

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, there is so much that has been said appropriately about Muhammad Ali that people in this era might not realize that when he was fighting, all of America really looked forward to his fights and watched them. The eyes of the Nation were glued to the television to see him fight and to see afterwards Howard Cosell speaking the sports talk to him and reviewing those fights.

He was a lot about Louisville. There is a street in Louisville named after him, Muhammad Ali Boulevard, and the Muhammad Ali Center.

Nobody carries on and will carry on Muhammad Ali's love of Louisville more than you, Mr. YARMUTH. I appreciate you having this hour. He was to Louisville in such a great way, and he was a great man to America. I thank you for putting this hour together.

Mr. YARMUTH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MAXINE WATERS).

Ms. MAXINE WATERS of California. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. YARMUTH for hosting this hour.

Muhammad Ali was a good friend. He was someone that I had known that I had worked on some projects with. But more than that, my husband was one of those athletes. My husband was then the linebacker for the Cleveland Browns when Bill Russell and my husband, Sidney Williams, and Jim Brown all got together to support Muhammad Ali when, of course, he was not allowed to be a conscientious objector and was threatened with prison.

I got to know him sometime after that. We used his home for a very special event. I got to know his former wife, Veronica, and his children. One of his children worked in one of my programs.

This comes at a very difficult time for all of us. I loved him because he had courage. He had the courage to give up his career, had the courage to threaten to be imprisoned, and had the courage to fight. The Nation of Islam stood with him, and these athletes all stood with him. He was a great man. When he said he was The Greatest, he really was, because he was an unusual extraordinaire.

I will be at the funeral on Friday. I will be there with the family and the rest of the athletes that are still living that are going to be there to honor him.

Mr. YARMUTH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman.

I yield again to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) for a quick comment.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, let me thank Mr. YARMUTH and say that I couldn't leave the mic without acknowledging that George Foreman is in Houston, and Evander Holyfield, only to say that the people that he fought became his dear friends. I know they would want me to say that.

Thank you so very much for allowing us to pay tribute to The Greatest.

Mr. YARMUTH. Mr. Speaker, as we wrap up this tribute to the life of Muhammad Ali, I just want to express what I know all of my colleagues would feel, and that is our outpouring of love and support for Lonnie, his wife of 25 years, his many children, and his extended family. Lonnie's love and dedication inspired and energized Ali, even when his body was failing him. I know that the hearts of this body as well as the world go out to her and the rest of Muhammad Ali's family.

May he rest in peace. I thank him on behalf of everyone for his great contributions to humanity.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of a man who was a three-time heavyweight champion of the world, a victor at the Supreme Court of the United States, and one of the most remarkable men of the 20th Century—a man who truly earned his title: The Greatest.

Muhammad Ali was born Cassius Marcellus Clay Jr. in Louisville, Kentucky on January, 17, 1942. By age 18, he was the Light Heavyweight Gold Medalist at the 1960 Olympics. In 1964, he won the heavyweight world title. He would go on to hold that title—off-and-on—for another 15 years.

But Muhammad Ali was not merely one of the greatest fighters in history—he was also a champion of justice in a country struggling to find its way. Like Detroit's own great champion, Joe Louis, he was a lightning rod for controversy. His success angered those who disagreed with the simple principle that a person's worth was never lessened by the color of their skin. He showed courage when he stood up for civil rights at a time when it was dangerous to do so. He never backed down, never allowed his voice to be silenced because of his faith or his race. He was an example for countless men, women, and children who needed one.

Beyond his work in the ring and as part of the civil rights movement, Muhammad Ali was also an advocate for peace. He grew into his faith in a way that shows that Islam is a religion of peace and America is a place of tolerance when—at great personal cost—he spoke out against the Vietnam War. As a conscientious objector, he was stripped of his title and unable to fight for three years during his prime.

Convicted of refusing to report for military service, he appealed to the United States Supreme Court, where he won a unanimous (8-0) opinion reversing his conviction.

A champion boxer, a champion for civil rights, and a champion of peace—it is not possible to overstate Muhammad Ali's achievements. He was quite simply, The Greatest.

We will mourn his memory going forward, and we will remember him for his work. Most of all, we will continue to draw strength and inspiration from a man who knew the true meaning of being a Champion.

STOP THE FRANK

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WOODALL) is recognized for 60 min-

utes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. WOODALL. Mr. Speaker, I am slow to come to the floor because you can't compete with a Muhammad Ali commemorative Special Order. That is too much passion to follow. I just have little old legislative business on my mind. I am not talking about changing the world. I am just talking about changing our little part of the world.

