

34TH ANNUAL PENNSYLVANIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE HIGH SCHOOL ESSAY CONTEST WINNER
1ST PLACE HIGH SCHOOL ESSAY WINNER:
MICHELLE BAUER—ST. MARYS AREA HIGH SCHOOL

When I hear the word civic, I think of governmental duties. I understand my duty as an American citizen to vote, obey laws, pay taxes, and serve on juries. These activities all involve one person: yourself. In reality, our civic engagement as Americans expands beyond a single individual and encompasses entire communities. The definition of a civic engagement is an activity that includes both paid and unpaid forms of political activism, environmentalism, and service. As I look at my community, it is apparent that we have a lot of civic engagements.

As with most towns, mine has a city council that holds meetings and elections for positions on the council. These elections are open to every member of the city and are an excellent way for citizens to have a say in the politics of the town. Just as the elections are open to all citizens so are the weekly meetings. A unique feature about my town's council meetings is that they are televised on a local channel. For individuals who are unable to physically be present at the meeting or have commitments that require attention, this televised version provides a perfect solution to keep abreast of the issues affecting our citizens.

Along with a local city council, it is also a civic duty of individuals in my community to vote and participate in elections and meetings at the school district level. Anyone is able to run for a position on the school board as well as attend the meetings. For me, our school board is a great way for civic involvement because the board is interested in new opportunities that can be incorporated into the education of our youth. Just recently, I attended a board meeting where the topic of robots was discussed. As a member of a small competition group, we were able to present our success and the benefit of curriculum that includes new technology. One month later, it was announced that a robotics class will be offered in the upcoming school year. This will allow even more students to enhance their education and perhaps encourage new career choices.

In my community, the civic engagements do not stop on the political level. One of the most prominent forms of civic engagement I see in my community that is not related to politics is the placing of wreaths on the gravestones of fallen soldiers for Memorial Day. Citizens from all over town come together the weekend before Memorial Day and walk through the entire cemetery adorning and honoring the heroes of our country. This event is not for publicity or money but instead is for respecting our veterans. Additionally, it is for the betterment of our community by presenting a beautiful scene to those passing by.

Onlookers can also be mesmerized by the beauty of the mountainous rural area. Unfortunately, garbage and litter on the side of roads and highways is so commonplace that most individuals do not even do a double-take when they see it. The highway through my town is an area where individuals think it is acceptable to throw garbage out of their vehicles or litter the sides of the road with cigarette butts and wrappers. For the past seven years, I have been a part of the National Honor Society highway cleanup. Every spring and fall, the society walks the sides of the roads picking up trash and making our town look beautiful.

Volunteering to pick up the litter is not the only way to carry out civic responsibility. Everybody has either witnessed or directly experienced an accident or fire that

required the assistance of a fire department. The fire department is a critical part of a city keeping fires at bay and lending a hand wherever needed. In my community, these people work tirelessly day in and day out for the good of the community. Much of their assistance is not what would be depicted as heroic but rather, responding to flooding issues, weather related emergencies, traffic control, helicopter landing zones, and searching for missing hunters in addition to the rescue and fire calls. They are all volunteers that give up their precious time as a civic duty to their community without expecting recognition. We, the rest of the community, have a duty to help support these people. One of the best ways to do this is to attend their pancake breakfasts that are used as a fundraiser. I am not a huge fan of pancakes and sausage so instead of helping the firefighters out by purchasing a meal, I volunteer to serve the meals to customers. It is the civic duty of individuals in my city to attend this pancake breakfast and show support to the members of this department who tirelessly serve and assist us.

Reporting for standby at a yearly event in July is another aspect of service that our firefighters join their community for. There are loud BOOMS echoing across the city and suddenly bright orbs of colorful lights bursting in the sky. This grand spectacle entrances onlookers for half an hour with its bright lights and fun designs. A Fourth of July fireworks display like this costs money. Every year, our city struggles to come up with the funds needed to purchase fireworks. Businesses around the town make it their civic duty to help by setting out donation cans in their businesses. The local Dairy Queen even has a day where 30% of the profits from every blizzard purchased go to the city fireworks fund. As citizens in the community, it is our duty to go to Dairy Queen on this day and purchase a blizzard as well as make donations in the cans set up at local businesses. Eating ice cream is certainly an enjoyable way to carry out a civic duty. The July show has been an important part of our community for many years thanks to the numerous supporters.

