

can devise a plan. I call on the leaders of Congress to support such an initiative. We need to do more. End hunger now. End hunger now. End hunger now.

Mr. Speaker, we can do this. We must do this.

CONFIRMATION OF SENATOR CHUCK HAGEL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

I want to thank President Obama for his nomination of Chuck Hagel to be Secretary of Defense.

While we were home last week, I had the opportunity to watch the Senate confirmation hearing, and I was dismayed by the way many of the Republicans in that hearing chastised Mr. Hagel.

Mr. Hagel is a man of integrity. The question from one of the Senators about, do you think the surge worked, and Senator Hagel was such that he didn't want to give him a direct answer. I would have said, no, it didn't work—1,200 Americans killed, I don't know how many Iraqis. And look at the country today. It's totally falling apart. But that was a question toward Senator Hagel.

Mr. Speaker, the Iraq war was very unnecessary. It was manufactured by the previous administration, and there was a general, Marine General Greg Newbold, who had been working with the Department of Defense, who actually wrote an article in Time after the war started. And one of the points he made that I'm going to share with you, Mr. Speaker, is "some of the missteps include the distortion of intelligence in the buildup to the war." The distortion of intelligence in the buildup to the war.

In the history of Washington, if ever our government needed integrity, it's now. Chuck Hagel is a man of integrity. No one can question his integrity.

I've had the privilege of knowing Senator Hagel since 2005 when I came out against the unnecessary war in Iraq. Senator Hagel reached out to me in support of my position and encouraged me in my journey to find out the truth, if it was necessary or not.

His record speaks for itself. As a non-commissioned officer, he honorably served this Nation in Vietnam, earning two Purple Hearts, served on the Senate Committee on Intelligence and the Committee on Foreign Relations, as well as the President's Intelligence Advisory Board and the Secretary of Defense Policy Board. No one can argue Chuck Hagel's experience.

Mr. Speaker, I know that Chuck Hagel is the right man to lead the Department of Defense through this very difficult economic time. He's a man that will uphold the Constitution and do what is right for this country. Our military and the American people need

Chuck Hagel to be the Secretary of Defense.

Mr. Speaker, before closing, I must say that, in my many years here in Washington, 18 years, I have never known a person with more integrity than Senator Hagel, and I hope that the Senate will pass on the confirmation of Chuck Hagel to be the Secretary of Defense because America needs him, our military needs him, and it's time for people of integrity to step up and help us fix this problem facing our Nation. And he will speak freely and honestly about what is needed to keep a strong military.

NATIONAL CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK

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

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of National Catholic Schools Week and to recognize the outstanding contribution that Catholic schools have made to our Nation. Catholic Schools Week was celebrated last week in schools all across the country.

As a proud graduate of St. Symphorosa Grammar School and St. Ignatius College Prep, and a strong supporter of Catholic education, I, once again this year, introduced a resolution honoring Catholic schools. H. Res. 46 expresses support for "the vital contributions of the thousands of Catholic elementary and secondary schools in the United States" and "the key role they play in promoting and ensuring a brighter, stronger future for the Nation." I'd like to thank the 28 Members who cosponsored this bipartisan resolution with me.

Since 1974, the National Catholic Education Association and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops have organized and planned National Catholic Schools Week. This year's theme, "Catholic Schools Raise the Standards," highlights recent initiatives undertaken by Catholic schools across the country to strengthen their already exemplary standards.

America's Catholic schools produce graduates with the skills and integrity needed by our businesses, governments, and communities, emphasizing a well-rounded educational experience and instilling the values of "giving back to the community" and "helping others." Nearly every Catholic school has a community service program, and every year their students volunteer half a million hours to their communities. My own decision to pursue a career in public service was fostered, in part, by dedicated teachers throughout my formative years in Catholic schools.

□ 1020

Today over 2 million elementary and secondary students are enrolled in nearly 7,000 Catholic schools. These students typically surpass their peers in math, science, reading, history, and

geography in any NAEP test. The graduation rate for Catholic high school students is 99 percent, and 85 percent of graduates enrolled in four-year colleges, rates well above the national average. As we continually hear disturbing reports of our national test scores, these statistics are truly remarkable and should be commended.

