

copies of the emails and details about the harassment. The Marine Corps did nothing.

The following year, the Marine Corps named Lieutenant Helmer to serve as the first female ceremonial parade flanking officer. Part of her responsibilities was to attend a pub crawl for St. Patrick's Day that had been endorsed by the colonel. When she objected to going, her superior, a major, told her it was a mandatory work event. The pub crawl involved a group of Marine officers identified in T-shirts going from bar to bar to bar on Capitol Hill, drinking excessive amounts of alcohol, all paid for by the Marine Corps. Lieutenant Helmer was required to drink shots at the same pace as the large male officers. On those occasions when she drank water to try to keep herself from becoming intoxicated, she was required by her boss to drink an extra shot as punishment.

As a result of the forced consumption of alcohol that night, Lieutenant Helmer became very intoxicated and left to find a cab to go home. Her superior, the major, followed her out and told her that she needed to come with him to his office to discuss a business matter.

When they reached his office, the major tried to kiss her. Lieutenant Helmer resisted, and the major grabbed her, knocking her over and hitting her head against the wall. She lost consciousness at that point.

When she awoke, she found herself lying on the floor in the major's office and was wearing his shorts. The major was found naked from the waist down, passed out on the floor nearby. After Lieutenant Helmer left the major's office, she reported it to her command that she had been raped. Her colonel discouraged her from asking for a rape kit examination, saying it would be "out of his hands." In spite of the colonel's objections, Lieutenant Helmer sought and obtained a rape kit and medical examination.

Despite the medical and circumstantial evidence of the rape, the Navy Criminal Investigative Services initially refused to investigate, claiming Lieutenant Helmer's inability to recall her rape precluded any investigation. After a delay that destroyed the crime scene, the NCIS eventually conducted a very brief investigation and concluded that nothing could be done in light of Lieutenant Helmer's lack of consciousness during the assault.

In addition, the Marine Corps "lost" Helmer's rape kit. Lieutenant Helmer complained to the major's superior. Although that Marine officer admitted the NCIS investigation was "woefully inadequate" and removed the major from his command position, he refused to press charges or take any further steps to punish the rapist. Instead, he told Lieutenant Helmer, "You're from Colorado. You're tough. You need to pick yourself up and dust yourself off." He then remarked, "I can't babysit you all the time."

Instead of the perpetrator being prosecuted, Lt. Helmer became the subject of investigation and prosecution. She was forced to leave the Marine Corps while her rapist remains a Marine in good standing. Elle, like so many victims I've heard from, report a culture of acceptance and a culture that blames victims. This must stop. We must pass H.R. 3435.

COMMENDING PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA'S PROPOSALS REGARDING HIGHER EDUCATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from American Samoa (Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Madam Speaker and to my colleagues here in the great Chamber of the people's House, the House of Representatives, I know of no other place in the world, only in America, that a man whose father was a devout Muslim from Kenya, Africa, who was married to a white woman from the great State of Kansas—and with all due respect to our birther friends, this man was born in the great State of Hawaii; this man is none other than Barrack Hussein Obama—could become our President, Madam Speaker, our President of all of the United States of America and its territories.

I want to share with my colleagues one of the most critical issues as advocated seriously by President Obama, and that is in the field of education.

I commend President Obama for his commitment to providing every child in America access to a complete and competitive education all the way from cradle to career.

In recent years, the United States has drastically fallen behind other countries when it comes to education. In the most recent Programme for International Student Assessment Report published in 2009, researchers ranked the performance of 15-year-olds internationally and found that the United States ranked 17th in reading, 24th in science, and 30th in math. To make America competitive once again, Madam Speaker, President Obama has introduced several key initiatives that focus on early childhood education, that reform and invest in K-12 education and restore America's leadership in higher education.

In his first major action of his Presidency, President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which makes significant investments in education. The act included \$5 billion for early learning programs as well as programs for children with special needs. The President has also introduced accountability standards for Head Start to ensure that early childhood programs are continuing to deliver quality services. In addition, nine States have also received approximately \$500 million from the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge fund to create systems of high quality early learning and development programs.

