

Afghanistan in which he flew over 2,000 hours in Harrier aircraft.

□ 1020

A southwestern Pennsylvanian at heart, it should come as no surprise that Otis was known, while seated in the cockpit, to listen to the Steelers while flying in the skies over Iraq. But more than anything, Lieutenant Colonel Raible was a father, a husband, and a son; a proud dad of three children, ages 11, 9, and 2. Otis so loved and was loved by his family.

As his mother Belvina of North Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, said, her son died defending all that he held dear. "He was the best of the best," she said. Indeed, Mrs. Raible, he was.

Today, we as a Nation say "thank you" to Lieutenant Colonel Raible and to his entire family. We're so grateful for your service and for your sacrifice protecting our freedom. Through your service, you have made your family and your Nation better. Through your sacrifice, you have made America stronger. Through your courage, you have made America proud.

Many times, I'm sure you soared above the clouds where you could touch the face of God. Now you rest in his loving arms for eternity. Thank you, Colonel. Our Nation thanks you, as well.

THE PUERTO RICO POLITICAL STATUS PLEBISCITE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Puerto Rico (Mr. PIERLUISI) for 5 minutes.

Mr. PIERLUISI. On November 6, the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico will hold a plebiscite on the island's political future. Voters will be asked if they want to continue the current status or to seek a new status. Voters will also be asked to express their preference among the three alternatives to the current status recognized as legally and politically viable by the Federal Government and international law: independence, nationhood in free association with the United States, and statehood.

This plebiscite is different from previous plebiscites in Puerto Rico. It will be the first time that island residents have an opportunity to answer "yes" or "no" to the question of whether they support the status that Puerto Rico has had since 1898. This question has inherent value in a democracy where a government's legitimacy is based on the consent of the governed. And this plebiscite will only include those status options identified as valid by Congress and the White House. True self-determination is a choice among options that can be implemented, not an exercise in wishful thinking.

If a majority of voters express satisfaction with the current status, Puerto Rico's status would not change at this time. Likewise, if there is majority support to change the current status

but not majority support for one of the three alternatives, Puerto Rico's current status would also continue. However, if the majority votes against the status quo and in favor of statehood, free association, or independence, Congress and the President should take action that honors that choice.

Top Democratic and Republican leaders have indicated they will take the results of this plebiscite seriously. That is as it should be. The United States is the greatest democracy in history and a champion of peaceful self-determination around the world. Consistent with this principle, I am confident that Federal officials will respect the choice made by their Federal citizens from Puerto Rico if they express a clear desire to change the island status.

Now I want to speak directly to the men and women I represent in Congress. This plebiscite will have a real impact on you, your family, and the future of the island we love. It is important that you make your voice heard and your vote count.

It is well-known that I oppose the current status and advocate for statehood for Puerto Rico. Whether it is called "territory," "commonwealth," or "colony," the current status denies us the most fundamental rights in a democracy: the right to choose the leaders who make our national laws, and the right to equal treatment under those laws. In my view, the current status is an affront to our dignity.

In my office hangs a framed photo of servicemembers from the island who have lost their lives since 2001. They're the latest in a long line of Puerto Rican patriots who have fought and fallen for this Nation. This photo inspires me, but it also makes me sad. I cannot understand how we, such a proud people, can voluntarily submit to a status that makes us second-class citizens in the country that we have defended for generations.

I realize that after nearly 115 years, the prospect of change can be unsettling, but I also know that there is nothing more powerful than an idea whose time has come. We deserve better than what we have, and the time has come for us to seek a new status that will empower us to realize our full potential.

Among the alternatives to the current status, I believe statehood is the right choice. Independence and free association are worthy options, but both would place at risk our U.S. citizenship and Federal support under programs like Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security for future generations of Puerto Ricans. Because I believe the overwhelming majority of Puerto Ricans are opposed to breaking or substantially weakening the strong political, social, and economic bonds that have formed between Puerto Rico and the United States, I think the only viable alternative to the status quo is statehood. At this critical moment in history, we should aspire to perfect our union, not to sever it.

