EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

PORT OPPORTUNITY, REINVESTMENT AND TRAINING ACT

HON. JANICE HAHN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 27, 2012

Ms. HAHN. Mr. Speaker, one of the unfortunate, oft-neglected effects of the financial crisis has been chronically high teen unemployment. This past summer, the unemployment rate for teenagers in California reached an astonishing 35 percent, which is well above the high rate for all Californians. For many teens, summer is a time to find their first jobs and learn their first lessons about making and managing money. Those experiences, however, are becoming less common as high school students find it harder to obtain summer employment. As study after study has shown, high rates of unemployment and stagnant wages have been linked with higher crime rates. Alleviating youth unemployment, therefore, isn't just about giving kids something to do over the summer, it's about giving them skills they can use the rest of their lives.

That is why I have introduced the ''Port Opportunity, Reinvestment and Training (PORT) Act.'' This legislation authorizes the creation of a grant program at ports throughout the country to hire eligible high school students over the summer. This is a win-win for the American economy. Our nation's ports have long been engines of economic growth, and so there is no better place for students to learn the skills they need to compete in today's workforce.

These grants are an investment in the communities that need them most. Not only will these grants put money in the pockets of high school students facing unprecedented levels of unemployment, but they will rejuvenate regions that have been devastated by the financial crisis.

I urge my colleagues to support this crucial investment in our students, our communities, and our economy.

HONORING ANDREW WILSON

HON. MARSHA BLACKBURN

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 27, 2012

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, we owe much of our freedom to those who offer their life's work in service to the tenets of this mighty country. With unequalled resolve, the men and women of the United States Armed Forces protect freedom at home while bringing the light of freedom into the world's darkest places.

On October 19, 2011, one of our brave defenders of the contract of democracy was injured when an Improvised Explosive Device exploded while he was on patrol in Afghanistan. He celebrated his 24th birthday at Walter Reed Medical Center awaiting his second prosthetic leg. After 11 surgeries, Wilson remains determined as his toil is for a higher purpose. He will stand and greet his fellow heroes as they return from the Global War on Terror in April.

With boldness, the brave men and women serving in our Armed Forces respond to recognizable evil with the might of America's military, and today freedom continues to march onward. There is a debt of gratitude to Specialist Wilson that no words can repay. I ask my colleagues to join with me in honoring Specialist Andrew Wilson as he refuses to accept defeat and lives brightly the Warrior Ethos. I rise to honor his sacrifice and join him in prayer for those in battle who have not yet made it home.

HONORING LEON HELMS

HON. TIM GRIFFIN

OF ARKANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 27, 2012

Mr. GRIFFIN of Arkansas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and recognize the life and work of one of my constituents, Mr. Leon Helms, who will retire at the end of this month.

Leon received his B.A. degree from Henderson State University. From 1954 to 1956, he served as a First Lieutenant in the U.S. Army at installations at Nuremburg and Munich in Germany, and Fort Benning, Georgia.

Since that time, Leon has enjoyed a distinguished banking career, spanning 55 years. Leon, a graduate of the National Trust School and the Louisiana State University School of Banking of the South, began his career in the area of personal trust at Commercial National Bank. After this, he spent a number of years at First Commercial Bank where he was manager of the bank and the personal trust administration department.

For the past 11 years, Leon has served as a senior advisor at Delta Trust. His service there has proved instrumental to the growth and success of the trust department.

Leon is also a distinguished member of Arkansas's legal profession. He received his J.D. from the School of Law at University of Arkansas at Little Rock, and he is a member of the Arkansas State Bar Association as well as the Pulaski County Bar Association. He was the 2005–2006 President of the Pulaski County Bar Association.

Leon's dedication to his community is demonstrated through his volunteer activity with a number of organizations. He also serves on the boards for the American Lung Association of Arkansas, the Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind, and the Central Arkansas Estate Council. He also serves on the advisory board of the Jones Eye Institute.

Leon and his wife, Ardith, reside in Little Rock, Arkansas, which is in my Congressional district. It is here that they will enjoy Leon's retirement.

It is an honor to represent Leon, and I congratulate him on his long and distinguished career, on his retirement, and for his dedication to his community and his nation.

