

of service. They are a blessing to our community.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HULTGREN). The Chair will entertain up to 15 further requests for 1-minute speeches on each side.

BACKLOG AT THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

(Mr. BOEHNER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, my colleagues, I know that the House shares my deep concern over the backlog of benefit claims at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

It is nothing short of a black eye for our government. This country has made promises that it is our duty to keep, and the House has acted to tackle this problem.

Even so, reform won't get very far if it is carried out by managers who have proven that they are not up to the job. So we recently introduced H.R. 4031, the VA Management Accountability Act. This measure gives the VA Secretary the authority to fire and demote officials who aren't performing.

The principle here is simple. When you are not getting the job done, you have got to go. At the VA, it has been quite the opposite. For all the incompetence we have seen and all the lives that have been lost, the evidence shows there has been no accountability. Only half-measures and little slaps on the wrist.

At any agency that has fallen down on the job this would be unacceptable. But to have it happen in the health care system for America's veterans? I think it is shameful.

The VA is failing our veterans and their families. It is time we hold these people accountable and get people in there who can fix this backlog once and for all.

I am going to applaud Chairman MILLER and the Veterans Affairs' Committee for their leadership. I am pleased this legislation has already picked up the support of several veterans' organizations. I would urge all of my colleagues to back this critical measure.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF RALPH WILSON

(Mr. HIGGINS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HIGGINS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mourn the passing of Ralph Wilson. Wilson is best known in my western New York community as the founder and owner of the Buffalo Bills for a remarkable 55-year tenure. He was a savvy businessman and true lover of the game of football.

I remember Mr. Wilson calling me to his office to discuss his concerns about the new NFL collective bargaining agreement. He believed that agreement was stacked against smaller market teams like Buffalo, and I found him to have a better command of the details than anyone on the subject. He was passionate not only about his beloved Buffalo Bills, but about its place in our community as well.

Mr. Wilson's interest in our community did not stop at football. His foundation donated over \$11 million in the past two decades, including to the Roswell Park Cancer Institute, the community food banks, and the Hospice Foundation of Western New York.

Mr. Speaker, we are forever grateful for Mr. Wilson's dedication to western New York and to our Nation as a World War II veteran. My thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends during this difficult time.

NATIONAL AGRICULTURE WEEK

(Mr. SMITH of Nebraska asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize National Agriculture Week. It is a time to celebrate the extraordinary diversity, abundance, and evolution of American agriculture.

In 1960, the average U.S. farmer fed 26 people; today, Mr. Speaker, the average U.S. farmer feeds 155 people by using less land, less water, less energy, and less fertilizer.

Thanks to agriculture research which has given rise to new technologies and techniques, America's producers are adopting practices which allow them to meet food, fiber, feed, and fuel demands and preserve our natural resources for generations to come. From high-tech irrigation tools to biotechnology, growers are producing a more stable, safe, quality, and affordable food supply.

As we recognize National Agriculture Week, we have much to celebrate but many challenges ahead. Knowing the forward-thinking nature of producers, combined with these exciting advances in agriculture, I am confident we will meet all of the demands of our growing world.

As cochair of the Modern Agriculture Caucus and the rural caucus, I am committed to ensuring Federal policy reflects sound science and strives to complement, not undermine, this innovation.

LET'S PASS COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

(Mr. HIMES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HIMES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today because today the Democrats will present a discharge petition to force a vote in this House on something that so many Americans know to be abso-

lutely essential, which is comprehensive immigration reform.

The Senate has weighed in with 78 "yes" votes. This is a Senate where you don't get 78 votes for just about anything—bipartisan support for comprehensive immigration reform.

The reason I rise today, Mr. Speaker, is because yesterday in Financial Services we had a very interesting hearing on why debt matters. We talked a lot about what we need to do to continue to put our country on a sustainable path and to help this recovery be stronger.

We had David Cote, CEO of Honeywell; Alice Rivlin of Brookings; Doug Holtz-Eakin of the American Action Forum; and Jared Bernstein from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. They agreed on one thing enthusiastically: that one of the most important steps we can take to spur growth in our economy, and to help our fiscal situation and balance our budget, would be to pass comprehensive immigration reform. The Senate has done so. It is time for this House to do the same and stand up for the economy and American families.

GOOD LUCK, DAYTON FLYERS

(Mr. TURNER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. TURNER. Mr. Speaker, as a proud alumnus of the University of Dayton, I am here today to wish good luck to the Dayton Flyers.

The University of Dayton men's basketball team has advanced to the NCAA tournament's Sweet 16 for the first time in 30 years. The Dayton Flyers are the only team this season to have upset two top 25 teams in the second and third rounds of the NCAA tournament.

But the city of Dayton has a history of being underestimated. Orville and Wilbur Wright started working on their so-called "flying machine" in a Dayton garage. As we all know, these pioneers of aviation went on to complete the first manned flight, transforming the way we travel and engage in commerce.

It is fitting that the University of Dayton bears the Flyer name in honor of the Dayton tradition of succeeding despite all odds.

Congratulations to the Dayton Flyers and Coach Archie Miller. You have a vast fan base of students, faculty, and alumni throughout the country who will be cheering you on tomorrow night.

ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR WOMEN

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

Ms. HAHN. Mr. Speaker, far too many women face financial pressures simply due to outdated policies that hamper their opportunities for success.

I recently hosted an event in Los Angeles with Congresswoman ROYBAL-