I don't know if you remember, Mr. Speaker, when you first got here, you had to go downstairs and sign your name so that we could use that instead of a postage stamp on every piece of mail that you sent out the door. It is called the franking privilege.

I have a bill—that is H.R. 1873—that TAMMY DUCKWORTH and I introduced together to abolish that franking privilege. It is not going to take a lot to get that done. It is something that is within the complete control of us here in this institution, but it has been a challenge that is hundreds of years in the making.

I put mine on here, Mr. Speaker. This is my signature there on the front of every envelope I send out. If you want to know how to forge a check in my name, all you need to do is look at any envelope I send out the door.

Back in the day, had we been here in 1817, it might have been hard to find a postage stamp. In the name of getting congressional business done, the law of the land, carried over from England, was that you could sign your name on all of your government documents in order to get that important government business done. You couldn't just walk down to the local grocery store and buy stamps. You had to have a mechanism for getting your constitutional responsibilities accomplished.

□ 1900

We do that still here today. In these cynical times, Mr. Speaker, I would tell you that I hear most often from folks that they think one of two things is going on with the franking privilege: one, that we are involved in some sort of incumbent protection plan—self-promotion here in this institution, self-glorification—by sending our names out on the front of all of the mail that goes out the door. If not that, I hear the second criticism, which is, ROB, why do Members of Congress get free mail? The Postal Service is in dire straits—free mail for all Members of Congress.

It is not free mail. For every letter that goes out the door that reads "ROB WOODALL" up at the top, I get a bill. I get a bill from the United States Postal Service for what a stamp would have cost had I put it on that letter. For every piece of mail that goes out the door with "ROB WOODALL" written up at the top, I get a bill from the Postal Service for whatever the bulk rate would have been for the large amounts of mail that I send out the door. It is not free mail for Members of Congress. I want to dispel that myth.

I get all of the emails that I know so many of my colleagues do, which read: "Go and serve one term in Congress, and get your pension for life." Nonsense. Not true. I do get the emails that come in and that talk about the special health care privileges that Congress has and that nobody else can have access to. Come on down, and join the ObamaCare exchange. You can have the same health care privileges that I have. Of all of the myths that go on out there, the myth of free mail continues still today. It is not free mail. We just don't put a stamp on it. Why don't we end this confusion once and for all?

I would like to tell you that this was my brilliant idea—a small idea but my brilliant idea. Not true. We, actually, went down this road in the 1800s. I hold here—Mr. Speaker, you can't read it—an article from *The New York Times* on March 3, 1875.

It reads:

By a vote of 113-65, the House has concurred in the Senate amendment to the postal appropriations bill partially restoring the franking privilege. The precise extent of this restoration is an allowance of free transmission through the mail on a Congressional frank of the Congressional Record, agricultural reports and seeds, and all public documents now printed or authorized to be printed.

The *New York Times*, as it is still known for today, goes on to editorialize just a bit:

So far, as our observation goes, there has never been any demand for the restoration of the franking nuisance except on the part of Congressmen. The new men, especially, long for a taste of the sweets of privilege.

This the *New York Times* in 1875. The "sweets of privilege" is how they described the signing of one's name to a constituent's response so you can tell your constituents how it is that you feel about the war in Iraq, so you can tell folks how you feel about the FCC's new regulations, so that you can respond to that young Eagle Scout applicant who wants to get the Citizenship in the Nation merit badge.

We knew in the 1800s that something just didn't seem right about not using stamps like everybody else did. We knew that something didn't feel quite right. For several years, we abolished the franking privilege, and then we brought it back.

I don't have any problem finding stamps, Mr. Speaker. If anybody in this institution has problems finding stamps, I have several local locations that are here by the Capitol. You can send a staffer down to pick up stamps in bulk. For me, I am in the Longworth House Office Building, up on the seventh floor, so I have got to go all the way down to the basement in order to buy my stamps. It is about seven floors away.

They don't do that anywhere else in Washington, D.C. They don't do that. If you are at the IRS and if you need to send out a tax form, you don't sign your name at the top of the letter. If you work over at the Department of

Agriculture and if you need to send out a newsletter, you don't sign your name at the top, because everybody else in government uses what is called "penalty mail." It is the same stamp up at the top of a corner that any businessperson would use, that any bulk mail house would use. It is section 3202. It is called "penalty mail."

It reads:

Subject to limitations imposed by sections 3204 and 3207 of this title, there may be transmitted as penalty mail official mail of officers of the Government of the United States, the Smithsonian Institution, the Pan-American Union, the Pan-American Sanitary Bureau, the United States Employment Service, and the system of employment offices operated by it in conformity with the provisions of section 4949(c).