TRIBUTE TO DONALD MALCOLM WILSON

HON. RUSH D. HOLT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 27, 2012

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise to mark the passing of Donald Malcolm Wilson who spent a lifetime in communications during some of the most historic occasions of the twentieth century. Until his death on November 29, 2011, he was the last surviving member of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (EXCOMM), the ad hoc group formed by President John F. Kennedy, which informed U.S. policy during the most dangerous days of the Cold War—the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962. At the time, Don was deputy director of the U.S. Information Agency, second only to the legendary Edward R. Murrow, who was the director.

Because Mr. Murrow was ill at the time, Mr. Wilson states in his book, The First 78 Years, he was asked to join EXCOMM, whose other 17 members included Vice President Lyndon Johnson, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Under Secretary of State George Ball, and Gen. Maxwell Taylor, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Then 37 years of age, Mr. Wilson was one of the youngest people in the room. It was his job to get the American side of the story out to the world.

The Crisis grew from the U.S. discovery that the Soviets had secretly built missile bases in Cuba. Evidence for the bases was collected photographically by reconnaissance flights, which some members of the administration did not want to release because they would reveal the scope of U.S. secret aerial activity. However, Mr. Wilson argued persuasively that release of the photos would convince skeptical allies that the bases actually existed. The photos were released as Soviet ships headed toward Cuba to deliver ballistic missiles to the formerly secret locations.

EXCOMM members were divided on two options: an invasion of Cuba or a U.S. Navy blockade of the island to prevent the Soviets from delivering the weapons. President Kennedy decided on the blockade. On Thursday, October 24, 1962, described by Robert Kennedy as the day in his life that was, ''The most trying, the most difficult, and the most filled with tension,'' Soviet-bloc ships approached the U.S. Navy ships surrounding the island. Much to the relief of the nation and the world, on orders from Premier Nikita Khrushchev, Soviet ships reversed course and the danger of what would surely have been a nuclear war was averted.

Dean Rusk famously remarked of that incident that, ''We're eyeball to eyeball, and I think the other fellow just blinked.''

On the day President Kennedy was shot, Mr. Wilson was again at the helm of the USIA, working to reassure the nation's people that the democratic process would continue as described in the Constitution of the United States and that their lives and safety would not be altered by the assassination.

Proud of the fact that the USIA had become an integral part of U.S. foreign policy during his tenure, Mr. Wilson left the agency in 1965 to return to his first employer, Time Inc., where he became general manager of Time-Life International.

He took a leave of absence in 1968 to work on Robert Kennedy's presidential campaign and was 50 feet behind Kennedy when he was shot. At that point, Mr. Wilson wrote, he decided not to be involved again in government service. Speaking for himself and his wife Susan Wilson, he stated, ''Two assassinations, which had broken our hearts, were enough.'' Nonetheless in 2000, at the age of 74, he made a brief return to the political arena during the primaries to support Bill Bradley's campaign for the presidential nomination.

In 1970, Mr. Wilson was named Vice President for Public Affairs at Time Inc., a position he filled for the next 19 years, where he initiated internal and external communications programs, including the school program, ''Time to Read,'' matching contributions for employees who donated to charity, and the development of a new and modern Time Inc. logo. News tours took him to Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Europe.

He was at the helm in 1984 when Israeli General Ariel Sharon sued Time magazine for libel. Although Time won the case, it lost the public relations war, Mr. Wilson states in his autobiography. In retrospect, Mr. Wilson believed that the case should have been settled before it went to court. Another explosive story in 1971 was a test of Mr. Wilson's skill in public relations. An authorized biography of reclusive billionaire Howard Hughes was scheduled to be excerpted in Life. Before being exposed as a fraud by Hughes himself, the author Clifford Irving provided material he said was handwritten by Howard Hughes that experts deemed authentic. The story unraveled before the excerpts were published.

