again will members of our military be forced to serve in the shadows, to lie about their identities, or to be afraid to talk about the people they love.

Let us remember the 14,000 loyal servicemembers who were discharged under this discriminatory policy over the years; for now they can serve alongside their military friends and family with dignity and honor. Let us also remember those individuals who served in silence and sacrificed their lives so that we, as Americans, could live freely.

As vice-chair of the LGBT Caucus in Congress, I see the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell as another step towards ensuring that all citizens, both inside and outside of the military, are never subject to discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Today signifies a crucial milestone in history and is a victory, not just for the LGBTQ community, but for America as a whole.

IN CELEBRATION OF HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

(Mr. COSTA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, September is Hispanic Heritage Month, and we celebrate as members of the Hispanic community the contributions that have been made to the United States throughout our history.

The story of Hispanic Americans is truly the American story. Our dream is the American Dream. In America, if you work hard, play by the rules and dream big, there is no limit to what you can achieve.

Succeeding in all walks of life and serving as patriots in the American Armed Forces, Hispanics have enriched in so many different ways our way of life. Their advances in universities from their knowledge and talent have continued to play a vibrant role as we strengthen the fabric of America. Hispanic Americans' commitment to faith, family, hard work, and perseverance adds to that rich diversity and vibrancy. It makes our country a melting pot like no other place in the world.

Today and every day, we should take time to note and to celebrate the wonderful contributions of the Hispanic community in the San Joaquin Valley and across America.

''DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL'' IS FINALLY NO MORE

(Ms. VELÁZQUEZ asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, two decades after its enactment, ''Don't Ask, Don't Tell'' is finally no more. At last, gay men and women can now openly serve in our military without having to hide who they are.

Eliminating this practice is a historic step forward in our pursuit of a more perfect Union. With this progress, our country's military can now become a shining example of equality—an example to be followed by all sectors of our society.

Just as important, this change will make our Armed Forces stronger. Young Americans who had previously been deterred from joining our military will now step forward, enlist, and serve the country they love. Many formerly discharged servicemembers will reenter the armed services to serve alongside friends and family. Ultimately, our military will benefit from a broader and deeper pool of talent. Now, as we move forward in fully implementing this change, we must ensure that same-sex families receive the same benefits as other military couples.

Mr. Speaker, although our work continues, today we are one step closer to the ideal that we are all created equal.

''DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL'' IS HISTORY

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

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, last year, I read on the House floor a letter from an active duty servicemember in Afghanistan. He shared how he and his partner of 10 years had managed the hardship that comes along with three deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. Despite their shared sacrifices, his partner received no support from the military and would not be officially informed of his death.

While serving on active duty, he became aware of a number of other soldiers who were gay. In one case, it was only after a friend died of wounds from an IED, and he received a letter from the deceased soldier's partner, expressing how much he had loved the Army. Of course, this letter had to be sent anonymously because, until yesterday, its very existence could have led to the soldier's discharge.

The indignity of concealing who you are and who you love in order to protect your country has ended. No longer will we subject the brave men and women who volunteer to serve our Nation to a shameful vow of silence, asking them to lie about themselves. This policy was wrong; and now it's history, and our Nation and our military are stronger as a result.

To all who serve our Nation in uniform, we are so proud of each and every one of you.

□ 1230

SUPPORTING WORKERS OF THE USPS

(Ms. RICHARDSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the 685,000 workers of the United States Postal Service who are facing a very devastating future without our action. If Congress doesn't act now, we could potentially lose 120,000 jobs, imagine that, that are in jeopardy today.

The United States Postal Service offers a very affordable system, but right now they are in jeopardy. Why? Because back in 2006, they were, I would say, in a discriminating way, required to pay $5.5 billion in overcharge into benefits that are not incurred at this time. Based on long-term projections, they have an estimated surplus—imagine that in this time—of $55 billion to $75 billion. Without this mandate, the USPS would actually have a $611 million benefit that could help out in this tough economy.

Mr. Speaker, there are 685,000 workers who are not at fault for this requirement, and this $5 billion requirement needs to stop now so our postal service can continue.

THE GREATEST HITTER WHO EVER LIVED

(Mr. STEARNS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Ted Williams, the last baseball player to hit .400 or better for a season, a feat he accomplished 70 years ago this very month, September 1941, which has never been equaled. Ted wasn't just a remarkable baseball player; he was a remarkable American who also served his country as a Marine Corps pilot in World War II and the Korean War.

Ted Williams once said: ''A man has to have goals—for a day, for a lifetime—and that was mine, to have people say, 'There goes Ted Williams, the greatest hitter who ever lived.' ''

Not only did he have a goal, but he also harnessed the determination and hard work necessary to succeed. Today I honor a man who was a friend, a constituent and a great American on the anniversary of his greatest achievement. He will always be remembered as baseball's greatest hitter.

OFFICIAL REPEAL OF DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL

(Ms. LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, today, I would like to thank my colleagues in the LGBT Equality Caucus, Leader PELOSI, Congresswoman BALDWIN, Congressman FRANK, everyone today as we celebrate the end of a discriminatory era against gay and lesbian servicemembers in America with the official repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell.

For too long, this failed policy unfairly denied fundamental human rights to highly qualified individuals who wish to serve our country. As a vice-chair of the congressional LGBT