

RECOGNIZING RYAN VARGO

Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I wish to bring attention to the leadership of Ryan Vargo, a senior up at Pottsgrove School District, and his role in helping expand recreational opportunity at the Upper Pottsgrove Township Park. He spearheaded a project to install donated playground equipment at Hollenbach Park off North Hanover Street, adding recreational opportunity for children in the Pottsgrove community.

It is a testament to how our country and its future is great when we look at student leaders and what they are doing in their teenage years to help improve communities across this Commonwealth and across this country.

□ 1030

MINNESOTA'S BEST AND BRIGHTEST

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

Mr. EMMER of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate five outstanding students in my district who have earned a Fulbright scholarship this year.

Austin Barkley of Sartell, Paul Creager of Stillwater, Amy Grant of Big Lake, Natalie Hoidal of Forest Lake, and Jenna Maus of Kimball will each have the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to lecture, study, teach English, or do research in foreign countries that range from Mexico to Malaysia. Each of these Fulbright scholars will not only have the ability to promote healthy relations and diplomacy with foreign nations, but they will also bring home the knowledge and leadership experience they will gain while abroad.

Many past participants of this program have gone on to achieve success in a variety of fields, with some even serving here in Congress. I have no doubt we will see great things from each of these exceptional individuals, and I congratulate and wish them luck on their exciting adventure.

MINNESOTA'S TOP FARM FAMILY

Mr. EMMER of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Bruce and Sharon Johnson of East Bethel and the Minnesota Fresh Farm for being named the Anoka County Farm Family of the Year by the University of Minnesota. For the past 2 decades, the University of Minnesota has chosen top farming families for their work promoting our State's great agricultural industry.

The Minnesota Fresh Farm has been passed down from one generation of the Johnson family to the next and is currently being farmed by Bruce and Sharon Johnson, along with their son, Luke, and his wife, Liz.

This year, the Johnson family was chosen for the efforts they have made to educate Minnesota's youth about farming. This includes working with

the Opportunity Services in Anoka, an organization that helps individuals with special needs so they can enjoy farming and the great outdoors. The Johnson family were also chosen because of their focus on sustainable production methods and growing food without using pesticides.

I want to congratulate the Johnson family and thank them for their efforts to promote the farming life and Minnesota's agricultural industry.

INVESTING IN MINNESOTA'S FUTURE

Mr. EMMER of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate a great Minnesota company that is actively helping our Nation's students develop skills that will help them shine in their future success. I am proud that Minnesota's own Best Buy Foundation is giving grants to form programs that will give students the chance to master important technology skills, like coding and graphic design.

The world that we are living in is rapidly transforming and technology is quickly becoming more than just a luxury—it is becoming a way of life and a key ingredient to our Nation's future success.

What is perhaps most commendable about Best Buy's grant program is that it targets teens who live in underserved communities. If we as a Nation hope to remain not only relevant, but competitive, then everybody must have the chance to strive. I would like to thank the Best Buy Foundation for recognizing the importance of serving the underserved.

STEARNS COUNTY HEROES

Mr. EMMER of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor 12 Stearns County dispatchers who received medals of merit for their work during the horrific attack at the Crossroads Center Mall.

What seemed like a normal night at a mall in central Minnesota quickly turned into a nightmare when a man began to attack shoppers with a knife. As the attacks unfolded, chaos ensued.

What kept this dangerous situation from getting even worse was the dedicated work of these 12 professionals. In 2 hours, they took 250 calls and they made numerous calls to emergency responders to keep them abreast on the most current details of the attack. As a result of their work, there was no loss of life and all shoppers and first responders were able to return home safely to their loved ones that night.

While words can never express the full extent of our gratitude, I am proud to stand here today to thank these men and women for their heroic efforts.

RECOGNIZING REPRESENTATIVE RON STEPHENS

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

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize my lifelong friend, Representative Ron Stephens

from Savannah, Georgia, for being awarded the Distinguished Alumnus Award from Armstrong State University.

Chairman Stephens represents the 164th District in the Georgia General Assembly. During his time in the legislature, he has done a remarkable job representing his constituents.