Don Wilson was born in Montclair, New Jersey, on June 27, 1925. Republican Calvin Coolidge was president and the George Washington and Golden Gate Bridges had not yet been built. Mr. Wilson's interest in politics began at an early age, and he was avid in his support for Franklin Roosevelt, despite the fact that his father was a Republican. He attended Montclair Academy, Deerfield Academy in Massachusetts. In 1943 he joined the U.S. Army Air Corps and was commissioned a second lieutenant as a B–17 navigator. Before World War II ended, he flew six missions over Europe with the 303rd Bomb Group.

He then finished his education at Yale University, where he gravitated to journalism and wrote a column for the Yale Daily News. Upon graduation, Mr. Wilson was hired by Life magazine as an office boy and worked his way up through the ranks from researcher to reporter to foreign correspondent. He covered the Korean War and the French Indochina War before becoming Washington Bureau chief in charge of coverage of the U.S. government. In 1960 he joined the Kennedy presidential campaign and became deputy director of the USIA in 1962.

In 1957, he married Susan Neuberger, a researcher at Life magazine, who, he states in his autobiography, impressed him immediately with ''her crisp questions and easy sense of humor.'' In 1978, she was appointed to the New Jersey State Board of Education and subsequently devoted 23 years to the Network for Family Life Education, now Answer, a nonprofit organization that promotes education on sexuality. She and Don are the parents of three children, Dwight M. Wilson, Katherine L. Wilson and Penelope Wilson.

In the 1960s Don and Susie Wilson moved to Princeton, and when Mr. Wilson retired from Time Inc., he and George Tabor, formerly Time magazine's business editor, launched NJBIZ, a business paper covering the state of New Jersey. He co-founded the nonprofit Independent Journalism Foundation in 1991 with James Greenfield, a former New York Times editorial board member. Following the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union, the IJF sponsored training programs for journalists in Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia. He was a member of the Century Association and the Council on Foreign Relations in New York City.

Don Wilson died at peace in the arms of his beloved wife, Susie, shortly after a Thanksgiving celebration filled with tributes from his children and grandchildren.

His interest in politics continues to live on in the Donald M. Wilson Fellowship at the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice & Human Rights. His legacy as an imaginative and innovative communicator continues on.

HONORING DR. MILTON RICHARDS

HON. JEFF DENHAM

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 27, 2012

Mr. DENHAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge and honor former California State University Stanislaus Director of Athletics, Dr. Milton Richards, who in November 2011, after 12 years as the Director of Athletics at the California State University Stanislaus, announced he was leaving to take a position as Athletic Director at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia.

He intends to lead Simon Fraser University on their journey to becoming a full-fledged member of the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA). He is guided by the belief that intercollegiate athletics is an integral part of the overall mission of the university, and that a successful intercollegiate athletics and recreation program for men and women contributes substantially to campus life and community interaction.

While at CSU Stanislaus, Dr. Richards and his staff took Warrior Athletics to new heights among the Nation's NCAA DII elite intercollegiate athletics programs. During his time at CSU Stanislaus, student-athletes graduated at a rate higher than the general student body while maintaining a stellar 3.0 class room grade point average as a group. Other accomplishments by Dr. Richards, his coaches, student-athletes, and friends of the program during Richard's tenure at CSU Stanislaus include:

More than 355 student-athletes were named to all-conference, all-region, and All-American honors, as well as receiving accolades as all academic student-athletes at various levels.

24 Warrior Athletics teams participated in NCAA postseason play.

More than $6 million dollars was secured in private funds for the Intercollegiate Athletics program.

Three separate student fee referendums were passed by CSU Stanislaus students in support of the Athletics program, including the referendum for the recently completed $16 million state-of-the-art Student Recreation Complex, and two additional referendums to support Warrior Athletics.

Prior to joining CSU Stanislaus, Dr. Richards served as Director of Athletics at the State University of New York at Albany. In this capacity, Dr. Richards provided the needed leadership to move the Albany Intercollegiate Athletics program from NCAA DIII classification to NCAA Division I status.

A native of Liverpool, New York, Dr. Richards worked in Division IA athletics for 11 years at Kansas State University and Temple University. As Director of Athletics at Kansas State, Dr. Richards was responsible for an athletics program which totaled 14 sports with an $8.5 million budget. Under his leadership, the program reached new heights in athletic fundraising.

