

THE DARRELL GWYNN  
FOUNDATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Darrell Gwynn Foundation, a national organization that for almost 12 years has made its mission "to provide support for people with paralysis and prevent spinal cord injuries."

On Friday, May 9, this important foundation will be holding an event in my congressional district to assist in providing power wheelchairs to children and young adults with spinal cord injuries.

Darrell Gwynn, son of former NHRA drag racing world champion Jerry Gwynn, seemed destined to replicate his father's achievements when his life took a tragic turn at the young age of 28. While participating at a demonstration race in England, Darrell's car broke apart, then veered into a retaining wall at 240 miles an hour.

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He sustained life-threatening injuries, but faith and determination allowed Darrell to survive this ordeal.

In response to his new circumstances, Darrell was motivated to help others who face similar challenges, and he founded the Darrell Gwynn Foundation. The Foundation's cornerstone, the Wheelchair Donation Program, provides the gift of mobility and independence to those living with paralysis.

Darrell's spirit and relentless efforts to offer support to people living with paralysis have earned him the respect and adulation of his colleagues. My good friend for many years—decades, actually—Angel Pardo, president of Spinal Cord Living-Assistance Development, said the following:

Mr. Gwynn is passionate about his work, and works hard to help others. Despite being quadriplegic and a partial arm amputee, he often works 7 days a week.

Thank you, Angel.

Mr. Speaker, the work that Darrell Gwynn and Angel Pardo do every day on behalf of individuals afflicted by this condition is very important. There are an estimated 12,000 new cases of spinal cord injury and paralysis each year. Over 36 percent are a result of car accidents.

I know from the many personal stories from my constituents and friends just how devastating these injuries can be. The toll is often not exclusively physical. The emotional and financial tolls can be substantial, both on the victims and their families.

The provision of a power wheelchair can return confidence, freedom, and independence to a victim. This life-changing piece of equipment, however, comes at the considerable cost of approximately \$25,000 a chair, and that is where the Darrell Gwynn Foundation comes in. They are committed to improving the victims' quality of life by

providing each with a power wheelchair.

I encourage all members of our south Florida community to attend the Darrell Gwynn Foundation event on Friday, May 9, at Casa Larios Restaurant in Miami.

Congratulations, Darrell and Angel. May you continue to help so many afflicted individuals.

OPTIMISM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak of the optimism of this Nation and of her people. Frankly, we do live in the greatest Nation in the world. Sometimes we are questioned when we say that, but I say it proudly and with a spirit of humbleness. I know that because on faraway shores and lands there are men and women who wear the uniform proudly.

This morning, in our own House of Representatives, we held a reception for participants of the Wounded Warriors program. These individuals are in a number of Members' offices. Many of us look forward to that opportunity, and they continue to serve.

So I know as President Obama rises tonight to speak to the Nation, he will have a sense of optimism, which I will enjoy and support. He will note, however, that as we are optimistic, we must provide that optimism and economic opportunity for all of our brothers and sisters, citizens and persons, in the United States of America.

It is well known that we have made great strides. We no longer have the horrific mortgage collapse, though we are still working with homeowners. We don't have the debacle on Wall Street because, as Democrats, we worked hard to fix that problem, as Wall Street continues to thrive. Of course, we have taken ourselves out of the doldrums of a deep depression—or recession—in 2008 and 2009 with a powerful stimulus package which today, in Houston, Texas, has seen the retrofit of the Mickey Leland Federal Building. With \$90 million, they put people to work fixing a building where citizens come for services.

That is the American way of investing, and not handouts, as has been described by my colleagues on the other side of the aisle. When are we going to recognize that the investment in human resources is really the answer?

Thank you, Mr. President, for understanding that.

Theodore Roosevelt said:

The man of great wealth owes a peculiar obligation to the State, because he derives special advantage from the mere existence of government.

That is true. Wealth inequality must be fixed, and it must be fixed now. In the U.S., income inequality has been rising steadily over the past four decades, reaching levels not seen since the late 1920s.

The President has signed an executive order, which I congratulate him on, understanding that you cannot live on less than \$10 an hour. It needs to be more. That is investing in the American way. That is generating the jobs so that individuals can then spend their dollars and then more jobs are created.

So tonight I don't want there to be a retrenching. I don't want us to be overwhelmed with this myth of debt and deficit so much so that we cannot invest in the education of our children and we can't fix the horrible situation of individuals not having access to higher education.

Who in their right mind would continue to allow those who are chronically unemployed and need unemployment insurance to suffer, as they are doing? Who would allow four out of five beneficiaries who have at least one adult that they are taking care of, children that they are taking care of, or multiple adults, who would allow 50 percent of those who have a college education and 36 percent who have a high school education and are not able to get jobs, and not extend the unemployment benefits on an emergency basis? Who would allow the over 9 in 10 that live in households with a total income under \$75,000 that need this extension of unemployment benefits so they can pay their rent or mortgage, who would allow such a crisis?

We are doing it right here, and we should be optimistic.

I have introduced legislation to extend unemployment for a whole year. It is an emergency. Then I introduced H.R. 3888, which indicates that those who are on unemployment benefits can get training to redirect their career with a stipend—their unemployment benefits do not cease—so that they can come back to what they want—the very stories that I listened to as I went to career recovery and resources fairs.

Mr. Speaker, tonight, I will be optimistic. I will be optimistic for Maggie, a 25-year-old Army veteran who has to get food stamps. She makes \$10 an hour, 6 days a week, in order to save for paramedic training. She is the very example of someone that we can provide that training for so she can invest in the community, even though she tried nursing but did not have the money to finish. Or, maybe I can speak of Ms. Aguilar, who lives in my State of Texas, which refuses to expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act.

Where is the optimism, Mr. Speaker?

So tonight, Mr. President, you do what is necessary for the optimism of this Nation. It is the greatest Nation in the world. We will stand with you as you invest in human resources, create jobs, provide unemployment extension, and raise the minimum wage to cure wealth inequality.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from