HONORING THE LIFE OF LANCE CORPORAL SCOTT HARPER

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

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, I could not think of any more appropriate personal to be in the Chair this morning than yourself, to me and to others, an American hero because, Mr. Speaker, today I come to the floor with a sadness but yet with a great sense of pride to honor the service of one of Georgia’s own, Scott Harper.

On October 13, in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, he gave the ultimate sacrifice in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and the protection of his homeland and his family and his friends.

Mr. Speaker, he will be greatly missed by all. Lance Corporal Harper was better known to his close friends not as Scott but as Boots. While a student at Alexander High School, he once forgot his tennis shoes for gym class and kept his boots on instead. And on that day, Mr. Speaker, he learned the lasting nickname of Boots. But he also showed how he was prepared to adapt and to all scenarios.

When a Marine recruiter showed up at his high school senior year, Boots answered the call and chose a life of service in the United States Marine Corps with a courage and motivation that most young men his age have not yet found in life.

After graduating high school, he went into active duty in the Marine Corps. Boots served one term in Afghanistan and returned safely home. He left on the second tour July 13, with the First Battalion, Sixth Marine Regiment, Second Marine Division.

On October 13, his division was struck by small arms fire while conducting combat operations. A fellow Marine was shot first, and Boots ran into opposing gunfire to save his friend. Though Boots lost his life, he saved the life of his wounded friend in the process. Boots was always loyal as a friend, and there is no more honor that one can give than to lay down his life for another.

Boots was devoted to his family and his community. Even when he only had a few days off, he would make time, that precious time, to come home and visit his family and his friends. Though communication was difficult, Boots was always writing his family and called home as much as possible. The Saturday before he was killed, Boots called his father to say that he had decided to enroll at the University of Georgia when he returned home.

Upon coming home for this final time, he arrived at Charlie Brown Airfield. Crowds from the community lined the streets to escort Boots to his final home, to his family and to his friends for the last time. Boots was accompanied by a Marine Corps Honor Guard, the Patriot Guard, the Douglasville Police Department, and the Douglas County Sheriff’s Department, among many others.

Norfolk-Southern even stopped its railroad cars in honor of the procession. As they passed everyone stood and saluted to honor the fallen Marine and hometown hero.

Boots embodied the ideals that the Marines strive to achieve. I am both honored and proud that this soldier from the Third District fought so hard for our country and for our freedom. Boots was a model citizen, soldier, and son. He was an example of a young man with incredible potential before him, and he will be forever missed.

I am proud to stand here and thank him for sacrificing his life for strangers like me and my family. And Joan and I extend our sympathy to the family of this fallen hero for raising such a brave, courageous, honorable, giving son.

And Boots, we, as a Nation, salute you today. Semper Fi.

LIFE WITHOUT HOPE

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

Mr. CLEAVER. Mr. Speaker, first, let me associate my comments with those of my colleague Mr. WESTMORELAND.

Mr. Speaker, on each Wednesday night for probably the last 10 or 12 years, our church has provided food for those who are struggling. Not long ago a gentleman came to our church, picked up food. And then later that night, as I was leaving the church, I ran into him at a 7-Eleven. You can imagine how troubled I was when I saw him buying a lottery ticket. I thought to myself, this guy has just ripped off the church and then is using his money for a lottery ticket.

So I waited for him outside the 7-Eleven. And when he came out, I said to him, Hey, you just bought a little lottery. And he said, Well, I probably shouldn’t have spent the money on the lottery, but you know, Reverend, a man’s got to have some hope.

And while I think that hope is misplaced, the truth of the matter is he was absolutely correct. It is virtually impossible in this kind of productive life on this planet without hope.

There are millions of Americans who, unfortunately, cannot place their hope in this body. I think that I can state without fear of contradiction that the dysfunctionality of the United States Congress is helping to erode hope from the men and women in this country who are struggling. All of the back and forth and blaming each other has nothing to do with providing hope. And quite often, we allow ideology to trump logic.

We decide almost every day that no matter what, I’m going to take the position of the Republicans or I’m going to take the position of the Democrats, and, as a result, we have polluted the public.

This is one of the nastiest moments in U.S. history. Just look at television. Look at all of the so-called reality shows. The ones that are most popular are ones where people are fighting other people—like one person against another; you’re fired, or you’ve got to eat live spiders. That’s what we are coming to.

A perfect example of what we’re doing is not addressing the expiring unemployment benefits. At the end of this year, almost 2 million Americans— they have names, they have faces, they have families—2 million Americans will lose their unemployment benefits by mid-February.

