Sobering stories of everyday heroes lost in the line of duty led me to introduce H.R. 2350, Children of Fallen Heroes Scholarship Act, along with my fellow Pennsylvania colleague, Congressman MIKE FITZPATRICK.

This is a commonsense bill that would ease the financial burden of families of fallen law enforcement as well as other first responders by increasing Federal student aid opportunities for those children to pursue a college education.

Every child should have a fair opportunity to pursue a college degree, especially those who have suffered the unimaginable loss of a parent in the line of duty.

I commend the Senate for passing our companion bill earlier this week, and I call upon the House to pass our bill immediately.

DECLASSIFY DOCUMENTS

(Mr. JONES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Senator BOB GRAHAM of Florida for taking the national lead to declassify the 28 pages about 9/11, when so many Americans were killed. The information is critical to the freedom of America.

Representatives LYNCH, MASSIE, and myself have introduced H. Res. 14. We have over 54 colleagues in both parties who have joined us to say to President Obama: You have the authority—you don't even need Congress—to declassify this information. You promised the 9/11 families that you would do this.

Mr. President, keep your promise to the 9/11 families who are in so much pain. Keep your promise to the American people and let the American people know the truth about 9/11.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair reminds Members to address their remarks to the Chair.

HONORING THE LIFE OF CARL WHITMARSH

(Ms. JACKSON LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, it is a special privilege to be able to come to the floor and acknowledge the giants that live among us.

Today I want to honor a giant in my community, the 18th Congressional District, which I have the privilege of representing. That giant's name is Carl Whitmarsh.

If one were to think of those like Franklin Delano Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, William Jefferson Clinton, President Obama, and many other leaders who invested in America, you would think of Carl Whitmarsh.

He invested in the process of democracy. He invested, yes, in the Democratic Party because he was known as a democratic activist, but he had a sincere heart, being one of the members of the Texas Young Democrats.

But in the course of being a democratic person and an activist, Carl worked with one of the first African Americans to integrate the Young Democrats in the name of Doris Hubbard. They worked together to say that, in this Nation, we are all equal.

Yes, he was feisty. He was strong. He made us stand up and acknowledge our responsibilities of service. We lost him this past weekend.

I want to thank Mr. and Mrs. Schlett for the great work that they have done to answer his need in the place he lived. I thank the Schletts for all they have done.

Let me thank all of his friends for all they have done. Certainly, he was a friend of Hillary Clinton. He was a friend of mine and a friend of those who now mourn him.

So among those of us who count ourselves as activists, let me simply say that he was a public servant and he believed in helping people.

Let me also give my sympathy to the Oak Forest Area Democrats and all of his friends and family. Because we know that not only is a voice of democracy silenced, but we realize that a person who loved all of us and loved life and was willing to share—that person is Carl Whitmarsh.

May he rest in peace. We have lost you, but not your spirit, your memory, and your legacy.

PLANNING 2.0

(Mrs. LUMMIS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. LUMMIS. Mr. Speaker, today in the Natural Resources Committee here in the House we heard testimony about how the Bureau of Land Management's Planning 2.0 rule might affect counties around this country that are dealing with Federal lands in their districts.

FLPMA, which is the Federal Land Policy Management Act, is a law that was designed to give local government a lot of input especially in counties where there is a tremendous amount of Federal land.

We heard today from counties that have 90 to 95 percent of their land owned by the Federal Government. They need input into what is going on in their districts. FLPMA contemplated that.

For Planning 2.0, the new proposed rule to change that and perhaps eliminate some opportunities for local governments to have input into Federal land management decisions would be a huge mistake.

I ask the Bureau of Land Management to extend the time beyond the 30 days they granted and allow 180 days for the time that local governments and other stakeholders are allowed to respond to the proposed new rule.

REACHING OUT TO CONSTITUENTS

(Mr. MEEKS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MEEKS. Mr. Speaker, as I often do, I reached out to my constituents to find out what issues are most important to them.

I sent out a survey, and thousands responded. The top three issues on the minds of folks back home are affordable housing, gun control, and police-community relations.

In every Congress since I have been here, I have pushed to raise funding for HUD and NYCHA so that we can renovate housing and increase both the amount of section 8 vouchers and affordable housing units in New York City and this country.

