

once unemployed are more likely than others to remain unemployed, which is why we need to revitalize our economy by supporting those who found themselves out of work before retirement.

Earlier this week, I introduced the bipartisan Empowering Encore Entrepreneurs Act, which will support older Americans working hard to start or expand a small business.

There are currently over 7 million self-employed workers in the U.S. age 50 or older, which demonstrates a tremendous capacity of older workers to contribute to our economy and create jobs when given the right resources.

My bill, which is supported by the AARP, will improve the capacity of entrepreneurs to begin small businesses and help successful small business owners make their enterprises even more prosperous.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill.

ONGOING VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN VENEZUELA

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

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in support of those fighting for freedom in Venezuela.

This morning our House Foreign Affairs Committee passed my bipartisan measure, H.R. 4587, the Venezuelan Human Rights and Democracy Protection Act, which will sanction members of the Maduro regime responsible for gross human rights violations.

Just a few days ago, Mr. Speaker, Human Rights Watch released a deeply troubling report that made clear that there has been "a serious pattern of abuse by Venezuelan security forces."

The report mentions stories like that of Lisandro Barazarte, a 40-year-old photographer for a local newspaper who said, "I live in suspense, because I don't know from where they are going to shoot at me." Or Jose Romero, only 17 years old, who was stopped by a national guardsman when coming out of a metro station and was taken to a building where he was threatened with death, beaten, and even burned.

Even as this brutality continues, the Obama administration and Congress have yet to act. I urge my colleagues to support bringing this important measure, which is bipartisan, to the floor immediately to support the people of Venezuela and to send a clear signal to the Maduro regime that his reign of oppression will have serious consequences.

□ 1230

NATIONAL TRAVEL AND TOURISM WEEK

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

Ms. GABBARD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and highlight National Travel and Tourism Week.

In Hawaii, we proudly showcase the world's most beautiful beaches, national parks, coral reefs, and hiking trails, many of which I enjoy as much as possible when I get home. Our robust and growing tourism industry is truly the backbone of our economy, generating more than \$10 billion in visitor spending each year.

From the lush cliffs of the Na Pali Coast of Kauai to Kilauea, the world's most active volcano, to whale watching around Maui, my home district, hosts some of the world's most awe-inspiring natural beauty. Every year, we welcome more visitors from around the world for tourism, business, cultural, and educational exchanges.

Hawaii is a leader in hospitality and we welcome all of our guests with the spirit of aloha. This week, I am proud to recognize all those who contribute to our world-class tourism industry, and will continue to work to strengthen this industry and give thanks to those who show their aloha to our visitors every day. Aloha.

HONORING OUR COURAGEOUS NURSES

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

Mr. BENTIVOLIO. Mr. Speaker, you can always identify them in a crowd wearing blue, green, pink, and yellow, and sometimes wearing a white coat. They have wings on their backs and many times a tired, tilted halo over their heads. They often miss holidays and similar events with family and friends. They work during times the rest of us sleep 24/7. They are educators who provide a concerned ear and empathetic heart, a smile supported by professionalism, and an unmatched sense of selfless service for those in need. They are angels of mercy.

May God bless our courageous nurses, and especially this week.

Mr. Speaker, may I say to that special nurse in my life: I love you.

MILITARY MATERNITY LEAVE

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

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Mr. Speaker, women in our military are contributing more than ever. They serve with distinction in Afghanistan and at duty posts around the globe. Women are an irreplaceable piece of the strongest and most capable military in the world.

Now, it is time that we show them the respect they deserve. Today, I am introducing the MOM Act with my colleagues, Congresswomen BORDALLO and NOEM. It will extend maternity leave for women in uniform from 6 weeks to 12 weeks. This bill would increase leave for military women to the same amount that the Family and Medical Leave Act guarantees their civilian sis-

ters. Women in Federal service also have 12 weeks of maternity leave, yet the bravest among us only receive 6 weeks after the birth of their child.

Mothers and fathers across the Nation understand the importance of maternity leave. More workers return to work if they are given sufficient time to recover. Maternity leave gives us healthier babies and stronger families.

Mothers in the military inevitably face separation from their children when they are deployed and serving our Nation around the globe. Extending maternity leave for these women is the least we can do for those who sacrifice so much for our country.

Mr. Speaker, this Mother's Day, let's stand up for the women who dedicate their lives to standing up for the rest of us. Let's pass the MOM Act.

ADDRESSING THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION BACKLOG

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

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, in recent weeks, we have made some strides in the area of the Department of Veterans Affairs and what that means for the Nation's veterans as well. Addressing the huge backlog and the atrocious practice of assigning bonuses to the upper members of the Department of Veterans Affairs for not getting the backlog done is an area we still need to continue to address.

We are also working on a project here that would allow our caseworkers in our congressional offices to have stronger jurisdiction in helping our veterans' cases. We have a situation where brokering happens where one office may broker a case to a different VA office elsewhere, maybe in the same State or in a different State, and we find that the one office can't help us, yet the new office where it has been brokered to doesn't seem to believe they can talk to us or our staff either.

We want to put the word out to Secretary Shinseki and all of the VA about the need to allow us as representatives of the people to have that firsthand ability to help our veterans have their cases solved and heard timely, no matter what the office jurisdiction is. We are looking for that help in that pronouncement by the Secretary to get this reform through.

HONORING JENNA HINMAN

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

Mr. MAFFEI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a very heavy heart to honor and remember Jenna Hinman. Jenna Hinman was 26 years old. She and her husband, U.S. Army Sergeant Brandon Hinman, were thrilled to learn she was pregnant last year while Brandon was stationed at Fort Drum in New York State.