

“gave a little blood.” In fact, John gave so much more than that. He gave his country his all, and he was willing to give his life to make America a more perfect Union, but he never gave himself over to anger or allowed himself to harbor hatred in his heart for those who persecuted him.

In a true mark of his character, he famously forgave George Wallace, saying: “. . . to do otherwise—to hate him—would only perpetuate the evil system we sought to destroy.”

John continued: “Our ability to forgive serves a higher moral purpose in our society. Through genuine repentance and forgiveness, the soul of our Nation is redeemed.”

This, he said, was the “very essence of the civil rights movement.”

Mr. Speaker, as I reflect on John’s life, those words sum up why he was a great man and why we will always honor him.

It was truly the privilege of my life to call him my friend. We are a better country because of him. His legacy of change will last as long as America does. Everyone should strive to honor his incredible life. More importantly, we should all strive to learn from it.

But today, we mourn his loss, celebrate his life, and thank Almighty God for sending a great man who helped change a nation and serves as the highest example of courage, compassion, and moral character.

HONORING REPRESENTATIVE JOHN LEWIS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. ADAMS) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ADAMS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in honor of our colleague, my friend, John Lewis.

Everything John Lewis did was in the service of justice—a courageous, compassionate man who gave everything, including his blood and his body, to the civil rights movement.

From the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma to the floor of the House of Representatives, John was never afraid to put it on the line, everything, for what he believed in.

John was many things: a fighter, a leader, one of the “Big Six,” an HBCU graduate, a “good trouble” maker.

He was honored with the Presidential Medal of Freedom and over 50 honorary degrees, from Portland State University in Oregon to Bates College in Maine, and yet he was always humble.

Many have called him a hero, a living legend, but most of us here just knew him as John, our colleague, our friend. It was an amazing privilege to serve in Congress with John Lewis.

John was not only a leader of the civil rights movement, he was a modern-day Founding Father. Because, while the Founding Fathers assured us that “all men are created equal,” it was the sweat and the blood and the sacrifice of people like Congressman

John Robert Lewis that made that assurance true, that made our Nation more perfect and made our form of government turn towards justice.

John Lewis earned the respect of men, women, and little children, and he made our world and our community and our Nation much better than he found it.

My prayers are with his family and every seeker of justice who mourns him today.

Thank you, brother Lewis. Thank you.

Rest in peace.

VALLEY GROVE SCHOOL DISTRICT AND BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend Valley Grove School District of Venango County, Pennsylvania, for truly going above and beyond to connect with their students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Due to coronavirus, we saw school doors close across the country. Many parents found themselves in unexpected homeschooling situations, and the teachers of Valley Grove School District rose to the occasion.

In an effort to connect with students during the quarantine, teachers and administrators created VGTV, a YouTube channel to share video lessons and updates with children and families.

Videos can range from a music class piano lesson to a banana bread tutorial from home economics or the early childhood education teachers reading storybooks.

Teachers from all grades have gotten involved to contribute something to VGTV. J.G. Resig, a high school teacher, said the project “started out just as a morale boost to stay in contact with our students and let them know that we still care about them, even though we are stuck at home.”

Third grade teacher Julie Plumer has used her everyday surroundings to create informative videos for her students. For example, Ms. Plumer has created a variety of videos about baby chickens she had been raising to teach students about what it takes to raise and to care for animals.

Content varies, but the thing that each of these videos has in common are the dedicated educators behind the camera.

None of this work would be possible, however, without reliable broadband connectivity. As coronavirus has transitioned most classrooms to distance learning, the importance of broadband infrastructure has never been more apparent.

Connectivity is something that many of us take for granted. While there is broadband available in many areas of the United States, more than 21 million Americans, including more than

800,000 Pennsylvanians, lack access. It is imperative that we do what we can to address this critical digital divide.

The CARES Act provided \$100 million for the ReConnect Pilot Program, which provides grants for the costs of broadband infrastructure development and improvement in rural areas. The CARES Act also provided \$25 million for the Distance Learning, Telemedicine, and Broadband program.

