

when the President comes to Congress to give a report on the state of the Union from time to time, as the Constitution says.

Sitting right here in this Chamber and hearing President Obama speak about the state of our Union would be exciting in any year, in any circumstance, but it was especially this year because, for the first time in 6 years—after the deepest and darkest recession in almost a century—we have turned the page. After 6 rather difficult years of digging our way out of a ditch, we now can build a foundation to move forward. With that, there were two areas specifically that the President focused on.

One was a universal college education. As the first of my family to go to college, I know I wouldn't have had the opportunities that I have had in life without having a higher education. I needed a combination of scholarships and student loans and every sort of work-study job imaginable to get there, as well as help from parents and even grandparents. That is a story similar to so many working and middle class Americans, but for too many Americans today the cost of a higher education is simply unaffordable.

The question is: Do you go without it at all even though two-thirds of the jobs by the end of this decade will require some form of a higher education? Do you just forgo a higher education altogether, or do you take on tens of thousands in student loans and then be burdened with paying back that debt upon graduation? Either scenario is far from ideal.

What the President said—and I completely agree—is let's make 2 years of community college universal and free in this country. Now, that may be unthinkable today. 100 years ago, it was unthinkable that a free, fully funded high school education would be universal. Yet, for us, that is the reality today. It would be unthinkable for Americans of my age and even of an older age to imagine a time in which high school was not universal. Let's get there with 2 years of a college education.

The second area the President focused on was the child care tax credit. For so many working families and young families, affording child care is simply unaffordable. We have an opportunity through this budget to change that, to build on the successes of the last 6 years and to finally prepare to make this century the second American Century. Ensuring that we have good, high-quality, affordable child care is vital to this middle class.

The reason the last century was the American Century was that we had the largest and most productive middle class in the world. Access to higher education and access to child care are two necessary ingredients in making sure we have a strong and vibrant middle class in the 21st century.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 28 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

Reverend Dean Curry, Life Center Church, Tacoma, Washington, offered the following prayer:

Father, what an honor it is to be in Your presence here today. We celebrate this morning what You have done through the United States of America.

We acknowledge the hand of providence in our history and the force of inspiration for our future.

Be with us here now most significantly in our present that we could see what others do not see, that we could do what others fear to do, so that we could change what others are afraid to change.

We are reminded that we are so small and You are so big. Our problems are daunting, and our responsibilities are many. But we look to You today, to Your principles and to Your goodness, that we could be everything You designed for us to be, that we could do everything You planned for us to do, that others may be free.

Today, may every decision made, every plan contemplated, be sprinkled with Your grace and be inspired from Heaven. Change us; change our minds and our hearts that we may change our destiny and the destiny of others both here and around the world.

I pray all of this with respect to all faiths in the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Indiana (Mrs. WALORSKI) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. WALORSKI led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

WELCOMING REVEREND DEAN CURRY

The SPEAKER. Without objection, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. KILMER) is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

Mr. KILMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor today's guest chaplain, Reverend Dean Curry, from Tacoma, Washington.

We are blessed to have such a remarkable pastor with us today who is a leading figure in the region that I represent. Reverend Curry's Life Center Church in Tacoma is a vibrant place where folks young and old come for worship.

He knows what it means to give back to your community. Each month, he brings together civic and elected leaders in Tacoma for a faith breakfast, and volunteers from his church are always helping out those going through hard times.

The motto of his church sums up his work pretty remarkably: "It's all about the people." That is why it is fitting to have Reverend Curry here today. Like the United States House of Representatives, his mission is to serve the people.

Reverend Curry is an example of how we should do more to listen, respect, and understand one another better so we can leave a place for future generations where opportunities are available for everyone.

Reverend Curry has also led humanitarian missions to troubled regions like Iraq and Afghanistan to offer assistance and hope to those suffering through tragedies. He is someone who "walks the walk" when it comes to fighting for equality, religious freedom, and social justice both in his community and around the world.

Whether he is listening to stories in refugee settlements or helping out with a national prayer breakfast, his passion for others shines through, and it is an honor to welcome him today.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FLEISCHMANN) laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, February 4, 2015.

Hon. JOHN A. BOEHNER,
The Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on February 4, 2015 at 9:22 a.m.:

Appointment:

Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki).

United States Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control.

With best wishes, I am
Sincerely,

KAREN L. HAAS.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain up to 15 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

RECOGNIZING THE SAFE FEDERAL CREDIT UNION 60TH ANNIVERSARY

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, congratulations to SAFE Federal Credit Union which on January 14 celebrated the 60th anniversary of its Federal charter.