On gun control, I have cosponsored nearly every gun violence prevention bill in Congress, and I will continue to stand up to the NRA and the rest of the gun lobby.

I am keenly aware of the need to improve police-community relations. We need to force an honest dialogue with police and the communities they serve.

So to the folks back home, I want to reassure you I hear you loudly and clearly and I will continue to stay focused on the issues most important to you. Thank you for participating in the survey we sent out. I will continue to fight for you, as I always have.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair reminds Members to address their remarks to the Chair.

OPIOID ADDICTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentlewoman from New Jersey (Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, for what feels like the first time this year, the House got to work on something that would genuinely help millions of Americans: addressing the opioid crisis.

My home State of New Jersey is a perfect example of this epidemic in both reach and financial impact. Four of every five new heroin users started their drug abuse addictions with a prescription opioid. By one estimate, New Jersey is now home to more than 128,000 heroin addicts.

□ 1645

In the past 10 years, heroin has claimed 5,000 lives in my State, and we fall just short of the top 10 in the percent of healthcare costs we use on those suffering with opioid addiction.

Opioids, both heroin and prescription painkillers, are driving the national

crisis of lethal overdose, with more than 60 percent of these deaths attributed to opiate abuse.

Many have called this an epidemic, and they are absolutely right. It deserves our attention, and I applaud the bipartisan work we have done this week.

But while we have taken a few vital steps, there are two very important things that I need my colleagues to understand. First, that although we have newly and rightly chosen to show those dealing with opioid addiction compassion and clemency, the only thing new about the addiction epidemic is its face.

The greatest spikes have been among White, suburban Americans, for whom we are opening doors for treatment, rehabilitation, and alternatives to incarceration.

Meanwhile, communities of color have watched families arrested, convicted, and imprisoned for decades over nonviolent drug offenses. African Americans are three to four times more likely to be arrested for drug crimes, and when these offenders go behind bars instead of to treatment beds, it breaks families and has lasting, devastating impacts on both families and communities.

We have now begun to take an evidence-based approach to drug abuse, one that recognizes that arrest and long prison terms come at great cost and zero benefit. It is something that we should have done a long time ago.

But now that we recognize the flawed policies of the past, we need to turn a critical eye to the victims of the older paradigm and offer them the doors to rehabilitation that we have created for today's offenders.

There is a second vital step here, Mr. Speaker, without which all of our bipartisanship today would be meaningless. We have authorized a variety of measures that have the potential to stop the advance of the opioid crisis, but without funding and continued review, our work will be worthless.

States and local municipalities need new resources to combat this crisis if we are going to make any kind of difference. That is why my Democratic colleagues put forward a proposal that will provide $600 million in new funds specifically to fight opioids and heroin.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle voted to block that proposal, which makes me concerned that they assume that the handful of authorizations we have worked on will be enough.

With 78 Americans dying from opioid overdose every day, the American people cannot afford for us to wash our hands of this issue without providing the resources necessary to halt this epidemic for all of those that are affected. We need to keep pushing forward.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to my colleague from Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON), the honorable chairman of our Progressive Caucus.

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding, and I also want to lend my voice to hers as I stand here before you to say that I was happy to vote for the legislation addressing opioid addiction today; sad that Republicans didn't support Democratic initiatives, but overall happy with the work that has been done on this this week.

I know many people fighting opioid addiction. It is debilitating. It is heartbreaking in the lives that it has ruined. And I think that though the steps we took today were positive, we could have taken more.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to reflect upon an issue that is related to this, but give a little historic perspective because I think that Congress' response to opioid addiction has, I think, in the main, been commendable.

Unfortunately, if it were 20 years ago today, in the mid 1990s, perhaps the response of Congress then to crack cocaine was very different.

The response to crack cocaine was massive incarceration. The effect of the crack cocaine epidemic was massive blanketing of police in certain neighborhoods, front-end loaders in poor neighborhoods.

I hope that what this more humane, more medical-oriented response to drug addiction represents is America learning how to deal with drug addiction because I think a more cynical person, not me, might say that because crack cocaine was associated with people who were African Americans, a more harsh, police-oriented, prison-oriented response was warranted and tolerable; and because opioid is more broad and affects the majority community as well, that a more reasoned response is warranted.

