

□ 1215

RECOGNIZING BILL GAERTNER

(Mr. TRONE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. TRONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Bill Gaertner for receiving the distinguished St. Dismas Award for his work through the Gatekeepers Re-Entry Program in Hagerstown, Maryland.

Gatekeepers is a program that addresses one of the top needs in our criminal justice system: support for returning citizens.

Today, 90 percent of incarcerated people get released into their own communities, but many struggle to find the resources and support to thrive.

A returning citizen himself, Bill was 70 years old when he was released from prison. He started the Gatekeepers organization when he realized the challenges those released from prison face as they reenter society.

Gatekeepers aims to provide a connection to resources so folks could be successful as they transition back into their communities.

We should all be working toward a more just criminal justice system.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Bill Gaertner on this much-deserved award for his work to support justice-impacted communities.

 RECOGNIZING HEROISM OF ROBERT TARLETON AND EDWARD RYER

(Mr. MALINOWSKI asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the heroism of two New Jersey State troopers, Trooper Robert Tarleton and State Police Lieutenant Edward Ryer.

On March 2, Trooper Tarleton was stopped and talking with a driver on I-287 in Bridgewater, New Jersey, when a tractor-trailer ran off the road, hit a structure, and burst into flames.

Trooper Tarleton immediately ran toward the scene, where he met Lieutenant Ryer, who was off-duty but had stopped to help.

With no thought to their personal safety, they grabbed the incapacitated driver from the wreckage, dragging him to safety seconds before the truck exploded.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Trooper Tarleton and Lieutenant Ryer for their selfless actions that saved a man's life.

I also want to take a moment to recognize the everyday acts of heroism by our law enforcement officers that may not make the news or be captured on a body cam, as this one was.

We call them when we need help, and no matter how dangerous the situation, they always come. We are grateful.

TIME TO RAISE ENDOMETRIOSIS AWARENESS AND FUNDING

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MALINOWSKI). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2019, the gentlewoman from Iowa (Ms. FINKENAUER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. FINKENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Iowa?

There was no objection.

Ms. FINKENAUER. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to represent the great State of Iowa and the First Congressional District.

We have been getting a lot of great things done here in the House, working across the aisle and moving a lot of bipartisan bills forward since I got sworn in over a year ago. It has been an honor to get to represent my district and have its back every day.

In the middle of all of this, I happen to have gotten engaged a couple of months ago to my very kind and supportive fiancée, who is sitting up there in the gallery right now. He has been there through so much of it, and I am grateful every day.

You see, we are very much looking forward to one day starting our life together and are talking about raising a family and doing it in Iowa and how much that means to us.

So it would surprise most folks to know that just about 4 weeks ago, on a Friday after votes, I was back where I stay in D.C., sitting on my bed, doubled over in pain, googling hysterectomies.

It was a pain familiar to me, stabbing in my lower left abdomen, and a tight pain like two fists clenched together in a vise grip in my lower back.

I know this pain well because I have been experiencing it intermittently for over the past decade because I have a condition called endometriosis. I have had this most of my adult life.

I was diagnosed at a young age, luckily, at the early age of 18. See, a lot of women don't get an accurate diagnosis until much later in life.

Endometriosis is a very painful condition where the tissue that normally lines the uterus grows outside and can even attach to organs and nerves. Endometriosis is also the number one cause of hysterectomies for women ages 30 to 35.

I have already had two surgeries, laparoscopies, where they went in and cut off or burnt off the tissue. I have white-knuckled my way through more flights, events, and days knocking on doors than I can count.

There are so many women out there who have been told that the stabbing pain in your lower left abdomen is nor-

mal, or they are told that the tightness in their lower back that they are doubled over with in their beds is normal, but none of that is normal.

On this particular day, 4 weeks ago, I felt like I had enough. So I sat there, frustrated at the prospect of more delays in the airport in severe pain. I was looking at some of the most extreme options that are out there that would mean I couldn't even have children.

And to be honest with you, I just got frustrated because it shouldn't be this hard. It should be more well known, and there should be more options for treatment.

As I was looking up hysterectomies, I came across a place called the Endometriosis Foundation of America, and their website was full of information, some that I didn't even know as somebody who has been living with this for over 10 years, like the fact that endometriosis affects 1 in 10 women worldwide and an estimated 7 to 10 million in the United States alone, or that it is the leading cause of infertility, but there is no known cure.

You see, when I was looking up hysterectomies, the reason there are not more options, or options are slow to come by is because it is also one of the least-funded diseases and conditions by Congress, by the National Institutes of Health.

So once I decided to start talking about this, the number of people, whether it is their staff who has it, or their sister who has it, or possibly somebody they work with every day, or people they have met on the campaign, I mean, it just goes on and on, the number of people this touched, the women who have it and the men and women who love them.

I was also reminded, as I decided to look into this, how lucky I am. You see, I am lucky that I had a mom who believed me, who believed my pain, and good health insurance from my dad's union, where we could go to doctor after doctor until finally somebody said: "Hey, she might have this. We better take a look at it." That is when, again, I was able to be diagnosed.

I am lucky to have great support from my staff and others. But there are so many women across the United States who don't have that support.

When I decided to talk about this just a few weeks ago, I was actually getting my hair trimmed, and my hairdresser heard me say the word "endometriosis." She looked at me, and she said: Do you have it?

I said: Yes, I have it.

And she said: Well, right now, I am feeling like I am being stabbed in my lower left abdomen.

I said: Yes, I know that pain.

She was working three jobs, and she is dealing with it every day. It is something where she doesn't have the luxury to not show up. Many women don't. You just push through it, and you get through that pain day in and day out.