

They cry about their so-called “due process”; but what about the due process for the 29 miners who died in the Upper Big Branch Mine explosion—and their families? What about the miners who went to work today in the coal mines of America—and their families?

Is Congress just going to sit here and simply wait for the next explosion? the next tragedy? the next loss of life? Are we going to let the special interests continue to paralyze this institution?

These should not be hard questions for the Congress of the United States. Our ability to respond goes to the heart of who we are as a Nation. There are things that Congress can and must do right now—and that only Congress can do—to better ensure that every coal miner who goes to work is able to return safely to their families at the end of their shifts. Congress has an obligation to make sure that that is the case.

It is long overdue to honor our promises to the families of the 29 miners who perished a year ago for doing the job that our Nation relies on to provide its energy, and it is also long overdue to give the rest of our Nation’s miners modern health and safety protections.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE LASALLE LANCERS AND THE TAFT SENATORS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, boxing legend Muhammad Ali once said, “Champions aren’t made in gyms. Champions are made from something they have deep inside them—a desire, a dream, a vision.”

I would like to recognize two high school basketball teams from my district which proved that they are, indeed, champions. They had the desire to make every practice count and to play every game as if it were their last. They shared a dream that was strong enough to overcome the many distractions all high school kids face, and their coaches gave them the vision that all their hard work and sacrifice would pay off in the end.

The schools? The LaSalle Lancers and the Taft Senators.

First, congratulations to the LaSalle Lancers on winning the 2011 Ohio Division I Basketball State Championship. LaSalle is a boys’ Catholic high school in my district that is particularly special to me since it’s my alma mater. Regardless of my personal attachments to the school, I’d like to recognize them on a job well-done and a season well-played. They represented themselves and our community with an outstanding display of athleticism, sportsmanship and class throughout the season—but especially in the playoffs.

The players and coaches stuck together in the face of adversity, especially when their head coach, Dan Fleming, suffered a heart attack, which placed sports and the tour-

namment in perspective. The LaSalle family rallied around their coach, and the Lancers, led by their seniors and the assistant coaches, went on to win their first basketball State championship in 15 years and the second in school history.

□ 1010

I would also like to congratulate Coach Tom Grippa and the LaSalle Lancer football team for their tremendous season. You made us proud. Congratulations Lancers.

I also rise today to congratulate the Taft High School Senators, who won the Division 3 Basketball State Championship. Now I acknowledge that it’s rare that a Member of this esteemed body, the House of Representatives, ever says anything positive about Senators, but I’d like to make an exception today.

Led by their head coach, Mark Mitchell, the Senators defeated Cleveland Central Catholic High School to win the first State championship in school history. The Senators went into the tournament ranked number 1 by the Associated Press. They not only made school history by winning their first State championship, but they also set a Division 3 boys basketball record for the most points scored in a championship game. Finishing the season at 26 and 1 is quite a feat. It is an honor to have them represent our district, and I congratulate them on their success.

I would be remiss if I didn’t also commend former Cincinnati Bengal star Mike Martin for the tremendous effort that he has made in turning around the Taft High School football program, mentoring his players to be successful in life as well as on the football field.

Let me conclude by once again congratulating the players, the coaches, the students, the faculty, and the fans of Cincinnati’s LaSalle Lancers and Taft Senators for the inspirational seasons you’ve just completed. You’ve made all of us very proud. Your accomplishments will be long remembered. Go Lancers! And go Senators!

1-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF UPPER BIG BRANCH MINE TRAGEDY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. RAHALL) for 5 minutes.

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, it has been 1 year since the fatal explosion at Upper Big Branch Mine, 365 days since we lost 29 courageous coal miners—fathers and sons, brothers and friends. We vowed then that some good would come from this terrible tragedy. We can say that criminal investigations are almost complete, enforcement has toughened, the Congress has increased funding to target pattern violators, and yet coal miners are still dying in our coal fields.

It’s easy to doubt. It’s easy to question whether things can be made bet-

ter. I find inspiration in the Biblical verse from Romans: “Glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulations worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope.” Never lose hope that we can improve the health and safety of miners in the coal fields. Never lose hope that we can pass tougher mine safety laws and that we can enforce those laws and save lives.