From 1982–1991, Dr. Richards enjoyed a nine-year association with Temple University, a Division IA institution in Philadelphia. He spent six of those years as Associate Athletics Director, a position that included the job of Chief Financial Officer. In that role, he managed all of the administrative and operational aspects for the Temple University Department of Intercollegiate Athletics. At Temple University, Dr. Richards also served as an adjunct faculty member for the Temple University College of Education teaching graduate and undergraduate courses in Education Administration.

Dr. Richards is completing a second five-year term as a member of the West Virginia University School of Physical Activity and Sports Sciences President's Visiting Committee. The Visiting Committee is an advisory board established to provide input to WVU President James Clements and College Dean Dana Brooks, on all matters related to the college. Dr. Richards is a member the West Virginia University Hall of Fame and earned three degrees from WVU, including an Ed.D (1983), a MS (1982), and a BS (1980). He has also authored several articles on issues related to intercollegiate athletics.

Dr. Richards is the father of two children—Milton Chase, a nursing student at West Virginia University, and Megan Brittany, a senior at WVU. He is married to former CSU Stanislaus Hall of Fame student-athlete Amy Bublak, who is a law enforcement officer with the Modesto Police Department.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in honoring and commending the outstanding contributions made to intercollegiate athletics by Dr. Milton Richards and hereby wish him continued success in his new journey.

THE BRIDGE TO JOBS ACT

HON. JANICE HAHN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 27, 2012

Ms. HAHN. Mr. Speaker, as every American knows already, we have a jobs crisis in this country. While unemployment has improved within the past year, at 8.5 percent it is still strangling our economy. Over 40 percent of jobless Americans—who lost their jobs through no fault of their own—have been out of work for six months or longer, and the longer they wait, they harder it is for them to find jobs. The fact of the matter is that we will not see robust economic growth again until we put Americans back to work.

We also have an infrastructure crisis. According to Transportation for America, there are 69,223 bridges that have been classified as ''structurally deficient'' by the Federal Highway Administration. Leaving these bridges in their current state of disrepair poses a grave threat not only to our safety, but also to our economy. As the President noted just a few months ago, ''Our aging transportation infrastructure costs American businesses and families about $130 billion a year . . . And if we don't act now, it could cost America hundreds of billions of dollars and hundreds of thousands of jobs by the end of the decade.'' Additionally, studies have shown that our crumbling infrastructure threatens our competitive edge in the world economy. As the Washington Post reported this past summer, if nothing is done to improve our infrastructure, ''U.S. businesses would pay an added $430 billion in transportation costs, household incomes would fall by more than $7,000, and U.S. exports will fall by $28 billion.'' Mr. Speaker, we can't afford to wait until the end of the decade; we need action now.

Alleviating both of these crises is not a mutually exclusive endeavor. That's why I've introduced the ''Bridge to Jobs Act,'' a much-needed ''win-win'' for the American economy and public safety. The act provides states with grants to put Americans back to work by repairing crumbling bridges. Not only will this legislation put Americans back to work and bolster our ailing economy, it will also ensure the safety of the millions who use these bridges each and every day. I urge my colleagues to support this crucial investment in our workforce, our economy, and our safety.

HONORING CHIEF RICKY WATSON

HON. MARSHA BLACKBURN

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 27, 2012

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, there are sacred obligations all citizens have to their community: to participate, to serve, and to leave their home a more prosperous place than they found it. From time to time, it is my distinct privilege to acknowledge outstanding citizens who have made it their life's work to fulfill their sacred obligations. I rise today to honor Chief Ricky Watson as he retires from 25 years of service to the Brentwood community, the Memphis community, and the greater Tennessee family.

Chief Watson began his career in public service by joining the Memphis Police Department in 1978 where he worked in various precincts as well as in the Criminal Investigations Division. A veteran of the United States Air Force, it was no surprise that Chief Watson would join the Tennessee National Guard and earn the rank of 1st Lieutenant. Coming to Brentwood in 1986, he served as Captain of Administrative Services and Captain of Police Services until 2000 when he was appointed as Chief of Police.