Notably, the success of Catholic schools does not depend on selectivity. Catholic schools accept nine out of every 10 students who apply and are highly effective in providing a quality education to students from every socioeconomic category, especially disadvantaged youth in underserved urban communities. Over the past 30 years, the percentage of minority students enrolled in Catholic schools has more than doubled, and today they constitute almost one-third of all Catholic school students. In times of economic hardship, Catholic schools provide an affordable alternative to other forms of private education.

Now, in addition to producing well-rounded students, it is estimated that Catholic schools save taxpayers over \$18 billion annually. The importance of these savings is undeniable as we in Congress, and lawmakers across the country, struggle with budget deficits.

I was born and raised in the Chicago Archdiocese, where more than 87,000 students attend 250 schools. In the Joliet Diocese close by, 22,000 students are educated in 48 elementary and 7 high schools. In my district alone, there are nearly a dozen Catholic high schools and more than 50 grammar schools, including one of the best in my home parish, St. John of the Cross in Western Springs, which last year was named a National Blue Ribbon School by the Department of Education.

The focus of this year's Catholic Schools Week, "Catholic Schools Raise the Standards," demonstrates a continued commitment to excellence. The National Catholic Education Association has launched an initiative called the National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools which will make sure that standards are consistently high across the country. The dedicated teachers and administrators who work at Catholic schools, many of whom could earn much more elsewhere, are instrumental in upholding these standards. In recognizing Catholic Schools Week, we pay a special tribute to these professionals who sacrifice so much for their students.

During Catholic Schools Week last week, I visited several schools in my district, including St. Dennis in Lockport, St. Cajetan in Chicago, and St. Alphonsus/St. Patrick in Lemont. At each of these schools, I was able to visit with students and witness the excellent Catholic education that was being instilled by teachers, administrators, pastors, and volunteer parents. The dedication of all those involved in educating these children demonstrated why Catholic schools are so successful

not only in my district but across our Nation.

Mr. Speaker, I hope my colleagues will join me today in honoring Catholic schools and all they contribute to our Nation.

BIDDING FAREWELL TO TWO MEMBERS OF THE LAS VEGAS MIGHTY FIVE

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

Mr. HECK of Nevada. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today to bid a solemn and respectful farewell to Mr. Romeo Barreras and Mr. Silverio Cuaresma. Messrs. Barreras and Cuaresma were residents of southern Nevada and members of the Las Vegas Mighty Five, a group of Filipino American World War II veterans denied benefits and recognition for their service to the United States.

Romeo Barreras volunteered for the Philippine Army at age 17 and served with the infantry as a Guerrilla fighter. He earned a Purple Heart for wounds sustained in action and received an honorable discharge for his service to both the Republic of the Philippines and the United States. Romeo passed away last month at the age of 85.

Silverio Cuaresma was a guerrilla intelligence officer who served under Army Colonel Edwin Ramsey in the 26th calvary. It was this unit that made the last horse charge in cavalry history on January 16, 1942. After his discharge, Silverio took up the cause of his fellow denied veterans and fought for their compensation ever since. That fight ended two weeks ago in Las Vegas. Silverio Cuaresma was 100 years old.

They, along with their countrymen, fought and in many instances died under the command of American troops in the Pacific theater of World War II. After helping the Allies win the war in the Pacific, many of these veterans began seeking the benefits promised to them by President Franklin Roosevelt. But on February 18, 1946, President Harry S. Truman signed the Rescission Act of 1946 into law, which denied over 200,000 Filipino World War II veterans the benefits promised to them just five years earlier by President Roosevelt.

Congress finally acknowledged the dedicated service of many of these denied veterans when it established the Filipino Veterans Equity Compensation Fund in 2009. But many of these veterans, as many as 24,000, still have not received compensation due to bureaucratic hurdles and paperwork shuffles over the types of records they hold verifying their service.