In January 1955, 15 civilian employees at Shaw Air Force Base organized the SAFE Federal Credit Union. Throughout the years, SAFE's membership has expanded to nearly 500 additional groups and eight underserved communities. SAFE, headquartered in Sumter, South Carolina, is now the largest credit union serving the South Carolina Midlands with 108,000 members and \$903 million in assets.

I am grateful for the work of SAFE's employees who have developed a reputation of exemplary service, knowledge, and trust under the leadership of SAFE's CEO and president, Beverly Gagne. They have also been on the cutting edge of fraud prevention which is critical as we address new cyber cases of crime.

With their professionalism in lending practices, members have created many opportunities and prompted thousands of new jobs. I know firsthand as a real estate attorney closing loans for SAFE.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and may the President by his actions never forget September the 11th in the global war on terrorism.

Our prayers for the people of Jordan as the latest victims of terrorism.

INVESTING IN OUR INFRASTRUCTURE

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

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, infrastructure investment is key to growing our economy and creating jobs which is why President Obama committed to a 40 percent increase in infrastructure funding in his budget released this week.

Despite the fact that every billion dollars invested in infrastructure creates 30,000 jobs, over the past 50 years, our investment in infrastructure has shrunk by half. Meanwhile, China is investing four times as much as we do in transportation.

We need these investments in Chicago where we have got a century-old transit system that needs updates to keep up with increased capacity. By the way, the Chicago Transit Authority carries more people in a month than Amtrak does in a year. We also need 1,000 miles of roads to be repaired, and 675 bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

Our crumbling infrastructure is slowing economic growth, and without serious long-term investments, we simply will not be able to compete in today's global economy.

The President outlined his 21st century infrastructure plan this week. Now, it is time for Democrats and Republicans in Congress to work together on the long-term transportation bill the American people are asking for.

MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA BENEFICIARY TRAVEL ACT

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

Mrs. WALORSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today after listening to the stories of veterans and their families. It is very apparent the VA is not doing enough to help victims overcome the physical and psychological pain of military sexual trauma.

This week, I introduced H.R. 642, a bill that would make victims of military sexual trauma eligible for VA travel benefits. Those who fight for our freedom have faced enough challenges along the way. Expecting them to pay for their own travel to receive care or treatment for the sexual trauma they endured by serving our country is unfair.

I am grateful today to work with Representative KUSTER, Representative COFFMAN, and Representative RUIZ on this important legislation, and I am hopeful it is a step in the right direction by helping veterans access much-needed care.

I encourage support for H.R. 642.

GO RED FOR WOMEN CAMPAIGN

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

Mrs. BEATTY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of Go Red for Women.

More than 600,000 women's lives have been saved from heart disease since Go Red for Women was created in 2004, but heart disease still remains the number one killer for women and men and causes more deaths than all forms of cancer.

As a National Heart Association Board member, one of Columbus, Ohio's first Go Red chairs, and a member of the Congressional Heart Caucus, I rise today to recognize survivors, those battling with heart disease, and those who are fighting and working to find cures and improve treatments.

Today, Members of Congress will stand together, Democrats and Republicans, in red to send a message to the Nation that as colleagues, we can stand and celebrate the American Heart Association and its Go Red for Women campaign.

Mr. Speaker, working together, we will make a difference.

RECOGNIZING BILLY KIRKBRIDE

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

Mr. STEWART. Mr. Speaker, I stand here today to recognize a true American hero, Utah veteran Billy Kirkbride, who was just awarded the Congressional Gold Medal.

Billy joined the Army in 1942, and he was chosen to be part of the unique program called the First Special Service Force which was the forerunner of today's Special Forces. It was here that he became a member of the very elite Devil's Brigade.

The Congressional Gold Medal is awarded to those who have performed amazing feats leaving permanent impacts upon American culture and history. As a former Air Force pilot, I know the sacrifice and the dedication that it takes to become one of America's elite warriors.

It is an honor to stand here today not just before the American people, but before his lovely wife and daughters to pay tribute to the sacrifice and dedication that Billy showed through his service to this great Nation.

He doesn't just represent the strength of the Armed Forces, he represents American values that continue to make our Nation great, and millions of us are grateful for his service.

PASS A VETERANS JOBS BILL

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

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise on behalf of the many Illinois veterans that I represent and their families to draw attention to the high rate of veteran unemployment in America. After fighting for our Nation, far too many military heroes are being forced to fight for a job here at home.

Despite many veterans having the leadership skills and work ethic that businesses are looking for, the unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans is 6.9 percent, far higher than the national average of 5.6 percent.

I am committed to reducing veteran unemployment and helping our heroes find quality work. Last week, I released an updated edition of my veterans resource guidebook to help our veterans get the benefits they have earned and employment resources to get them and their families back in the workforce, but we need to do more.

I urge my colleagues to work with me to pass a veterans job bill to put the half million unemployed veterans back to work.