A storied legacy of service, Chief Watson embodies at that we in this chamber hold sacred. A member of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, American Legion, and Leadership Brentwood, Chief Watson has spent his career giving to the noble ideals of freedom, service, and sacrifice. I thank him for his service and his example, and ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Ricky Watson for his lasting devotion to a higher calling.

A TRIBUTE TO HENRY S. TRYSLA

HON. ADRIAN SMITH

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 27, 2012

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor an icon of the Eastern Nebraska business community, Henry Trysla. I was saddened to learn this week he had passed away at the age of 82. Henry's life was linked with Nebraska newspapers for more than 50 years. Beginning as a young reporter and columnist at the South Sioux City Star, he rose through the ranks to become the paper's editor and then a contributing writer after his retirement.

Henry served as president of the Nebraska Press Association which bestowed on him its highest honor, Master Editor-Publisher. A Nebraska Press Association Hall of Fame inductee, Henry led the South Sioux City Star to nine community service awards.

Henry's accomplishments did not stop with his professional life. He was also a devoted family man and community leader. He and Margaret, his wife of 52 years, raised five children and have twelve grandchildren. Henry was active in the South Sioux City community, holding a variety of offices in service organizations and receiving numerous awards, including the Optimist Club Service to Youth Award. He was also a founding member of the board of directors of Dakota County State Bank, and he was instrumental in creating a park along the Missouri River.

Henry lived life to its fullest and is an example to us all. He leaves behind a loving family, a grateful community, and a lasting journalistic legacy. Henry was a very special Nebraskan who will be truly missed. May his memory be a blessing.

TRIBUTE TO CONGRESSMAN EDWARD J. DERWINSKI

HON. JIM JORDAN

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 27, 2012

Mr. JORDAN. Mr. Speaker, I am honored today to recognize the accomplishments of former Congressman Edward J. Derwinski, who passed away on Sunday, January 15, 2012, after a long and distinguished career of service to our country.

Ed Derwinski led a fascinating and extraordinary life. An Army veteran, he served in the Pacific during World War II and the postwar occupation. He returned home following his Army service to earn a degree at Loyola University in 1951. After a single term in the Illinois House of Representatives, he was elected to Congress, where he represented Illinois's Fourth District for 24 years.

The congressman's fearlessness was a hallmark of his career, as was most clearly evident in his policy toward the USSR. He was of Polish descent and sympathized strongly with Poland's plight under Soviet rule. To this end, President Reagan appointed him to the State Department, ultimately tapping him as Under Secretary for Security Assistance in 1987. The capstone of his long career of public service was his appointment as the first Cabinet-level Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

As Chairman of the Republican Study Committee, I am proud to note that Ed Derwinski was one of our founding members. Heritage Foundation President Ed Feulner has written that Congressman Derwinski was ''the only senior member who was willing to have the group meet in his office in those early days,'' as other members ''did not want to be viewed as party mavericks by the Republican leadership in the House.'' I am grateful for the solid foundation he and his colleagues built nearly four decades ago.

Mr. Speaker, Ed Derwinski is now fittingly buried in Arlington National Cemetery. On behalf of the Republican Study Committee, I offer his family my condolences as we all continue to celebrate the life of such a tireless defender of freedom both at home and abroad.

RECOGNIZING REP. GABRIELLE GIFFORDS

HON. JOE BACA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 27, 2012

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, it is with a thankful heart that I rise to recognize a dedicated public servant and truly exceptional Member of Congress—Rep. Gabrielle Giffords.

In her time as a Member of Congress, and before that—as a Member of the Arizona State Legislature, Gabby has been a shining example of what a public servant can be.

From supporting our veterans, to working to bring greater fiscal stability and championing home-grown energy—her accomplishments have been many.

But perhaps even more amazing is what Gabby has shown all of us about perseverance and the strength of the human spirit.

We all remember the horrible attack that took place on January 8, 2011, and the impact it had on every single one of our communities and families.

We also remember the bravery of the heroes and first responders, who saved lives on that day.

Gabby's courage, strength, and resilience remind all of us that the human ties of family, and friendship that connect us are much more important than the ideological and political differences that can divide us.

As we recognize Gabby, let's also take a moment to remember the individuals who lost their lives in this heinous event that occurred in Tucson last January.