Thinking about people like Kemba Smith, who got 24 years in prison when she was a student at Hampton University. She never touched 1 gram of crack cocaine; had a boyfriend who was a drug dealer. He housed some drugs in her house. She got convicted, ended up getting 24 years in prison.

Thank goodness President Clinton gave her a commutation, but ruined her life.

We now have about 2.4 million people in prison, many of them for nonviolent drug offenses, many who were arrested and given an enormous amount of time in the crack cocaine wars of the 1990s.

I hope that the enlightened approach that we have now, which is not marked with helicopters and front-end loaders and all types of weaponry, literally militarizing Black neighborhoods across the United States back in the 1990s—I am glad that that is not the response we have taken this time. I hope it means we have learned something, but I hope it also means that we go back and ask ourselves if some of the exorbitant sentences that people got, life sentences in some cases, 10 years, 20 years, we revisit these; we look at mandatory minimums for some of these offenders; that we look at how we have exploded massive prison rates all around crack, even though, in my opinion, crack and powder cocaine are basically the difference between ice and water. They are essentially the same chemical.

We incarcerate one much more severely than the other. One is used predominantly by Whites; the other, more Blacks are found in possession of it, and the rates of incarceration are dramatically different.

This Congress corrected a grievous injustice where we punished crack cocaine 100 times more severely than we did powder. We changed that to 18 times more. That is improvement; it is not equality.

But I hope that today, the way we dealt with opioids, which I supported and I voted for—because I do believe that we do need to have more of a medical approach to drug addiction than the militarized, police-oriented, incarceration-oriented measure that we have used in the past—I hope that this new way of dealing with drug addiction is an advance in our understanding rather than a reflection of who is being hurt.

I think that if we really want to demonstrate that it is a reflection of what we have learned, then we have some unfinished business to achieve because there are still a lot of people who are dealing with the vestiges of mass incarceration and the war on crack cocaine.

Let me also just say that I remember being a young criminal defense lawyer in Minnesota, and I remember being in court when a courageous young judge named Pam Alexander, an African American female, found that the difference between powder and crack cocaine sentencing was not warranted by the facts or the evidence; in fact, amounted to an equal protection violation under the Minnesota constitution.

To the credit of the Minnesota State Supreme Court, they upheld her ruling, but Pam Alexander paid a heavy toll for her courageous judicial work because she was nominated to be a Federal district judge. That was blocked by people who wanted to maintain the status quo, and she never got to be a Federal district court judge.

Now, she is still a distinguished journalist, to the pride of us all; but, you know, just showing that some people went to prison for this and others had their careers limited because of their willingness to speak up against these equal protection problems.

So I just hope that today represents advancing our understanding rather than just the different treatment that different people historically have received in our country.

I definitely feel that I was proud to vote for the four measures today and enjoyed the debate and definitely was—my heart was in sync with all of my colleagues when they were talking about some of the very horrific problems that people suffer from opioid addiction. I am right there with them and my heart is right there with them and my mind is right there with them.

But I cannot get it out of my head about how differently we dealt with the crack epidemic. According to the Center for Disease Control, Blacks and Whites use crack about the same rate. And yet, there were whole jurisdictions in this country where there was literally no White person being charged with crack possession, and there were African Americans getting 5 years for a few grams, 10 years for a few more, and their lives absolutely devastated because of it.

I mentioned 2.4 million Americans behind bars. Much of this is driven by the war on drugs. There are 2.7 million children whose parents are behind bars. When your parent goes to prison, it devastates family income.

So I am just going to turn it back over; announce that I am proud of the votes that I took in favor of addressing opioid addiction today; say that I hope that it was because we learned something about the war on drugs; say that we must go, sort of fix some of the overzealousness of the war on crack years in the 1990s; and say that I really hope that our sympathies don't return only in favor of people who look like us, but to all Americans.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. I thank the gentleman from Minnesota. I appreciate the remarks that he has made and the issues that he has brought before this body this evening, particularly his illuminating for us and reminding us of the disparities of the criminal justice system, of the way we dealt with drug addiction in the past.

But we are in an enlightened period now, as evidenced by the work that we did just today; and I hope that we look at the issue of drug addiction and those addicted in the same humane manner, even if it is not an addiction to just heroin or an addiction to opiates, but it is an addiction to a drug that is harmful to their well-being.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY).

Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend, Representative BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN, for hosting this Special Order to talk about opioids and drug policies.

