

the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty." These are the words that begin every Medal of Honor citation, our Nation's highest and most prestigious military decoration.

They are uncommon but not as uncommon as the actions and sacrifice detailed in the narrative summaries of those awards.

Of the estimated 50 million Americans who have worn a military uniform, 3,440 have received the Medal of Honor.

The criteria for the award are profound, clear, and always deadly; indeed, almost all recipients sacrificing their lives to earn them.

Their service is memorialized at military installations throughout the world. You can read of their bravery on walls, monuments, and headstones. Buildings, streets, ships, and forward-operating bases bear their names in an attempt to honor, to inspire, and to remember.

If you wear a uniform, you walk in the dark shadows of heroes every day.

Today, Mr. Speaker, there are 71 living recipients. Tomorrow, there will be 72.

Mr. Speaker, in the early morning hours of March 4, 2002, a helicopter attempted a landing on a mountain peak high in the Arma Mountain range of southeastern Afghanistan.

The mission was reconnaissance. But, Mr. Speaker, war has no regard for the plans of men. War is violent. War is chaotic. War is unforgiving. And as the helicopter touched down, it was engulfed in a hail of lead and rocket-propelled grenades.

The helicopter escaped, but one man remained: Chief Petty Officer SEAL Neil Roberts. He was alone. He was isolated, and he was surrounded.

In a letter to his family, Roberts would write, "All the times spent in the company of my teammates were when I felt closest to the men I had the privilege to work with. I loved being a SEAL. If I die doing something for the teams, then I died doing what made me happy. Very few people have the luxury of that."

Mr. Speaker, men and women join the military for many reasons, but they do not join with a desire to die. There will always be moments of uncertainty and fear and hesitation, moments when fear turns the thoughts to your own safety, well-being, and survival.

Every service issues a uniform. None of them issue courage. In those moments, where beliefs and resolve are tested, leadership illuminates the path.

On March 4, 2002, Master Chief Special Warfare Operator SEAL Retired Britt Slabinski chose to lead. He led his men back into the fight, into overwhelming odds and superior enemy fire. There would be no element of surprise. There would be no tactical advantage, and despite the odds and despite the risk, he chose to lead.

They assaulted trenches and bunkers and hardened machine gun nests. They

took the fight to the enemy until it reached the brink of their own destruction. They did not run. They did not hide. They fought.

Mr. Speaker, bravery is not motivated by fear, rage, hate, or the desire for awards or recognition. Bravery is motivated by love: love for an ideal, love for a country, and love for a teammate.

Bravery is not a certainty; it is a choice.

Master Chief Slabinski and his men chose to be brave. His actions, his personal courage, and his leadership are an example, not just to every sailor, soldier, marine, and airman, but to every American.

His citation has earned its place among the other heroes who have received the Medal of Honor. Its ownership, its meaning, and its promise belong not just on the walls of every military installation but on the walls of every home in America.

Master Chief Slabinski's actions serve as a beacon, as a reminder of who we can become, of what we can accomplish when we, instead of running away, rise up and challenge our darkest fears, our worst enemies, or overwhelming odds.

Mr. Speaker, long live the brotherhood.

RECOGNIZING PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOLS THAT RANK IN THE TOP 100 IN THE STATE

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

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, we recently concluded Teacher Appreciation Week, and I am proud to stand with the teachers throughout our community in Bucks and Montgomery Counties. It is of utmost importance that we recognize their service and sacrifice for all of our young people.

Recently, this has culminated in our district having several schools that ranked in the top 100 in the State of Pennsylvania for both standardized test scores and graduation rates.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the following schools now on the floor of the House: The New Hope-Solebury High School, Council Rock High School North, Central Bucks High School East, Abington Senior High School, Council Rock High School South, Central Bucks High School South, and the Quakertown Community High School.

I am proud to represent a community that produces such high-achieving young adults, and I would like to thank our educators for the work they do in molding our future generation.

RECOGNIZING MILITARY APPRECIATION MONTH

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, May is Military Appreciation Month, and I am proud to stand here today to recognize the brave men and women in uniform who have served our Nation valiantly.

As a member of the House Homeland Security Committee, I am in awe of the sacrifices made and risks taken by our Armed Forces every single day to keep our country safe.

And I speak for all of my constituents in Bucks and Montgomery Counties when we truly say that we value the troops' service and sacrifice, and we owe them a tremendous debt of gratitude.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the 75 graduating high school seniors who were honored this month at Spring Mill Manor in Northampton by Our Community Salutes to recognize their enlistment in our Armed Forces.

These exemplary young men and women received a certificate from Montgomery County State Representative Tom Murt, a veteran of the Iraq war, and received their first military coin.

Mr. Speaker, as elected officials, we must continue to enact policies that ensure the well-being of all of our men and women in the military. There is no more important responsibility than serving those who have so bravely stepped up in times of crisis.

Mr. Speaker, I will continue to stand up for our military this month and every month. And to all those who serve, we say: Thank you.

NEW HOPE HOSTS A PRIDE PARADE

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, last weekend in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, was the 15th Annual New Hope Pride Parade.

This parade served as the culmination of a week-long celebration of LGBT culture and achievements, and I am proud to recognize this event and our LGBT community in Bucks County and throughout our district.

Currently, the New Hope Pride Parade stands as the only recognized event of its kind that crosses State lines between New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

I would like to recognize board member Jennifer Wohl, under whose guidance the attendance at this event grew from 1,000 in 2003 to 15,000 last year.

I would also like to thank the president of New Hope Celebrates, Matthew Hanson, for his work in advancing equality in Pennsylvania and across our Nation.

Mr. Speaker, as Members of Congress, it is critical that we advocate for measures that will support equality for all American citizens. I will continue to do so as a Member of this House, and I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to do the same with every single action we bring to this floor. We value them, Mr. Speaker.

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 42 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.