The President has also set a goal for the United States to have the highest

proportion of college graduates in the world by the year 2020. To reach this goal, the President focused on K-12 teaching and learning. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provided \$77 billion to strengthen elementary and secondary education, including \$48.6 billion to stabilize State education budgets and to encourage States to ensure that all schools have highly qualified teachers, improve achievement in low-performing schools, and ensure college and career readiness.

The President also has invested to make sure that teachers are supported as professionals in the classroom, while also holding them more accountable. Effective teachers will be rewarded, and States will be encouraged to remove ineffective teachers from the classroom.

The President has also supported innovation in the classroom, such as the expansion of high quality charter schools, investments in the Race to the Top competition between States, and also providing flexibility for States who are looking for greater relief under the No Child Left Behind Act. The President also introduced the "Educate to Innovate" campaign, which is aimed to improve the participation and performance of America's students in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

President Obama has also introduced measures to make college more affordable. Under the President's leadership, the maximum Pell Grant amount has been raised to \$5,500. The new "Pay As You Earn" proposal will also give about 1.5 million students the ability to cap their loan payments at 10 percent of their monthly income and allow debt forgiveness balance after 20 years of payments. The President's plan will enable an estimated 6 million students and recent college graduates to consolidate their loans and reduce their interest rates. Colleges and universities will also be rewarded based on their ability to offer relatively lower tuition costs and provide value to especially low-income students.

Madam Speaker, if we prepare America's children with a high quality education, we enable them to succeed in today's global economy. Furthermore, our ability to educate America's children will determine the economic competitiveness of our great Nation. And as our President has recently stated, no issue will have a bigger impact on the future performance of our economy than education.

Once again, Madam Speaker, I commend President Obama for his commitment to helping our children succeed from cradle to career. I thank him for his bold leadership and vision for the future of our children and our great Nation.

□ 1100

HONORING MONICA PEARSON

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

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Madam Speaker, for more than 30 years, Monica Pearson has been a voice of WSB-TV, the Atlanta ABC station. She is a sensitive, caring individual, and one of the most loved and admired television anchors in the Nation. You can always see her out in Metro Atlanta somewhere, serving and sharing, giving back to the community of people who have supported her for many, many years.

When Monica delivers the news, people believe it because they believe in her, and they know she believes in them. She didn't just read the news, but as a member of a community she tried to discover the truth, and we trusted what she said. Though she may be leaving the airwaves, she is not retiring from her involvement in our city, our State, and our Nation.

I wish Monica and her husband, John, the very best. We love her. She's been good for our city, for our State, and for our Nation.

A TRIBUTE TO MONICA KAUFMAN PEARSON

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

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Madam Speaker, today I rise in tribute to retiring WSB-TV anchor Monica Kaufman Pearson, who brought Atlanta the evening news for almost four decades.

Before I go into that, something is compelling me to extol the virtues of a glass of cold iced tea in the middle of the day. After a hard morning at work outside and you come in for your meal, for your lunch, and you enjoy that lunch with a glass of iced tea, it's a Southern tradition, and I want to use that in talking about Monica Pearson.

Monica is the recipient of numerous awards, including more than 35 Emmys. She broke the color barrier and the gender barrier by becoming the first black female to serve as evening news anchor in the Atlanta broadcast market. She is known for her commitment to excellence, her commitment to professionalism, and also for her optimism and her compassion.

She is also known for sharing her talents by mentoring aspiring female news anchors across the Nation. It was Marian Pittman, news director of WSB-TV who worked with Monica for more than 15 years, who said, "Monica is to WSB what sweet tea is to Atlanta."

