

I will continue to keep residents' thoughts and concerns at the forefront of my decisionmaking, and I thank them for reaching out to me over the last week. I urge my colleagues to do the same.

STUDENT SUCCESS ACT

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

Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the issue of public education in America and what we need to do here in Washington, D.C., to improve our public education system.

I specifically rise today to urge passage of the Student Success Act in the name of putting students first.

The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is that right now the Federal education bureaucracy has imposed more mandates on local classrooms, on students, on teachers, on administrators, than was ever intended or contemplated by our Constitution and essentially runs afoul of the principles of federalism. That being that, if power is not vested upon the Federal Government to do something, it should be left to the States or even more local subdivisions; in this case, our local school boards.

The Student Success Act seeks to empower teachers, administrators, parents, and students by sending control back to school boards and classrooms across this country.

Mr. Speaker, the Student Success Act accomplishes a great deal for the sake of the student. I am going to spend a minute explaining how and why that is. But it is also important to point out what happens if we do not pass this bill: more curriculum mandates out of Washington, D.C., more testing mandates out of Washington, D.C. If we do not pass this bill, we get more of that.

If we do not pass this bill, we have more power and control administered at the sole discretion of the Secretary of Education, as it stands right now. The Secretary of Education has the power of the purse at his disposal, and we have a waiver program that essentially plays out as follows:

If the Secretary of Education at the Federal level likes what you are doing with your curriculum and your accountability measures at the local level, you get grant money. If he doesn't like it, you don't get the grant money. There is way too much discretion in Washington, D.C., over how public education is managed and administered in this country. That is not the way it was intended to be.

The waiver program, which is in effect right now, is acting as a top-down lever to dictate what is taught in the classrooms, how it is taught, when and how much testing should be employed by teachers, how they teach in the classroom, and when students have to take tests.

I cannot tell you how often I hear from parents and students and teachers lamenting about not only the days spent testing, but the days spent preparing to test.

The effort with the Student Success Act is to roll that back and have States take a leadership role in that and the Federal Government retreat, reduce the Federal footprint in education in this country.

This is not a partisan issue. This is an issue of fairness. It is only fair that teachers and parents get more say over public education and Washington, D.C., gets less.

A vote against this bill is a vote for the status quo, and I don't think anyone really, truly wants public education coming more out of Washington, D.C.

The Student Success Act ensures that States cannot be coerced into Common Core. If we do not pass this bill, the Secretary of Education, through the waiver program, has more ability to impose Common Core. By passing this bill, States cannot be coerced into the Common Core curriculum.

The Student Success Act eliminates 49 duplicative, ineffective Federal programs. If we do not pass this bill, those 49 duplicative, ineffective programs stay on the books.

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The Student Success Act provides more flexible funding for school districts to fund their priorities at the local level.

I want to thank Chairman KLINE, Mr. ROKITA, and all my colleagues on the Education and the Workforce Committee for their work on the Student Success Act.

Mr. Speaker, let's put children first and pass this bill.

ROSA PARKS DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. BEATTY) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BEATTY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and celebrate the memory of the great Rosa Parks, also known as the mother of the modern civil rights movement.

Today, December 1, marks the 60th anniversary of Rosa Parks' arrest for refusing to surrender her seat on a city bus in Montgomery, Alabama, to a White male. Her arrest on this date in 1955 put a face to Jim Crow and the disgrace of segregation in this country and, in many ways, united a nation in the struggle for civil rights for all.

As many of you know the story, Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat, sparking the peaceful Montgomery bus boycott, which lasted 381 days and led to the eventual desegregation of the public transportation system across this Nation.

Rosa Parks in every way embodies the tremendous difference a single person, Mr. Speaker, can make through

the power of protest, nonviolence, and courage.

As a member of the Ohio General Assembly, where I served as House leader, I was proud to have led the efforts that resulted in the 2005 passage of House Bill 421 designating December 1 as Rosa Parks Day, the first State in the Nation to do so. Each year, the State of Ohio, spearheaded by the Central Ohio Transit Authority, proudly celebrates the life of Rosa Parks in our State capital, Columbus, Ohio.

