

Today, we see the consequences of excessive debt in our economy. I am greatly concerned with the legacy of debt that we are leaving to our children as our national debt reaches over \$10 trillion. That amount translates to a debt of over \$30,000 for each of our children. We must pay interest on the debt and each day the average interest payment adds more than \$1 billion to the tab we leave behind.

While I believe that huge, persistent debt has a significant cost for the economy, I also practically realize that both the President and my colleagues across the aisle refuse to pay for this package of tax relief. They rejected the fiscally responsible bill, H.R. 6275, that I voted for in the Ways and Means Committee and on this floor when the House approved the bill on June 25, 2008. The other legislative body has only passed an AMT patch without an offset, rejecting paying for this tax relief just last week once again.

Weighing the economic stress middle-class families face today, I will cast my vote for the Alternative Minimum Tax Relief Act today so that this tax does not fall on families struggling to meet increasing prices with wages that have not kept pace with inflation over the last 8 years. I do so in the hope that Congress will work next year with a new administration to advance commonsense tax reform that includes paid for AMT relief. We must reverse years of failed Republican policies that have mortgaged our grandchildren's future with debt.

IN RECOGNITION OF CHICAGOANS
HELPING THEIR NEIGHBORS
FOLLOWING THIS MONTH'S
FLOODING

HON. RAHM EMANUEL

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Sunday, September 28, 2008

Mr. EMANUEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the firefighters, police officers, sanitation workers, and other Chicagoans who pitched in to help their neighbors in the Albany Park neighborhood and other areas affected by record flooding earlier this month.

When I toured the Albany Park area Sunday before last—after 3 straight days of hard rain and a rising river—I saw streets, parks, sidewalks, and backyards underneath the floodwaters. Chicago bungalows line these streets, and no amount of sandbags could prevent the floodwaters that submerged streets, sidewalks and parks from pouring in.

But rather than chaos, I saw neighbors helping neighbors, and a coordinated response from Chicago's city workers and the Army Corps of Engineers. The city of Chicago coordinated emergency services to be accessible with a telephone call to 311, and Aldermen and other elected officials were on the front lines ensuring residents' safety and organizing the clean-up and rebuilding efforts.

Now that the flood waters have receded, I am working across party lines with my colleagues from all over Cook County and all over Illinois to make sure that our State has the emergency assistance we need and resources to continue the clean-up and rebuilding process. This week, the entire Illinois dele-

gation sent a letter to the President supporting Illinois' request for a major disaster declaration and emergency Federal assistance. We will continue to work together to help our home state just as our constituents have helped one another.

As the saying goes, the colder the weather, the warmer the hearts. Chicagoans have experience braving freezing winters, but in times of need, they have the warmest hearts. I commend the men and women who volunteered to help their neighbors. With families rebuilding homes and lives after these floods, that goodwill and those good works will go a long way to rebuilding neighborhoods like Albany Park, and I am committed to making sure that Chicago has the tools and funds we need to complete the job.

TRIBUTE TO SERGEANT MAJOR JOHNNIE ROBINSON

HON. JOHN M. SPRATT, JR.

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Sunday, September 28, 2008

Mr. SPRATT. Madam Speaker, I wish to call the attention of the House to a remarkable citizen, Sergeant Major Johnnie Robinson, of Rock Hill, SC. Johnnie Robinson served for 27 years in the Army, including tours in Korea and Vietnam, and rose to the rank of Command Sergeant Major. When he retired from the Army, he kept on serving. For 22 years he was Quartermaster and Commander of VFW Post 2889 in Rock Hill, SC, and also State Commander of the VFW. Under his leadership, Post 2889 became one of the largest posts in the State, and by everyone's estimation, one of the best. Among his proudest accomplishments: handsome new quarters, a building 11,000 square feet large.

Johnnie Robinson has passed the torch to a new generation, and stepped down as commander, but to commemorate all that he has done for veterans, the VFW, and Post 2889 in particular, the post today is naming its ballroom for him.

Madam Speaker, I ask permission to enter into the RECORD the following account from the Rock Hill Herald of Johnnie Robinson's service to community and country, and not least, to veterans and the VFW.

[From the Herald of Rock Hill, SC]
VFW LEGEND PAVED THE WAY FOR LOCAL
VETS

Few places are known to a city by one face like Rock Hill's Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 2889 is known by Johnnie Robinson.

For most of the past 22 years, Robinson has been commander of the almost 500-member post, among the largest in the state. The few other years, he was quartermaster in charge of raising and accounting for the post's money.

Robinson has spoken about service and community to throngs at the local football stadium and to small groups of students. He has helped raise and give tens of thousands of dollars for veterans, widows and the children of veterans.

He helped start and organize an honor guard that still serves at military funerals and other functions.

He has been the state VFW commander and held national posts in the organization of more than 1.6 million members nationwide.

He has bent the ears of local, state and federal politicians to make sure veterans get

better treatment and raised a stink if he didn't like the answers he got.

Robinson helped the post move from an old building on Main Street into what is now an 11,000-square-foot building down the block. He brought the first black member into the post decades ago, walking in with an arm on the guy's shoulders saying, "Meet one of us."

But now it is over. Robinson, 77, has given up his commander's hat. He didn't run in the recent yearly post elections.

"It was time for somebody else to lead," he said.

That somebody else is Ray Bentley, elected the new commander, but even Bentley said following Robinson isn't easy.

"The man is a legend," Bentley said. "Leadership is what Johnnie was always about."

The post is having a banquet September 27 to honor Robinson, and to name the ballroom in his honor. Politicians, combat veterans and dignitaries will toast what this guy has meant to the little guys who fought in wars. One of those speakers will be Pat Nivens, veterans affairs officer of York County, whose job it is to help veterans get benefits. Robinson is respected and well-known around the country in veterans' circles as a veterans' rights advocate, Nivens said.

To outsiders, the VFW might look like a smoky barroom where old vets drink cold beer and tell war stories. That it is at times, and few places are as tough as at the bar rail of the VFW if somebody is a boaster who can't back up claims about heroism or combat.

But the VFW is a lot more, offering veterans advocacy and assistance and helping with community functions ranging from scholarships to flower sales for deceased veterans' children. Robinson is not to be found at the bar.

But he has been found where soldiers are since joining the post more than 30 years ago. When a group of area National Guardsmen went to Iraq and then Afghanistan, Robinson led the drive for the post to adopt the whole unit so money could be raised for families.

Robinson then worked to enlist those men from 178th Combat Engineers in the VFW when those men came home: More than 60 of those newest vets joined.

"This is their VFW, not mine," Robinson said. "We serve combat veterans, and we serve the community. I only hope I serve both."

Robinson himself—not a representative—attends every local military send-off, every welcome home. Why? Maybe it's two wars and 27 years in the Army ending up as a command sergeant major—the highest enlisted rank there is.

He joined as a teenage kid straight off the cotton-chopping fields of rural Lancaster County. He was in the Nevada desert for atomic bomb tests, the cold killings of Korea, the hot killings of Vietnam. He doesn't have to read about Agent Orange—he lived through it, and he has lived through cancer because of it.

"I came home from Korea to California on a ship, then took a bus across the country to Columbia," Robinson said. "I had to take another bus to Lancaster. I couldn't say I was coming home because we had no phone in those days."

"I came home alone, and nobody knew I was coming until I got there. People need to be there at these ceremonies to show these guys what they do matters."

Robinson's membership at the post continues, and he will be around to help. He'll pull in driving his red pickup truck, with an old South Carolina license plate from 1990 on the front bumper.