

uniform fight overseas, and more proud to have served alongside them. In December 2008, I became the first Member of the House to serve in an imminent danger area when I deployed to Kandahar, Afghanistan to serve as a special adviser to General Nicholson for Regional Command South focused on counternarcotics. A year later, I returned to Afghanistan to serve again. Each time, I have become more committed to the men and women serving over there and their mission.

Today, 9 years after the first American boots hit the ground in Afghanistan, the mission remains vital to our security. We must leave Afghanistan only after victory is secured and terrorists no longer find sanctuary in its rugged mountains capable of hurting Americans and the United States.

As a veteran, one of my highest priorities in the Congress is to take care of our men and women in uniform, consistently work to improve the quality of life for active duty servicemen and -women, their families, and retirees.

I am proud to have joined with Congressman DENNIS MOORE to pass the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial Coin Act. This memorial will honor the sacrifices made by America's more than 3 million disabled veterans by building a memorial for them here in Washington, D.C., within eyesight of the Capitol. I was also inspired to see this bill passed by an extraordinary young man, Sergeant Bryan Anderson of Rolling Meadows, Illinois. Bryan lost both legs and an arm due to a roadside bomb in Iraq.

Washington has legions of professional advocates who make a living out of convincing people to see issues from their point of view, but none can compare to Bryan. With Bryan, what you see is what you get—a veteran with an inspirational story who wants to see the memorial built, not for himself, not just for disabled veterans, but so that everyone will remember the sacrifice of all of our veterans.

One project in particular follows the arc of my career in this House. In 1999, a Washington-based consultant wrote a study recommending the closure of the North Chicago VA Hospital. The study said that Lake County veterans could get help downtown in Chicago or Maywood, or even the Milwaukee area, with only a 30-minute drive.

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The study overlooked the fact that North Chicago VA was recently renovated and housed modern in-patient wards with the latest equipment still in bubble wrap. It also overlooked the fact that the Navy was operating an outdated, oversized hospital no more than a mile away and had plans to invest more than \$100 million to replace it. I thought it made more sense to combine these two institutions, rather than close one and rebuild the other.

Over the last 10 years, we battled the bureaucracy and gradually integrated the services of the Navy and VA. We

started by combining in-patient mental health, leading to a jointly operated operations suite and emergency room, and on October 1st of this year, we officially opened the first truly joint Navy-VA hospital in the country. This new facility will care for more than 100,000 veterans, retirees, sailors, and their families. It is my hope that this model will improve veterans' health care throughout our Nation.

What better way to honor our veterans than by naming the facility after one of our Nation's heroes, 10th District resident and Apollo XIII Commander Captain James A. Lovell, Jr.

In 2007, I wrote to Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England and requested that the new facility have the name that reflected the mission of this pioneering hero. In response, the Deputy Secretary wrote, "It is fitting to name the facility after Captain Lovell, not only for the reasons cited in your letter, but also for his role in the history-making Gemini 7 mission, which included the first rendezvous of two manned maneuverable spacecraft. The joint DoD-VA health care facility in North Chicago can be described as the first rendezvous of two separate medical treatment facilities, joining them into one cohesive, comprehensive federal facility. It, too, is a history-making event."

As I leave this House, we face key challenges; challenges of solving increasing gridlock in our communities; challenges on the environmental front of cleaning up nuclear waste and PCBs; challenges of maintaining the tradition of the 10th District in education excellence; challenges like keeping the U.S. health care system on the cutting edge so that each American lives a full and healthy life; and providing tax fairness for married people, ending the death tax, and stopping government waste.

I look forward to continuing our work and confronting these challenges head-on in the Senate. In the meantime, I want to extend my best wishes and heartfelt congratulations to our congressman-elect, Robert Dold, who I know will continue our tradition of thoughtful, independent leadership. Congressman-elect Dold shares my passion for our district, our State, our country, and our democratic allies. I am confident that the 10th District is now in good hands and look forward to working with him to advancing these goals.

Mr. Speaker, I first arrived in this House as a staff member in 1984, 26 years ago. On and off, I served during the speakerships of Tip O'Neill, Jim Wright, Tom Foley, Newt Gingrich, Dennis Hastert, and NANCY PELOSI. This institution is the real arena of American politics. It is here that the raw emotions of the American people are translated nearly instantaneously into draft policies to address our Nation's needs. It is here where democracy is strongest, youngest, and most vibrant.

As an intern, staffer, and Member I have had the honor to serve in the

House of Commons in London, in the House of Representatives here in Washington, and soon in the Senate. But most of my professional life, in one form or another, has been here in the People's House. I have loved every minute of it, and would say to young Americans that one of the best ways to make a real difference in life is to join the roughly 12,000 Americans who have had the unique privilege of serving their district here in the center of the democratic world.

I want to especially thank my district chiefs of staff, Dodie McCracken, Lenore Macdonald, and Eric Elk; my Washington chiefs of staff, Doug O'Brien, Liesl Hickey, and Les Munson; and the man who drafted my first speech in the House, Patrick Magnuson, and the man who drafted my last speech in the House, Patrick Magnuson.

I move on now to the Senate to serve the people of Illinois. I am honored to have the privilege to work for everyone from Rockford to Cairo. But part of my heart will always remain here in the House with the spirits of Washburne, Church, Rumsfeld, Mikva, and Porter, the men and women who represented the northern suburbs here in the House of Representatives.

Mr. Speaker, I yield the floor for the last time, and thank you.

#### SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. GRAYSON) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. SHERMAN, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. KAPTUR, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. GRAYSON, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. BURTON of Indiana) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania, for 5 minutes, today and November 18.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, for 5 minutes, today.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 35 minutes p.m.), the House adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, November 18, 2010, at 10 a.m.

#### EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

10327. A letter from the Administrator, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the