

I was proud to vote for the ACA, and when the majority is ready to get serious, I will be proud to vote for commonsense improvements and reforms to the law. The American public have spoken, and they will not return to the days before healthcare reform. It is time for Congress to listen to the American people.

SUICIDE PREVENTION AWARENESS MONTH

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

Mr. UPTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the fact that September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. This gives all of us a chance to come together to promote awareness about the issue of suicide prevention and how we can all help others talk about suicide. For many families in communities across the country, loved ones are gone far too soon because of suicide.

Suicidal thoughts and action certainly know no bounds. They affect people of all ages, races, sexes, and religions. The statistics are startling. Suicide has become the third leading cause of death among young people and is the 10th leading cause of death here in the U.S. Each year, more than 40,000 Americans die by suicide—more than 100 per day, on average.

A week and a half ago, I was in Kalamazoo's Bronson Park for the Gryphon Place Suicide Prevention Walk. A beautiful young woman by the name of Kait stood before a crowd of more than 100 and read a stirring poem about being bullied and, as a result, how she harbored thoughts of suicide.

Hearing her deeply personal story certainly broke everyone's heart. It really did. As a father of two young adults, my thoughts quickly turned to them and their school experiences. Bullying is a very serious problem in our schools and can lead to depression, psychological issues, and, of course, suicide.

When she finished, I followed up with her and told her that she is not alone. Anyone considering suicide or having suicidal thoughts should know the same. You are not alone, and there are always help and options available.

In our communities, we have got to do more to stop bullying the minute it rears its ugly head. We should do more to reach out to those vulnerable to suicidal thoughts and tendencies, particularly young people, as they grapple with the pressures of growing up. We should also do more to treat mental health issues that can lead to suicide.

Here in the House, we recently were able to pass a very strong bipartisan piece of legislation sponsored by Dr. TIM MURPHY, a member of the Energy and Commerce Committee, to do just that. We voted to give a much-needed upgrade to our mental health system and deliver real reforms that are going to make a difference for folks suffering with mental health illnesses.

In July, it was advanced through our committee 53-0, and then on the House floor by a 422-2 vote. This landmark vote marks the most significant reform to our Nation's mental health programs in decades, and I was proud to shepherd this important piece of legislation and now work with the Senate to get it done.

Suicide prevention is deeply personal to me. I don't talk about it often, but my uncle, my daughter's college roommate, and my son's dear girlfriend's sister all committed suicide. Those losses have left an indelible impression on my life.

Suicide is not an issue that can linger in the shadows. We have got to confront it and the underlying issues behind it together.

I include in the RECORD Kait's message of hope and inspiration. It can also be found on my Web site, upton.house.gov.

MY (SURVIVAL) STORY

I tried to start writing my story, but all that became of it was complicated comparisons and meaningless metaphors.

I thought that's just what I had to do, to connect with people.

Tell some confusing story about a lion and a lamb, or a turtle and a hare with some hidden cliché reworded moral of a story, explaining how the inferior character always wins in the end, and people would just get what I was trying to say.

But, you see, in reality, I didn't know which character I was supposed to play and so I played someone different every single day.

You see it's hard to stand up for yourself, when you don't even know who you are, and in school, if you didn't define yourself, others had no problem doing it for you.

So my name tag read Kait, but the names people called me sounded nothing like that.

slut, queer, trash, worthless, nothing.

I call them names, because that's what I became. At least in my mind, so it kept me in line.

for seven years in the hall I looked at the ground, I thought people wouldn't kick me if I was already down.

And if I didn't look up, I couldn't see the mirror, that way you and I could both pretend I wasn't even there.

And they decided that popcorn looked even better in my hair, but when I hid in the bathroom stall during lunch, they said I was throwing up my food.

Which, I was.

because I was too big, too small, too short, too tall, too skinny, and too fat.

I was big foot and man hands, with gorilla arm hair.

I took up other people's air and might as well go die in a hole because no one even wants me here.

But that was okay, I didn't want to be here either.

My mom still thinks I fractured my hand from catching it in the door, but I had the locker slammed on it because if you cry, that means you're asking for more.

And I didn't know how to face her, or the fact that I was a failure.

