

their eyes open. They got to see what happens when a community rallies together as volunteers. It was a sight to behold. Everyday Texans and everyday citizens in the Montgomery/Magnolia County area joined with our charity agencies from the United Way, to the Red Cross, to our local food banks, to our churches, to our YMCAs, to chambers of commerce in order to provide a response to the firefighters across this Nation, a response that we will be talking about for years to come.

We saw the best of our communities and the massive volunteer effort to feed, clothe, and take care of our bravest. At the Magnolia West High School staging area, I got a tour. If a firefighter were thirsty, three volunteers would rush over with a bottle of water, and there were likely two more behind them, carrying a hot meal, just in case that firefighter might be hungry.

In speaking about the firefighters who came from across the country, all they could talk about was how well they were treated by the community of Magnolia. They came in looking for water and a FEMA bar, and what they got was home-cooked meals, fresh clothes and necessities. If they asked for it, a volunteer found it and brought it right over. When these volunteers ran low, they simply sent out a message on Facebook to the community; and within 3 hours, that staging area in the ag barn was filled to the brim again. It was amazing.

The outpouring of love and support was truly a sight to behold. It's no wonder, back home we consider this God's country.

Today, it's an honor for me to be here on the House floor to honor our heroes. Without all of you, thousands of families wouldn't have homes to go to tonight or businesses in which to work. The proof is right here on this map.

This Saturday afternoon, Unity Park in Magnolia, our community, will come together to honor the men and women who beat back the fire, held the line and saved our community. We'll also honor them by heeding their warnings if the fire danger remains extraordinarily high. We must remain vigilant in our prevention efforts. That's another way we can honor our bravest, who spent the month of September away from their families, saving homes and businesses in our community.

God bless our firefighters. God bless our volunteers and all who supported them, and God bless our community.

RECOGNIZING THE SERVICE AND SACRIFICE OF AMERICA'S VETERANS AND MILITARY SERVICE-MEMBERS

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

Mr. YODER. Today, I rise to recognize the service and sacrifice of our Nation's veterans and military servicemembers who have answered our country's call to serve.

Last month, we commemorated the 10th anniversary of the attacks of September 11, 2001, in remembrance of the victims and their families, while at the same time recognizing the need for continued vigilance as the United States seeks to rid the world of terrorism.

This month, we commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Afghanistan war. Ten years later, our Nation is safer as a direct result of the voluntary service of men and women who are willing to place themselves in harm's way, often under circumstances many Americans cannot fathom.

This willingness to serve and dedication to duty remains consistent with previous generations of veterans who chose to serve their country during our greatest time of need. Unfortunately, we have lost some of our greatest treasure in our fight against terrorism. Since October 2001, 4,914 servicemembers have been killed and another 46,376 injured as a result of military action in Iraq and Afghanistan. Recently, we again faced a tragic loss of life.

On August 6, a CH-46 Chinook twin-engine helicopter, carrying U.S. Army soldiers, U.S. Navy SEALs, and Afghan soldiers, was shot down in the Wardak province of Afghanistan, resulting in the greatest loss of life in any combat incident of the entire conflict thus far. The unit involved, B Company 7th/158th Aviation, is headquartered in New Century, Kansas, in the southernmost part of my district.

□ 1120

Last March I had the privilege to attend the deployment ceremony for the unit as they departed for training at Fort Bliss, ultimately deploying to Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. As my colleagues are well aware, deployment ceremonies are often somber affairs with family members wanting to spend every last second with their loved ones before they depart for duty and soldiers assuring family members that they will be okay and not to worry.

This past August, I was saddened to learn about the tragic events of August 6, 2011, hearing the news that three members of the unit had been killed during the combat operation. These soldiers, Army Specialist Spencer Duncan, Chief Warrant Officer Bryan Nichols and Army Specialist Alexander Bennett, are remembered as outstanding soldiers, dedicated to duty, their unit, and to each other.

Spencer Duncan was just 21, a 2008 graduate of Olathe South High School. He enlisted in the Army Reserve shortly after graduation; and before deployment to Afghanistan, he served at New Century AirCenter Aviation Support Facility in Olathe, Kansas. First he was an aircraft mechanic, and later he trained to become a Chinook door gunner. I had the honor of attending a memorial service for Specialist Duncan and witnessed the outpouring of friends and loving family.

Bryan Nichols was 31 and a pilot from Kansas City, Missouri, who, when hearing of the need to train people for mobilization, followed and sacrificed for our country, leaving behind a wife and son.

Alexander Bennett was 23 and was trained as a Chinook helicopter flight mechanic. Originally from Tacoma, Washington, he had already served one tour of duty in Iraq in 2009 before being deployed again, this time to Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, our hearts go out to the families and friends of these three patriotic servicemen who gave the ultimate sacrifice that we all in this country might continue to live in a Nation of freedom and liberty. For their service and sacrifice to our Nation, a grieving country says thank you.

Mr. Speaker, next month we will celebrate Veterans Day and once again remember the service and sacrifice of all those who have faithfully and dutifully served, in peacetime and in war, throughout.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 22 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until noon.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

Reverend Scott Eynon, Community Christian Church, Tamarac, Florida, offered the following prayer:

Heavenly Father, it is our prayer that You will grant us wisdom today and that You will bless the Members of Congress as they lead our Nation during these challenging times.

Father, we are amazed by Your grace, awed by Your resplendent creation, captivated by Your love, and dependent upon Your guidance for every day. We do not take these blessings for granted. We thank You for them.

We also thank You for the problems that come our way, for they make us even more dependent upon You for Your guidance and for Your strength.

Father, Your Word tells us that righteousness exalts a nation. So help us to be great by striving to be good. May our Representatives exemplify principle-centered leadership.

Father, we ask that You would bless the men and women who serve in our military. We ask that You would bless those who serve here in Congress. We ask that You bless this great land that we call home. In Jesus' name I pray.

Amen.