus package and that the plan would put money back into the hands of the American people and would energize the lagging economy. We are seeing all of these things come to fruition today.

Ron Gettelfinger pulled our automobile manufacturing industry from the brink of devastation and saved hundreds of thousands of jobs. By saving the Detroit Three, Mr. Gettelfinger played a pivotal role in keeping the American economy away from total disaster. Mr. Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues to join me today in wishing Ron Gettelfinger the best and congratulating him on his retirement from the United Auto Workers.

Mr. RUSH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a hero of the American workforce: Ron Gettelfinger. For the past eight years Mr. Gettelfinger has dedicated himself to fighting for our Nation's auto workers as president of the UAW. Many of the fights that Mr. Gettelfinger undertook helped not only his constituency but Americans as a whole.

Mr. Gettelfinger's priorities are not unique to the UAW but are shared by many members of this body, myself included. Whether fighting for single-payer healthcare, labor protections, or investment in America's industry Mr. Gettelfinger had made it his life's work to advocate for the American worker.

I am proud to rise today to honor a fine man on the occasion of his retirement and commend him for the excellent work he's done. Mr. Speaker, it is because of individuals like Ron Gettelfinger that our workforce functions as well as it does.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join our distinguished Dean of the House, Representative JOHN DINGELL, to honor Ron Gettelfinger for his years of service to the United Auto Workers (UAW). Ron recently announced that he will retire after serving as President since 2002, and a lifelong commitment of service to the organization. As President, he worked closely over the years with my regional UAW Directors, outgoing Director Bob Madore and his predecessor Phil Wheeler, on issues important to Connecticut. Ron presided during a time of economic difficulty and a historic health reform debate, and did so with great poise and a never subsiding commitment to the men and women he represented. I once again commend him on his years of service and join with my colleagues in saluting him.

Mr. PETERS. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to honor Mr. Ron Gettelfinger, a lifelong champion of the American labor movement and President of the United Auto Workers Union, on his retirement after forty-five years of dedicated service. As a Member of Congress it is both my privilege and honor to recognize President Gettelfinger for his many years of service and his contributions which have enriched and strengthened our country, the State of Michigan, and Oakland County.

In his career, President Gettelfinger has been a tireless advocate for working families and workers' rights. In 1964, he was hired at

Ford's Louisville Assembly plant as a chassis line repairman and a member of UAW Local 862. As a member of UAW Local 862, he was elected to serve as a committeeperson, bargaining chair and eventually president. In 1992, he was elected as the director of UAW Region 3, representing members in Indiana and Kentucky and served in that role for six years. In 1998, he was elected as a UAW National Vice President under then UAW President Steven Yokich. In 2002, Mr. Gettelfinger was elected as President of the UAW International Union, the position he has held until his retirement.

The American auto industry has faced unprecedented challenges in recent years. During this time, President Gettelfinger has provided steadfast, thoughtful, and effective leadership. During his tenure, the American auto companies have faced their greatest challenges since the Great Depression. Following the economic downturn of September 2008, in which irresponsible decisions on Wall Street created an economic crisis for businesses and families across the United States, President Gettelfinger's bold action and leadership was critical in securing the future of the American auto industry. He was instrumental in the forging of a set of sustainable contracts, which have allowed the American automakers to remain globally competitive. President Gettelfinger's leadership has saved hundreds of thousands of American jobs, while upholding the ideals and standards of a hard day's work for a fair day's pay.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me today to honor President Ron Gettelfinger for his many contributions to our community and his leadership at the United Auto Workers Union. I wish him many more years of health, happiness, and productive service.

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize retiring United Auto workers President Ron Gettelfinger. Mr. Gettelfinger has dedicated his career to advancing the interests of working people around our country and the world. He has worked for safer and more equitable workplaces and to make the idea that hard work should translate into a good wage and a stable job a reality. His work has also directly benefited my district.

The UAW has represented nearly 5,000 autoworkers at the NUMMI plant in Fremont, California for nearly 30 years. With the UAW's representation, these workers were able to earn a good wage and benefits that allowed them to build solid middle class lives. In turn, they built some of the best cars in the world and won numerous awards for quality and craftsmanship.

Unfortunately, the NUMMI plant ceased production in April. Mr. Gettelfinger and the UAW worked tirelessly to keep the plant open. Since the closure, I've worked with Mr. Gettelfinger to secure job training and Trade Adjustment Assistance for the many workers who have lost their jobs. Recently, Tesla Motors purchased the NUMMI factory and they will be building electric cars there. I will keep working with the UAW and incoming President Bob King to ensure that the UAW is recognized and former NUMMI workers are hired to fill the new jobs.

It has been a pleasure to work with Mr. Gettelfinger. On behalf of the thousands of my constituents that have benefited from his service, I say "thank you."

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Ron Gettelfinger who recently retired

as President of the United Auto Workers. Ron has been President of UAW since 2002, though his ardent support for the American worker extends back to his days as a rank and file UAW member and chassis line repairman at Ford's Louisville plant.

Ron led his members through one of the most devastating economic downturns since the Great Depression. He should be particularly lauded for his efforts to fight for those employees in the auto industry who have lost their jobs in recent years. He worked tirelessly to secure opportunities for and ensure the fair treatment of his members during this time and I thank him for those efforts.

Ron has also been a staunch advocate for expansive and affordable health care in this country. He should be proud of his role in supporting and passing the expansion of SCHIP in 2009 and the historic health care reform package passed earlier this year. When I led the effort in the House of Representatives to oppose the excise tax on health care plans, I was proud to have Ron and his members working side by side with me to protect the benefits of working families in our country.

In my state of Connecticut, I have worked closely with the men and women of the UAW. Whether they are the men and women who work at Foxwoods casino or those helping design the next generation of submarines at Electric Boat in Groton, UAW members are among the hardest working individuals in our country.

I commend Ron for his service to improve the quality of life for so many American working families and I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking Ron for his work and wishing him a happy retirement.

THE ECONOMY AND OTHER CURRENT ISSUES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CARSON of Indiana). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. AKIN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. AKIN. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate a moment here to get our charts lined up and to talk about a subject that we have been talking about for some time but which is very much on the minds and hearts of people in America, and that is the situation of jobs, the economy, and the condition of our solvency as a nation, and the challenges to leadership and the way forward.

Now in order to try to get a perspective on where we are, it's helpful to look back a little bit and to see where we have come from. Those of us perhaps who have been paying a little attention to what has been going on over the last couple of years, there have been some changes, changes of a recession that has come, changes in terms of unemployment, people having trouble making their mortgage payments, people having trouble keeping or getting jobs, and also a sense that the economy is not all that it should be. These things didn't happen just by accident. They were a result to a large degree of government policy. Many of the problems that we are experiencing actually