

HONORING FLORIDA HEROINES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the many generations of women who have shaped our Nation and thank them for their invaluable contributions.

As the first Hispanic woman elected to Congress, I am grateful and inspired by their legacy. These women have influenced public policies, built institutions, and contributed to a stronger economy. Without their contributions, our society would be less lively, our culture more impoverished, and peace would be less stable. We need to respect their great achievements by continuing the job.

I share the hopes and aspirations of all women across America who wish to make the lives of our daughters, sisters, aunts, and mothers more equitable. I have always been committed and dedicated to advancing the role of women in our society, and I work toward policies that would assist them and their families. That is why I have joined the bipartisan Congressional Women's Caucus and have supported extensive legislation and programs fighting domestic violence and women's access to a quality education.

Today I would like to pay tribute to some of the more energetic champions of women's rights from my area of south Florida: Roxcy O'Neal Bolton, Helen Aguirre Ferre, Julia Tuttle, Marjory Stoneman Douglas, and Judge Bertila Soto.

Roxcy Bolton has had an impressive career by advocating for equal rights in the workplace and also by creating the first rape treatment center in the country, located in my hometown of Miami. She also founded Women in Distress, the first women's rescue center in Florida. Roxcy has received numerous accolades and is an iconic and loved figure in our community.

Congratulations, Roxcy.

Helen Aguirre Ferre is another pioneer. She is an award-winning journalist and communications consultant who was recently inducted into the Florida Women's Hall of Fame. As the chair of the Board of Trustees of Miami Dade College—my alma mater—Helen is committed to promoting education and establishing policies that would help students across our community.

Congratulations, Helen.

Julia Tuttle, known as the mother of Miami, made history as the only female founder of a major U.S. city when she helped establish the city of Miami many years ago. Julia's vision and perseverance have long been traits that south Floridians have worked to carry on since the founding of our great city of Miami.

Tuttle's mantle of leadership is heavy, but it has been carried on by so many others.

Marjory Stoneman Douglas made another kind of south Florida history

when she worked tirelessly to save her beloved Everglades. Her iconic book, "The Everglades: River of Grass," helped awaken so many to the need of preserving this one-of-a-kind ecological wonder and led the fight to establish the Everglades National Park.

Judge Bertila Soto is a modern-day heroine. She is a fellow graduate of my alma maters, Florida International University and the University of Miami. She was named chief judge of Florida's 11th Judicial Circuit.

Bertila is both the first Cuban American and the first woman to helm the largest judicial circuit in the State. Her energy and understanding of complex legal issues have driven her to success. Every day that Judge Soto is hard at work, she is not only living, but making south Florida history.

Congratulations to Bertila.

I also want to honor our female pilots of World War II, the Women Airforce Service Pilots, also known as the WASPS. They were responsible for removing the barriers for women in the military today. And I know this because my daughter-in-law, Lindsay, was afforded the opportunity to join the Marine Corps and fly combat missions both in Iraq and Afghanistan thanks to these women pioneers.

South Florida has been home to some of these remarkable heroines like Ruth Shafer Fleisher, Shirley Kruse, and Bee Haydu, as well as Frances Rohrer Sargent and Helen Wyatt Snapp, who have passed away.

Mr. Speaker, I am so proud to recognize all of these outstanding women, past and present. May these role models continue to remind girls and young women that nothing can hold them back from realizing their dreams.

HEROIN AND OPIOID OVERDOSES

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

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, the chart that is being set up next to me here depicts graphically one of the most sickening trends in terms of an increasing cause of death in the United States, which is heroin and opioid overdoses.

On the top, the map shows data from 2004 from the Centers for Disease Control, when 7,500 Americans lost their lives to overdose deaths. In 2014, that number has grown to 27,000.

The red shaded area is high-intensity areas of death of up to 20 per 100,000 in the population. The blue is 10 or less. And in 2014, as you can see, the red is slowly but inexorably taking over the entire country.

This is a crisis which, again, affects every part of our country, whether it is rural, suburban, or urban. It affects Republican districts. It affects Democratic districts. And it is time for our Nation to recognize that this needs to be treated the same way we would any natural disaster or public health emergency in the country.

