

Mr. Speaker, the example set by Kyle demonstrates the rewards of dedication and perseverance. It is an honor representing Kyle and his family in the United States Congress and it is with great pride that I recognize them today. I ask that all of my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives join me in congratulating Kyle on competing in this rigorous competition and in wishing him nothing but continued success in his education and in his future college education at the University of Northern Iowa.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN OUR BACKYARD AND IN OUR CONVENIENCE STORES

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 8, 2018

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, May 29th marked the 3-year anniversary of the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act (JVTA). This legislation officially declared that modern-day slavery will not be tolerated in our country. Since its passage the United States has seen enormous efforts to find and protect victims of this scourge on society. While JVTA took an important step forward in the fight against human trafficking, much more must be done.

The International Labor Organization estimates that there are still hundreds of thousands of victims of human trafficking in America. One challenge we face in this fight is the difficulty associated with finding and communicating with victims.

Since 2006, the nonprofit organization 'In Our Backyard' has been advocating and fighting against the horrors of human trafficking. Recently, this group has created a program known as CSAT—Convenience Stores Against Trafficking.

Not only does this program train clerks to spot signs of human trafficking in victims, it also utilizes the convenience and isolation of the convenience store bathrooms as a way to reach victims. Convenience stores can be found on almost every corner, and they see hundreds of customers each day—making them an easy place for traffickers to bring their victims without the fear of being found out.

Now, In Our Backyard is attempting to turn the tables on these criminals and transform convenience stores into places where victims can come across both highly trained staff members and information on hotlines and websites where they can get help. With over 11,000 convenience store locations in 29 states—including my home state of Texas—this organization has been able to help victims all over the country.

The fight against human trafficking is not over. We must recognize and appreciate the volunteers and organizations such as In Our Backyard that have taken up this fight as well. Together, we will succeed in making trafficking a thing of the past.

And that's just the way it is.

RECOGNIZING JOHN AND BENJEAN RAPP

HON. EVAN H. JENKINS

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 8, 2018

Mr. JENKINS of West Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize John and Benjean Rapp of Summersville, West Virginia. Mr. and Mrs. Rapp are cornerstones in their community, who have dedicated their lives to bettering our nation, and improving West Virginia.

John Rapp served our country in the United States Air Force and returned home to the Mountain State to serve as a West Virginia State Trooper for over 20 years. Outside his time in uniform, John also served as county commissioner for Mercer county from 1990 to 1996. While a county commissioner he prioritized growing the economy and infrastructure development.

Benjean Rapp has been an active member of her church and serves as a local leader through multiple civic groups.

Benjean has played an integral part in working to restore the historic Old Main High School in Summersville.

Together, they have made a tremendous team and have had a positive impact in their community and the Mountain State.

I would like to thank them for their service and dedication to not just their communities but to our nation. I wish them all the best as they continue to work to better our world.

IN RECOGNITION OF MARY HALL-THIAM FOR BEING NAMED A WOMAN OF ACHIEVEMENT BY THE KAPPA FOUNDATION

HON. DEBBIE DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 8, 2018

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Dr. Mary Hall-Thiam for being named a Woman of Achievement by the Kappa Foundation. Dr. Hall-Thiam has distinguished herself through her civic activism and her public service.

The Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti-Inkster Alumni Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity was established on December 6, 1958. The organization was founded in order to foster relationships between Michigan Kappa Alpha Psis, provide leadership to current students at Michigan universities and mentor youth in suburban Detroit. Since its founding, group members have come together to serve the local community in a variety of ways including golf tournaments, college fairs, pancake breakfasts, Meals on Wheels programs and robust scholarship programming. In addition to their myriad civic endeavors, the fraternity honors female leaders in southeast Michigan annually at their "Women of Achievement" event. This year's honorees include Mary Hall-Thiam, a longtime public servant and educational champion.

After receiving her Educational Doctorate in Guidance and Counseling from the University of Michigan, Dr. Hall-Thiam began a distinguished tenure of service in the public sector

of the State of Michigan. She has served in various positions including the Acting Director of the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity Programs at the Michigan Department of Human Services as well as co-Project Manager of the 2008 Poverty Summit put on by the state. She is known for her dedication to her work and local community and seeks to give back as often as possible. She currently serves as the President of Pearls and Ivy Foundation of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and as the Chairperson of a branch of the NAACP. Dr. Hall-Thiam is well-known in southeast Michigan for her engagement and activism, and we are grateful for her lifetime of service to our state.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Mary Hall-Thiam for being named one of The Kappa Foundation's Women of Achievement. Her leadership has opened doors for all residents of our state and will continue to better public institutions for years to come.