In particular, I hope we can all keep a special place in our thoughts and prayers for Christina Taylor Green and her family.

Christina was a nine year old child, who had been recently elected to the student council at Mesa Verde Elementary School.

She was beginning to show an interest in civics, and went to the Congress on Your Corner event that day in order to get a chance to meet her Congresswoman.

Christina had great hopes and aspirations for her future. Sadly, all of that was taken away from her in the blink of an eye.

Let us stand together to honor the lives Christina and everyone else who lost their lives in this terrible tragedy.

We offer our heartfelt condolences to the families, friends, and loved ones they leave behind.

Again—I want to thank Rep. Giffords for her outstanding service to her constituents in Arizona, and to the nation as a whole.

The best wishes and prayers of Barbara and I go out to Gabby, her husband Mark, and her family and friends, on continued happiness and a complete recovery.

REMARKS REGARDING STATEMENT BY RYAN C. CROCKER, THE U.S. AMBASSADOR TO AFGHANISTAN

HON. DANA ROHRABACHER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 27, 2012

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Speaker, the January 24 statement by Ryan C. Crocker, the U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, contained two claims that were not worthy of a diplomat of his wide experience.

First, he misstated the rationale for why the United States has spent over 10 years, 1,800 lives, and half a trillion dollars in Afghanistan, claiming, "the United States is committed to supporting the efforts of the central government, to build a strong, secure, democratic, and unified Afghanistan. We have no other aim or goal." As much as we may care about the Afghan people, the defense of America is the only legitimate reason for the deployment of such a large combat force.

We went to Afghanistan in 2001 to avenge the slaughter of 3,000 Americans that was planned by terrorists hiding in that country. We did not go to Afghanistan to indulge in a nation-building social program. What we have done in Afghanistan must be justified on the grounds of whether it has made America more secure. Crocker seems to be moving away from that objective; perhaps because the current policy is failing to meet the security needs of our country. Yet, the current policy he does defend is failing to provide stable, honest government in Afghanistan.

Crocker claims in his second misstep, "Rumors that the United States has a plan to divide Afghanistan or change its form of government are, frankly speaking, lies that dishonor the sacrifice of more than 1,800 American service members who have died in the cause of a unified Afghanistan, governed by its Constitution." While it is true that the U.S. has no plan, certainly a discussion on how to change the current corrupt and incompetent system in Kabul has been going on for a long time.

Questions like whether governors and mayors should be elected or appointed and what constitutes a sustainable Federal system are for the Afghans to decide by democratic methods which depend on free debate.

Ambassador Crocker seems to want to stifle the debate on how to reform and improve the Afghan structure so as to leave behind a more sustainable and legitimate government in Kabul when the U.S. and its allies withdraw in 2014. It is not a "lie" that such a debate is in progress, nor is the debate a "dishonor" to those who have died fighting enemies of the United States.

Indeed, it would be a dereliction of duty not to look for alternatives to the present failed policy. Many Afghans feel that the current governmental structure will not survive beyond 2014 because it has not created a system that is rooted in the people. It's over centralized form, remote from tribal and village society, does not command the allegiance of those who will have to fight to protect Afghanistan after 2014.

Crocker's attempt to insult and discredit those who engage in an honest dialogue is not what one would expect from a professional diplomat and trouble-shooter with his reputation. Though he has had a long and distinguished career in the State Department, he has never held elected office nor served in the Legislative branch. He, thus, does not fully appreciate the role and authority of members of Congress to engage in spirited debate and oversee how U.S. policy is conducted in foreign lands.

I ask that the full text of Ambassador Crocker's statement be printed in the RECORD at this point.

EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES,
Kabul, Afghanistan, January 24, 2012.

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR CROCKER FROM REMARKS DELIVERED AT THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT MEDIA INFORMATION CENTER

A free and independent media plays a vital role in any democracy by keeping the public well informed of key issues, as do government spokespersons who provide accurate information to those who report the news.

Afghanistan's media and the government spokespersons who interact with it—but do not control it—are important elements in our close bilateral relationship.