And even though I just graduated, I still feel I owe her apologies.

for the messages everyday the principal left on her phone, for the days she had to

get me, because I couldn't drive myself home, for the permanent art work on my arms that wouldn't ever be hung on fridge, for always playing too close to the ledge.

Because I couldn't pass math, but I could calculate just how many pills it took me to get sick without passing out so I didn't have to go to school the next day.

42.

I'm sorry.

Even once they were done with me, I felt like I owed them an apology.

Like they could hit me in the face, and I would apologize for standing in the way of their hand.

There were times I didn't believe I would be here today.

But look at me now, look where I stand.

Never did I realize that my own two hands had to the power to control my life. or end it.

My own principal, looked at me and said there was nothing he could do, unless I was seriously hurt.

Like to actually be noticed, I'd have to be dead in the dirt.

Because he thought that even if I walked away crying, as long as I was still alive and walking, it wasn't his problem.

His position of power told him he could decide when I was in pain, but he wasn't the one who had to stand in the rain.

Look in my eyes, look at my arms, read my poetry, can you still see me?

I lost myself halfway between my current normalcy and my makeshift reality.

Drowning in a sea of ideas that unless I became just another number in data about bullying, that I wouldn't actually make a difference.

because in a world where we focus on problems like gun control, we over look the fact that people can cause just as much damage with their words.

An issue is defined as a topic that can be debated or discussed, Like the "issue" I had with bullying was something that could be compromised.

Like my own life, was a thing that could be compromised.

It's like if you see a lamb being slaughtered, you just let it continue, because you too are a lamb, and it very well could be you.

I think in a way that's kind of the worlds view, like if I don't change a number or a statistic. There's nothing I actually went through.

Tell me why no stories ever make the news, about being a survivor of bullying.

but if my story was told, after I was six feet under, it would actually mean something.

It doesn't take 50 cents a day, it literally costs nothing to be a decent human being, or to simply treat each person like they have some meaning.

they say charity begins at home, but I think that's where the love should start too because those that know hurt are the ones that hurt you and my brothers and sisters who have walked in my shoes, i'm sorry if it gave you blisters for the longest time I tried to wear a pair that didn't fit, when I tried to be a she, that wasn't me.

Bullying is not just a consequence, the effects I still live with are alive and real, sometimes they are more real than I feel.

You can not push me under the rug because I am still here.

I am not just another bullying story.

And I am not just my bullying story.

Put a name to my face and call me, survivor.

END HUNGER NOW

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I recently had the opportunity to visit and volunteer at the Philadelphia region's largest hunger relief center, Philabundance.

Philabundance, a member of the Feeding America network of food banks, aims to drive hunger out of local communities with an eye toward eradicating hunger altogether. Each week, Philabundance serves 90,000 people in the Philadelphia area through partnerships with 350 agencies and food distribution programs. Incredibly, last year alone, they distributed almost 30 million pounds of food to neighbors suffering from hunger and food insecurity in nine counties.

I was impressed by the innovative strategies Philabundance employs to feed hungry people in its region. The Philabundance Community Kitchen equips those looking to reenter the workforce with valuable life and kitchen skills, while also providing meals to those in need.

Philabundance also opened the Nation's first nonprofit grocery store called Fare & Square in Chester, a city that faced a serious economic downturn due to the loss of manufacturing jobs. Fare & Square provides affordable and healthy food to the community, as well as discounts to those who qualify.

Food banks across our country like Philabundance and places like the Worcester County Food Bank and Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, which are both in my congressional district, do incredible work to reduce hunger in surrounding communities. They employ innovative strategies to fight hunger and increase access to nutritious food for our most vulnerable neighbors.

But the truth of the matter is we know that food banks and our charitable organizations can't do it alone. Some in Congress have proposed cuts and other restrictions to our Federal antihunger and nutrition programs. We often hear from them that charities, not the government, should be responsible for eradicating hunger.

Mr. Speaker, I agree that food banks and food pantries and other charitable organizations are incredible on-the-ground partners in our effort to end hunger. They are often the first line of defense in emergency situations. But charities cannot do everything. That is just a fact.

Charities do face limitations. Many are small and only open on limited schedules. Most are run with the support of dedicated volunteers, some of whom have other full-time jobs. Often, these charities operate out of small places like basements or closets at houses of worship. Importantly, they rely on donations from members of the community as a primary source of food to distribute.

