

stressed to me as a child that to get a good job, you need a good education. It was true then and even more true today.

Virginians are blessed with many great schools with dedicated, professional teachers like my sister Nancy in Amherst, who work tirelessly to mold the minds and character of the next generation.

To compete in this global economy every young Virginian must have the opportunity of a world-class education from pre-school to college.

A child's future prospects should be as unlimited as his intelligence, integrity and work ethic can take him. No child in Virginia should have her future determined by her place of birth or zip code.

We will work with President Obama to expand high-quality charter schools and institute performance pay to our great teachers.

More money must go to the classroom and less into administration, and new opportunities in science, technology, engineering, math and healthcare must be created through our schools and colleges.

And let us recognize that a high school degree is no longer the finish line in a global economy. We must create affordable new pathways to earning a college degree and make a commitment to confer 100,000 additional degrees over the next 15 years. We must make our community colleges national leaders in workforce development and career training.

These are investments that will pay individual and societal dividends for many years to come.

Barbara Johns was willing to risk everything for the simple opportunity of a good education. Surely, sixty years later, we can work together to provide that opportunity to all Virginia children.

Our Administration will demand excellence, reward performance, provide choices and celebrate achievement.

God has bestowed upon our Commonwealth an amazing wealth of natural resources. Virginians have the intellectual capital to use these resources to create new jobs, reduce our energy bills, and make our nation more energy independent.

We will make Virginia the "Energy Capital of the East Coast" by growing the natural gas and coal industries, expanding the use of nuclear power, and promoting new energy technologies like wind, solar and biomass.

And we will champion environmentally safe offshore energy exploration and production, bringing with it thousands of new jobs, hundreds of millions in new state revenue and billions in new investment.

We must also seize the opportunity to improve our transportation system by getting long overdue projects underway, and utilizing innovative ideas to build the roads, bridges, rail and ports we need.

A better transportation system will create new opportunities for Virginians across the state.

These are policies focused on addressing the real problems our people face, and delivering results.

I've had people tell me they fear that America may no longer be the land of opportunity it has always been, and that Virginia's history in playing a leading role in the life of our nation may be just that—history. I say: They are wrong.

Working together—Republicans, Democrats and Independents alike—Virginia will continue to blaze the trail of opportunity and prosperity.

And like the mechanic looking to the owner's manual to troubleshoot the automobile,

we should look to the Founders and their writings for wisdom.

The Founders' capstone on the Constitution is the Bill of Rights. No federal mandate nor program crafted by either political party should undermine the central principle of federalism, enshrined in the birth certificate of America by those who pledged their lives, fortunes and sacred honor.

The Founders recognized that the government closest to the people governs best. More often than not, Richmond knows better about the hopes and dreams of the people than Washington. And Galax and Fairfax and Virginia Beach know far better than Richmond.

As we enthusiastically pursue the vision of "A Commonwealth of Opportunity", I ask all Virginians to continue to seek your own opportunities to get involved in the life of our Commonwealth.

Half a century ago President Kennedy challenged the American people to "ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country." Today, I ask all Virginians to rise up to meet this timeless challenge.

We live in the most generous nation on Earth. So many Virginians give sacrificially of their time, talents and treasure, and rightly so. The Scriptures say, "To whom much is given, much will be required."

Right now, much is required in the nation of Haiti. And I urge all Virginians to donate to the relief efforts underway.

Here in our Commonwealth, I urge business owners to look for opportunities to sponsor a little league team, help a charity, and promote corporate responsibility in the communities in which you live and work.

I urge all the leaders of our faith communities to expand your selfless work of helping the homeless, feeding the poor, and comforting the broken hearted.

I urge the young people of Virginia to use your talents and energy to fully engage in the future of this Commonwealth.

I urge Virginians who came here from other lands to contribute your culture, your history and your traditions to our rich tapestry of life.

I urge every Virginian to take every opportunity to thank a man or woman in a law enforcement or military uniform for the preservation of our freedoms.

There is so much each one of us can do to leave this Commonwealth a better place than we found it.

No government program can substitute for the incredible good done through voluntary actions performed freely by caring individuals every day.

And while government can help provide opportunities, it is every person's responsibility to take advantage of them.

In recent weeks I've seen people exercising that responsibility, and changing lives at: the Healing Place in Richmond, the Carpenter's Shelter in Alexandria, Food Banks in Abingdon, Norfolk and Richmond, the Boys and Girls Club in Virginia Beach, the USO in Norfolk.