A BAD YEAR FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN VIETNAM

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 8, 2018

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, yesterday we held a hearing on human rights in Vietnam. It has been a very bad year in Vietnam for human rights. Since the beginning of 2018 alone, the Vietnamese government has handed out sentences totaling over 100 years in prison and house arrest to human rights defenders and democracy advocates.

In the past year alone, 22 bloggers have been jailed as well as six members of the Brotherhood for Democracy. An outrageous 15-year sentence was given to Nguyen Van Dai, whose wife Vu Minh Khanh testified before this committee in 2016.

Nguyen Van Dai should be released unconditionally and immediately. I know he is courageous and he wants to remain in his own country seeking rights and reform. However, if he desires to leave Vietnam, he should be allowed to leave with his wife immediately. Vietnam's loss will be the world's gain.

The Vietnamese government has gotten a free pass on human rights for too long.

There are currently 169 political and religious prisoners in Vietnam, including bloggers, labor and democracy advocates, and religious leaders.

Freedom House rates Vietnam as "Not Free" and possessing of some of the world's highest press and internet restrictions.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom again this year recommended that Vietnam be designated as a "Country of Particular Concern" for egregious religious freedom abuses. U.S. policy has failed the Vietnamese people. This is a bipartisan criticism. We have enriched Vietnam's Communist leaders and coddled their interests at the expense of the hopes and desires of the Vietnamese people of liberty and human rights.

The Trump Administration has an opportunity to bring about real reforms in Vietnam if tangible human rights improvements are linked to better U.S.-Vietnam relations.

The U.S. has leverage to encourage reform—Vietnam needs a strong U.S. partnership—particularly as China's aggressiveness

increases. The question is—will this leverage be used to help the people of Vietnam or their Communist rulers?

I have been to Vietnam. I have met with its rights advocates and young activists for decades now. The younger generation in Vietnam—66 percent of Vietnam is under the age of 40—looks to the U.S. as a land of opportunity and freedom.

This generation wants the same liberties enjoyed by their relatives in California, Texas, Virginia, Louisiana and so many other places where former Vietnamese refugees have flourished.

They want to speak freely, blog freely, worship freely, and be free to choose and change their leaders.

Failing to press for concrete human rights improvements underestimates U.S. leverage and will disappoint the young generation in Vietnam who are that country's dynamic future.

The President will face pressure from his advisors and the business community to look at Vietnam through the lens of trade deals and the containment of China. Hopefully, he will be able to see the situation more clearly than past Administrations.

I know there is great interest in the Pentagon about a partnership with Vietnam to oppose China's aggressive South China Sea policy. The U.S. has an interest in free and open sea lanes.

But no government that represses its own people or restricts fundamental freedoms can be a trusted ally of the United States. No government that censors the Internet, tortures and jails dissidents, and crushes civil society should be given generous trade or security benefits without conditions.

Robust championing of individual rights will meet with some success—if recent history is our guide.

The Vietnamese government has responded to concerns expressed by the last two Administrations when they linked human rights improvements to better U.S.-Vietnam relations.

Whether to gain entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO), the TransPacific Partnership (TPP) or to address U.S. concerns over religious freedom abuses, the Vietnamese government took steps toward reform when pressed by past American Presidents.

It is when the U.S. loses interest in human rights that conditions regress—as it has in the past year.

The business of the Communist Party is staying in power and repressing those they believe will challenge their power. They will not embrace human rights improvements or the rule of law unless it is a firm condition of better relations with the U.S.

Putting human rights and the rule of law at the center of bilateral relations is the goal of H.R. 5621—the Vietnam Human Rights Act—bipartisan legislation that was introduced last month.

The bill emphasizes the connection between human rights improvements and U.S. interests and states that U.S. policy should prioritize the freedom of religion, freedom of the press, Internet Freedom, independent labor unions, the protection of women and girls from trafficking, and advances in the rule of law as critical components of both U.S.-Vietnam relations and any U.S.-led effort to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

Similar bills passed three times in the House with overwhelming margins, only to stall in the Senate.