There are plenty of good coal companies in America, companies that put time and effort and money into making their workplaces safe in which they operate. They are forward-thinking coal companies, with strong safety records that have designed programs aimed at protecting the lives and preserving the health of their miners. They want to see those bad actors, those companies that have tarnished the reputation of an important industry, reined in. They do not accept a world in which they must compete against companies that would sacrifice the health and lives of their own employees for competitive advantage and blatant profit.

There are plenty of Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle who recognize that legislation is necessary. Congressman MILLER, Congresswoman LYNN WOOLSEY and I, along with many others, will continue fighting for reforms to give the agencies the tools they need to target the bad actors. We want to ensure that sound companies that have good records can continue to perform and produce, but we just as surely want to ensure that the worst operators can be reined in and that lives can be saved. We can strike a balance, and we will.

Changes and improvements may come slowly, but they will come. As long as coal miners and these brave, courageous families continue to demand that the loss of their loved ones not be in vain, they will come.

The April 5 disaster of 1 year ago was a tragedy that never, ever should have occurred. We must provide accountability, and we have a duty to institute changes that will help prevent a repeat of that awful day. Those 29 coal miners should not have perished, and for them and all those miners on the job today, we must keep speaking out.

Tonight, I will be at the 1-year anniversary with the families of all of these perished coal miners. I will look in the eyes of their loved ones once again as I did that painful week following their tragedy 24 hours, 7 days a week. We will join and we will commemorate these good men and the people who came together to try to rescue them—to them we say thank you—and to provide comfort and a final closure to these families, which we have yet to do.

These families want accountability, they want the truth, and they want to ensure that no other families ever have to suffer the way they have. Chairman MILLER, LYNN WOOLSEY and I remain committed to their cause. I urge my colleagues to join us in this life-saving, important endeavor.

IT'S TIME TO BRING OUR TROOPS HOME

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, last Tuesday, Congresswoman SUE MYRICK and I went to visit the wounded at Walter Reed. These trips are always a vivid reminder of the true cost of war. Seeing the men and women who have lost limbs for this country make we wonder how many more are going to be in that hospital, both at Walter Reed and Bethesda, with severe wounds.

After hearing Secretary Gates, and I have great respect for Secretary Gates, but he has made it clear that we will be in Afghanistan until 2014. He said it will be 2014 or 2015 before we can start substantially bringing down the number of troops in that country. Here we are in Washington battling right now about the 2011 budget, what should we do or not do and cut this and cut that, yet we seem to find \$8 billion a month for a corrupt leader in Afghanistan named Karzai. He's corrupt and his government is corrupt. Yet we're saying to the American people, if you're a senior, we can't be sure that you can get a sandwich at the senior citizen center in your county. We're saying to the children that cannot afford milk at home, there will be no programs for you. But yet we can find \$8 billion a month for a corrupt leader in a country in a war that we cannot win.

Our troops have already won, but history says you will not change Afghanistan—and I won't go through the history because of time. One day Karzai likes American troops being over there and the next day he doesn't like American troops being there. In fact, in December 2010 in the Washington Post, and I will paraphrase this, Karzai said to General Petraeus:

I have three main enemies—the Taliban, the Americans, and the international community. If I had to choose a friend today—and again, this is the President of Afghanistan—I would choose the Taliban.

They're the ones killing Americans and blowing their legs off and their arms off. How much longer does this have to go on?

I say to my colleagues in both parties, join Representative KUCINICH, RON PAUL and myself—and many others—let's bring our troops home.

I have a photograph here, Mr. Speaker, that was in the Raleigh, North Carolina, paper about a year ago. This is a young Army sergeant. His legs are gone. They've been blown off. His right arm has been blown off and he has a left arm. He is what they call a triple amputee. His lovely wife is there pushing the wheelchair.

Mr. Speaker, it's time for the American people to say to those of us in Congress, do not keep our troops there until 2014, 2015, 2016 for a corrupt leader. It's time to bring our troops home.