Yes, she was a quenching force when she arrived in Atlanta. It was at a time where Atlanta had recently elected a blunt-spoken man of action, Mayor Jackson, as the mayor of Atlanta. It was a time of transformation. At those kinds of periods you have a lot of turmoil going on among people—one group losing control, the other group taking control. They were difficult moments during that time politically, and people were polarized and divided. Then Monica arrived on the scene, a young, beautiful, personable, non-threatening,

cheerful person. WSB-TV did something that was revolutionary: they made her the first African American and the first female to have that evening news slot. And boy, I'll tell you, you're talking about a glass of iced tea in a hot time, that's what she was.

Monica was so enthusiastic—she still is—upbeat, and she just lit up the TV screens. I personally just couldn't keep my eyes off of her. She was so cheerful. Her laugh and her smile are still infectious. She continues to light up Atlanta. She created and hosted one of the most remarkable interview programs in the Nation—"Monica Pearson Closeups." She interviewed world leaders, elected officials, and celebrities. Many of the people that she interviewed were just astonished at the depth of her preparation for the interviews.

While we are all wishing her God-speed in her well-deserved retirement, we can take heart that she will continue to be a fixture on the Atlanta scene, always ready with a smile and an insightful word.

Monica Pearson is and will remain an Atlanta treasure and a glass of good, cold iced tea.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

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

Mr. SARBANES. Madam Speaker, this week, we're marking the second anniversary of the passage of the Affordable Care Act. I wanted to take a few minutes to speak to a number of groups that have benefited from the health care reform, a reform which I strongly supported.

If you think back to the time of the debate 2 years ago, it was at the height of hearing stories about people across the country, millions of people, who were struggling to access the health care system. So let me speak to the struggles of two or three particular groups.

Many adults across the country had had the experience of trying to get health care coverage, health care insurance, and discovering that because they had a "preexisting condition," as it's so called, that they would be denied that coverage. If you look at some of the policies even today, you can see that the list of preexisting conditions is a long one. You don't have to have some kind of exotic disease or condition. Diabetes, hypertension, other things that plague millions of Americans across the country could be the basis for an insurance company denying coverage to you.

As difficult as that experience was for many adults to have when they went to try to purchase coverage because they had a preexisting condition, the most heart-wrenching stories we heard were of parents who had a child that suffered from a preexisting condi-

tion, and that child was unable to get health insurance coverage. It literally was tearing the hearts out of families across this country. One of the things that the Affordable Care Act put in place was a prohibition against denying coverage for children based on a preexisting condition. That is now law as a result of the Affordable Care Act.

Those who argue that we should repeal the Affordable Care Act, I cannot believe that they want to go back to a time when a family would have to look at their child who had a preexisting condition and know that they couldn't get coverage, couldn't provide health care for that child. I can't believe that we want to go back to that.

A second group that benefited are young people, many of whom after they graduated from college could no longer stay on the health insurance plan of their parents because it wasn't provided for. Under the Affordable Care Act, if you're a young person, you can now stay on your parents' health insurance plan until age 26.

□ 1110

This is making a huge difference for millions of Americans across the country. Already hundreds of thousands have taken advantage of the opportunity to stay on the insurance plan of their parents, which means that young people, many of whom think that they're invincible but then something happens to them and they need that health insurance coverage, now they'll have it. It's still in place because, under the Affordable Care Act, there's now a requirement that health insurance plans cover young people until age 26.

I cannot believe that those who want to repeal the Affordable Care Act want to go back to a situation where millions of young people can't access that health insurance coverage.

And let me talk about the third group, our seniors who, 2 years ago, were dealing with the situation of having to come out of pocket for prescription drugs because of the so-called doughnut hole under the prescription drug benefit program. Under the Affordable Care Act, we put in place the opportunity now to begin closing the doughnut hole and making sure that seniors who are in the doughnut hole have access to a 50 percent discount on prescription drugs, brand-name prescription drugs.

So now our seniors, many of whom before were having to make a choice between do I cover the cost of food, do I pay the rent, or do I cover the cost of my prescription drugs because they were having to come out of pocket, now, many of them don't have to make that terrible choice because of the assistance provided by the Affordable Care Act.

I cannot believe that those who are urging the repeal of health care reform want to take our seniors back to a place where they have to make that terrible choice between whether to