

on diversity in hiring. She made it very clear that she had our community's interests at heart when she said, "Yo hablo Español" in her beautiful British accent.

Most of the news coverage of this meeting was about when she used the term "illegals" to describe immigrants, which, in case you need a reminder, is not a good idea when you are meeting with members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

Well, forgive me for not noticing just how much progress NBC was making on diversity when some of the most visible people of color at NBC, like Alex Wagner, Melissa Harris-Perry, and Jose Diaz-Balart, are disappearing.

But let's be clear: this is not about quotas, window dressing, or checking the diversity box. Journalists of color bring a different texture and a different perspective on what issues matter and what should be discussed and debated on television.

The reality is that our Nation has become more diverse, and our television and our news media and our political institutions, including the Democratic and Republican Parties, have not kept up.

When NBC has a bad year when it comes to race, or when the Oscars have a couple of bad years when it comes to people of color, these are moments to talk about and confront the emotions and ideas we all have—we all have—about race and ethnicity.

It is a good time to think about what the phrase "e pluribus unum" really means in America today. This is a discussion we should all be having all of the time here in this body, on news programs, and in entertainment. It is a discussion I hope every family is having at their dinner table.

#### TAMMY BATEMAN'S STORY

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

Mr. JENKINS of West Virginia. Mr. Speaker, every West Virginian knows about the consequences of the war on coal. We see it everywhere we go: mines are closing; school districts are laying off employees; county commissions are forced to lay off deputy sheriffs; retailers are going out of business; mom-and-pop stores are struggling, barely able to hang on.

A pink slip doesn't mean just a loss of a job. It means a loss of a way of life; it means hard choices; and for some it means having to leave West Virginia entirely to find work elsewhere. The war on coal is killing West Virginia jobs.

Tammy Bateman and her family had to make a difficult decision. It changed the life of every member of her family, in particular that of her daughter. Tammy is a West Virginia coal voice. This is her family.

Here is what Tammy wrote to me:

"My husband worked for Cecil Walker Machinery for over 20 years at the

Logan branch in West Virginia. We have lived here for all of our lives.

"Due to the declining coal industry, we had to move to another State and move our daughter from the school that she loves.

"We have a lot of friends and family that have either had to pack up and move away also and some that have stayed and have been laid off and are suffering.

"This is all due to Obama's war on coal. You see, when coal is affected, so are small businesses, schools, and much more, especially people's livelihoods."

Mr. Speaker, the people of my district want to work. They want a paycheck to provide for their families. They want a better future for their children.

Thanks to the war on coal, thanks to the EPA's regulations putting coal mines out of business, West Virginians are suffering. This administration needs to put West Virginians back to work, not put West Virginians out of work.

#### SPECIAL IMMIGRANT VISA PROGRAM

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, today a bipartisan group of several dozen Members from both sides of the aisle led by ADAM KINZINGER and me were going to be sending a letter to Secretary Kerry, and I am pleased to say we don't have to send it.

The origin of the request dealt with our military operations in the Middle East, the brave Iraqi and Afghan men and women who provided sensitive and trusted services to United States military personnel. For over a decade, I have been working to try and protect them.

These Iraqis and Afghans who worked with Americans, whether as drivers or interpreters, were shoulder to shoulder with our troops, often in dangerous circumstances. In some instances, we have heard how their services literally made the difference as to whether our soldiers lived or died.

Now, thousands of our allies who helped us, face kidnapping, torture, and murder as a direct result of their assistance provided to the United States because members of the Taliban and the self-proclaimed Islamic State and other hostile elements on the ground see these individuals' service as an act of betrayal—and they have long memories.

To reward their faithful service and to fulfill our moral obligation, I have worked with colleagues on both sides of the aisle and with Senators, starting with Senator MCCAIN and the late Senator Kennedy in 2007, to create a special immigrant visa program. Known as the SIV program, enables the safe relocation of these Afghans and Iraqis to the United States.

Since 2007, our bipartisan team in Congress, including a number of Members who have recently joined us who served in Iraq and Afghanistan and know these circumstances firsthand, has been working to reform and revise the program, sometimes fighting just to keep it alive.

In November of last year, the National Defense Authorization Act extended and expanded the Afghan SIV program to ensure the continued protection of these souls. However, the final version of the bill also lengthened the period of service from 1 to 2 years required for individuals "submitting a petition after September 30, 2015."

The State Department's initial announcement on the interpretation of the law would have made more than 3,000 of our Afghan allies who had already begun the cumbersome application process start over to demonstrate the 2 years of qualifying employment. That is why Representative KINZINGER and I prepared this bipartisan letter to call on the State Department to revisit the interpretation.

Thankfully, after review and consideration of the concerns from Members of Congress, the State Department agreed to apply the 2-year requirement only to new applicants. This is welcome news.

Every hour that is delayed to relocate these vital partners to safety, puts their lives at risk and lives of their families. I am glad we have put this behind us perhaps, but we cannot keep operating in this inefficient manner while our allies and their families face consistent threats.

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They deserve better. And we can do better.

It is shameful that we cannot better serve those who have put their lives on the line to help us. It seems that there is always another roadblock that occurs.

This should be a bipartisan issue that Members of Congress and the administration can work together on to save lives. It is not just saving the lives of the people who helped us.

It ensures the safety of our troops and other American personnel currently serving in harm's way. It will ensure the success of our future missions. No one in their right mind will cooperate with American forces under dire circumstances if we abandon them after their vital assistance.

I applaud the State Department's reinterpretation of this work requirement and look forward to working with my colleagues on the SIV program improvements this year. I hope we can do a better job to meet our responsibility to these souls who risked so much to help Americans.

#### REFORMING OUR MENTAL HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

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