We have many such events traced back in our records. Local history is like the heart of the human body. It shapes us, powers our being, and makes us unique. Without history, individuals would not even be alive. A great example would be the Forty-Second Pennsylvania Volunteer Regiment (Bucktails) who were part of the Civil War. These rugged woodsmen were skilled marksmen and ideally suited to the challenges of battle. Stories say that this group was so influential in fighting the war at Gettysburg that the entire outcome could have been different without them. The grit and determination of our local ancestors remains in current day lineage within our community. By knowing local history, members of the community have a sense of pride and can even feel at ease understanding that future generations will uphold the same virtues. My town has a Historical Society that is free to enter and accepts donations of local artifacts and history. As a member of the community, it is my civic engagement to donate any pieces of history I have so that others may benefit from it as well. It is also the duty of our community to visit the Historical Society and learn about our heritage and how we can use the skills of our people to better our society just like the Bucktails did in the Civil War.

Civic engagements are abundant in our community. From the local fireman's pancake breakfast to the city council meetings, civic activities are occurring all around us. It is the obligation of the citizens to engage in these activities to assist with local chal-

lenges and create a better community for all of its members.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania.
Mr. Speaker, I will close with her final paragraph:

"Civic engagements are abundant in our community. From the local fireman's pancake breakfast to the city council meetings, civic activities are occurring all around us. It is the obligation of the citizens to engage in these activities to assist with local challenges and create a better community for all of its members."

Mr. Speaker, I couldn't agree more.

DOWN SYNDROME

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

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Mr. Speaker, last week, the Labor-HHS Appropriations Subcommittee had a most remarkable hearing on Down syndrome, which moved us to a new understanding of this disability.

DS is a genetic disorder that affects over 300,000 men, women, and children in America. It is the most common chromosomal disorder and the most frequent genetic cause of learning disabilities in children.

Each year, approximately 6,000 babies in the United States are born with Down syndrome, a condition resulting from an extra 21st chromosome. Sixty years ago, people with DS had a life expectancy of less than 20 years, and most lived their lives in institutions. Today, due to early medical care and being raised in loving homes, these children can expect to live well into their sixties.

Last week's hearing was one of the most emotionally charged and inspirational hearings I can recall as a member of this subcommittee. The room was filled with children and adults with DS and their families, including my young constituent, Jose Cisneros. Amidst the tears, laughter, and applause, we heard inspiring stories about the amazing accomplishments of DS teens and young adults in sports, scouting, community activism, and film acting.

We learned that they are graduating from high schools, attending colleges, and working at jobs in their communities.

And, most importantly, we saw how these young Americans are teaching our country about the value of diversity and inclusion, while at the same time increasing the happiness quotients of those lucky enough to be in their very wide circle of friends.

We also learned some very surprising and amazing facts about Down syndrome. Researchers told us that individuals with DS are medically very special. On the one hand, they are highly predisposed to autoimmune disorders such as thyroid disease and rheumatoid arthritis; children with DS are 50 times more likely to develop

childhood leukemia, and virtually all adults with DS will develop the brain pathology of Alzheimer's by the age of 40.

But they also said that due to a small difference in their genetic makeup, persons with Down syndrome are naturally protected from heart disease, high blood pressure, and most solid-tissue cancers. Researchers said studying these unique genetics could help discover ways to prevent or cure diseases such as cancer, autoimmune disorders, and Alzheimer's disease.

With such promising potential, one would think the Federal Government would invest heavily in Down syndrome research. Unfortunately, what we learned was that over the last two decades, DS has been one of the least funded genetic conditions at the NIH.

This hearing left no doubt about the need for a significant and sustained investment in Down syndrome research. A trans-NIH DS initiative could help not only find answers and cures for DS, but discover its mysteries, which could answer questions about other serious and life-threatening diseases.

While the benefits of DS research are unquestionable, it will take time to realize its full potential. In the meantime, we must ensure those living with DS can access and afford high-quality, coordinated healthcare and the long-term services and support they need to live productive lives in their communities.

Medicaid long-term supports and Medicaid community-based services gives them that opportunity by enabling them to maintain gainful employment and stay in their homes and in their communities. Sadly, across our country, thousands of people with Down syndrome are on very long waiting lists for those services.

As lawmakers, we have an obligation to find a bipartisan way to protect and expand Medicaid services so all individuals with DS and other debilitating diseases have access to the lifelong interventions and support they need.

The time has come for this country to embrace the gift and potential that Down syndrome brings to our society. The 300,000-plus Americans living with DS today want and deserve the same opportunities available to all of us: to live a full life and to reach their true potential.