Our country is currently facing a great crisis. According to the Centers for Disease Control, 78 Americans die each day from an opioid overdose. We are in the midst of an addiction epidemic, an epidemic robbing mothers and fathers of their children, and children of their future.

I cannot imagine the torture and hardship that not only those with these addictions suffer, but their families and friends as well, seeing their loved ones in pain, unable to help them. But that does not have to be the case.

Congress can make a difference. Our actions here can help save lives, save people from suffering and having to bury a loved one. But we cannot stop this epidemic with just congressional authorization of new grant programs, studies, reports. We must fund these needed tools so that communities have the resources they so desperately need.

Today the House passed, and I was proud to support the Comprehensive Opioid Abuse Reduction Act, a bipartisan bill creating the Comprehensive Opioid Abuse Grant Program. And while I wholeheartedly support this new program, we have to make sure we provide the funding that is necessary to get the program up and running.

This new program and any others we enact will be no help without funding to support it.

Since 2000, there has been a 200 percent increase in the rate of deaths attributed to opioids. This problem is only getting worse, and has been for some time.

□ 1700

Our actions are already too late for the 28,000 lives lost just in 2014.

The leading cause of accidental death in New York State is now an overdose. An estimated 886 lives were lost citywide in 2015. That is 886 preventable deaths a year just in New York City, 886 individuals that could still be here today had we acted sooner.

Last month, Mayor de Blasio announced a new $5.5 million plan to combat deaths caused by overdose, building on the ThriveNYC initiative, a program to support those suffering with mental health problems.

Actually, today, the first lady, Chirlane, was here in Washington meeting with the delegation on the Thrive initiative on ways that we were working in the city to combat the opioid epidemic.

Earlier this week, Governor Cuomo of New York launched a statewide task force to face the heroin and opioid crisis in the State head-on. But our States can't do it alone, and they shouldn't need to. This isn't a problem confined to one district, one State, or one section of the country. It is a nationwide epidemic that cannot be allowed to continue unabated any longer.

We owe it to all those suffering, those addicted and their families, to show we recognize this problem and that we are working for them, not only through our efforts, our votes authorizing these new programs today, studies, and reports, but through actually putting the necessary support behind these efforts and funding them.

We can and we must work to save lives. But all those votes are for naught if we don't actually get these programs off the ground. Communities across the country need our help, and the time to act is now. We have already lost too many to this epidemic. I am proud of the votes on the floor today in support of moving forward to do something about it.

I thank the gentlewoman for her leadership and for yielding.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from New York.

Mr. Speaker, I now yield to the gentlewoman from the great State of Texas, the Honorable SHEILA JACKSON LEE.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congresswoman BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN for leading this Special Order and for bringing us together around two very important issues, not only this question of opioids, but, as well, the question of the rights of women.

Let me say that this has been a week for news, news coming from the most powerful lawmaking body in the Nation. As I heard a Member say in the course of the debate on the list of opioids legislation, it is not that we needed it, for the record is established through the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, but that we would want to have those areas that are usually filled with media really take hold of what is being done on the floor of the United States House of Representatives and, of course, the complementary legislation of the other body.

Over the past 2 days, we passed legislation dealing with pregnant women, we passed legislation dealing with teenagers who lost their lives because of overdose of prescription drugs, and we passed legislation that gave a whole litany under the Judiciary Committee not of mandatory minimums and mass incarceration, but how do we bring law enforcement and substance abuse counselors together? How do we provide training for police officers to use naloxone? How do we ensure that there is training or resources for those who are addicted? How do we get parental training as it relates to individuals who are addicted and their children are addicted? How do we monitor the issuance of prescription drugs with the respect for the medical profession that we all have in doing their job?

Because we do realize that this prescription journey started with the new approach to pain management that had been studied on an evidence-based basis that you would heal better if you could allow the pain not to be so devastating, then, of course, what happens are many things: the amount of prescription is more than you would need; or your children get ahold of it, or other people's children; or there is no place to dispose of it.

In this discussion of opioids, I want it to be reflected that the Congress came together as Republicans and Democrats focusing on how we should address this as a sickness and an addiction and not as incarceration and punitive sentencing.

