

State of Indiana, to our congressional offices. My staff and I, in particular, are eager to connect our constituents to whatever federal services, and funds, might help them get their lives back on track.

But make no mistake: it will be the people of Indiana—the people of tight-knit communities like Henryville, Marysville, Chelsea, and New Pekin—who will rebuild broken lives.

During these tough times, Hoosiers are reminding us what it means to be a community of citizens—One Nation, Under God, indivisible, come what may. That sense of community has always bound Americans in tough times, and it will get us through this tragedy as well.

This thought especially struck home with me as I visited Henryville High School. The roof of the gymnasium was torn off, some of the walls had collapsed, and the bleachers were demolished. But hanging in the rafters, waving in the breeze, still hung the American flag unscathed.

May God be with those Americans who are putting their lives back together. We are praying for you, and here for you.

HONORING THE LIFE AND SERVICE  
OF SGT. JUSTIN AVERY EVERETT

**HON. JIM COSTA**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, March 7, 2012*

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today with my colleagues, Mr. NUNES and Mr. DENHAM, to honor the life of United States Marine Sgt. Justin Avery Everett. Sergeant Everett passed away Wednesday, February 22, 2012 in a tragic helicopter accident during a night training exercise near Marine Corps Air Station in Yuma, Arizona. He was 33 years old. Sergeant Everett's patriotism, bravery, and selfless service to his country will ensure that his legacy lives on for years to come.

A proud son of California's San Joaquin Valley, Sergeant Everett was born in Chowchilla, California to James and Patsy Everett. Sergeant Everett grew up in Fresno, California with his siblings: James, Jason and Jeremy. He graduated from Reedley High School in 1996 where he won numerous wrestling medals. After high school Sergeant Everett served as a youth group leader at the Church of God Prophecy in Fresno. His commitment to service was evident as a young man. He exemplified a selfless, noble nature and a commitment to a cause greater than his own.

Following the terrorist attacks of September 11th, Sergeant Everett joined the United States Marine Corps in 2002. During his 10 year service, he was deployed on two tours of duty in Iraq. He served as a Pilot and a Crew Chief with the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing aboard a UH-1Y Huey. At the time of his death, Sergeant Everett was preparing for a deployment to Afghanistan in July 2012.

In addition to his legacy as a U.S. Marine, Sergeant Everett will be remembered as a loving son, brother, husband, father, and friend. He is survived by his parents and his brothers, who are also helicopter pilots. Shortly before his death, Sergeant Everett and his wife, Holly, celebrated their 11th wedding anniversary.

The couple have two children, a 5-year-old daughter and a 2-year-old son.

Mr. Speaker, we offer our most heartfelt sympathy and sincere condolences to Sergeant Everett's loved ones. I ask my colleagues to join Mr. NUNES, Mr. DENHAM, and me in honoring his courageous and heroic service in the United States Marine Corps. His dedication to preserving freedom and democracy will be remembered for generations to come.

TESTIMONY FROM BRIAN AHO,  
PASSENGER ABOARD THE  
"COSTA CONCORDIA" CRUISE  
LINER

**HON. TIM HOLDEN**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, March 7, 2012*

Mr. HOLDEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to enter sworn testimony into the record from Brian Aho, whose family was among the thousands who experienced the panic and confusion during the evacuation of the *Costa Concordia* class cruise ship on January 13, 2012. Mr. Aho and his family have taken multiple cruise vacations and are familiar with many of the safety procedures that are necessary aboard these large ships. Mr. Aho details the failure of safety measures aboard the *Costa Concordia*, the lack of guidance from the ship's crew, and the absence of accountability demonstrated by the ship's captain. This testimony will hopefully lead to new rules and safety guidelines that can help prevent future catastrophes.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE: Thank you for inviting me to testify today. My name is Brian Aho. My wife, Joan Fleser, my daughter, Alana, and I set sail from the Port of Rome (Civitavecchia) on January 13, 2012, aboard the *Concordia* cruise liner operated by Costa Crociere and its parent company, Carnival Corporation.

Though we have been on many cruise vacations with several cruise lines, this was our first European cruise and our first time sailing with Costa. We chose this particular ship and itinerary for our 20th anniversary cruise because of the opportunity to visit many ports in several countries.

As experienced cruise passengers, we have fallen into a particular embarkation pattern. Once aboard we locate our stateroom, unpack our luggage (if available) and take a walking tour of the ship. We investigate the theater, the pools, the dining-room to which we have been assigned and the safety features. We made note that our stateroom was on Deck #2 forward, our dining room was on Deck #3 aft, and lifeboat access was on Deck #4.

After our investigation, we went back to our stateroom to prepare for a late-seating (9 p.m.) dinner. Once seated—while our appetizers were being served—the ship began to shudder. The rhythmic vibration quickly became worse and, after a tremendous groan and crash, the ship began to list severely. People were falling, glasses and plates were sliding off the tables and smashing, and people were screaming. The panic got worse when the lights failed.

My family formed a three-link chain and we worked our way through the fallen debris toward an outboard gangway leading up to

Deck #4 and the lifeboats. The central (Main) entrance to the dining room was blocked with panicking passengers and crew. The only crew member offering guidance was a woman in a showgirl-style gown near the gangway who was showing the passengers the way to the lifeboats.

Once on Deck #4, people were panicking and fighting over lifejackets. Once I found and delivered one to my wife, another woman damaged it while tearing it out of her arms. The announcements indicated that it was an electrical problem with the generators and everything was under control. Evidence indicates that some passengers were instructed by crew to return to their cabins. As these announcements were made, the ship was listing more and sinking deeper. Immediately after a similar announcement, we heard the abandon ship signal (six short signals and one long signal). Few people knew what it meant as there was no verbal abandon ship announcement.

When a crewmember finally appeared, the panicking passengers pushed their way toward the boat. My wife had to grab my daughter and pull her into the boat as a cowardly man tried to push her out of the way. Once the boat was filled, the crewman had trouble readying and releasing the boat. After much hammering noise, the boat swung away from the *Concordia*. We were showered with white paint chips as if this boat had not been released since the gear had been painted over. After being lowered, the crew had difficulty disconnecting the boat from the davits. Once disconnected, it was clear that the crew did not know how to pilot the lifeboat effectively. It kept colliding with other boats and, eventually, the pier.

There were NO Costa representatives—neither officers nor crew—on the pier to provide guidance to the passengers. The only help we received was from the residents of the island.

As experienced cruise vacation passengers, we have recognized significant problems that, in our opinion, made a terrible situation even worse:

There were no safety drills or instructions distributed to passengers before sailing out into the open Mediterranean Sea.

The public address announcements provided false information.

The manning and deployment of the lifeboats was delayed though the ship was in imminent danger.

The crew was unable to instruct passengers during an emergency.

The crew was unable to launch and operate the lifeboats effectively.

According to reports, the captain and senior staff abandoned the ship with passengers still aboard the capsizing vessel. There was no one aboard to coordinate the evacuation.

This accident was not caused solely by the actions of a single individual. It has been alleged that Costa and its parent corporation, Carnival, allowed Captain Schettino to divert from the assigned course on previous voyages. Clearly, this course deviation was not due to climatic or safety concerns. It is our opinion that—with today's technology—central management of the cruise line must have been able to locate the position of—and track the progress of—a massive liner like the *Concordia*. Either they were aware of its deviation from the pre-determined course and sanctioned it, or they were ill-equipped to manage the operation of this and perhaps other vessels.

The courts will determine who or what organization is to blame for the tragic loss of life in January of 2012 off the coast of Tus-