These funds will certainly have an impact on distance learning in the age of coronavirus, but broadband connectivity is crucial regardless. We need to continue to make rural broadband and reliable broadband infrastructure a priority long after coronavirus is a thing of the past.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the dedicated educators of Valley Grove School District for going the extra mile to support their students during these extraordinary times.

They are hometown heroes.

REMEMBERING REPRESENTATIVE JOHN LEWIS

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

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Speaker, I rise with a heavy heart this morning to remember our colleague, John Lewis.

He was a hero to me. He was my friend. I am going to miss his smile, his soft voice that could quickly become a bellow. I will miss his hugs, his eternal optimism, and his hope that we would heed his advice and “keep the faith.”

John had a long and special relationship with my family, with my grandmother in particular. They went through a lot together. They survived a lot. They witnessed a lot.

She asked me to read a letter here today in his memory. She writes:

Dear friends,

Our hearts are heavy, but also grateful for the gift of John Lewis, a man who devoted his life to making gentle the life of this world.

John’s loving demeanor enveloped a mighty determination and passion for justice, equality, and the realization of his dream for the “Beloved Community.”

A young man full of fire and ideals, qualities that he never lost, he was a trusted voice to my husband, Robert Kennedy, relied upon, first, as a student demonstrator and, later, as a campaign aide.

Activist, lawmaker, champion, he was also a teacher and a cherished friend.

He and Bobby learned from one another. They listened, they understood, they acted.

As a Freedom Rider, John was badly beaten at a bus stop in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1961. From the basement of the First Baptist Church where John, Martin Luther King Jr., and Ralph Abernathy sought refuge, they called Bobby asking for protection from a crowd of armed White supremacists surrounding the church. President Kennedy sent in the National Guard.

In Indianapolis, the night we lost Dr. King, John influenced Bobby’s decision to ignore Mayor Lugar’s plea to cancel a rally, instead seeking to comfort and seeking comfort from a devastated crowd of Black supporters.

As the youngest speaker at the March on Washington, his was a clarion call to end racial segregation and discrimination in the United States. Over half a century later, as unrest over systemic violence against Black Americans gripped our Nation in recent weeks, John reinforced what he knew was true:

"You cannot stop the call of history," the Congressman said. "You may use troopers. You may use fire hoses and water, but it cannot be stopped. There cannot be any turning back. We have come too far. We have made too much progress to stop now and go back."

John was witness to our Nation's history; he shaped it and his legacy will forever be part of that history. When I think of John and Bobby, I am reminded of Stephen Spender's poem, "The Truly Great."

. . . those who in their lives fought for life,
Who wore at their hearts the fire's centre.
Born of the sun, they travelled a short while
toward the sun,
And left the vivid air signed with their
honour.
Sincerely,
Ethel Kennedy.

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80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WELLES DECLARATION

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

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, in 1939, Hitler's Nazi Germany and Stalin's Communist Soviet Union signed a secret agreement to invade and create spheres of influence. The Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement allowed Hitler to invade the free and sovereign country of Poland, while the Soviet Union invaded the free and sovereign countries of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

Eighty years ago today the United States responded with the Welles Declaration. Let me read it.

"Department of State, July 23, 1940, Statement by the Acting Secretary of State, the Honorable Sumner Welles.

"During these past few days the devious processes whereunder the political independence and territorial integrity of the three small Baltic republics, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, were to be deliberately annihilated by one of their more powerful neighbors, have been rapidly drawing to their conclusion.

"From the day when the people of these republics first gained their independent and democratic form of government the people of the United States have watched their admirable progress and self-government with deep and sympathetic interest.

"The policy of this Government is universally known. The people of the United States are opposed to predatory activities no matter whether they are carried on by the use of force or by the threat of force. They are likewise opposed to any form of intervention on the part of one state, however powerful, in the domestic concerns of any other sovereign state, however weak.

"These principles constitute the very foundations upon which the existing relationship between the 21 sovereign republics of the New World rests.