We followed the beginning, in 2009, where we removed some of the disparities between crack cocaine and didn't have it in this large, unfair basis where, if you had a little bit of crack you were in prison for 400 years, if you had cocaine, you might skip by. We made that step. But now it is 2016, and we made a metamorphic change because we moved from the idea of mass incarceration to the idea of treatment.

When I finished the debate on the floor on the most recent Judiciary

Committee bill authored by Mr. SENSENBRENNER working with Mr. GOODLATTE, Mr. CONYERS, many Members, and me, I indicated that we missed a period of history of the crack cocaine users. Many of them are languishing in prisons. So I am hopeful about this bipartisan spirit, as we look to sentencing reduction through H.R. 3713, for something miraculous, because it includes retroactivity. Many of those crack cocaine users are nonviolent. We will have the ability as this legislation works its way through Congress to include them in the scheme of treatment and the restoration part of what we are trying to do in the lives of people who are sick and addicted.

I had someone come to me who said: Don't forget the meth users. We know that meth was an epidemic—and still is—and how destructive it is to one's physical look and body.

So I am delighted to join my colleagues here to say that we did have a newsworthy great week and that we were taking a look at opioids in a different manner, that we are taking a look and working with physicians and the medical profession to be able to ensure that they do their work and that we find a way to provide a monitoring situation so that we can stem the tide of this horrific, horrible, and destructive drug addiction that destroys the lives of so many young people.

I close by saying that some years ago, my late mother was in the hospital. We know how we treat our parents—but our mothers. I was flying back and forth from this House checking and determining what her condition was. She had so many moments where she was on the brink but she came on back.

One of the moments that I came to the hospital, there was erratic behavior. It wasn't my mother. That is the issue that we want. We want people to be explained to as to what is going on. It was a treatment that was dealing with trying to ease her pain.

I had to ask them: What is she using?

Percocet.

The first time that I heard that word was 6 years ago—or even later, beyond 6 years. That was 2010, so it was even earlier than that. I didn't know the ramifications of Percocet. I am a lawyer and not a doctor. But I realize that whatever it was, the cure was worse than the disease, and I asked them to take my mother off the Percocet and for me never to see that again.

Now, how many families do that?

She did get off of it. Thank God, she healed and walked out of that hospital. That wasn't the time that she passed. She lived for another day.

But we need, in this opioid discussion, as we are moving against mass incarceration, to explain to families and physicians to talk about what these painkillers can do. Because, in essence, they are sometimes so toxic that they, in many instances, easily cause addiction, as I have heard many parents say about their youngsters who had athletic injuries.

So I thank the Congresswoman for yielding to me because I think this week has been a magnificent week when we have opened the door and kicked the can not down the road, but we have kicked it to open the door to say to all of us in America that it is okay. Addiction can be cured. But we are going to work alongside of you so that you can openly seek that cure to relieve yourself of addiction, and we are not going to direct you down the path of incarceration and mandatory minimums. I want that for those who are languishing and who have been sentenced on crack cocaine, and I am looking forward to working so that legislation covers that aspect of those who are still incarcerated.

With that, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding to me, and I thank the gentlewoman for her leadership.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for always sharing with us in our Special Order Hour her wisdom, experience, unique observations, recommendations, and proposals. I thank the gentlewoman very much.

Mr. Speaker, let me add just one more thought to this topic.

This week we demonstrated that bipartisanship is still possible on issues that matter to the American people. We need to take that same spirit and apply it to the countless other issues that have always been bipartisan. Restoring the Voting Rights Act, for one; addressing the significant dangers of a virus, in this instance, of the Zika virus is another illustration; and passing a budget that creates jobs and grows paychecks for American workers.

As we now shift topics here, Mr. Speaker, there is another issue that this body has been avoiding for decades. A few months ago, I joined my colleagues on the floor of the House to urge the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. We are here again, Mr. Speaker, and we will keep coming back until it is done.

We have been avoiding ensuring protection for women in the Constitution for almost 100 years, and with enduring biases and discrimination against women, there is no better time than now.

The ERA would give Congress the constitutional grounds to pass legislation that gives women victimized by gender-based violence recourse in Federal court and restoring elements of the Violence Against Women Act that have been deemed invalid by the Supreme Court. The ERA would give women a stronger legal platform from which to protest gender bias discrimination at work, giving cases like Betty Dukes' 2011 suit against Walmart the standing they would need. When you prove statistically lower pay and slower promotion, the biases are obvious and shouldn't be allowed to continue just because they haven't been specifically expressed. The ERA would keep women from being forced out of work during pregnancy, a protection that currently does not exist.

