

their three distinguished alumni, Ronald Hall Sr., Dennis Archer, and William Pickard. Their influence and community engagement will make a difference for decades to come.

URGING CONGRESS TO ADDRESS
EPIDEMIC OF VETERAN SUICIDE

HON. MARC A. VEASEY

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 27, 2017

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, as a member of the House Armed Services Committee, I work to ensure that our service members receive all the resources they need when they volunteer to defend the United States. But it is important that Congress not only provides them with support during their service, but in the years after they faithfully executed their duties as a member of the Armed Services. That is why I rise today to address the epidemic of veteran suicide in our country.

September is recognized as “National Suicide Awareness Month” and currently our veterans are suffering from a substantially higher rate of suicide than the general population. According to a 2014 report by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), 20 veterans take their lives every day, a rate that is 150 percent greater than the general population. Although the VA has dedicated a significant amount of effort and resources to address veteran suicide, the fact remains that of the 20 average veteran suicides that occur on a daily basis, 14 were not utilizing VA services. As the 2016 VA report “Suicide Among Veterans and Other Americans” explains, up to 22 percent of Post-9/11 veterans have depression disorders, and up to 43 percent of all struggle with symptoms of mental health issues, such as drinking excessively, smoking, and/or sleeplessness. In addition, female veterans and those living in rural areas face a higher risk of suicide and we must address the barriers to care for these populations.

It is clear that we must extend more resources to help our veterans and prevent the unnecessary loss of life. The VA’s 2016 study and upgrading crisis hotlines are steps in the right direction, fully addressing veteran suicide remains a complex issue that will require a multi-faceted approach. But their suffering does not have to continue and we must reverse the trend of veteran suicide.

Raising awareness about the issue begins in Congress, but every day citizens can also join in the effort year-round. Moreover, the effort to raise awareness about veteran suicide will have benefits across our society as a whole, contributing to the de-stigmatization of mental health issues. It is no secret that the stigma surrounding mental health prevents many veterans from obtaining care for these issues, forcing our country’s heroes and heroines to suffer in silence. De-stigmatizing mental health care is critical to open up dialogue about a pervasive issue and provides opportunities for treatment and prevention of suicide. In addition, Congress must provide the VA with additional resources so that they better serve the female and rural veteran population with child care services and extensions of specialized care to remote, rural areas. We must continue to support innovation within the VA so that the agency will be more willing to em-

brace new approaches to treatment, such as canine service animals, art and outdoor therapies.

It goes without saying that we owe our veterans a tremendous debt for their service to our nation in defense of the freedoms we all enjoy. In return, we must care for them as a demonstration of our nation’s core values. Raising awareness of the suicide epidemic and de-stigmatizing care throughout society, in addition to embracing innovative modes of therapy and furthering the VA’s outreach will go a long way to honoring the service of veterans’ to our nation. I urge my colleagues to join me in ensuring that we address the veteran suicide epidemic immediately.

HONORING HOMETOWN
NEWSPAPERS

HON. KRISTI L. NOEM

OF SOUTH DAKOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 27, 2017

Mrs. NOEM. Mr. Speaker, in honor of National Newspaper Week, I rise today to recognize the 126 individual news organizations of South Dakota.

Living in the information age, data is constantly at our fingertips. It is the local newspaper, though, that tells the story of everyday America and documents community history in a way that will forever be available to future generations. The local news reminds us that the world is made of neighborhoods and shared experiences, that love of country still exists, and that diversity of opinion truly makes our country great.

Freedom of speech and freedom of the press must ever be protected, for it is only through a free system that democracy can thrive. As Thomas Jefferson said, “our liberty depends on the freedom of the press, and that cannot be limited without being lost.”

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in thanking local journalists, particularly those serving South Dakota, for giving a voice to the individual and cultivating the road to free speech for all.

WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY
ACT OF 2017

SPEECH OF

HON. LOIS FRANKEL

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 25, 2017

Ms. FRANKEL of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this critical bill that will help ensure that women have a meaningful role in peace and security around the world. From Syria to Myanmar to South Sudan, violent conflicts are becoming more widespread and deadly. Women in conflict zones suffer tremendously, and women and girls make up around half of any refugee population, where they are at risk of unspeakable violence.

But women are not only victims. They also help moderate violent extremism and are key to post-conflict society building. Yet so few are present at the tables of power. In peace processes between 1992 and 2011, women made up only 9 percent of negotiators. When

women have a seat at the table, the prospect that peace negotiations will succeed rise significantly, as does the likelihood that women’s rights and interests will be addressed. A recent study from the International Peace Institute found that a peace agreement is 35 percent more likely to last for at least 15 years if women participate in its drafting.

This legislation would require a government-wide strategy to promote women’s participation, and institutes training for State Department, USAID, and Pentagon personnel to facilitate women’s engagement in conflict prevention and resolution.

I’d like to commend the progress made under President Obama on this issue, which includes issuing the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. In the last five years alone, the percentage of peace agreements referencing gender equality has increased from 22 to 70 percent.

We have an opportunity to make our voice heard on the issue of women in conflict. The UN Security Council will convene next month to hold its open debate on Women, Peace and Security. The United States should highlight its commitment to ensuring women’s equal participation in peacemaking, and protecting their physical and economic security. That begins with sending a high-level delegation.

I urge adoption of the bill.

INDIAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY
FIGHTS HURRICANE HARVEY

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 27, 2017

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, since Hurricane Harvey hit our area last month, stories of Harvey Heroes continue to bring our community together and make us grateful for the incredible people that we call neighbors. There are many uplifting stories of those who grabbed their personal boats and set out in the waters to rescue individuals, many of whom they did not know. Our first responders answered the call time and time again. And so did so many people whose names we may never know. For all of them, we thank them from the bottom of our hearts.

So many people have opened their homes, their hearts, and their wallets to help Houston recover. One such community was the Indian-American community right in the greater Houston area. They have already raised over \$1.6 million dollars. 700 Indian-American volunteers have dedicated more than 24,000 hours to their city, and together, they have distributed over 28,000 meals to our neighbors in need.

One specific story I would like to highlight is that of a group of Indian-Americans, led by Houstonian, Jiten Agrawal, made their way through the unparalleled flooding after the Hurricane to reach a student apartment complex near my alma mater, the University of Houston, that had been flooded and was without power. The president of the Indian graduate students’ organization, Ravi Shankar, reached out to the community to help, and help is what they gave. These volunteer rescuers brought food and water to over 180 students and helped transport them back to their families or a safe location.

We are grateful to these volunteers, some of the many Harvey Heroes, for helping