

With our troops spread thin in Iraq and Afghanistan, our military is having serious problems meeting personnel requirements. The Army missed its February recruiting goals by 27 percent. Yet under the Don't Ask, Don't Tell, we are discharging thousands of experienced, dedicated servicemembers simply because of their sexual orientation.

Hundreds of people let go under the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy have skills that are critical to the war on terror, including translators and linguists. These soldiers have the courage to fight and the skills our military needs. There is no reason we should not allow them to serve their country. It is time for Congress to put national security interests first. It is time to repeal the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy so we can keep the United States military the strongest in the world.

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#### RECOGNIZING THE CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF BAD AXE, MICHIGAN

(Mrs. MILLER of Michigan asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize the centennial celebration of Bad Axe, Michigan, the capital of Huron County. This beautiful city was founded originally in 1861 in the "thumb area" of Michigan, and it has remained a distinct part of history as it has continued to grow and to prosper over the past 150 years.

Bad Axe is a unique city. In fact, its very name gives it a very unique distinction. It is located in one of the most beautiful areas in the State of Michigan. It is a favorite destination for so many people who love the outdoors, either hunting or fishing or just enjoying the magnificent scenery.

Bad Axe's rich history includes some outstanding Michiganians, including Albert E. Sleeper, who became Michigan's 29th Governor, served from 1917 to 1921, certainly leaving his mark on the entire State as he worked to establish the State highway system and the State park system. So it is fitting that some of the most beautiful State parks are in Bad Axe area.

I am proud to represent this unique city in Congress as it has developed and transformed over the years. From its pioneer beginnings during the Civil War, Bad Axe has managed to leave its mark on history.

Mr. Speaker, I wish the city and its citizens the very best as they celebrate the future and as they remember the past.

#### HOMEcoming OF USS "LINCOLN" CARRIER GROUP

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

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor the service of the sailors and Marine Corps of the USS *Abraham Lincoln* Carrier Strike Group who bravely and compassionately served the Nation and the world in the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean in the wake of December's tragic tsunami.

These women and men began their new year by delivering vital food, water, and medicine around the clock to the people of Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean. They showed the world the values that we represent and why this country is so great.

From January 1 until February 4, carrier group aircraft flew over 1,700 missions in support of Operation Unified Assistance, carrying almost 6 million pounds of supplies. Over 1,200 crew mechanics from the group volunteered to go ashore and help.

Tomorrow I will attend the USS *Lincoln* and USS *Shoup* homecoming to Everett Washington. The VAQ 131 Prowler Squadron out of NAS Whidbey, the Lancers, just returned; and they are all part of Operation Unified Assistance.

Tomorrow, with their return, will be a great day for our country, a great day for our Navy and Marine Corps and for their families to celebrate.

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#### BUILDING AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to discuss how two service organizations in the Second District of South Carolina have joined together on the Nothing to Hide project to promote awareness about mental illness. This project is an educational photo exhibit about families whose lives have been affected by mental health disorders.

By sponsoring the Nothing to Hide project, the Rotary Club of Hilton Head Island, Sunset, and the Mental Health Association of Beaufort and Jasper are addressing the myths and stigmas surrounding mental illness and are helping connect people who suffer from mental illness to the appropriate resources for support, education, and treatment.

Sunset Rotarians have volunteered to oversee the transition of the display during its 8-week tour through Beaufort and Jasper Counties. I would especially like to recognize the good work and leadership of the dedicated volunteers, Ed Dowaschinski, Krista

Delgado, and Sandy Leath. Their strong efforts to raise awareness about this issue that affects so many of our friends and family members will help increase understanding throughout our community.

In conclusion, God bless our troops and we will never forget September 11.

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#### CELEBRATING PEACE CORPS WEEK

(Ms. McCOLLUM of Minnesota asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. McCOLLUM of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, this week we celebrate the 44th anniversary of the Peace Corps and the service of current and return Peace Corps volunteers.

Today 7,700 Americans of all ages, including 38 volunteers from my congressional district, are serving our Nation and advancing the cause of peace in cities, towns, and villages in 72 countries around the world.

As we all know, with service also comes sacrifice. So as we celebrate this Peace Corps success, I would like to remember a young Minnesota Peace Corps volunteer, Melissa Mosvick, who died in a bus accident last November while serving our Nation in Morocco. Her service and sacrifice are also honored.

Nearly 180,000 Americans have served our Nation as Peace Corps volunteers these past 44 years. The service and commitment of all Peace Corps volunteers to our Nation and the world is truly a very special gift all Americans can celebrate.

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#### HONORING COLONEL WILLIAM GLEN GUSTAFSON

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

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Colonel William Glen Gustafson of Marietta, Georgia, who sadly passed away last Tuesday.

Throughout his life, Colonel Gustafson served his country and his community. He was a master parachutist and troop commander during two tours of duty in Vietnam. He worked for the American Defense Preparedness Association here in Washington. He served on the academy review committees of former Georgia Senator Sam Nunn and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich. And from 1991 to 1997, he served three terms as chairman of the Cobb County Republican Party.

