

the service of all women, including Betty Clark-Dickey.

WELCOMING COMMISSIONER KERLIKOWSKE

(Mr. HIGGINS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HIGGINS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to welcome Gil Kerlikowske, recently confirmed as Commissioner of the United States Customs and Border Protection.

I am pleased to welcome a Commissioner who has an understanding of the needs of the northern border, as he previously served as police commissioner for the city of Buffalo. His firsthand experience comes at a critical time as we work to advance the United States-Canada Beyond the Border initiative.

In western New York, this cross-border relationship is especially critical to the local economy. I worked with Customs and Border Protection in the past to advocate for increased border staffing levels along the border. At the Peace Bridge, there is also a pre-inspection pilot currently underway that hopes to ease congestion and shorten wait times. In the coming year, we hope to continue moving forward on plans to construct a new border station at the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Base.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Commissioner Kerlikowske. I look forward to working closely with him and his staff on issues important to the Buffalo-Niagara region and the entire Nation.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AWARENESS MONTH

(Mr. MCKINLEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MCKINLEY. Mr. Speaker, March is National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. Every year at this time we all bring attention and understanding to the needs and the potential of people with developmental disabilities.

As an individual with a hearing disability and a grandfather of a child who has CHARGE syndrome, I am very familiar with the hardships of overcoming these disabilities.

We must all think of ways that would be more inclusive, respectful for our communities, schools, and our workforce.

Interning for us in our Washington office we are fortunate to have a young woman who happens to have Down syndrome. She is also attending a local university. We look forward to those days we have her in our office. Her cheery disposition and her work ethic is infectious.

I encourage everyone to engage with people in our communities who have developmental disabilities and recognize their talents and abilities that will make this a better Nation.

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH AND MINIMUM WAGE

(Mrs. DAVIS of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, Women's History Month is a time for us to reflect on what women have done for America and what America can do for its women.

If we really look at the history of women in this country, we see that they have done far more than we give them credit for. I am not just talking about extraordinary figures like Susan B. Anthony and Rosa Parks. I am talking about the countless women who have worked day in and day out since this country was founded.

The idea that women are new to working is a myth. The truth is women have always worked to better their families and their communities, but too often the work that they do is undervalued.

Almost two-thirds of minimum wage workers are women, and although more families than ever rely on female breadwinners, women's wages still lag behind men's. For these women it isn't about having it all; it's about having enough to get by.

This Women's History Month, let's give women and their families the raise they deserve. Let's show all Americans that their work is worth a living wage. After all, when women succeed, America succeeds.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF DEP- UTY SHERIFF WILLIAM R. MAST, JR.

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of Watauga County Deputy Sheriff William R. Mast, Jr. Deputy Mast was shot and killed while responding to a 911 call in Deep Gap, North Carolina, in 2012.

Deputy Mast was only 23 years old when he was killed 20 months ago, and his first child was born shortly thereafter.

Today, at a ceremony at the Perkinsville Baptist Church in Boone, the bridge spanning the south fork of the New River on U.S. Highway 421 will be named for Deputy Mast. This is a small token of gratitude from the community which Deputy Mast served so ably and honorably.

Our thoughts and prayers today are with Deputy Mast's widow, young son, and all those who continue to mourn his passing.

COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

(Ms. JACKSON LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address a question that

the American people have been raising for more than a decade: When will we address the question of human dignity of so many who are in our country who desire the status of citizenship? When will we pass a sensible, reasonable immigration reform legislation or package? Will we combine our concern for national security with border security, along with human dignity?

The question is being asked by constituents from my 18th Congressional District in Houston. It is being asked by the American Jewish Committee. It is being asked by Cardinal DiNardo in the most eloquent and passionate way as they met last week to hear from voices of those who have not heard the answer. Or the 139 who showed up at a press conference some weeks ago, standing with me, demanding that people be given their human dignity. Or the leadership from Ireland who was here at a St. Patrick's Day luncheon who stood up and asked the Speaker, When are we going to put comprehensive immigration reform on the floor of the House.

This is a multicultural challenge to America. This is an economic challenge. This is from the Irish. This is from South Asians, from Asians. This is from people from Bangladesh, from Poland. It is all over America. Let's pass comprehensive immigration reform.

AMERICAN RED CROSS MONTH

(Mrs. BROOKS of Indiana asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. BROOKS of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, March is Red Cross Month across the country, and as chairman of the House Committee on Homeland Security's Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications, I would like to take some time to recognize the accomplishments of the American Red Cross and its volunteers, everyday heroes.

Last year, Red Cross and volunteers responded to over 60,000 emergencies and provided over 900 shelters to people forced from their homes. Following the Boston Marathon bombing last April, the Red Cross provided 500 units of blood products to Boston-area hospitals. They played a pivotal role in sheltering families in my district in Indiana during last year's winter holiday floods.

I visited the Red Cross national headquarters, where I toured the digital operations center and saw how they are utilizing social media in their operations.

I am grateful for their achievements in educating Americans on how to prepare for and respond to emergencies and disasters. This organization and their volunteers exemplify the everyday heroes as they lead the way in disaster preparedness and response, and we must all thank Red Cross. I urge my fellow Members to visit chapters and to follow them on Facebook and Twitter.