Our charities are doing an incredible job on the front lines, but ending hun-

ger will take a strong partnership between these organizations and Federal, State, and local governments. For our part, the Federal Government must continue to invest in our preeminent food and nutrition programs like SNAP, WIC, and The Emergency Food Assistance Program, known as TEFAP, just to name a few, and fight any attempts to cut or weaken them. TEFAP is especially important to our food banks, as they rely on this Federal funding to serve those in need.

We know that strong Federal investments in these critical safety net programs reduce hunger, improve the diets of low-income households, and save billions of dollars in healthcare costs. So the next time any of my colleagues try to score political points by demonizing Federal hunger programs, I ask you to think of these programs and the impacts they are having on constituents in each of our districts. I urge you to visit local food banks and charities and see all the incredible work they are doing to reduce hunger in our communities. Ask these organizations how the Federal antipoverty programs support their efforts to bring food to those most in need.

I urge all my colleagues to remember this fact:

Today, in the United States of America, the richest country in the history of the world, over 42 million of our fellow citizens are hungry. They are kids, senior citizens, people who can't find work, and many people who are, in fact, working. They defy stereotypes. But all of them are our brothers and sisters, and we should care. We should absolutely do more than we are doing right now to end hunger in America.

The Federal Government, working with charities and local partners, has, within its grasp, the power to end hunger now; what we lack is the political will. Let's at long last create the political will and guarantee that, in our country, no one ever has to struggle with food insecurity or hunger. We can end hunger now.

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MOMENT OF SILENCE HONORING FORMER CONGRESSMAN BILL BARRETT

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

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in memory of former Congressman Bill Barrett. He passed away earlier this week in his hometown of Lexington, Nebraska.

Mr. Barrett devoted his life to service. From his speakership in the State legislature to the years he spent in Congress, he was known for being true to his word and bringing people together to get things done. Serving Nebraskans was his top priority, and his dedication to the Third District and our State set a lasting example for me and all who have sought to fill his shoes.

Mr. Barrett was an influential conservative leader and a champion of agriculture. The Third District is now the top-producing agriculture district in the country, and we owe much of that to Mr. Barrett's tireless work.

His former staff have recounted how he would always ask: "Does this help the Third District?"

He was a true statesman who sought to serve others rather than himself. He worked so hard representing the 60-plus counties of the Third District for the 10 years that he served.

I extend my condolences to Mr. Barrett's wife and tremendous teammate, Elsie, and their family.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to request a moment of silence.

CONGRESSIONAL INABILITY TO PASS THE NDAA

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

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, this is a sage-grouse. I found out that the sage-grouse have poor eyesight, so they often collide with barbed wire fences and other obstructions that are difficult to see. And these collisions are often fatal.

But the sage-grouse looks like a keen-eyed hawk compared to Congress. That is because the sage-grouse recently collided with the National Defense Authorization Act, and the near-sighted bird won. Hopefully this time it won't be fatal.

We were supposed to vote to send the NDAA to the President this week, but a disagreement between the House and the Senate Republicans about the sage-grouse got egg all over the deal. That is right, a bill that authorizes over \$600 billion in spending on wartime operations, weapons acquisition, service-member benefits, and many other provisions critical to the defense of our country was taken down by a bird. But unlike the plane that landed in the Hudson River, Congress doesn't seem to have a Captain Sully to rescue it from bird-induced mayhem.

Don't get me wrong. The NDAA has many problems. It redirects billions in critical funding towards a program the Defense Department does not want. It sidesteps the Bipartisan Budget Act compromise by requiring supplemental funding just to keep the Pentagon running. It contains a myriad of poison pill riders, from allowing contractors to engage in discrimination against the LGBTQ employees, to releasing tens of thousands of handguns into our communities with no background checks.

All of these reasons are why I voted against the bill in committee and on the House floor. Nonetheless, the conference report is a compromise between the Senate and the House on complex issues ranging from funding operations against ISIS to military healthcare reform, a compromise on everything but this pesky bird.

House Republicans stubbornly refuse to remove language that would prohibit the sage-grouse from being placed