In all these capacities, Colonel Gustafson exemplified the virtues of honor, dignity, and leadership. His death is a great loss not only for his family but for the entire Cobb community as well. I will always remember the enthusiasm he brought to his work and his commitment to solving every challenge he

faced. I will greatly miss his charisma, his leadership, and, most of all, his friendship.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in honoring Colonel Gustafson.

#### WELCOME HOME G.I. BILL

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

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, in every major war since the Revolution, the United States Congress has acknowledged our returning veterans for their service and sacrifice. In this proud tradition, last weekend I announced a Welcome Home G.I. Bill for the veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. It is a bold new direction in helping our veterans achieve the success they so rightly deserve and earned.

The Welcome Home bill provides health care for up to 5 years for that member and their family if they cannot get it from their employer or lost it when they were overseas. The Welcome Home bill includes \$75,000 for college education and waives the \$1,800 fee required for the benefit. And, finally, it will offer them a tax-free \$5,000 down payment on a home.

Most importantly, under the plan all returning veterans are treated equally whether they served in active duty, National Guard, or Reserve. Because their experience over there was the same, their benefit over here should be the same.

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The Welcome Home Package is a small token for our appreciation for the debt of gratitude we can never fully repay.

Mr. Speaker, we do not owe our newest veterans a favor. We must repay one.

#### SAY NO TO FOREIGN LAW INFLUENCING AMERICAN COURT DECISIONS

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

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, George Washington once said that "history and experience prove that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of Republican Government." But the United States Supreme Court has taken to relying on foreign law and foreign documents when issuing opinions.

This week, the Supreme Court ruled that the Constitution forbids the execution of convicted killers who are under the age of 18 when they commit their heinous crimes. Many of us might agree with this decision, but the court used the laws of other countries and foreign documents to determine whether American laws on this should stand.

American laws are made by the people chosen by Americans to make them. That is a republic. The court has no right or authority to consider any other basis for legal opinion. In doing so, it only undermines the very structure under which it operates, the consent of the governed as defined by the United States Constitution.

Foreign law is still a baneful foe of our republican government.

#### NATIONAL MISSILE DEFENSE SYSTEM A LEMON

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

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, Canada has officially opted out of the laughably named National Missile Defense System. We should take a lesson from our neighbors. They knew the NMD has a terrible record; 10 highly artificial and carefully scripted flight intercept tests, only five resulting in hits. One hit occurred when the equivalent of an electronic "hit me" sign was put on a supposed attack missile.

The new booster rocket for the kill vehicle has a one-in-three success rate. That is a one-in-three chance of even getting off the ground. The Pentagon canceled nine of the original 20 tests to focus on building the system instead of testing it.

Today, the NMD benefits no one except a few contractors and their patrons. Meanwhile, the Canadians chose not to buy a lemon. Here we plant a lemon grove and then franchise lemonade stands.

#### CONGRATULATING DELL COMPUTER FOR NEW PLANT IN FORSYTH COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

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

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, today I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Dell for beginning construction last week on a new \$100 million assembly plant in the Fifth District of North Carolina.

The 527,000 square foot facility set to open in Forsyth County this fall will be Dell's largest plant in the world. It will bring jobs to 700 people in its first year and employ up to 1,500 people within 5 years. Most of these jobs are expected to be new and most of them will go to local residents. The plant will join Dell's two other American manufacturing operations in Texas and Tennessee and produce Dell's OptiPlex and Dimension desktop computers.

Dell, which was named Fortune Magazine's "Most Admired Company" for 2004, will be a tremendous asset to the Fifth District. Its presence will attract

other businesses and suppliers that will add millions of dollars to the local tax base and bring thousands of new jobs to the region.

I would like to thank the local leaders in Forsyth and surrounding counties for working so hard to make this possible. I am proud of the success in manufacturing coming from the Fifth District and look forward to many prosperous years at Dell.

#### WORKING TOGETHER AS DEMOCRATS TO IMPROVE SOCIAL SECURITY FOR ALL AMERICANS

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, there has been an ongoing discussion with the American public on what is good for them in the future and today. It is interesting that the American public, when you hand them the facts, understand the underpinnings of Social Security. Over 51 percent of them do not agree with the present plans offered by the administration to allegedly solve the solvency question on Social Security.

The American public understands what it means to take \$1.5 trillion away from Social Security to establish a private savings account that does not equate to solvency; the American public understands that Social Security is an insurance plan; the American public understands that any solution must be bipartisan; and the American public understands that when you begin to engage and divide a nation on a generational gap, that you are not moving toward a solution, you are only moving toward divisiveness.

Social Security has endured since 1935. It has provided an umbrella on a rainy day. It is an insurance plan, a survivor's benefit, and it allows the disabled to live in dignity.

Fix Social Security, do not destroy it. The plan before us destroys it. We are prepared to work together as Democrats, as Americans, to solve it.

#### ECONOMY CONTINUES TO GROW

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

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, the economy continues to grow as a direct result of the President's economic policies and those of the Republican Congress. Here are a few facts to illustrate this.

In January, we saw 146,000 new jobs and witnessed the twentieth consecutive month of job gains in the United States.

The national unemployment rate is down to 5.2 percent, the lowest since September 2001.