"The United States will continue to stand by these principles, because of the conviction of the American people that unless the doctrine in which these principles are inherent once again governs the relations between nations, the rule of reason, of justice and of law—in other words, the basis of modern civilization itself—cannot be preserved."

Mr. Speaker, this declaration here refused to recognize the Soviet annexation of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. This nonrecognition lasted 5 decades.

This declaration enabled the Baltic States to maintain free, diplomatic missions. And with this declaration, Executive Order 8484 protected Baltic financial assets.

Today, the United States joins Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in remembering this declaration and recommitting ourselves to peace, democracy, freedom, and the rule of law.

Subsequently, their entrance into NATO and the European Union assures them of being part of the family of western democracies.

HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Massachusetts (Mrs. TRAHAN) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. TRAHAN. Mr. Speaker, walking the halls of the United States Capitol this week has felt different, like a piece of what makes this institution great is missing, because he is. It has been a somber reminder that this body and our country will never be the same without our guiding light, our moral compass, Congressman John Lewis.

I have never known someone to be more devoted to our Nation than John Lewis. He demonstrated that devotion by setting standards high and requiring her continuous improvement; calling out when our policies or practices didn't live up to the words written in our Constitution; and never giving up on the pursuit of freedom and equality for everyone in our country.

He committed his life to the fight for civil rights and, along the way, he persuaded a Nation, through steadfast, peaceful protests.

Yes, John Lewis is a hero. He is also the closest example I will likely ever know of a saint. But more than that, he was a friend.

To those of us who are new to Congress, John Lewis welcomed us. He made time for each of us; got to know us and, somehow, made you feel like the only person in his presence. He wanted you to know that he truly heard your words and that they mattered.

Part of what makes this job the honor of a lifetime is serving alongside giants like Congressman Lewis. Like so many in this Chamber, I stood in absolute awe of him. He embodied decency, perseverance, justice, courage, and compassion, traits that he used to

great effect in changing hearts and minds by meeting hate with love, and cruelty with kindness.

I will forever remember and cherish the opportunity to join John Lewis in Selma, Alabama, this past March with my husband, my mom, and two daughters. The time he spent with Grace and Caroline, describing to them what "good trouble" was; walking across the Edmund Pettus Bridge one last time, and reminding us what happened there 55 years ago.

He said: "On this bridge, some of us gave a little blood to redeem the soul of America. Our country is a better country; we are a better people. But we have still a distance to travel to go before we get there."

Thank you, John, for never giving up, for never giving in, for keeping the faith, and for always keeping your eyes on the prize.

We know the work we have left to do, and you gave us the tools and the courage to continue your legacy.

Rest in peace, Congressman Lewis.

HIGHLIGHTING CORRECTIONS OF OFFICERS AND STAFF AT FCC ALLENWOOD AND USP LEWISBURG AS PA-12 COVID-19 HEROES

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

Mr. KELLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight the work of the outstanding corrections officers and staff at FCC Allenwood and USP Lewisburg during the COVID-19 pandemic and recognize them as PA-12 COVID-19 heroes.

Prior to and during the pandemic, the corrections officers at these two facilities, located within Pennsylvania's 12th Congressional District, stepped up in a big way.

These dedicated men and women went to work every day, overseeing Federal inmates, many of whom had been moved across State lines to Central Pennsylvania. In the face of these unprecedented challenges, our corrections officers took on expanded responsibility at great personal risk.

These corrections officers and staff at USP Lewisburg and FCC Lewisburg answered the call and they deployed to other BOP hotspot facilities to assist with diminished staffing capacities due to COVID-19.

Answering the ongoing call to duty, USP Lewisburg was asked to step up in a big way when storms destroyed portions of FCI Estill in South Carolina, requiring nearly 1,000 new inmates to be moved from that facility to Central Pennsylvania.

For dealing with unprecedented challenges under pressing conditions and answering the call to duty, it makes me proud to recognize the corrections officers and staff at FCC Allenwood and USP Lewisburg as PA-12 COVID-19 heroes.