In 2016, we know these numbers are, in fact, going to get worse.

The Office of Chief Medical Examiner in the State of Connecticut released their 2015 numbers a few weeks ago, and the number grew in the State of Connecticut by 20 percent, to 723 deaths in 2015.

Just this morning in the local press in southeastern Connecticut, a 25-year-old was found dead in a motor vehicle on Route 12 outside the Groton Navy Base, and a young man, an 18-year-old, was found dead in Norwich just a couple of days ago.

It is time for us to listen to the folks who are on the front lines—the police officers, the addiction counselors, and the folks that are dealing with this program bringing people to life with Narcan—and understand that we need a new approach to solving this incredibly dangerous crisis for our Nation.

The good news is that the Senate, a couple of weeks ago, passed the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act 94-1. It is a good bill. It makes some smart changes in terms of the overprescribing of painkillers. It deals with the disposal of the proliferation of painkillers that is far too great in the Nation today. It also talks about changing protocols in the FDA, HHS, DOD, VA, all of the agencies of the Federal Government that deal with folks suffering from pain. Unfortunately, though, the bill does not contain a single penny of emergency assistance which the police departments across the country, the addiction counselors across the country are begging for.

In the House, there is a bill, H.R. 4473, which does provide emergency supplemental appropriations this year to try and get resources so that folks who are dealing with this crisis and families that are dealing with this crisis are actually going to get real help. And this bill has been endorsed by 21 organizations, from the Fraternal Order of Police, the police and the cops and the firefighters who are out there saving people's lives right now with Narcan, and also the addiction counselors who, again, do not have adequate detox facilities and beds to deal with the carnage that is happening all across this country.

The Republican majority leader announced last week that in May, the House will take up the Senate bill. I wish it was this month. I wish we could move with the urgency of a natural disaster like a fire or hurricane or tornado striking parts of our country that causes devastation much less than what these maps depict. However, the fact that there is going to be some movement is some sign of hope.

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But it is important to remember it is not enough to just pass authorizing language that is about trying to change policy without funding, because the folks who are dealing with this problem, who are watching us like a

hawk because they are dealing with this problem, like that young man who was found dead last night, understand that resources are needed, just like in any other natural disaster or public health emergency facing this country.

Again, we need to turn this map around. We need to change this so that, again, the devastation that is being caused in families of middle class, upper class, lower income families across the country is going to stop.

There are real-life solutions that the folks who are at the front lines are prepared to move forward. They are on standby. What they are waiting for is this Congress to move forward with the real resources that we would deal with as a great Nation in terms of any other epidemic or any other massive public health or health emergency in this Nation.

We need to include H.R. 4473. We need to listen to the 21 organizations that deal with this problem all across America so that we get real help out on the streets of America and not just give lip service to solving this critical problem.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF CAPTAIN JAMES T. DEAN, JR.

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

Mr. CURBELO of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of Captain James T. Dean, Jr., an Army veteran from the Vietnam war.

Jim was born in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1944. In 1962, he joined the Army and graduated from Officer Candidate School at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. He served in Korea with a Sergeant missile unit before being deployed to a beautiful place during an ugly time. He served in Vietnam from January 1968 to September 1969, serving with the 2nd Battalion, 40th Field Artillery, of the 199th Light Infantry Brigade.

A proud redleg, Jim received the Bronze Star with "V" device for heroism in ground combat, the Bronze Star with two oak leaf clusters for meritorious achievement in ground operations against hostile forces, the Purple Heart for wounds received in action, along with numerous other awards and decorations for his service.

Following his service, Jim and his wife, Carla, moved to Naples, Florida, where he started several businesses before returning to his true passion, horticulture.

Jim worked for the city of Naples as the assistant parks and parkway supervisor. He was proud to have played a significant role in the Naples-scape project to beautify the city.

He was a civic leader, serving on the board of the Greater Naples Better Government Committee as well as the Marco Island Kiwanis. He was an ordained elder within the Presbyterian Church, and he and Carla were members of the Collier County Republican Executive Committee.