As a Commonwealth, we must do the same . . . and we will.

Standing here today, on the steps of our State Capitol, in the inspiring shadows of the shared history behind us, we embrace the limitless future opportunities stretching out far before us. . . .

And now it is here, in this place, that we pledge to work together to create "A Commonwealth of Opportunity" . . . for all Virginians, and to add our steps to Virginia's journey.

It was George Washington who noted, in his first Inaugural Address, "The propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected to remain on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which Heaven itself has ordained."

It is right to help one another.

It is right to work together to get results and solve problems.

It is right to provide opportunities for all.

Let us heed the words of the Father of our Country, employ these eternal rules of order and right, and get to work for the good of the people of Virginia.

Thank you and God Bless the Commonwealth of Virginia.

THE FEHBP PRESCRIPTION DRUG
INTEGRITY, TRANSPARENCY,
AND COST SAVINGS ACT

HON. STEPHEN F. LYNCH

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 21, 2010

Mr. LYNCH. Madam Speaker, I don't have to remind you that much of the public policy debate in this country has largely focused on healthcare reform and on how best to tackle rising costs, while ensuring access and quality at the same time. These calls for change in the healthcare policy arena have also been coupled with demands for a more fiscally responsible federal government.

Many policymakers look to the FEHBP as a model for providing health care. That's why it's important to ensure the program is providing the best benefits and at the best price for subscribers. Having conducted a Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, Postal Service and the District of Columbia hearing in June, a September policy forum with key stakeholders, and months of additional research and collaboration, I have discovered that when it comes to prescription drugs, our federal employees and retirees are not receiving the best benefit at the best price. Considering that prescription drug costs comprise nearly 30% of the FEHBP's premiums, it is imperative that we do everything in our power to ensure that federal employees and the taxpayer are getting the best value for their dollar.

In short, the FEHBP health plans contract with Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs) to price and to provide the pharmacy benefit to FEHBP members. In contrast with other federal health programs, the FEHBP does not regulate or negotiate drug pricing for its members. Instead it relies on competition among the various carriers and PBMs to keep prices low. However, as we recently affirmed, prices are not low! In fact, when comparing FEHBP drug prices to those of other federal programs, such as the Veterans Administration, the Department of Defense, Medicare, Medicaid and the Public Health Service's 340B Program, the FEHBP is paying substantially more for its drugs. Even more alarming is that some research actually shows that Costco and drugstore.com offer their employees better prices for drugs than the FEHBP does for federal workers and retirees. In these economically challenging times, it is unacceptable to ask federal employees and the American taxpayer to put up with such an irregularity. If the

FEHBP wants to remain a model for providing health benefits, legislative changes that allow for alternative prescription drug benefit contracting and pricing are in order.

For this reason, I am proud to be introducing legislation today that will afford the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) greater oversight authority in the contracting and pricing of the FEHBP prescription drug benefit. Titled "The FEHBP Prescription Drug Integrity, Transparency, and Cost Savings Act", this bill will prohibit certain ownership relationships; require Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs) to return 99% of all monies received from manufacturers for FEHBP business; cap prices paid by the health plan to the Average Manufacturer Price (AMP); restrict drug switching by PBMs; and require enhanced transparency and disclosure of all contract terms and related information. These requirements intend to not only lower costs of prescription drugs in the FEHBP but to also provide our federal employees with a safer, higher quality prescription drug benefit.

In this day and age, when every effort is being made to reduce federal spending and to find money to fund healthcare reform and other domestic policy priorities, the level of ambiguity around costs and drug prices under the FEHBP is appalling and must change. What we have before us is an issue that can save the taxpayer billions of dollars while at the same time reduce premiums for federal workers and their families. All I ask of my colleagues is for their support in passing this important legislation.

HONORING THE OUTSTANDING
SERVICE OF THE 354TH EXPEDITIONARY
FIGHTER SQUADRON

HON. GABRIELLE GIFFORDS

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 21, 2010

Ms. GIFFORDS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the 354th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron on their recent landmark deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

During their recent combat deployment, the 354th distinguished itself as the Air Force's premiere Close Air Support unit by flying more sorties per day, per aircraft, than any other ground-attack unit in the Central Command area.

Over the course of their 6-month tour, the unit flew more than 10,000 flight hours and launched more than 2,500 sorties in support of thousands of troops on the ground and all with only half of their full complement of aircraft.