It is important that we do not let her legacy of bravery die. I look forward to joining my constituents when I travel back to the district on December 3 to celebrate the 11th annual statewide tribute to Rosa Parks, "The Power of One."

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Congressman JOHN CONYERS, the dean of this House, for agreeing to participate in my Community Leaders Forum at this year's celebration.

For five decades, Congressman CONYERS has been a champion of civil rights and voting rights. His distinguished career is highlighted by his work on important civil rights legislation such as the Martin Luther King Holiday Act of 1983, the Motor Voter bill of 1993, and the Help America Vote Act of 2002. Today, he continues to fight for voting rights and civil rights as the ranking member on the House Judiciary Committee.

I look forward to welcoming him to our Rosa Parks celebration because he shared a personal relationship with her. She worked for Congressman CONYERS from 1964 until 1988. However, before working with Congressman CONYERS, she took a stand for justice and equality. The power of one person changed our Nation forever.

Our fight for racial equality and real inclusion is ongoing, as recently publicized tensions across our Nation have made clear. With the Supreme Court decision to strike down section 4 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 in *Shelby County v. Holder*, we no longer have the safety net that ensures that Americans, especially minorities, are able to participate in our democratic process.

Mr. Speaker, we should not be rolling back voting rights protection. Instead, we should honor the progress our country has made to ensure and protect equal rights and equal treatment for all.

That is why I am the cosponsor of the Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2015, H.R. 2867, which enjoys bipartisan and bicameral support. Congress should immediately bring this legislation to the floor to ensure that all Americans may cast ballots to choose their leaders in public service.

Mr. Speaker, many of the policies being pushed by the House Republican leadership would adversely and disproportionately affect people of color and individuals in low-income communities.

When we talk about reform in Washington and starting with a clean slate

without consideration of how these policies will affect all communities, we do our Nation a disservice. I am confident we can do better. I am hopeful that we can do better. We have a responsibility to do better.

Today and every day, let us be inspired by Rosa Parks and remember that each person must live their life as a model for others.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak on this important issue.

OUR VETERANS DESERVE BETTER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, last month, we celebrated Veterans Day, a day where we rightly single out the members of our military, past and present, and pay tribute to their service and sacrifice.

When you stop to think about it, it is amazing that men and women choose to serve in our Armed Forces, knowing full well that their sacrifice could be tremendous and even require their life. But, still, they volunteer. They do so because America—her ideals, her people, and her way of life—are worth defending.

The entire Nation owes our military personnel and veterans a huge debt of gratitude, and ensuring that debt is properly repaid is one of my top priorities in Congress.

Mr. Speaker, as I travel North Carolina's Fifth District, I hear a similar refrain. No matter where I go, constituents tell me horror stories of their experiences with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Veterans from my district and across the country are frustrated with the lack of service they are receiving. They are angry because they can't get an appointment or a phone call returned. And they are outraged, as I am, that the Obama administration is doing nothing to solve the multitude of problems that have been revealed.

My heart is always touched when veterans and their families describe their efforts to get service through the VA and how the VA wouldn't help them until my office intervened. These stories affect me more than words can say.

I am always happy to know that my office has helped, and my staff is encouraged when we get a problem solved. However, these veterans shouldn't have to contact their congressional office to access the benefits they have earned.

To say I am fed up with this administration's treatment of veterans is an understatement. How they can turn their backs on the veterans the way they do is unconscionable to me.

It is past time to put an end to the agency-wide pattern of mismanagement at the Department of Veterans Affairs. The bureaucratic incom-

petence is abominable, and there needs to be a shakeup at all levels. The agency needs to be led and staffed by people who believe America has a duty and an obligation to help our veterans.

Right now, it seems there is no sense of responsibility or concern from the Obama administration with the disgraceful way our veterans are being treated. It is time for President Obama to truly commit to reforming the VA and give America's veterans a meaningful, decisive plan to right the many wrongs.