Understand that we have a special section in the United States Code that deals with how mail gets out the door, because it is very difficult. We have only been doing it for a couple of hundred years. It requires some special attention from the United States Code, so we have a special section of the Code that allows officers of the Government of the United States, of the Smithsonian Institution, of the Pan-American Union, of the Pan-American Sanitary Bureau, and of the United States Employment Service some special dispensation so they can get mail out the door.

But was that good enough for Congress? The answer is "no." Congress has yet another special exception beyond the special exception, as is highlighted in section A, "officers of the Government of the United States other than Members of Congress," because what we have is our special signature program.

Mr. Speaker, we have got big things we have got to solve in this country—big things we have got to solve. You can't solve those big things when folks believe that you are not telling them the truth about the little things. You have got to build trust with one another. You have got to build trust with one another not just here in this institution but with our constituencies back home; but when people see what they think is free mail that is going out the door, it undermines that trust.

I refer now to the House Manual, Mr. Speaker:

Postal expenses incurred only when the frank is insufficient, such as certified, registered, insured, express, foreign mail, and stamped, self-addressed envelopes related to the recovery of official items, are reimbursable. Postage may not be used in lieu of the frank.

I got to Capitol Hill, Mr. Speaker, and I thought: Do you know what? I know what it is like not to be on Capitol Hill. I am going to go get a bulk mail permit.

They said, No, ROB. You can't get a bulk mail permit to send out mail on Capitol Hill.

I said, Most of what I do isn't bulk mail. I will go buy stamps to send that out.

They said, No, ROB. You can't buy stamps to send out mail. You have to

sign your card. You have to put your signature on it. We have to have a special congressional mail privilege for you.

TAMMY DUCKWORTH and I—one Republican, one Democrat—say we can do better than that. It is an election year. Do you know what happens in an election year? The law of the land is: you can't send out mail anymore. If I have a town hall meeting that is going on next week, I couldn't have sent out an invitation last month to have invited you to come meet your Congressman. I couldn't have sent out a newsletter last month to have told you what we were doing with the National Defense Authorization Act. I couldn't have sent out a newsletter last month to have told you about an employment and jobs fair program that was going on, because the law of the land so recognizes this privilege as something that incumbents use to boost their election prospects that it is banned in the 90 days before any election.

So I ask you: If this practice is so offensive that we ban it within 90 days before any election, why don't we just do away with it altogether? If it is so offensive that it must be banned for 180 days out of the year, why don't we do away with it for the other 180 days, too?

I don't need my name on the front of every letter that goes out the door, and I don't need someone to protect me from the challenges of buying stamps; but I have rules in place that prevent postage from being used in lieu of the frank.

I serve on the Budget Committee, Mr. Speaker. I want to balance the Federal budget. We are not going to do it with this bill. I am the lead sponsor of the FairTax. It is the most fundamental reconstruction of our Tax Code that has happened since the income tax came into being in the early 1900s. It is the most prominently cosponsored piece of fundamental tax reform legislation in this body. Those are serious pieces of legislation. This is something minor—this is around the edges—but the National Taxpayers Union has seen fit to say that repealing the so-called "franking privilege" is a simple reform to introduce pay-as-you-go budgeting. It is absolutely right. Public Citizen hardly supports the Woodall-Duckworth legislation to rein in the abuse of taxpayer-funded franked mail.

I want to do the big things together, and I want to do the things that matter together. When silly things like this undermine the sacred trust that we have with our constituents, they need to go. Our colleagues who served in this body in the 1870s knew it. They abolished it, but they just couldn't let it go, and they brought it back. Even *The New York Times* asked: Where was the outcry for free congressional mail? Why was it brought back yet again?

I tried to get this done on my own. I say to my colleagues that I didn't want to waste your time in this way. I tried

to go to the Chief Administrative Office to see if I could just get an exception so I didn't have to send out this mail. I tried to go through the House Administration Committee to see if there was some sort of dispensation so that I could opt out of this system. I tried to go through the Office of the Speaker to see if my MRA could be spent in a different way so I didn't have to perpetuate this. Again, it is a practice that is, apparently, so hideous it is outlawed for 180 days out of the year; but I couldn't get any of those things done.

Now it has come down to us to pass that simple line of code. It is a bipartisan bill—ROB WOODALL, TAMMY DUCKWORTH, a host of other cosponsors. I invite you to join me to abolish the franking privilege. You are welcome to use our hashtag of “Stop the Frank” any time you feel like you can move that forward. We are not going to reestablish trust overnight, but with one little accountability action at a time, we can do it. Let's do this little one today. Let's show up again and do another one and tomorrow and do another one and the next day and do another one and the next day and do another one. Then we are going to wake up a year from now or a month from now or a week from now, and we are going to find out that we have really made a difference together.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX), my friend from the Rules Committee.