CARE FOR UNIVERSITY RAPE VICTIMS

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, ever since she was a little girl, Silvana loved to play hockey. In her Massachusetts hometown, hockey was more of a way of life than just a sport.

Her parents knew she was talented, and supported her dream to play even in college. When she was offered a scholarship in 2011, to be the goalie for the University of Connecticut, Silvana

felt like all of her dreams had come true, so she eagerly accepted.

She pulled out of her driveway with her packed clothes and hockey gear, but she could have never known that in a few days her life would change forever. She could not have foreseen how a lifetime of hard work and ambition would suddenly disappear tragically.

Like all new students, she was eager to immerse herself in her new college life. On the third day at the university, Silvana went to a house party with some new friends she met. But, after two drinks, she began to feel dizzy, numb, and lethargic. She quickly lost the ability to walk, and she became very ill. As she drifted out of consciousness, a male hockey player at the party instructed others to carry her to his bedroom. When she woke up, she found him on top of her, sexually assaulting her.

She immediately turned to the university for help and reported the assault at The Women's Center. But the counselor did not tell her to call the police, advise her to press charges, or help her in any way.

Silvana then went to the on-campus doctor. But instead of treating her like a victim and offering her the care and support she needed, the doctor told her that he didn't want to know who assaulted her. Get this, Mr. Speaker: the doctor told her, the remedy was for her to transfer to another university. This is awful.

One in five women on our university campuses are sexually assaulted. Of those, less than 25 percent even report the rape.

It took an extraordinary amount of courage for Silvana to report that sexual assault, especially to multiple people she didn't even know. She was offered no help or no support by anyone. She was alone, and she felt it.

The doctor wasn't trained to deal with rape victims and made it clear he wanted nothing more to do with Silvana. The university clearly viewed Silvana as a burden, just another statistic they didn't want to deal with.

Mr. Speaker, universities in the United States should be required to have a victim advocate on staff, a sexual assault victim advocate. Also, to ensure that this doesn't happen to more victims at hospitals, I have introduced legislation that would require a hospital to provide access to a staffer—it is called a SAFE, sexual assault forensic examiner—who is trained to provide care and be sensitive to trauma rape victims, or have a plan to get that victim to a nearby hospital that does. Universities and nearby hospitals need to work together to make sure that rape victims are treated appropriately when they are assaulted on campus.

The bill that I just mentioned is named the Megan Rondini Act. It is in honor of a college sexual assault victim on the University of Alabama campus, who was a Texas student, who was denied access to post-rape treatment at a hospital. The university didn't help

her, and the local law enforcement didn't help her.

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In Megan's case, because she was alone and abandoned by all three of those entities, when she returned to Texas, she later committed suicide.

Anyway, after the rape of Silvana, the university left Silvana to pick up the pieces of her shattered life. She was traumatized and depressed. Claiming that she wasn't stable enough, the hockey coach removed her from the team. She never played a single game of hockey in college. She withdrew from the University of Connecticut shortly thereafter, but her rapist stayed on his hockey team and played for the university. Silvana had to successfully sue the university to get justice. She had to take the matter to court, where society and our justice system should have helped her initially.

Mr. Speaker, rape is never the fault of the victim, yet Silvana felt that she was the one being blamed for what happened to her.

We as a society must demand our universities and hospitals protect and care for sexual assault victims. No longer should they be allowed to suffer alone and be abandoned. No more excuses.

And that is just the way it is.

REPUBLICAN TAX PLAN

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

Ms. MOORE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today under the "E Pluribus Unum" to give voice to the elderly, the children, the disabled, the most vulnerable who are once again facing your proposal, Mr. Speaker, to rip healthcare and the safety net from them.

Is this the best you can do, Mr. Speaker, to once again, over and over again, propose this legislation to cut trillions of dollars from Medicaid and Medicare to fund tax cuts for corporations and for billionaires, and to do this, to slam this through the House without transparency?

Mr. Speaker, Republicans like to call me a "tax and spend liberal," but today we see this GOP fiscal plan as another "borrow and spend to pay for billionaires tax cuts."

Now, the Wharton School and the Goldman Sachs studies both show that, at best, this plan would produce a paltry one-tenth, maybe two-tenths of 1 percent growth, but we all know that it will increase the national debt by trillions of dollars.

This is a horrible investment, a horrible return, a negative return on investment. It is a terrible process. This is terrible legislation. It will produce terrible results for the overwhelming majority of Americans, especially the millions who rely on Medicaid and Medicare.

Now, here is the deal, Mr. Speaker, that you are trying to push: if Americans are willing to give billionaires