

Ballet, Orlando Philharmonic and the Central Florida Jazz Society to develop intimate programs in The Abbey and The MEZZ that attract new patrons and give donors a closer look into the artistic side of the organizations, all in a risk-free rental environment.

In his more than 13 years as the leader of FTA, Ron has doubled the number of season ticket holders, making Orlando one of the country's top one-week Broadway markets. He also works with Broadway producers to attract the best possible touring shows to the Orlando market.

I am happy to honor Ron Legler, during LGBT Pride Month, for his work to further the arts in Central Florida.

HONORING ART IBLETO

HON. MIKE THOMPSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 24, 2014

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Art Ibleto for his induction into the Sonoma County Farm Bureau Hall of Fame. Art's contributions to our community are innumerable and far-reaching; therefore, it is appropriate that we honor and recognize him today.

Art was born and raised in Sesta Godano, Italy, which is where he first cultivated his lifelong love for good Italian cooking. When World War II erupted, Art served as a young demolition specialist in Italy, planting explosives under bridges, railroads and in highway tunnels to hinder the Nazi advance. After the war, Art made his way to Sonoma County in search of a brighter future and immediately immersed himself in the Sonoma County agriculture community. When he first arrived in the U.S., Art worked in the field picking vegetables at the Ghirardelli Ranch in Petaluma, which is where he met his wife, Vicki Ghirardelli. Since then, he has gone on to contribute to our agriculture community in many ways. From being an experienced meat cutter and farmer, to growing quality grapes and making superb wines, it's hard to think of an area of agriculture that Art hasn't left an indelible mark on.

In addition to his agricultural endeavors, Art is perhaps best known for his role as the beloved "Pasta King". For the past fifty years, Art has shared his gift for cooking authentic Italian food through his renowned Pasta King catering business. Art the Pasta King has been by my side at more of my events than I can count. He volunteers to cook at more community events and for more charitable causes than I could possibly list here. Art is truly committed to giving back to our community, to an extent that most of us will only ever hope to emulate. Art's unwavering passion and dedication to our community is an inspiration to all. And in turn, Art is beloved by all in our community.

But most importantly, I know Art as my friend who loves his family, his friends and our community. Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure and honor to recognize my good friend Art Ibleto today.

H.R. 3136 AND H.R. 4984

HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 24, 2014

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the two bipartisan higher education bills we are considering this week—the Advancing Competency-Based Education Demonstration Project Act (H.R. 3136) and the Empowering Students Through Enhanced Financial Counseling Act (H.R. 4984).

H.R. 3136, on the floor today, allows schools to pilot new competency-based education programs to give students more flexibility to pursue their educations. By exploring new options to measure student growth, rather than relying solely on completed credit hours, we can reduce costs and time to degree for non-traditional students.

H.R. 4984, which we will consider tomorrow, increases financial counseling for students and parents to ensure that they understand any lower-cost options that are available before turning to more expensive loans, have an accurate picture of their debt and obligations, and can predict and manage their monthly payments upon graduation.

While I support both of these efforts, much more needs to be done to ensure that students have access to affordable education and address college debt, which has now surpassed \$1 trillion. I look forward to working on a bipartisan basis to reauthorize the Higher Education Act and give America's students the opportunity to pursue the skills and education they need without accumulating debt they can't afford.

SUICIDE PREVENTION AMENDMENT TO H.R. 4870 DEFENSE DEPARTMENT APPROPRIATIONS ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2015

HON. RUSH HOLT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 24, 2014

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, on June 18, 2014, I offered an amendment to this legislation to address another facet of a national tragedy: the epidemic of suicide among our soldiers and veterans.

In March of this year, zero U.S. troops died in combat. In that same month, almost 700 soldiers and veterans died at their own hand.

This bill takes really enormous strides to treat the mental health problems underlying this epidemic. It provides tens of millions of dollars for therapy, outreach, and peer-to-peer support—and for that, the chairman and the ranking member, all the committee members, have my sincere praise and gratitude.

Suicide and the decision to take one's own life is complex and often mysterious, but we err if we think suicide is only a mental health problem. In truth, suicide is often the desperate act of a soldier or veteran in a desperate situation—and one important component of that desperation is financial stress.

My amendment has been endorsed by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. It would set aside up to \$1 million to study these issues: to improve our understanding of the

links between financial stress, financial abuse, and military suicide, and generate recommendations to fix these interlinked problems.

A few years ago, Army Sergeant Angelo Stevens was living with \$100,000 in debt. He had just been told that, because of his deteriorating finances, he was at risk of losing his security clearance. If he lost his clearance, he would lose his job—which would make his debt even more unmanageable.

Sergeant Stevens met with a military financial planner. He left feeling hopeless and humiliated. He told a reporter, "I walked out thinking, 'If I'm dead my family can get \$500,000 in life insurance, but I have to kill myself.'"

Now, Sergeant Stevens ultimately found help and survived, but he was far from alone in his desperation. According to the Defense Department's Suicide Event Report, in 2011, almost one in three military suicides was linked to workplace or financial problems. About one in 10 was directly associated with excessive debt or bankruptcy. Nearly half were associated with family or legal stress that might also be related to financial stress. These numbers surely underestimate the problem, as financial data wasn't even collected for many suicide deaths.

So we know, through personal stories like Sergeant Stevens' and through existing data, that financial stress is a major contributor to military suicide. But here's what we don't know.

We don't know, in many cases of military suicide, whether financial stress contributed to the soldier's decision to take his or her own life.

We don't know how many soldiers lose their security clearances because of personal financial problems, nor how the loss of a clearance contributes to mental health problems or suicide.

We don't know, in any evidence-based way, whether existing military financial planning programs are working to alleviate financial stress, financial abuse, mental health problems, or suicide risk.

We need to understand the effects of financial stress and financial abuse on mental health problems, including suicide, among our soldiers. We need to understand how effectively the Defense Department is providing adequate, unbiased, comprehensive financial planning and financial counseling—and we need to understand the obstacles that prevent military personnel from seeking these services.

We need to understand how effectively the suicide prevention programs at the Defense Department, the VA, and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau are working together, and how they could work together better.

And we need to build connections between the mental health professionals and the financial planning professionals who serve our soldiers. Mental health problems and financial problems both contribute to suicide, and we should explore ways to treat these problems together rather than separately.

Earlier, I told the story of Sergeant Angelo Stevens. He was one of the lucky ones. A financial planner overheard his accounting of his struggles, and on her personal time, she helped him put his financial life back together. With a lot of help, Sergeant Stevens stepped back from the abyss.