Please visit and thank them for all the work they are doing in our communities.

AFFORDABLE HEALTH INSURANCE

(Mr. VEASEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to remind Americans today to hurry: they have 6 days left to sign up for the Affordable Care Act through their Federal and State exchanges and marketplaces. Don't believe the hype from the Republicans. The Affordable Care Act is working to improve the lives of millions of Americans. More than 5 million Americans have signed up so far through the marketplace, and they will continue to do so.

This weekend, I hosted two enrollment events in my district, both in Dallas and Fort Worth, and attended two additional ones to ensure that constituents in my district get the affordable health care they deserve. What I saw when I visited those events were rooms filled with men, women, and children looking to provide insurance for their families, looking to ensure that they are protected from unforeseen sickness and health issues.

Let's stop playing politics with people's health care. Let's work together to get every American covered.

□ 1215

DEFENDING RELIGIOUS LIBERTY FROM THE ACA

(Mr. BILIRAKIS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BILIRAKIS. I rise today, Mr. Speaker, in support of religious liberty.

The Affordable Care Act, better known as ObamaCare, forces businesses to provide services like the morning-after pill as part of their health insurance. For businessowners who believe that life begins at conception, this aspect of the ACA violates their religious principles.

The First Amendment is sacred to Americans. At the time of its creation, the First Amendment was completely unique. God, not government, gave unalienable rights to women and men, including freedom to practice their religion without interference.

No individual should be forced to violate their religious beliefs. Opponents will say that this is restricting access to health care. I disagree. This is about ensuring the integrity of religious freedom for all Americans, regardless of religion. That is a founding American principle.

INVESTING IN SPACE EXPLORATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

(Mr. MCNERNEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MCNERNEY. Mr. Speaker, the U.S. has always been the world leader in space exploration. We were the first and only nation to put humans safely on the Moon and the only nation to send unmanned ships to Mars, among other extraordinary missions.

In 2011, NASA flew its last space shuttle mission. Without any new human lift system ready, the U.S. has had to depend on Russia to send our astronauts to space. This arrangement has worked because of a sense of cooperation and mutual respect between our two great nations' space programs.

But American innovation cannot be stopped. Several private companies are working with NASA to ensure that Americans can once again fly on American spaceships.

As a Nation, we should support this effort and encourage private American companies to accelerate their programs. These public-private partnerships will ensure that the U.S. does not rely solely on Russian spacecraft.

I urge my colleagues to consider the long-term benefits of investing in space exploration and scientific research.

RECOGNIZING BRANDI BRULEY

(Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Ms. Brandi Bruley, principal of North Elementary School in my hometown of Taylorville, Illinois.

Ms. Bruley was recently named the Illinois Principals Association's 2014-2015 Elementary School Principal of the Year in recognition of her positive impact on her students and the entire educational community.

She has worked hard to improve communication between teachers and parents with a goal of raising student achievement. As a result of her efforts, North Elementary School has been awarded the Illinois State Board of Education's Spotlight Award for the last 3 years and made the ISBE Honor Roll in 2013.

Ms. Bruley has a long-standing and deep commitment to serving her students, faculty, and our entire community. Her experience and innovation enable her to bring creative ideas that focus on high standards for our local schools.

Congratulations and thank you to Brandi. This is a well-deserved award to recognize all that you do for our students and the entire Taylorville community.

IN HONOR OF THE ANNIVERSARY OF GREECE'S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE FROM THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

(Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to cele-

brate the 193rd anniversary of Greece's declaration of independence from the Ottoman Empire.

The ancient Greeks forged the notion of democracy. They believed in the right of self-governance, one of the foundations of our great Nation; yet, for centuries, the Greek people—the people whose ancestors inspired our own country's founding, the people who Thomas Jefferson called the light which led ourselves out of Gothic darkness, the Greek people were denied this right.

Today, Greeks celebrate March 25 as the day when the Greeks began the long, hard battle for independence.

I recently met with Ambassador John Koenig, ambassador to Cyprus, to discuss the latest on our Cyprus negotiations. He was hopeful that real progress could be made in unifying the island and stopping the illegal Turkish occupation.

The U.S. must also continue to work to find a mutually agreeable name for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Greece is an important ally to the United States. I am proud to stand with American Greeks today to celebrate their independence and aspirations.

HOBBY LOBBY

(Mr. PETERS of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PETERS of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise to bring attention to the Hobby Lobby case, which is being argued today at the Supreme Court.

In this case, a for-profit company is refusing to cover the birth control of its female employees, citing the owners' personal religious objections.

In 2014, the idea that a woman has to fight for access to birth control is astonishing. Ninety-nine percent of American women will use contraception at some point in their lives.

As I have said before, all health care decisions, including birth control and women's reproductive rights, should be between a woman and her doctor, not involving her boss or a politician here in Washington, D.C.

The wide availability of birth control has been an enormous benefit for millions of women and the American economy, enabling generations of women to support themselves financially, complete their education, and plan for the right time to start a family.

It is a basic, preventative health care option. It should not be available only at the discretion of a woman's employer, nor should a woman have to choose between her job and her health.

As a husband of nearly 28 years and a father of two, it seems pretty simple to me. Women, not bosses, should be in charge of their personal health care decisions.