SKILLS GAP

Ms. FOXX. I thank my colleague from Georgia.

Mr. Speaker, I frequently hear from employers who are struggling to find employees with the right experience and technical skills to meet workforce needs.

The passage of the bipartisan Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act was an important step for the millions of Americans who are looking for work and for the employers who have 5 million-plus job opportunities that remain unfilled due to the skills gap. However, great jobs are still going unfilled. Americans are still missing out on rewarding careers, and many businesses are still suffering.

For example, in the AED Foundation's 2016 Workforce Survey Report, more than 50 percent of equipment distributors indicated that the skills gap hindered company growth and increased costs and inefficiencies while nearly 75 percent said the lack of skilled technicians made it difficult to meet customer demand.

It is imperative that the Department of Labor finalizes regulations for WIOA and that Congress strengthens the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act.

I appreciate very much my friend from Georgia and my colleague on the Rules Committee for yielding to me in order to discuss this important issue to so many of us.

Mr. WOODALL. If my colleagues don't know, one is used to seeing the gentlewoman from North Carolina leading on the Education and the Workforce Committee. All day today, she has been leading on the Rules Committee—chairing those actions that are going on up there. I hoped she was here to file a rule to tell us that that process had been moved right along, but we will have to wait for that.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 1915

FLOODING IN THE STATE OF TEXAS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. AL GREEN) for 30 minutes.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on the subject of my Special Order. That subject, Mr. Speaker, will be flooding in the State of Texas.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I and a good many of my colleagues will speak tonight about circumstances that are occurring in Texas more often than we would care to see. In a sense, Mr. Speaker, this is a continuation of a mission of mercy that we embarked upon earlier this year when we were having flooding in Houston, Texas.

These floods that we are having across the length and breadth of our State are causing great property damage, and that is worthy of a lot of consideration and it is worthy of being addressed on the floor of the House of Representatives. But we also have a good many lives that have been lost across the length and breadth of our State, and these, of course, are of paramount importance to us. So while we may make some references to the property damages and there will be some things said about possible solutions, I believe that we will say a good deal about the lives that have been lost.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Texas' 27th Congressional District (Mr. FARENTHOLD) to give his comments.

Mr. FARENTHOLD has experienced some flooding, and I am honored to have him appear and tell us about what is happening to his constituents in the 27th Congressional District.

Mr. FARENTHOLD. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor and a privilege to be here.

A little over a year ago, there were some horrible floods just outside the district I represent in Wimberley, Texas, that took the lives of several constituents vacationing there in Cor-

pus Christi, Texas. In fact, some of the bodies of the young children who perished in that horrible flood have yet to be recovered. My family's prayers and the prayers of the Nation go to those grieving families and the survivors and for the repose of the souls of those who passed.

There has been a lot of flooding in Texas over the past year or so, just as recently as last week. I represent Wharton, Texas. The river in Wharton rose just as it had gotten repairs from the previous flood a few months earlier. All the Sheetrock was newly installed and ready to go; and sure enough, another flood comes and the damage to the property continues.

Unfortunately, the floods of last week and the previous weeks did not result in loss of life in the district that I represent. Thank the Lord for that.

I tell you, in the past 14 months, another county I represent, Bastrop, has experienced the worst flooding it has seen in 35 years. It is currently dealing with \$2.5 million in damaged infrastructure, and 20 roads still remain closed today. Of the 100-plus homes damaged in the past 14 months, more than half were determined to be unlivable, and four families still remain in temporary housing.

Earlier, in Wharton County, more than 1,000 people were evacuated and 150 homes flooded. It has really been tough.

I was driving through and visited with the emergency management folks in Wharton. You look at the fields of green. I posted on Instagram the picture of a milo field. It said, “Amber waves of flooded grain.” Cotton fields are under water as well.

In addition to the property damage, I think our farmers in Texas may suffer from an overabundance of water. As I grew up in a farming family, our complaint was it either rained too much, too little, or at the wrong time. I will tell you that these floods have just been horrible in Texas.

I do want to thank the folks from FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, for their quick response.

What it has told us is that we are taking way too much time for projects to stem the flooding, levees and the like, to get approved by the Army Corps of Engineers and the other Federal agencies. The funding for it is difficult to come by.

We end up spending all this money with FEMA. If some of that money were redirected to preventive maintenance or preventing these floods, we might save lives and certainly save property as well. I think it is something that this Congress should look at: preventing problems rather than just reacting to them.

I also want to commend the first responders and the emergency management personnel throughout Texas who have done so much. I also want to offer my thoughts and prayers to those brave servicemen who perished in Texas in the training exercises as well.