Currently, he is the chairman of the House Economic Development and Tourism Committee and a member of the Appropriations, Rules, and Ways and Means Committees, allowing him to advocate important issues for his constituency. In addition, Governor Nathan Deal appointed Mr. Stephens to the Georgia Tourism Foundation.

Before his time in the Georgia General Assembly, Chairman Stephens was already working for the betterment of his community. He began his career in pharmacy and served the medical needs of others for 37 years. Thereafter, he served as a councilman in Garden City, Georgia.

I am proud of my lifelong friend for his work, and I am overjoyed that he is receiving the Distinguished Alumnus Award from Armstrong State University.

RECOGNIZING COACH DOYLE KELLEY

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Mr. Doyle Kelley from Savannah, Georgia, who passed away on September 30.

Mr. Kelley, known throughout the Savannah community as Coach Kelley, dedicated his life to teaching and mentoring students.

After graduating from Armstrong State University in 1969, Coach Kelley started coaching Jenkins High School's basketball team, sparking his commitment to students. Coach Kelley's passion shows not only in his incredible success on the court, but also the notorious testimonials from students about how he changed their lives for the better.

After he moved to coach basketball at Savannah Christian Preparatory School, he had 427 victories in basketball, along with 18 State championships in three sports, but the number of students he positively impacted is far greater.

After his successful years in the sport, Coach Kelley served as the high school principal for 14 years at Savannah Christian until his retirement.

His caring and compassionate nature was seen by everyone in the community, from friends, colleagues, students, and certainly family members. Coach Kelley's presence in the community will be deeply missed and felt by all who had the pleasure of knowing him.

HONORING WINSTON HENCELY

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask for your thoughts and prayers for Mr. Winston Hencely.

Mr. Hencely was injured in the suicide attack on Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan on November 12. Four brave Americans were killed in the attack

and Mr. Hencely was one of 16 soldiers who were injured. He was immediately transported to Germany for treatment and surgery, but is currently in critical condition.

This attack is a sobering reminder of the harsh reality that our soldiers must endure during their deployment.

I encourage everyone to keep our Nation's soldiers in their thoughts and, especially, Mr. Winston Hencely during his time of need.

Mr. Hencely, thank you for your service to our country, and we will be with you every step of the way.

RECOGNIZING JOHN RUTLEDGE

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the life of Mr. John Rutledge, who passed away on September 11, 2016, at the age of 96.

Mr. Rutledge's life has been quite extraordinary as he has been on hand for some incredible events in our Nation's history.

On December 7, 1941, Mr. Rutledge was aboard the USS California during the attack on Pearl Harbor, narrowly escaping with his life. The next year, he was at the Battle of Midway in the Pacific Ocean, covering the battle as a photographer and filming the burning of Japanese ships.

Mr. Rutledge continued his service to our Nation long after his time with the military and fighting in World War II. For the next 20 years, he taught science classes at Pensacola High School.

I am proud to honor someone who dedicated so much of his life to the betterment of our Nation.

Mr. Rutledge, you will be greatly missed.

FINDING CURES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Missouri (Mrs. WAGNER) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. WAGNER. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of legislation that begins making strides toward enhancing our ability to combat some of the toughest diseases of our time—the 21st Century Cures Act.

From improving the development and approval process of drugs and devices, to bettering our ability to diagnose and treat diseases like Alzheimer's and diabetes, this legislation will have a positive impact on countless lives.

I further applaud provisions in the bill that address mental health issues and opioid abuse, both crises that tear families apart in my home district of St. Louis and across our Nation.

However, I also rise today to say that passing this bill must not be the end of our efforts, but, rather, the beginning—the beginning as we look towards a better day for thousands of children fighting against pediatric cancers.

Mr. Speaker, the 21st Century Cures Act legislation outlines that rare and pediatric diseases and conditions should remain a biomedical research priority. While the bill provides an additional \$4.8 billion to the National In-

stitutes of Health, I see little that suggests a sufficient amount of this money will be dedicated to pediatric research and care.