Those are just a few of its benefits.

For a long time, the push for the ERA has been viewed from a single perspective. But it is time for a coalition of women of every ethnicity, every religion, every nationality, and every race to stand united in the call for the ERA because it is for all of us. There are unique issues that every minority group faces, but they are all compounded when you add the gender to that plate. We can and we must work together to level the gender playing field, and the ERA is the best route to that goal.

Mr. Speaker, I now yield to a fierce fighter for women and the ERA, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY).

Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I truly want to thank BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN for hosting this Special Order to talk about the Equal Rights Amendment. I can't think of anything that is more important than protecting the rights of half the population of America.

We in Congress and in our country have helped other countries win their independence and craft their constitutions. One of the things we worked to place in that constitution is equality of treatment for all people. We have seen that countries that treat women well have less terrorism, less turmoil, and more economic stability, and that adds to the peace of the world. Yet we don't have women in the Constitution of the United States of America.

□ 1715

I think it is long past due, and it doesn't cost any money. It just is an equality statement in a Constitution giving protection to half the population.

I have come to this Congress and reintroduced the Equal Rights Amendment. We know that it passed in the 1970s. It fell three States short of ratification. You need 38 States, and 35 ratified it. It has already passed in this country before, and there is huge support. Currently, we have over 187 bipartisan cosponsors that have joined Bonnie and me in this effort.

There is an old Chinese saying that women hold up half the sky. But what most women are concerned about is how they are treated while they are on the Earth. We want to be treated fairly on the Earth. The exclusion of women—half the population—from the Constitution has dire consequences.

Last month we commemorated Equal Pay Day, or more appropriately, ''Unequal Pay Day,'' when the average woman's salary catches up with an average man's earning from the previous year. To put it simply, women have to work 3½ months more than a male colleague doing the same job with the same pay to reach his equal pay.

Now, I can say we have made progress. When I first entered the workforce, we were at 59 cents to the

dollar. We have made progress. We are now at 79 cents to the dollar. But economists say that, if we continue at the same rate, it will be the year 2025 before anything near equality is reached in equality of pay.

Given that fact, the economic state of women in the United States is unequal, unfair, and unacceptable if we want to ensure financial stability of American families and protect economic growth.

It is very interesting. One study was done by Heidi Hartmann, who is a MacArthur Award-winning economist. She stated that, if you just paid women equally, you would eliminate half the poverty in the United States.

So everybody talks about job programs and everything else. Just pay women fairly and you would eliminate half the poverty in our country. That is an easy way to address opportunity and fair treatment.

This unfairness of 79 cents to the dollar is also much, much more unfair when it goes to women of color. The pay gap is even larger. The pay gap has narrowed slightly over the years, but its impact is perhaps more detrimental today than ever before because women are participating in the workforce in record numbers.

Increasingly, women are sometimes absolutely necessary for the income of the family, and some are single parents, as I am. I am a widow. When you treat a woman fairly, you are treating her husband fairly and her children fairly. With more women in the workforce because they have to work, bringing home a full, fair paycheck becomes more and more important.

I recently asked the Joint Economic Committee democratic staff to study the effects of the gender gap, not just the 79 cents to the dollar, but what does it mean over a lifetime. This report, which was probably the most comprehensive, in-depth report on the subject to date, looked at the pay gap by age, race, State, and congressional districts.

What it showed is that, over the span of a lifetime, it compounded. Women are 75 percent more likely to live in poverty in their old age than their male counterparts. The unequal pay in the paycheck translates into lower pensions, lower Social Security, lower savings, and just less cash in the pocketbook.

They say that, in 1 year over the lifetime of a woman, the average is that you lose over $500,000 in pay. That is just the pay. Then you have to compound it into all of the savings aspects that all of us rely on in our older age.

We found that the gender gap varies widely by race, age, and State. Working mothers—this is so interesting. For a country that says we honor the family, we honor the mothers and the fathers, if you become a mother—and many economists have written the same thing—you pay a penalty in the form of depressed wages when compared to working fathers and women without children.