And it is a close, multi-dimensional relationship that is vitally important to both our countries. That is why we are negotiating a long-term Strategic Partnership that will affirm our mutual commitment far into the future. Afghanistan will not be left alone.

Simply put, the United States is committed to supporting the efforts of the central government, to build a strong, secure, democratic, and unified Afghanistan. We have no other aim or goal.

Rumors that the United States has a plan to divide Afghanistan or change its form of government are, frankly speaking, lies that dishonor the sacrifice of more than 1,800 American servicemembers who have died in the cause of a unified Afghanistan, governed by its Constitution.

It is for the same cause that American taxpayers have provided billions of dollars over the past decade, supporting the government and people of Afghanistan in rebuilding this country, supplying electricity, improving health, and giving access to education, as well as our support for the Afghan Government Media Information Center. We will continue this important work with our Afghan partners through our long-term strategic partnership.

Let me also address another false and absurd rumor: that the United States is seeking a secret deal with the Taliban at the expense of the Afghan government and people.

As you know, Ambassador Grossman was just in Kabul. During his visit, we engaged in a comprehensive discussion on the way forward with President Karzai, his senior advisors, and with the leadership of the High Peace Council.

Afghanistan and the United States both support a peace process for Afghanistan. But only Afghans can decide the future of Afghanistan.

President Karzai, in his speech to Parliament, spoke in support of opening an office in Qatar for the Afghan Taliban. For a peace process to succeed, Afghans must talk to Afghans. The President also spoke of Afghan government contacts with representatives of Hizb-i Islami. This is another example of an Afghan-led process that we are pleased to support.

As Secretary Clinton said after she met the Qatari Foreign Minister earlier this month, nothing has been concluded on the opening of an office, and more work needs to be done.

As Ambassador Grossman said, that work includes first, direct contact between Qatar and Afghanistan on the subject of the opening of any office.

Secondly, for an office to open, we also need to have a clear statement by the Afghan Taliban against international terrorism and in support of a peace process to end the armed conflict in Afghanistan.

And for reconciliation to take place, we are in full agreement with the Government of Afghanistan that three conditions must be met by the Taliban and other armed insurgents: a complete break with al-Qaida; an end to violence; and respect for the Afghan constitution, including its protections for women and minorities.

SBA LOAN PAPERWORK REDUCTION

HON. JANICE HAHN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 27, 2012

Ms. HAHN. Mr. Speaker, during my short time in Congress, I've met with over 50 small businesses in my district to listen to their concerns. Over and over they tell me that their biggest obstacle in working with the Small Business Administration is the arduous amounts of paperwork needed to access SBA loans. If we are going to get our economy back on track, we need to make sure our small business owners and entrepreneurs have access to capital.

That is why I am introducing the SBA Loan Paperwork Reduction Act, which will make permanent the SBA's pilot Small Loan Advantage Program which features streamlined paperwork, with a two-page application for borrowers and a faster approval time. Small business owners are having a hard enough time in this economy without having to spend their valuable time and resources wading through a mountain of paperwork.

By passing this bill, we will ensure that our entrepreneurs are given the chance to succeed and our small business owners can access the capital they need to grow and hire more workers.

HONORING ROBERT MECHLING

HON. MARSHA BLACKBURN

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 27, 2012

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, throughout our history, at times appointed, this country has come face-to-face with evil. It's gone by different names, but it is always recognizable by its desire to blot out the light of freedom. Time and time again, America has seen her sons and daughters respond to that threat with the might, devotion, and strength of military service. We've seen the freedom defended within our boundaries, but more than this, we've come to be known the world-over as defenders of freedom's cause at home and abroad.

One such son, Robert Mechling, took to the call of freedom and served as captain in the 8th Army Air Force in World War II. His dedication to the mission at hand and the promise of liberty for those bound by tyranny's grasp has earned him deserved admiration and distinction. For his heroic deeds which were decisive in the liberation of France, especially his participation in the Normandy landings, Mechling will receive the National Order of the Legion of Honor.

I rise today to honor Robert Mechling as he receives the highest honor given by the President of the Republic of France and thank him for his courage. I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking Mechling and all who served in WWII for their constant vigilance against the foe.