The current status is about second-class citizenship, which we should rise up to reject. Independence and free association are about separation, which would diminish the opportunities available to our children and grandchildren. Statehood is about equal treatment. It would deliver to Puerto Rico what all free people deserve: full voting rights, full self-government, and full equality under the law.

This November, I hope that the U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico will send a clear message to Congress that they're ready to make a change.

IN HONOR OF OFFICER BRADLEY FOX

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

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to honor the life and memory of Pennsylvania Police Officer Bradley Fox.

Brad Fox was a 5-year veteran of the Plymouth Township Police Department in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.

Having grown up in my home of Bucks County, Officer Fox graduated from William Tennent High School and went on to serve his country for 10 years in the United States Marine Corps.

A well-decorated soldier, Officer Fox received, among other accolades, the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal, the Combat Action Ribbon, and the National Defense Service Medal.

Upon returning from his military service, Officer Fox joined his local police force in Montgomery County, where he built a life for himself, his wife, Lynsay, their daughter, and a second child who is on the way.

On the night of Thursday, September 13, the family, friends, and fellow officers of Brad Fox received the phone call they hoped would never come. Officer Fox was responding to a report of a hit-and-run in his suburban Philadelphia township. As he was investigating the incident, both Officer Fox and his canine companion were ambushed by the suspect and attacked, which left Officer Fox fatally wounded.

Yesterday afternoon, I attended the burial services for Officer Fox at the Washington Crossing National Cemetery in Bucks County. The show of support from the local law enforcement community and the people of southeastern Pennsylvania as a whole was inspiring and it was heartfelt.

To see that in such a short lifetime this father, husband, brother, son, veteran, and police officer had touched so many lives was a testament to the kind of person that Brad Fox was. He dedicated his entire life to service to his community and to his country and should serve as an example to every one of us.

Every day in Montgomery County and in Bucks County and in communities across this great Nation, law enforcement officers, firefighters, and

paramedics are working to preserve the public safety. These men and women wake up every morning and head to work not knowing what dangers they may encounter during their shift. The loss of Officer Brad Fox serves as a somber reminder of the risks our police officers face each and every day.

Here in our Nation's capital, just a few miles from where I stand at this very moment, is the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial. Etched into this memorial are the names of countless men and women who gave their lives in service to their communities. Sadly, Officer Brad Fox will join that roll of honor.

Also carved on the memorial are quotes which capture the spirit of those honored there, including one from former President George H.W. Bush, which reads:

Carved on these walls is the story of America, of a continuing quest to preserve both democracy and decency, and to protect a national treasure that we call the American Dream.

There can be no doubt that Officer Bradley Fox did his part in his quest to preserve the American Dream. Our country owes a debt of gratitude to Officer Fox and to his family for the sacrifice he made and they made to keep his community a safe place to work and to live and to raise a family.

□ 1030

A WORLD AT PEACE, FOR OUR GRANDCHILDREN AND THEIR GRANDCHILDREN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, in April of the year 2004, I rose in this Chamber to speak for 5 minutes about my conviction that the war in Iraq was a dangerous, immoral policy, and it was hurting America and our national security.

Since then, I've delivered a similar message nearly every day that it was possible when we were in session, and once the Iraq war finally drew to a close, I moved on to focus on the ongoing military occupation of Afghanistan, which soon will be in its 11th year, costing us more than 2,000 American lives and more than half a trillion dollars and counting.

Today is my 440th 5-minute Special Order calling for an end of these wars and the safe return of our troops to their families right here at home. I'm not proud of having reached that number. I would much prefer that the speeches were no longer necessary.

But since I'm retiring from the House at the end of this year, my 20th year in Congress, one of my biggest disappointments is that we haven't shown the leadership, the courage, and the resolve to finally secure peace.

We are still mired in this Afghanistan conflict, even though the evidence

is overwhelming that it's doing more harm than good, even though it's emboldening terrorists and insurgents rather than defeating them, even though it's breeding resentment of America instead of winning hearts and minds. We are still mired in this conflict, even though a clear majority of the American people no longer want any part of it.

