

Seventy years ago this past Sunday, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed the bill that transformed American economic and social life and changed forever the way we live and work.

The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, commonly known as the "G.I. Bill," opened the doors of higher education to millions of the veterans who risked their lives to save the world for freedom in World War II.

Before World War II, college and homeownership were, for most Americans, an impossible dream. Because of the G.I. Bill, millions who would have flooded the job market instead opted for education.

In the peak year of 1947, veterans accounted for 49 percent of college admissions and by the time the original G.I. Bill ended on July 25, 1956, 7.8 million of 16 million World War II Veterans had participated in an education or training program.

Millions also took advantage of the G.I. Bill's home loan guaranty and from 1944 to 1952, the federal government backed nearly 2.4 million home loans for World War II Veterans, which was then the largest expansion in home ownership in American history.

Upon signing the G.I. Bill on June 22, 1944, two weeks and two days after D-Day, President Roosevelt stated:

This bill gives emphatic notice to the men and women in our armed forces that the American people do not intend to let them down.

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For they have been compelled to make greater economic sacrifice and every other kind of sacrifice than the rest of us, and are entitled to definite action to help take care of their special problems.

The lawmakers that passed the G.I. Bill had no idea the remarkable effect this bill would have in establishing a thriving middle class America. The legislation that they passed provided opportunity for individuals to succeed. It was an investment in our people and many Americans took that opportunity and thrived.

The lesson in this is if you give average Americans an opportunity to succeed, then they will take advantage and do extraordinary things.

HONORING PRESIDENT AND CEO
OF CONFERENCE OF MINORITY
TRANSPORTATION OFFICIALS,
JULIE CUNNINGHAM

HON. CORRINE BROWN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 30, 2014

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mourn the passing of the President and CEO of Conference of Minority Transportation Officials (COMTO), Julie Cunningham.

Ms. Cunningham served on President-Elect Barack Obama's Transition Team at the U.S. Department of Transportation and provided expert testimony before the U.S. Congress, including the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, the Congressional Black Caucus and the Senate Democratic Caucus.

I have been working with COMTO and Julie Cunningham for many years, and was so pleased to host the COMTO conference in my home town of Jacksonville last year. She was a powerful force in the transportation industry

and brought together all the minority voices in transportation to speak as one to ensure that people of color were working in and receiving contracts in the field of transportation.

Ms. Cunningham was nationally known for her talent in building healthy, effective partnerships across diverse government and corporate cultures as well as for her strong advocacy for a level playing field and maximum employment and contract participation for minorities, women, and economically disadvantaged persons. Under her direction, COMTO became a recognized resource as a result of the organization's advocacy relative to workforce diversity and inclusion, and participation by Historically Underutilized Businesses (minority, women and veteran owned businesses) in the transportation industry. COMTO was awarded the 2005 Disadvantaged Business Advocate of the Year by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Prior to joining COMTO, she held positions in the energy and construction industries. She was previously employed as a Senior Consultant at a Nuclear Power Plant and was credited for developing critical strategic and internal communication plans for a struggling power plant. She led the plant's senior management team in implementing programs to improve employee morale and to win the stakeholder community as ambassadors of nuclear power. She is also known for her ability to implement grassroots programs, and facilitate work process improvements for nuclear power plants.

A veteran of the U.S. Army, Ms. Cunningham was a member of many boards of directors, including the Mineta Transportation Institute, the Eno Foundation and the National Transit Institute Advisory Council. She was also a member of the American Society of Association Executives, and the Association for Conflict Resolution.

A native of Cleveland, Ohio, Ms. Cunningham graduated from Hiram College with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Business Management. She leaves to cherish her memory her daughter, Karissa Cunningham of Clarksville, TN; parents, James and Louise Smith of Painesville, OH; siblings, Cathy (Safdar) Hussain of Jacksonville, FL, Elisa (Paul) Sanchez of Painesville, OH, and Jeffery Smith of Painesville, OH; grandmother, Minnie Banks of Painesville, OH; niece Tiffany Smith of Cleveland, OH; nephew, Blake Smith of Coshocton, OH; great nephew, James Gadomski of Painesville, OH, as well as many aunts, uncles, cousins, and lifelong friends throughout the nation.

My prayers go to Julie's daughter and her family, and to the many members of COMTO. I am thankful for her life and many accomplishments.

TEXAN COL. RUDDER'S BOYS OF
POINTE-DU-HOC

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 30, 2014

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, it was raining as the English Channel churned and tossed the Americans in the landing craft. The sun was coming up over the horizon, but no one could see it through the gray clouds. Thousands of teenage liberators stared into

the distance to see the high cliffs of Normandy, France. It was D-Day, June 6, 1944—70 years ago.

Expecting to land on Omaha Beach at 6:30 a.m. ahead of other Allied Forces, Texan Lt. Col. James Earl Rudder led the United States Army Rangers' 2nd Ranger Battalion into what seemed like an impossible feat.

As the treacherous weather conjured crashing waves five to six feet tall, a shifting wind tossed the Rangers off course. The mist, clouds and smoke obscured the navigation, making it hard to locate Pointe-du-Hoc from a mile out at sea. Their landing was delayed by forty minutes. Already, the mission seemed doomed. This navigational error meant two things: They would have to sail parallel to the coast facing intense enemy fire. It gave the enemy time to recover and prepare for the next assault.

For almost half an hour, the Rangers rode along the coast as bullets were flying all around them. Some Rangers were hit by enemy fire. But bleeding or not, still they pushed forward.

They battled the wind as the pelting rain blurred their vision and soaked their climbing equipment. They were exhausted and tense. The landing crafts that brought the GIs to shore were beginning to take on water, presenting yet another obstacle for Rudder's Rangers. Water began to leak in through the front ramp of the landing crafts, so the Rangers ripped up the floorboards and used their helmets to bail out the alarming amount of water rushing in all while the Nazis fired down at them atop the cliffs.

One of the landing crafts sunk from the weather and enemy fire. The brutal conditions of the sea caused others in the landing crafts to become violently seasick. Finally, the Rangers reached the eastern side of the Pointe, their new designated landing spot. It was now 7:10 a.m. The battle had just begun, and the odds were stacking up against Rudder's success.

The Rangers were miserable, cold, wet and seasick; some bleeding from injury but none wavered. Their mission: to conquer the cliffs at Pointe-du-Hoc and find the big German guns. The guns could reap havoc on later landings.

No longer was the weather their only enemy. As the first shoe print was made in the wet sand of Normandy, the Rangers came under brutal fire from atop the cliffs as the enemy chunked grenades down at them. The men had to resist the urge to take out the machine guns because the primary mission was to climb. Fifteen men were already lost in the crossing of the beach. Divided into three units, Lt. Col. Rudder prepared to lead the Provisional Rangers, task force A of 250 men up the cliffs. They moved quickly with precision and expertise. They shifted through the chaos that ensued around them all while operating soaking wet equipment. (The ropes attached to the grappling hooks were heavy with water and thus could not reach the top of the cliffs when launched from a mortar.)

The Rangers used rope ladders, a few dry grappling hooks and steel ladders to scale the cliffs. Their machine guns were clogged with mud. Amidst enemy fire and malfunctioning equipment, the Rangers were flung back and forth climbing the wet ropes.

While some Rangers provided cover on the beach, amazingly, the first ones to the top, conquered the cliff in 10 minutes. They in turn