

He had the privilege of speaking to over 20,000 persons in January of 1992, where he spoke to the Baptist General Convention of Texas—Evangelism Division, to an attendance of over 20,000 persons. And in January of 1992, he was guest preacher for the Mississippi Baptist State Evangelism Conference and delivered the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day sermon at the Austin Presbyterian Seminary, his alma mater.

What I would like to say most of all is that, beyond the accolades that he got on the outside, he was an outstanding human being, an outstanding minister, an outstanding civic leader, someone who continued to serve his community even during his time of illness. You never noted a lack of cheerfulness in Reverend Lightfoot. And in the early stages of his illness, I had the opportunity to visit him at home. And again, what a cheerful, believing person who loved America and served America in his capacity, and that was as a faith leader who believed in all persons, reached beyond his doors, helped build a beautiful new sanctuary on that same street, Homestead, did not move, continued to serve the community, and was known as a light to all.

My sympathies to Velma Mitchell Lightfoot, his wife, and his beautiful children and his eight grandchildren, and being a great-grandfather as well. The diversity of his training has led him to be that light, that servant, that special person. I believe it is appropriate to pay tribute to James Lightfoot who remains, even in death, a light to us all because of the great history and the great legacy he has left.

May God bless him, God bless his service, and I know that he would want me to say that God bless his most wonderful and most great Nation, the United States of America.

Pastor Lightfoot, may you rest in peace.

HONORING PAUL RODGERS PIERCE, JR.

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

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, I have come to the floor today to honor Mr. Paul Rodgers Pierce, Jr., for his 25 years of service to the State Theatre of Georgia and the Springer Opera House.

Paul was born on January 19, 1953, in Anniston, Alabama, to Mr. and Mrs. Paul R. Pierce. He attended East Rome High School and graduated from the University of Georgia in 1977. After graduation, he developed his passion for theater through working as an actor, director, designer, and booking manager on a number of national touring productions, such as the American Repertory Theater, Flat Rock Playhouse, and Circuit 21 Playhouse. Following his time on tour, he accepted the position of associate artistic director at the American Repertory Theater

under the guidance of Mr. Drexel Riley, who was not only his mentor, but his friend.

Paul's adventures led him across the country when he accepted the position of managing director of Virginia's Wayside Theater, and then as artistic director of the Harbor Playhouse in Corpus Christi, Texas. Thankfully, his travels led him back to Georgia, where he became the artistic director of the Springer Opera House in 1988.

To say Paul was passionate about his job is an understatement. He expanded the artistic mission of the Springer Opera House and took its potential to new heights. Paul created the Spring Theatricals, a national touring company that reaches over 60 American cities annually. He hired Ron Anderson and created the Springer Theatre Academy that mentors and develops over 16,000 children and families through the year-round character education program. With Paul's additions, the audience of Springer has nearly tripled, and the bar for artistic excellence in the community has been held to a higher standard.

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Paul has not only improved the artistic standards in the community, but the physical appearance of the Springer Opera House as well. Paul oversaw the National Historic Landmark Theatre's \$12 million renovation in 1998 and has campaigned for over \$11.5 million for the construction of the McClure Theatre for children's programs and education.

In his 25 years, Paul has helped put the Springer Opera House on the map. In 2008, the Georgia Council for the Arts declared it one of Georgia's top-ranked art institutions. Paul has served on with State Theatre of Georgia as producing artistic director with distinction and dedication and continues to further his mission through the pursuit of selfless innovations to improve the quality of life for the citizens and community of Columbus, Georgia.

I'm proud to stand here today to honor and thank Mr. Paul Rodgers Pierce, Jr., for all he has done for the great State of Georgia, the city of Columbus, and all the children and families he has touched. Paul's devotion and commitment to theater is an inspiration to us all, showing us that with passion and hard work you can make a difference and leave a legacy that will never be forgotten. Thanks, Paul.

START WINNING THE WAR ON MILITARY SUICIDE BY ENDING THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, more than 2,000 U.S. troops have been killed in the line of duty in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, that dramatically under-

states the human cost of this war, a war that is now nearly 11 years old.

A recent Time magazine cover story details the silent killer of our brave servicemembers—the tragically high suicide rate among Iraq and Afghanistan veterans and other members of the service. The article describes how one Army helicopter pilot, who had flown 70 missions in Iraq over 9 months—70 missions over 9 months—waited on the phone for 45 minutes to speak to the Pentagon crisis line when he was in severe distress. The last communication his wife received from him was a text in which he said, “Still on hold.” Several hours later, she found him in their bedroom with a fatal gunshot wound to the neck.

A second victim, an Army doctor who wasn't deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan, wrote an email to his wife minutes before hanging himself. It read:

Please always tell my children how much I love them, and most importantly, never, ever let them find out how I died.

Mr. Speaker, we can no longer deny the devastating mental health impact of repeated deployments, of continued exposure to explosions, horror, carnage and destruction. Of course, in an institution like the U.S. military that values courage and toughness, there's a reluctance to admit to depression and anxiety.

Sometimes that manifests itself in the worst possible ways. For example, one Army major general wrote an angry diatribe on his blog about the selfishness of troops who killed themselves or were leaving others to “clean up their mess.” He admonished:

Act like an adult, and deal with your real-life problems like the rest of us.

It's about time, Mr. Speaker, that we lost that attitude because we're losing brave Americans at a terrifying clip. In fact, according to the Time article, more soldiers have taken their own lives than have died in Afghanistan. While veterans make up 10 percent of the adult population, they account for 20 percent of the suicides.

We are starting to see more awareness of this problem, thank Heavens. Secretary Panetta says the right things, but it's time to back up rhetoric. It's time to back it up with more resources because the fact is only 4 percent of the Pentagon's medical budget is devoted to mental health, about the same amount that we spend on the Afghan war every day and a half. We spend \$2 billion a year to treat servicemembers suffering from psychological trauma, but we spend \$10 billion a month on the war that is the root of much of that trauma in the first place.

Even if the Afghanistan war ended tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, so much damage is already done. We would still be left with a huge crisis that will require more resolve than we are seemingly prepared to muster. I would expect every Member who has enthusiastically supported this war to just as eagerly support what it takes to fight the suicide epidemic this war has caused. It's