

In doing so, they do not demonstrate genuine interest in legislating on behalf of the American people. The Republicans know the Senate will not vote for such a bill. Nor will I. I will not approve a bill that caps non-economic medical malpractice damages at \$250,000. Apparently, this is the price the Republicans put on a lifetime of physical impairment, pain, suffering and even wrongful death.

I know our medical malpractice system needs improvement. If only my Republican friends would come to me with a third way, a new fair and workable way, to approach this problem. I would be more than happy to work with them on a bipartisan basis, which this Congress so desperately needs right now.

But, until that time, I am forced to vote against this piece of legislation. I will not approve of a bill that reshapes the same old medical malpractice language. I will not vote for a bill that attempts to wear down bits of the Affordable Care Act. If they had their way, the Republicans would repeal the entire ACA, and take away insurance from over 30 million Americans. Instead, we are busy granting insurance coverage to 17 million children with pre-existing conditions.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. KENNY MARCHANT

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2012

Mr. MARCHANT. Mr. Speaker, due to the sudden passing away of my father, I was unable to participate in House floor votes on March 22, 2012.

THE CURRENT SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

HON. MICHAEL M. HONDA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2012

Mr. HONDA. Mr. Speaker, tragic events in the last few weeks in Afghanistan have underscored the messages I have continuously emphasized in Congress in the past. As long as we pursue military solutions to the unrest in Afghanistan while foregoing attention to economic, political and social solutions, security will remain elusive. Our military service officers are heroes, but we are failing them as we continue to pursue a strategy that lacks proper understanding of both the social constructs of the Afghan people and the meaning of peace.

It is our duty as Americans to give the people of Afghanistan what they want, not what we want to give them. Afghan citizens want peace, they want security and they want the right to self-determination based on their own social, cultural, and religious values. Afghans do not want to be at the constant risk of night raids and air strikes that could kill their friends and neighbors, checkpoints and security barriers that keep their families apart, or incidences of violence which sometimes involve International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) troops and contract security forces. And they certainly do not want foreigners burning the Holy Quran, which all Muslims hold as dear as life, or have their very own

safety compromised by foreign forces who should be there to protect them.

As members of the United States government, we also owe the American people what they want, and not what we want to give them. In this regard, we are failing our own people as they face the difficulties brought on by the global economic crisis while lives, money and resources are being wasted abroad in an effort which has, sadly, led to resentment and the incitement of hatred against America.

Last week, the Department of Defense Comptroller confirmed one of our worst kept secrets—that the deployment of one soldier to Afghanistan for one year costs \$850,000. We currently have 90,000 soldiers deployed in Afghanistan. Additionally, we have 1,142 U.S. civilians from the State Department and other non-defense agencies currently in Afghanistan, and each civilian costs taxpayers \$570,000 per year, according to the most recent estimate from the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction. Furthermore, in 2011, our taxpayers spent \$11.2 billion to pay, train and equip Afghanistan's security force. Over the past ten years the U.S. has spent more than \$550 billion in Afghanistan alone, or about \$1 billion per week.

A new Washington Post poll finds that sixty percent of American voters feel that the war was not worth fighting. It also finds that, for the first time, Republican voters are "evenly split" on the wisdom of continuing this war. This is what America wants, and it is our duty to respect that.

Last year, as co-chairman of the Congressional Progressive Caucus's Peace and Security Taskforce, I urged President Obama to bring about the swift, safe and responsible withdrawal of U.S. troops and military contractors from Afghanistan. We asked for plans for a significant drawdown, beginning no later than July of this year.

We welcome the news that Congress's calls to the White House have finally been heard. On February 1, 2012, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said that while American troops will still leave Afghanistan by the end of 2014, plans were laid out so that by late next year, U.S. and NATO troops in Afghanistan will switch from a combat role to a training mission. The Administration may further want to take heed of the same Washington Post poll which revealed that fifty-four percent of all voters want the U.S. to withdraw troops even faster than the President's 2014 timetable.

As we look forward to our future role as global leaders of peace and security, we must not forget our past and present mistakes. Our international affairs priorities must be anchored in the recognition that our national security is inextricably linked to our economic vitality. We cannot fight for global security but ignore the economic security of the people of America. We need a budget that reflects the fact that diplomacy and development prevents wars, because smart security can lead to global stability at a fraction of the cost, freeing up funds to engage in nation building here at home. As we look forward to the question of how to handle future matters in the Middle East, these are the priorities that we simply cannot afford to forget.

Mr. Speaker, Peace and Security are created through a well-functioning government, a fair and prosperous economy, and a harmonious society. We have failed the Afghan people on each and every one of these fronts,

and in so doing, we, we have also failed ourselves and our constituents. As we reflect on the recent military tragedies in Afghanistan, we must ask ourselves how many more apologies we can afford to offer.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE TOWNSQUAREBUZZ FOUNDATION AND PARTNERS: HONORING THOSE WHO SERVE

HON. SAM JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2012

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to recognize the TownSquareBuzz Foundation and the City of McKinney, Texas, as they join forces to declare Red Shirt Fridays in McKinney.

The Foundation's "Paint McKinney Red!" campaign was launched last year to raise awareness about the unique challenges veterans face when they return from war.

To date, TownSquareBuzz has printed 500 red t-shirts that are being sold by 10 local partner businesses. The shirts remind us, "Honor Those Who Serve: Past, Present, Future," and all sale proceeds go directly to the local Community Lifeline Center in McKinney.

The Lifeline Center's great operation serves folks in need in 17 cities across Collin County. Its veterans-support initiative, funded in part by a grant from the Texas Veterans Commission, helps local veterans and their families with housing, utilities, medical and dental treatment, transportation, counseling, and job training, to name a few.

Inspired by the nationwide Red Shirt Fridays project, the local efforts of TownSquareBuzz and the City of McKinney will provide direct assistance to our friends, family members, and neighbors who are the returning heroes of today's military campaigns.

These brave men and women put their lives on the line to keep America strong, proud, and free. Through partnerships like Red Shirt Fridays, the North Texas community is reminded of the privilege and duty we bear to honor, thank, and give back.

To the TownSquareBuzz Foundation, City of McKinney, Community Lifeline Center, and every individual and business helping to paint McKinney red:

Thank you for your efforts. May God continue to bless the United States of America through great folks like you. I salute you!

JACK SILLIMAN

HON. RANDY HULTGREN

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2012

Mr. HULTGREN. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I rise today in honor of U.S. Marine, Jack Silliman. Tragically, Jack was killed during the Vietnam War. In 1961, when Jack was still a boy in the 7th grade he wrote a winning speech that was presented to President John F. Kennedy.

I submit Jack's speech.

WHAT I CAN DO FOR MY COUNTRY

Madam president, honorable judges, fellow C.Y.C.L. members, parents, teachers and