The Mighty Five is now reduced to two with the passing of Romeo and Silverio. We lost Augusto Oppus last year as well. I fear many more will pass without ever obtaining the recognition they deserve if this body does not act to remove the barriers pre-

venting these veterans from receiving the benefits they have earned.

Yesterday, I introduced legislation to ensure that the remainder of the Mighty Five and denied Filipino veterans everywhere finally receive the benefits promised to them so many years ago.

My bill, Mr. Speaker, is very simple. It directs the Department of the Army to certify the service of any Filipino World War II veteran whose name appears on the Approved Revised Reconstructed Guerrilla Roster or has certified documentation from the U.S. Army or Philippine Government attesting to their service.

Simply put, these men fought so that the Allies could defeat the Japanese in the Pacific. If they can show they fought, let's fulfill our promise to them so they can live out their years knowing that the United States has officially recognized their service.

I have met with the Mighty Five many times in Las Vegas. All they want is to be recognized. It's not about the money to them. They want to know that their service was appreciated, that their sacrifices did not go unnoticed.

As I attended Lieutenant Cuaresma's funeral last week, no flag draped his casket, no honor guard was present, and there was no playing of "Taps." There was no official recognition of his dedicated military service. And that, Mr. Speaker, was wrong.

I would like to thank my friends and brother veterans, Romeo and Silverio, for their service to our country. Their passion and dedication to this cause will be missed. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in fighting to ensure these honorable World War II veterans are appropriately recognized.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WILSON) for 5 minutes.

Ms. WILSON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, "gender-based violence"—a phrase the world has coined to speak internationally about violence, abuse, rape, assault, and disrespect of women. Women like our mothers, grandmothers, sisters, aunts, nieces, friends, and most especially our children.

Gender-based violence permeates the world, generally in far away countries, far from the civilized democratic world that we communicate with and befriend.

To the women of this Congress and the women of the world, take a moment to imagine trying to survive without a response from the police, without the ability to press charges and being able to actually see your assailant day after day if you are a victim of gender-based violence. Contemplate life without access to medical care to address your physical, mental, and emotional trauma. Imagine having nowhere to hide.

This scenario sounds like 100 years ago in a world far from our country,

but in reality it is just a two-hour flight away from my congressional district of Miami, Florida. It actually describes gender-based violence in Haiti. But through smart policy and the strength and courage of Haitian women, it's a reality that's within our power to change.

□ 1030

The 2010 earthquake in Haiti brought a striking increase in incidents of gender-based violence. Nearly half of the victims are girls under 18, and many cases involve the use of weapons, gang rape, and death threats for seeking help from authorities. These threats, coupled with the lack of police presence and equipment, hurts the integrity of Haiti's legal system and denies women and girls their basic dignity.

The National Penitentiary was destroyed in the earthquake, freeing countless violent prisoners who now roam the streets. Through the determination and grace of the Haitian people and smart assistance from the Obama administration and international NGOs, some change is coming to Haiti. Most of the rubble has been removed, more than a million Haitians have moved out of tent camps, jobs have been created, schools have been built, yet core challenges, including gender-based violence, remain severe.

Today, I am introducing a resolution calling attention to the plight of Haitian women and children and calling for action on their behalf. With its Strategy to Prevent Gender-Based Violence, the Obama administration is on the right track. Congress and the administration must ensure robust funding for these initiatives, including the U.S. Agency of International Development's Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy, to meet the continuing need.

For me, this issue is personal. I have seen the tent cities firsthand. I have spoken to the women. I have counseled the victims and witnessed the scars of indignation and pain. I feel the anguish in my bones, but I also feel the hope.

Let's work together to ensure that no woman in Haiti, no woman in this hemisphere or in this world, has to bear the indignity of sexual violence.

SECOND AMENDMENT

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

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, the Constitution of the United States of America was written to put in statute the limits of government's authority over citizens. It does not bestow rights or permit freedoms upon American people; rather, it delimits what government of the people, by the people, and for the people can and cannot do.

Since well before our country's founding, Americans have exercised the right to keep and bear arms, a right formally protected by the ratification of the Second Amendment in