A total of over 6 million Americans will lose benefits next year unless this body decides to become functional. In Missouri, my home state, 40,000 citizens depend on unemployment benefits. Many more are unemployed and not receiving any help at all. In Missouri, the unemployment rate is almost 9 percent.

I grew up in public housing. Yes, public housing. My father worked three jobs to get us out, worked three jobs to send me and my three sisters through college. And my mother started college when I was in the 6th grade. So I always resent any implication that people who want to get out of public housing.

So as we move into a holiday season, a season of hope, my hope is that the Congress of the United States will not snatch hope from over 2 million Americans.
We should not risk the American taxpayer by giving money or lending money to Europe under these circumstances. It's crazy, in my opinion.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that the President and the Fed will reconsider this and not put us into the basket with the Europeans under these circumstances right now. It makes absolutely no sense, and it risks the American taxpayer.

UNEMPLOYMENT IN AMERICA

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

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. At a time when Americans are not really deeply concerned about investors in European markets and what will happen to them upon Greece or Italy or somewhere like that going belly-up, most Americans are fixated on one problem, ladies and gentlemen. It's a very personal problem. That problem is unemployment right here in America.

Now, while we are pondering the difficulties that investors may face because of efforts to prop up central banks in Europe, people are hurting out here. People, including wives or husbands of unemployed spouses, are suffering. They're suffering as we close in on the holiday season when they see so many out doing for their families and they themselves, having been unemployed, most of whom have been unemployed for at least 6 months, many for 2 years, they're looking and they're feeling this holiday season and the Christmas season. They're regretful of the fact that they're not able to fully participate in this part of the American Dream doing for others, buying Christmas gifts.

In fact, people are worried about whether or not their unemployment insurance will be there for them after the beginning of the year. They realize that they're closing in on the cut-off date for expiration of the long-term unemployment insurance. They are worried about that, not about investors and how they might fare in terms of European countries not being fiscally solvent, allegedly.

So, Mr. Speaker, every day it seems like I read another report from economists telling us how important it is to extend unemployment benefits to help our fragile economy recover. And there's no doubt about helping millions of unemployed Americans during the worst downturn since the Great Depression, which was caused by the very investment bankers that have been discussed today that might be hurt because of European shenanigans. It's mind-boggling.

They're the ones that actually kicked this cesspool that we're in off. And then they got bailed out, but they're not willing to allow the very Tea Party, Grover Norquist Republican parties who they control, they're not willing to allow the long-term unemployment insurance benefits for the long-term unemployed unless there's a penalty involved.

They can't bring themselves to fund it. They don't want to do it.

As the holidays near, economics should take a backseat to our basic humanity. What about our commitment to each other? We're all in this together; but unfortunately, the 47 percent of millionaires who populate the House or Representatives don't have that same concept of knowing what it is to hurt when you've been unemployed for such a long time and when money is not coming in. They don't relate to that. We've got nearly 14 million unemployed and about five workers are applying for each job that is available. So, for Congress to think about going home to celebrate the holidays with their families and leaving these people out with no hope is, indeed, a great tragedy.

TRIBUTE TO MRS. MAGGIE DALEY, FIRST LADY OF THE CITY OF CHICAGO

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

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. On Monday, November 28, 2011, the City of Chicago laid to rest the wife of Chicago's longest serving mayor, Mayor Richard M. Daley.

While Maggie Daley was known as the mayor's wife, she was, indeed, a well-known, well-liked and revered personality in her own right. Maggie Daley played the role of matriarch. She was warm, graceful, elegant, eloquent, and easy to like. She was a patron of the arts and was fully steeped in the cultural affairs of our city.

While Mrs. Daley has received accolades for many of her activities, the one which strikes me the most is her involvement in a program called After School Matters. I think that anyone who knows anything about education and youth development knows that, yes, after school does, indeed, matter. When discussing this program, you could see Maggie Daley's eyes light up, and you could feel her passion. She seemed to know everything there was to know about the program. She knew program sites, personnel, special features and activities, benefits and successes. After a session of listening to Mrs. Daley explain and advocate for this program, I would often smile and say to myself, How could anyone not be in support of this great program?

So I say thanks to a great lady—a lady of grace, a lady of dignity, a lady of passion, a lady of faith, and a lady of action.

My family and I and residents of the Seventh Congressional District of Illinois express condolences to Mayor Richard M. Daley and to all of Maggie Daley's family. She was a great first lady of our city and performed her role to perfection. After school does matter. It mattered to Mrs. Maggie Daley, and it matters to all of America.