Jim also battled bladder cancer and, with Carla and other friends, formed

the Bladder Cancer Foundation of Florida to raise awareness.

Sadly, Jim succumbed to bladder cancer and passed away last month, on March 23. His name will not appear on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial wall; however, make no mistake about it, like too many other survivors, Jim was a casualty of the war due to his exposure to Agent Orange.

Recently, the National Institute of Medicine forwarded to the VA that "there is limited or suggestive evidence of an association between chemicals of interest and bladder cancer."

Adding bladder cancer to the list of medical conditions that qualify veterans for a presumption of exposure to Agent Orange would allow veterans easier access to critical healthcare benefits.

Unfortunately, it is too late for Jim, but many Vietnam veterans continue to suffer from this disease. I call on VA Secretary McDonald to approve this designation so our Vietnam war veterans can receive the help that they have so solemnly earned.

I know I speak on behalf of the entire Congress and a grateful Nation to express our deepest condolences to his widow, Carla; daughter, Michelle; and his many friends and loved ones. I pray for God's mercies upon them as they cope with their pain.

BUDGET CUTS AT THE INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, this week in 2 days is April 15, the day that our income taxes are due. We have seen that day difficult enough under the best of circumstances, be made even more difficult, purposely, for millions of Americans. My Republican friends have decided to take out their differences with the IRS, their opposition to taxation, by deliberately torturing the American taxpayer.

Ours is the largest tax system in the world that relies primarily on volunteer compliance. Each 1 percent where people decide not to comply costs the Treasury \$30 billion. Now, most, in fact, do comply, but an ever-increasingly complex tax system makes compliance difficult.

It should be noted that it is not the IRS that makes the Tax Code complicated; it is Congress that is constantly changing that Code. Sometimes it is so late in meeting its obligations with tax changes that the Service doesn't even have time to print the forms on time.

In order to help citizens with Congress' complex tax system, the Internal Revenue Service runs the largest consumer service operation in the world. Last year, it was a disaster. Well, this process has been deliberately sabotaged by the Republican approach to the agency budget. It has 30,000 fewer

employees than it had in 1992, down 13,000 from 2010, despite the fact that the Code gets more complex and there are more people filing returns every year.

Congress should have been a constructive partner in streamlining, modernization, with new computers, but the IRS budget prevents it from modernizing information technology. It still uses applications that were running in the early 1960s. And you cannot completely computerize the simple task of answering phone calls and talking to taxpayers.

When you visit the IRS offices, as I have, you find employees who are sad and angry that they are unable to meet the needs of the taxpayers. They don't like getting somebody who has been on hold for 20 or 30 minutes and then not having the time to work with them to answer their questions. It frustrates the taxpayer, and it breaks the heart of our employees.

Now, it is no secret that some people forget or cheat on their taxes, but Congress has not equipped the IRS to do the audits necessary to actually collect the money that is due. This year, when we have a big deficit, there will be \$300 to \$400 billion of taxes that are due and owing but won't be paid. Yet Congress is deliberately trying to make it worse. They have 12,000 fewer enforcement staff, a reduction of 23 percent, and I am going back to a Ways and Means Committee where one of the proposals would cut that budget another \$500 million. It is not fair to the taxpayer, it is not fair to our employees, and it makes it hard to fund the needs of our Nation.

People talk around here about running government like a business. What business undercuts, underfunds, and slashes its accounts receivable department? They may think it is good politics to make the taxpayer experience as miserable as possible, but it is ultimately bad judgment, poor politics, and a disservice to the American people as we undercut the ability to fund essential government services.

Many of my Republican colleagues have been looking for scandal within the IRS. Whatever problems they uncover or imagine, the real scandal is how they are treating the American public and the people who work for them at the vital service of the Internal Revenue Service.

GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CURBELO of Florida). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 195th anniversary of Greek independence.

Citizens of Greece have always been a proud people in body, mind, and spirit. From Pericles, Greek statesman and general, dubbed "the first citizen of