Women that become mothers, the study showed that they are paid less—they call it the ''mommy penalty''—yet, men that become fathers are paid more. Men that become fathers are paid not only more than women, but they are paid more than men without children. So it is interesting.

And the statistics are that men with children make 15 percent more than men without children and significantly more than women. Over a career, this disparity widens for women, making them more likely to live in poverty. Older women are the largest segment of poverty in our country.

Women cannot support their families or fully participate in the economy when they are consistently paid less than men doing comparable work. This is bad for everyone. As you go through it, you wonder why does the gender gap persist and what can we do about it.

In the past 30 years, the gender gap has been stuck at 79 cents to the dollar. After controlling for the complex factors that contribute to the gender gap, which could be leaving work to take care of children, taking care of an elderly parent, or other reasons, there is a 40 percent gap which many economists attribute to discrimination. Without the ERA, there is little to do. There is no recourse to fight gender discrimination when it does exist.

The late Justice Antonin Scalia agreed and famously said, ''Certainly the Constitution does not require discrimination on the basis of sex. The only issue is whether it prohibits it. It doesn't.''

I believe that Justice Scalia, who Ruth Bader Ginsburg called her closest friend on the Court, was doing the women's movement and like-minded men who care about women a favor by making this crystal clear.

He was a strict constitutionalist. He went by the Constitution. His statement made it very clear: Women are not in the Constitution; therefore, I, as a Justice, and others would not protect them.

We need to correct this. It is something that we could join hands and make happen. If we don't explicitly protect women in the Constitution, there can be no expectation for equality in the workforce, government, sports, or academia. There is no remedy for discrimination against women in the court.

There have been some celebrated Supreme Court decisions that the dissent has said that this will be reversed in later years, and I believe it will. But they decided against women on the point that women aren't in the Constitution. Well, let's change that. That is something we can do in this House: pass a bill that puts women in the Constitution of our great country.

Leaving women out of the Constitution and legally defenseless harms all of us in other areas of our lives. The progress women have made can too easily be rolled back, laws can be repealed, and judicial attitudes can shift. Something as fundamental as equality of opportunity and rights should not be at the whim of who is on the Court, who is in the legislature, or any other law that could be put in place to roll rights back.

I would say that equality for women is a fundamental right that the vast majority of this country supports. I polled it once, and 99 percent of the people in America said, yes, people should have equal rights, and, yes, they should have equality of opportunity.

Yet, this fundamental aspect for half of the population of America—and it is an important half of the population. Every man had a mother. Women are there working in the home, in the society, and in the communities.

As we help and support and empower women, we empower our country and empower our economy. We can't compete and win in this world economy without using the strength of all of our people. That means not just talented men, but talented women, also.

Ninety percent of the country actually thinks the Constitution already fully protects women because it seems so much like a no-brainer. If you asked anyone in this body, they would say ''Of course women should be treated equally,'' ''Of course I want my daughters and my sons to have equal opportunity.''

Properly valuing women is the right thing to do for our daughters, sisters, mothers, and grandmothers. It is also the closest thing to a silver bullet to stimulate the economy. If you just paid women equally, you would move so much more money into the economy that would have to be consumed and spent in the economy.

I want to really thank the like-minded men and women who support the opportunity and the goal for women to be treated fairly. I believe this is an issue that we could all agree on. It is a fundamental right. I think that people believe in opportunity. This is one way to make sure that all of our citizens have the same opportunity.

I want to thank BONNIE for bringing this issue to the floor. She brings it to the floor once a month. That shows a persistence and a commitment that I want to follow and want to support.

I can't think of anything more important that we could spend our time on as a Nation or as individuals than helping people have the equal treatment and the equal opportunity that they so justly deserve in this great country.

I just want to close by saying I wake up every morning and I say a prayer and I kiss the ground and thank God that I was born an American. There is no question in my mind that we are the greatest country on Earth. We treat our people the best. It is amazing.

We just did a report that came out of the President's Office of Economic Advisers that shows that our economy is leading the world. The only thing that is hurting our economy is the suffering other economies that are pulling us

down. We are a great country. But one of the reasons that we are so great is that we always strive to be better.

I can't think of doing anything more important or better than treating all of our citizens equally and allowing them to have the same equal opportunity under our great flag and under our great Constitution. It is long past due to put women in the Constitution.