I have the fortune of representing Camp Lejeune Marine Base in my dis-

trict. I talk to the Marines, who are as brave as brave can be, that have been there three, four and five times. I've talked to the families as they're breaking up, the families when their loved one has committed suicide upon returning from Afghanistan. It's time to bring them home. How many more will be like this sergeant, without legs, without arms?

Mr. Speaker, last week on Tuesday, SUE MYRICK and I saw two young men, one from Florida and one from Nevada, that have no body parts below their waist. The body parts are gone. Everything is gone. Wake up, Congress, and let's bring our troops home from Afghanistan.

My close is this, Mr. Speaker: I ask God to please bless our men and women in uniform. I ask God to please bless the families of our men and women in uniform. I ask God, in His loving arms, to hold the families who have given a child dying for freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq. Mr. Speaker, I ask God to bless the House and Senate, that we will do what is right in God's eyes. I will ask God to give wisdom, strength, and courage to President Obama that he will do what is right in the eyes of God. And I will ask three times: God please, God please, God please continue to bless America.

IN MEMORY OF FORMER MEMBER GERALDINE FERRARO

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) for 5 minutes.

Mr. RANGEL. My colleagues, I rise to pay tribute to one of the great Americans that we have ever had in this body, Congresswoman Geraldine Ferraro. Most of the people remember her as an exciting Vice Presidential candidate, but those of us in the New York delegation remember her as just a great personality, a great legislator, and a great American.

We in the New York delegation have been fighting for time in which we could express ourselves, but the legislative calendar has not been very kind to us. So this morning we have two of her dear friends in Congresswoman MCCARTHY and Congresswoman MALONEY, and I suspect that every time a New York Member gets an opportunity, we will grab that time so that no one will ever say that she did not leave footprints here that all of us were just so proud.

□ 1020

She succeeded Jim Delaney, who was known to be a very conservative Democrat from Long Island. And we all awaited to see just who was going to succeed Jim. And to see this beautiful, intellectual former teacher, former assistant district attorney to come here, we all waited with breath held back to see just what type of woman she would be.

And even though she held closely those conservative views, it has never been presented to this body in a more

eloquent, a more charming way as we found ourselves with this new exciting candidate who later became a Member and became a part of the leadership of the New York delegation. And once Tip O'Neill saw her, she became a part of the congressional Democratic delegation and just went on. Wherever she went, she excelled with her smile, with her brains and contributed so much in raising the standards of Members of Congress and those who would run for national office.

I worked pretty closely with Senator Fritz Mondale when he ran for President of the United States. And while he was looking for a Vice Presidential candidate, I was so pleased, much surprised that Tip O'Neill said that he thought that within our delegation the answer to Fritz Mondale's problem would be the nomination of Geraldine Ferraro. I was surprised but so excited that I could serve on the Mondale team and to be able to say not only do we have a New Yorker, but we have an exciting candidate that could provide that shot in the arm that the Mondale campaign so badly needed.

And I felt so much like an American when we found out that her background was one of near poverty. Her dad had come here from Italy. She just made the Italian American community just so proud. She made women from all over the country proud. She made New Yorkers proud. And certainly while she did not succeed in becoming a Vice President, as Mondale did not get the numbers that he needed, she became a national figure, a compassionate figure serving in the United Nations, serving on television in terms of the expression of views of the Democratic Party, raising funds for candidates.

Then when she was stricken with this terrible disease that she died from, you would only hear her talking about her husband, John, her beautiful children, and how she can help to make it a better, more effective Democratic Party as well as what contributions can she make to this great country.

So we in the New York delegation feel extremely proud that she was a part of us. She had her own personal family that she loved, her own church, her own community. She had the respect and support of all Americans and the deep-seeded feelings Italian Americans have. She was so well respected in Democratic circles and congressional circles.

But most of all, we remember what a gentle lady she was. We have an expression in this House of Representatives, "the gentleman from Wisconsin," "the gentlewoman from New York." But anyone who had known Gerry, as we so affectionately called her, would know that she was indeed a strong leader but a gentle leader from Long Island and from New York.