

seeing their town in ruins, despite the horror and devastation of one of the most destructive tornados in American history, KZRG continued to broadcast and report, 24 hours a day, on-air and in the field.

The tornado's widespread devastation damaged or destroyed much of Joplin's cell phone towers and phone and electrical lines. This left much of the community powerless and unable to communicate. However, the radio broadcasts of KZRG continued. KZRG remained on air, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, giving folks critical and time-sensitive information as it was happening. KZRG was there, helping the police dispatch their officers, helping loved ones find each other, helping community leaders coordinate disaster recovery efforts. Truly, journalism at its finest.

They also launched a relief collection effort, which collected food, clothing, and toiletry items to listeners in need. In fact, their station became a meeting place of sorts, for emergency personnel and volunteers. They became a symbol of the community getting back on its feet.

Folks in Southwest Missouri should be proud to know that in times of trouble, KZRG was and will always be there. I too am proud and honored to call the associates of KZRG my fellow citizens and neighbors in the 7th Congressional District of Missouri.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 1540,
NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION
ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2011

SPEECH OF

HON. EARL BLUMENAUER

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 14, 2011

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, today I voted against the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012 (NDAA). While nothing is more important than providing the resources needed to keep America and our men and women in uniform safe, this authorization spends too much and is a missed opportunity for much needed reform.

First, however, I would like to thank Chairman MCKEON and Ranking Member SMITH of the House Armed Services Committee for including elements of all three of my amendments in this final conference bill. One amendment lifts the veil on classified immunity for defense contractors, a practice that exposed 36 of our Oregon National Guardsmen to toxic chemicals in Iraq. The other two will help protect our troops on the battlefield and save billions of dollars through energy efficiency initiatives. Their inclusion, however, does not offset the overall authorization which fails to reflect America's priorities or our national security realities.

It is deeply unfortunate that this legislation includes the appalling detention provisions and that the bill continues to tie the President's hands by restricting his ability to transfer detainees to the United States for trial in Federal Court are appalling. Preventing the administration from closing Guantanamo only serves to bolster Al Qaeda and erode America's security. There is no excuse—even in the name of fighting terrorism—for undermining our ideals. Beyond the practical security considerations, terrorism is an assault on those ideals and we

should not further erode them in response to that threat.

One thing that most of the Occupy Wall Street and majority of the Tea Party advocates agree upon is that the United States is on an unsustainable path.

The economy is still floundering. We are losing the competition with other countries in the international arena when it comes to rebuilding and renewing America's infrastructure and making advances in education. Even our health care system, improved by the Affordable Care Act, still falls short of the systems in use by most of our major European competitors.

These glaring examples of un-sustainability for our infrastructure, our education system and our health care system are all troubling. None of this, however, compares with the un-sustainability of our massive defense and security spending. U.S. defense spending is bloated and not strategically oriented. We cannot continue to spend almost as much as the rest of the world—friend and foe alike—combined. We spend 6 times as much on defense as China, and 12 times that of Russia. Our Navy is larger than the next 13 navies combined.

People who are at the front deserve our best in terms of equipment, and they and their families need to be well-cared for, not just in the field, but when they come home. Our armed forces are stressed and continue to be hobbled by the reckless actions in Iraq and further challenged by the war in Afghanistan, and need to come home. We continue to spend in Afghanistan with no clear plan for withdrawal.

Today we have a reauthorization of the defense bill that fails to lay the foundation for the dramatic changes that are needed. Scaling back our open-ended spending commitments, nuclear weapons systems that we spend more on today than during the Cold War and are far more out of proportion to what we will ever need or use, patterns of deployment, for example, with our Navy, all cry out for reform. Long overdue elements to deal with cost effectiveness and the environmental footprint, energy costs at \$400 a gallon for fuel at the frontlines in Afghanistan, and tens of billions of dollars lost to inefficient air conditioning are missing.

The greatest threat to our future is losing control of our ability to make tough decisions that will enable us to sustain our military and, more importantly, to sustain the economy. In short, the NDAA ignores the big picture.

We should reject this blueprint and begin the process now of right-sizing the military, trimming our burdensome nuclear stockpiles and unnecessary programs, eliminating costly weapons programs, ending our misguided mission in Afghanistan, and moving away from a Cold War model of deployment with U.S. military bases all over Europe.

We have the most powerful military in the world and will by far even if we invest substantially less. Our problem is that the American public is being ill-served by government. We're not investing in our future, and our economy will not be able to sustain this ever-increasing military commitment, to say nothing of the demands of investing in our communities and our people, especially the young. This is another missed opportunity to set down a marker for real change, and to lead responsibly.

THANKING BILL HARRIS

HON. MAC THORNBERRY

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, December 16, 2011

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, each Member of this body is assisted by those who serve on our staffs. The roles and responsibilities of a Member of Congress make it impossible for any one individual to do it all. It takes a team.

Today I wish to recognize and express appreciation to a key member of my team as he retires from official public service.

Bill Harris has served as my Chief of Staff and then Senior Counselor since 2004. But his service to the country began in 1968 as a member of U.S. Army Signal Corps and his service to the Congress began in 1972, when he took a job as a staff assistant to Congressman Mike McCormack of Washington State. Earning his law degree from Georgetown, he was Congressman McCormack's Counsel until 1976.

Between his stints with the Congress, Bill worked for the Atomic Industrial Forum, the Committee for Energy Awareness, the U.S. Council for Energy Awareness (which is now the Nuclear Energy Institute), and the University Research Alliance. In each of these positions, Bill's focus was energy and the tremendous possibilities that can come from nuclear research and development.

In 2004, I enticed Bill back into government service to serve as my Chief of Staff. He led my team by helping each staff member develop his or her talents and interests to grow and serve the people of the 13th district. His expertise in energy and in management, as well as his background in the law, were invaluable. But, perhaps most importantly has been his character and strong, steady leadership.

Too few individuals possess the modesty that puts the good of the organization and the mission ahead of any personal considerations. Yet some of the strongest leaders and those with the most to say are those persons of character whose soft-spoken demeanor quiets the noise with intellect, honesty, and sound judgment. Bill is just such a leader.

He has helped ensure that we made decisions based on the concerns of the people in Texas, not how policy in Washington should control the lives of people back home. No matter what the task, my staff and I counted on Bill's guidance and sense of duty to the people we represent.

Of course, Bill's commitment to service goes beyond his profession. He spends his free time engaging with all corners of the community. For example, he is currently a Mission Pilot with the Civil Air Patrol, a long-serving board member of the Harrington Cancer Center of Amarillo, and a member of the Amarillo Chamber of Commerce Executive Committee. But that is just a sampling. Over the years, Bill and wonderful wife Bev have become fixtures in the community when it comes to serving others and the community as a whole. Bill has been on more committees and organizational projects than anyone could count.

President Reagan put a premium on principle-based leadership. He kept a small plaque on his desk in the Oval Office with a quote that read, "There is no limit to what a man can do or where he can go if he does not