Regardless of the outcome, my office will continue to leave no stone unturned when it comes to serving our veterans.

HIV/AIDS

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

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today to mark World AIDS Day.

I do so in great pride, following my colleague from Ohio, Congresswoman JOYCE BEATTY, who spoke on the floor about the 60th anniversary of what happened in Montgomery when Rosa Parks, with great courage, refused to give up her seat on the bus. The courage of that woman and all of those who supported her has made such an incredible difference in our country, and it is indeed related to what I want to say about HIV and AIDS.

Many of us had the privilege of knowing Rosa Parks when she worked for JOHN CONYERS. We honored her here in the House and are so proud that we have a statue of Rosa Parks in the Capitol of the United States.

We think of her and we think of the courage she had, which led to the Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act. And that Voting Rights Act and Civil Rights Act led to our having a much more diverse Congress of the United States.

From there came our Congressional Black Caucus, the Hispanic Caucus, and the Asian Pacific Caucus. The Black Caucus directly related to Mr. CONYERS, who was a founding member, and Rosa Parks, who was an inspiration. They were responsible for so much change in the leadership of our Congress. And because so many issues spring from the Congressional Black Caucus, some say "the conscience of the Congress."

So the relationship from Rosa Parks, through the caucus, to now we are observing the 25th anniversary of World AIDS Day, the link is Congresswoman BARBARA LEE, who has been such a champion in the Congress on this subject. We take great pride in the accomplishments she has had in her capacity as a Member of Congress but also as our representative to the United Nations General Assembly.

Each year, World AIDS Day is observed internationally to reflect the progress that has been made in re-

affirming our determination to banish AIDS to the annals of history. We recognize that achieving an AIDS-free generation requires our relentless, energetic, and undaunted commitment to testing, treatment, and finding a cure.

The World AIDS Day theme this year, "The time to act is now," challenges us to act with the urgency that this global epidemic demands.

AIDS, as we know, and the HIV virus is a ferocious and resourceful disease, a resourceful virus, ever-mutating to escape our efforts to destroy it. Therefore, we have to be ferocious, resourceful, and adaptable in our effort to succeed to end HIV. We must bring bold thinking and deep commitment to testing, treatment, and the search for a cure and a vaccine to prevent.

President Bush, with his PEPFAR initiative, took a big advance in how we can help prevent the spread of AIDS in the rest of the world. He and Mrs. Bush, with their Pink Ribbon Red Ribbon Initiative to link cervical cancer prevention with HIV testing and treatment in Africa, was a remarkable initiative.

So we salute the bipartisanship. We supported, of course, President Bush with PEPFAR. We wanted it bigger, and he wanted it strong, and there we were with something that has saved millions of lives and given hope to people.

I visited some of the clinics in Africa where PEPFAR is being administered, and some of the people I met there said, "I would never have come in to be tested before because there was no reason. I had no hope that there would be any remedy or any maintaining of a quality of life that would have encouraged me to risk the stigma of saying that I was HIV-infected." So, again, it is all about the people.

In New York today, Bono will be observing the 10th anniversary of the ONE and (RED) initiatives that have set out to alleviate poverty and eradicate disease, with a heavy focus on HIV/AIDS. We know the work of the Melinda and Bill Gates Foundation and what they have done on this issue, particularly in India.

I, today, also wish I could be in San Francisco, where amfAR will be saluting the work at University of California-San Francisco on HIV/AIDS by establishing a new initiative there.

I am just mentioning a few other observances of World AIDS Day. It is happening throughout the world.

If you go back a number of years, when I came to Congress, we were going to two funerals a day. It was the saddest thing. Now we are going to weddings and helping people make out their wills and all the rest because they have a longer life ahead.

The maintenance of life, the quality of life is really important, but we do want a cure.

So I said it was the 25th anniversary of World AIDS Day; I meant to say the 25th anniversary of the Ryan White CARE Act. That young man, whose