The Bulldogs spearheaded the integration of the SADL communications system or Situational Awareness Data Link. They were also the first A-10 unit to forward deploy to Kandahar Airfield, closer to the action and closer to the enemy.

In order to remain airborne, the maintenance team worked around the clock to ensure a utilization rate of 210% of the usual domestic operational rate. For the 354th that meant 400 sorties a month.

The dedicated service of the airmen of the 354th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron has un-

doubtedly saved the lives of countless American, Coalition and Afghan ground forces and under the brutal conditions of an unrelenting Afghan winter.

As the first A-10 squadron in theater, the 354th has set the bar very high, but I am confident that their follow-on units will meet that standard.

On behalf of the people of Tucson, I am personally very proud to welcome home the 354th to Davis-Monthan Air Force Base.

CBS WINS LAP DOG AWARD

HON. LAMAR SMITH

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 21, 2010

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Madam Speaker, for the second time in a row, CBS is the winner of the Media Fairness Caucus' highly un-coveted "Lap Dog Award" for the week's most glaring example of media bias.

During CBS' coverage of the special election in Massachusetts on Tuesday evening, two hours before the polls closed, political analyst John Dickerson claimed that if Republican candidate SCOTT BROWN won the election, it would "get a lot uglier in Washington."

Brown went on to say that Republicans "feel excited and they see glory in attacking the President."

It's no wonder just 2 in 10 Americans say reporters try to offer unbiased coverage of political campaigns, according to a recent Rasmussen poll.

CBS and the national media should give Americans the facts, not tell them what to think.

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN
EGYPT

HON. ALBIO SIRE

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 21, 2010

Mr. SIRE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to share my concern and outrage over human rights abuses in Egypt.

I rise to ask that the Egyptian Government uphold the rights of all religious communities by ending discrimination and harassment of groups such as the Coptic Christians, and prosecuting those that do such groups harm.

An attack that happened just weeks ago starkly illustrates the need for change in Egypt. On January 6th, 2010, a drive-by shooting killed six Coptic Christians in Nag Hammadi. This deadly attack, carried out the night before the Coptic Christmas, is the most recent in a long history of repression and abuse of Coptic Christians in Egypt.

On January 14th, 2009, the U.S. Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Michael Posner, spoke out against this attack. He stressed the need for prosecution and justice in the country. Last October, the Department of State released its 2009 International Religious Freedom Report detailing the widespread and ongoing persecution of

this community. The report also highlights increasing violence and the need for improved investigations.

While the United States and the human rights community have been vocal in condemning this attack and other human rights abuses, the Egyptian government has yet to recognize the full significance of the violent act or the overarching issue of intolerance in the country. Violence in the name of the religion is unacceptable, but when governments do not sufficiently address such behavior, the violence is far more troubling.

Religion is a fundamental freedom that must be upheld and respected around the world, in every nation and in every community. I urge my colleagues in the House to join me in calling for religious freedom and basic rights for all people.

TRIBUTE TO THE CITY OF
OWASSO, OKLAHOMA

HON. JOHN SULLIVAN

OF OKLAHOMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 21, 2010

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam Speaker, today, I rise to recognize the city of Owasso, Oklahoma, in the First Congressional District for receiving an A+ rating in government transparency by the online citizen's watchdog group, Sunshine Review. I congratulate the city of Owasso for receiving this prestigious award and becoming the first city in Oklahoma to receive a perfect grade.

The Sunshine Review is an online resource that monitors government transparency at the local, county, and state levels throughout the country. According to the organization, they seek to make government accountability and records accessible for all citizens and taxpayers to read. In order to assess a city's rating, the Sunshine Review compiles a "transparency checklist", consisting of ten basic sections of accountability. Each section must have proper online access for its constituents to review governmental work, including budgets and contractual information for elected and administrative officials.

I am proud that Owasso became the first city in Oklahoma to receive this distinguished honor. As we work towards accountability and transparency in Congress, Owasso remains a shining example to local and state governments and to what our nation must accomplish as a whole. By receiving a perfect grade, the city of Owasso remains a shining example of a local government taking responsibility to its citizens and taxpayers they represent. All citizens deserve an open forum to see how their government spends their hard-earned, taxpayer dollars.

I firmly believe that an open and honest government is the most effective way to give Americans the transparency they deserve. Owasso's focus on this important issue illustrates their steadfast leadership to promote accountable governance at all levels. I am proud of the city for this great accomplishment.