This past October, I had the opportunity to tour the Cardinals Kids Cancer Center at Mercy Hospital in St. Louis and meet with families affected by pediatric cancer, including the Leslie family. The Leslies' son, Caleb, was diagnosed with Ewing's sarcoma, a rare type of bone cancer, when he was just 10 years old. Despite the incredible strength that Caleb showed in his more than 2-year fight with cancer, he ultimately lost the battle on July 22, 2015.

I was shocked when the Leslies told me that childhood cancer receives only 4 percent of the National Cancer Institute's annual research budget—only 4 percent—an absurdly small amount of money for a population with countless life years ahead of them.

In fiscal year 2016, the NCI was appropriated \$5.21 billion, and only \$208 million of this went toward childhood cancer research. Childhood cancer does not discriminate based on gender, race, or social class. These are diseases that could affect any of our children at any time.

It is my hope that going forward, as both a lawmaker and a mother of three children, that we can prioritize NCI research funding to give every child a fighting chance at a healthy and happy future.

I am committed to giving families like the Leslies solace, solace in knowing that maybe one less family will have to suffer the tragic loss that they endured.

GATLINBURG FIRE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACK) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BLACK. Mr. Speaker, Tennesseans have experienced the worst of Mother Nature this week—from the tornadoes in my own district to the historic wildfires that ravaged the Gatlinburg community. These fires forced a mass evacuation, destroyed hundreds of homes and businesses, and tragically caused three known fatalities so far.

Today I rise to call for prayer for our neighbors in the beautiful Smoky Mountains region of our State, to remember those precious lives lost, and to recognize our heroic first responders who have worked diligently to contain the damage.

As the work continues, we pray that healing rain would fall, literally, across eastern Tennessee this week, that businesses would be able to quickly reopen, and that visitors would once again flock to this treasured region of our State to experience all that Gatlinburg has to offer.

FIDEL CASTRO

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

Mr. DESANTIS. Mr. Speaker, last week marked the death of the tyrant in Cuba, Fidel Castro. This is a man whose regime was marked by the suppression of God-given rights—the right to religion, to speech, to assemble.

The people who disagreed with the regime in Castro's Cuba were jailed or tortured. People who had spent their lives building businesses, restaurants, and hotels had their property confiscated after the Cuban revolution. People were executed by the thousands who ran afoul of the regime.

□ 1045

Now, in pre-Castro Cuba, you had economic opportunity and prosperity, but you did have a yearning for democratic reforms. It was effectively an authoritarian system, and Castro capitalized on this by pointing out that we needed to have free elections. There were people who supported Castro initially because they thought he was going to usher in democratic reforms. He duped people. Once he had the opportunity to seize power, he sided with the Soviet Union and imposed a Stalinist tyranny on the small island nation.

I think it is interesting, when people look back, to see how poorly Cuba has done under his rule. Compare that with a lot of the Cuban exiles who left Castro's tyranny. These are people—many of them—who came to Florida. A lot of them didn't speak the language. They were in a new country and didn't necessarily have a whole lot of advantages; yet Cuban Americans, in our country, have excelled at all levels—in business, in government, in athletics, in entertainment. You name it.

Meanwhile, you look at the people, over the last decades, in Cuba, and unless you are attached to the ruling class—the regime—to the intelligence services, or to the military, you basically have no shot to do anything to advance your life and to make the most of your God-given abilities. Of the Cuban exiles who came to Florida, a lot of them were responsible for really putting Miami on the map. I think that shows that, when you have folks fleeing from a tyranny and going to freedom, they can succeed beyond people's wildest dreams, but the people who are suffering under the tyranny just have nowhere to go.

It is funny because, if you look at some of the media reports, Castro is lauded by some as an egalitarian—that this was a big deal that he was an egalitarian. Look, I have to admit that part of that was true. I mean, he was an egalitarian in the sense that he inflicted the equal suffering—equal misery—upon broad cross-sections of the Cuban people. That much is true, but it is obviously false in the sense that his thing was not egalitarianism. It was to amass power for himself. He died a billionaire. This was the avant-garde of the working class, supposedly. He was a billionaire while many Cubans struggled to even eat, and, certainly, they could not prosper.