U.S. policy must send the unmistakable message to the Government of Vietnam that human rights improvements are fundamental to better relations, critically linked to our mutual economic and security interests, and will not be ignored or bargained away.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN MCCONKEY

HON. DAVID YOUNG

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 8, 2018

Mr. YOUNG of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate John McConkey of CAM High School for winning the Class 2A, 285 pound bracket at the Iowa High School State Wrestling tournament. John finished the season with a record of 57–1.

Iowa has a long and proud history of strong wrestling programs, producing college and Olympic champions for years. John contributes his success to years of hard work and commitment and for the support from his parents, family, coaches and fellow teammates.

Mr. Speaker, the example set by John demonstrates the rewards of dedication and perseverance. It is an honor representing John and his family in the United States Congress and it is with great pride that I recognize them today. I ask that all of my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives join me in congratulating John on competing in this rigorous competition and in wishing him nothing but continued success in his education and in his future endeavors.

REFORMING OUR DISASTER RESPONSE SYSTEM

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 8, 2018

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, Hurricane Harvey hammered Houston last August, bringing with it a deluge of rain. In the nine months since then, Houston has begun to recover. Downtown Houston is full of students and workers of all ages, strolling the streets during their lunch break. However, there is still lots to be done. Only minutes north of downtown Houston, Minute Maid Park, and the Toyota Center is Kashmere Gardens, a neighborhood that 10,000 Houstonians have called home. Each street in this neighborhood has houses that are no longer habitable, with destroyed doors and gutted interiors.

While the rest of Houston is flourishing, Kashmere Gardens is floundering. This is not due to the actions of any one agency, but rather the convoluted and bureaucratic disaster-response system that almost everyone agrees is failing to provide the necessary support in the wake of these disasters. Federal recovery funding currently comes from 17 different federal agencies, including HUD and DHS, which oversees FEMA. We must streamline the recovery process for the sake of those who are impacted by disasters. There are still Houstonians, including those in Kashmere Gardens, who are living in transitional housing because they are unable to navigate the government's cumbersome dis-

aster recovery efforts. When someone's home is destroyed in a hurricane, wildfire, or volcanic explosion, they should not have to spend months trying to discern their eligibility for federal disaster relief. They should be able to focus on rebuilding their home and their life.

Another hurricane season is just beginning, and it is expected to again be a season with above-average activity. We must learn from past disasters to better respond to disasters that are still to come.

And that's just the way it is.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A GOLD STAR FAMILIES MEMORIAL MONUMENT AT WASHINGTON CROSSING NATIONAL CEMETERY

HON. BRIAN K. FITZPATRICK

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 8, 2018

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to recognize Washington Crossing National Cemetery as the first national veterans' cemetery to accept from the Hershel 'Woody' Williams Medal of Honor Foundation the gift of a beautiful Gold Star Families Memorial Monument, which will be dedicated on Saturday June 9, 2018. Approximately 35 similar monuments have been dedicated across the country, but this one is the very first in a national veterans' cemetery.

The Hershel 'Woody' Williams Foundation is a nonprofit organization that seeks to erect monuments for Gold Star families throughout the United States, and provides scholarships to children of fallen heroes.

At the request of John C. Heenan, Project Chairman, I would like to honor the important and enthusiastic help provided by the Director of Washington Crossing National Cemetery, Gregory J. Whitney, and his team along with the official support group, The Guardians of the Washington Crossing National Cemetery, to bring this most noble project to fruition.

Since opening in January 2010, more than 11,000 of our nation's veterans have made this cemetery their final resting place. The Gold Star Families Memorial Monument is a tribute to Gold Star Families—to those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom and their loved ones who continue to honor their memory.

We must never forget our fallen service members, who paid the ultimate sacrifice to uphold our liberties and cherished way of life. For the families of those departed, may this monument serve as a small token of our humble gratitude for the heroism of their loved ones.

IN RECOGNITION OF THEOLA JONES FOR BEING NAMED A WOMAN OF ACHIEVEMENT BY THE KAPPA FOUNDATION

HON. DEBBIE DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 8, 2018

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Theola Jones for being named a