I will not return to the House in 2013, so this will be one of my final opportunities to press this point. But as long as our troops remain in harm's way, and as long as this dreadful policy continues, I will continue to speak out and speak up.

I know there are many proud and fearless opponents of this war on both sides of the aisle who will continue to lead this effort right here in Congress. Time and time again what I have advocated is not just an end to these wars, but the beginning of a new approach to combating terrorism and keeping America safe.

We need to lead with American cooperation and compassion around the world, not American weapons and brute force. We need SMART Security, a plan that puts the focus on development and diplomacy. We need a strategy that gives people hope and improves their lives instead of invading and occupying their lands.

This is not only the humane approach, Mr. Speaker, it's also the more pragmatic one, the one that will truly advance our national security goals, and it's a lot more cost-effective. Helping people costs pennies on the dollar compared to waging war. A lot of people have said to me over the years, WOOLSEY, your problem is that you think we can have a perfect world. Well, consider me guilty as charged.

I don't believe there is anything wrong with idealism and ambitious goals because I'm absolutely certain that if we don't strive for a perfect world, we won't ever come close to providing a safe, secure, and peaceful world for our grandchildren and their grandchildren, and that's our job here in Congress.

ENERGY CLOSURES AND LAYOFFS

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, this week another American energy-producing company announced plant closures and worker layoffs, citing the Obama administration's authoritarian regulatory regime in part as a rationale for its decision.

Yesterday Alpha Natural Resources announced closures of eight coal mines in three States, one of which is located in the Fifth Congressional District of Pennsylvania, which I'm proud to represent. Company officials, in announcing the closures, cited "a regulatory environment that's aggressively aimed at constraining the use of coal."

The decision will result in layoffs of 1,200 workers and an immediate 400 jobs lost in Virginia, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania.

The fact that the coal industry is facing tough times isn't news. They have other energy competitors, including natural gas, and challenges with coal transport costs, energy, and labor costs. The issue that's newsworthy is the additional burden being placed on American employers during such difficult and tough economic times.

The administration's announced intentions to eliminate coal, our most abundant natural resource, from our fuel mix, with no clear plan to replace it with any effective alternative, has taken a significant toll on employers and individuals across my home State.

Here are several news headlines of closures and layoffs in my home district from the past several months:

September 18 headline: "Alpha Natural Resources closing eight coal mines." Twelve hundred companywide layoffs and an immediate 400 jobs cut in Virginia, West Virginia, and my home State of Pennsylvania.

August 30 headline: "Another round of Joy workers laid off." The Derrick:

In August, Joy Mining Manufacturing in Franklin, Venango County, Pennsylvania, posted another round of employee layoffs, and 43 employees were notified they had been furloughed from their jobs. The week before that, 19 others were laid out. Joy Mining is the largest private-sector employer in Venango County.

February 9 headline: "Local Officials Respond to Shawville Power Plant Closure":

GenOn Energy has about 80 employees at its plant in Shawville, Clearfield County, and contributes roughly \$225,000 dollars annually in local taxes. GenOn offers jobs not only through its plant but through Amphfire coal and trucking firms, which means a loss of 100 to 200 workers in it is next several years.

January 26 headline: "FirstEnergy Shutting Down 6 Sites in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Maryland":

In January, FirstEnergy announced that the new environmental regulations led to a decision to shut down six older coal-fired power plants in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Maryland, affecting more than 500 employees.

Coal operations are closing, forcing more workers into unemployment as countless indirect coal jobs have been put at risk because of the President's unwavering commitment to end coal. Our most abundant natural resource is a source of domestic energy.

In the aftermath of all these closures and job losses in my district, along with numerous across my State and the country, it is becoming increasingly clear that this administration expects the consumers of Pennsylvania to bear the costs of a poorly thought out, poorly defined, and poorly explained environmental agenda.

But it's not just a war on coal, it's a war on electricity and jobs. The shuttering of a record number of coal-fired power plants threatens thousands of