I hope my colleagues will join me in helping to make this dream of equality a reality in the great country of the United States of America.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman from New York. I welcome our partnership on this endeavor. We committed to one another that we are going to continue to raise the issue of the ERA on a monthly basis so that people will be reawakened to just how significant and important this is.

I was very struck by the information that she shared with us with regard to the unequal pay as it relates to women versus men. While we cited sort of the general knowledge or norm that is associated with the ERA and with unequal pay, we recognize that there is an even greater disparity when it comes to African American women and Latin women to the tune of 63 cents on the dollar and 54 cents on the dollar.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE), who is also a fierce fighter for equality for all people.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, as I listened to Congresswoman MALONEY, I heard her mention the Constitution and the importance of the Equal Rights Amendment and I am reminded of the constitutional amendment that was needed in 1920 to allow women the right to vote.

If you took a broad assessment of the American people, they might allude to women have the right to vote. But what I would offer to say to them is that every time we wanted to be sure of a right given to a left-out group, we had to add to the Bill of Rights.

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The Bill of Rights includes the Fifth Amendment, which is the protection of our property and due process. It includes the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments, which codify, constitutionally, the wrongness of slavery and the concept of equal protection under the law. But in all of that, it has not protected women in their rightful place in this society to have a legal basis to object to unequal pay. It did not provide the cover for Lilly Ledbetter, who went to protest the fact that she was paid less and was not given any respect by the employer who felt that there were no laws that protected her.

I believe that, in all of my tenure in Congress, I have supported the Equal Rights Amendment legislation. So I just answer today, for those who may be querying ''here they come again'' or ''they already have a Bill of Rights'' or ''they have the amendment allowing them to vote,'' yes, we have sectors of rights—the right to vote—and maybe we join in and have the right to due process.

What the Equal Rights Amendment does is it pierces the veil of governmental leadership and governance, and it says to the 50 States: you must adhere to the Constitution as it is related to women and that, with every aspect of governmental action that impacts women, without discrimination against men, you must put them on an equal footing.

We have title VII and we have title IX; but, Mr. Speaker, in spite of those statutes, women are still discriminated against because you can't section off their rights and expect all of their rights to be protected. Discrimination under title VII fits one box, and title IX, with athletics, fits another box. Then, for some reason, we have all of these different aspects that seem either not to prevail under lawsuits under title VII or not to prevail under lawsuits under title IX, but women are still discriminated against.

If there were an amendment that would cover all aspects of governance that States had to adhere to, that counties had to adhere to, that cities had to adhere to, and that, certainly, the Federal Government had to adhere to, because the Constitution is the Constitution of the United States for all people, then we would see the lifting of those issues that impact women and that are not clarified through the statutory process.

I rise today again to support the movement of this bill through the Judiciary Committee, to the floor of the House, and, ultimately, through the Senate. For my colleagues, many of you know that there is a constitutional process that would engage the States. Then, ultimately, that would become an amendment to the United States Constitution. What better process of engaging the people of the United States in determining whether they want and recognize the importance of an Equal Rights Amendment than the process of amending the Constitution of the United States.

I finish by saying we are doing what is right, and I am hoping that its conclusion will be in short order on behalf of the women and the men and the families of this great United States of America.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. I thank the gentlewoman from Texas for joining us in this discussion as well.

Mr. Speaker, it has been almost a century; so the time for the ERA is right now.

I yield back the balance of my time.

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK: BLUE LIVES MATTER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. REICHERT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. REICHERT. Mr. Speaker, tonight, my colleagues and I come to the floor of the United States House of Representatives to spotlight and highlight a very special week, a week that brings families and police officers together here in Washington, D.C. It is a week that is called National Police Week where these families and police officers from around the country come and gather to remember those police officers whose lives were tragically taken in the line of duty during the past year, and this happens every year. In that process, we not only remember those lives who were lost in the past year, but we also remember those lives who were lost in all of the years prior to that. Later on, I will talk about a couple of close friends of mine whose lives were taken early in their careers in the King County Sheriff's Office.

I should say that, prior to coming to Congress, I spent 33 years in the King County Sheriff's Office in Seattle, starting in a patrol car, then as a detective, then as a SWAT commander, a hostage negotiator, a precinct commander, and, finally, as a sheriff, then coming here to Congress.

To begin tonight, I honor Chehalis Police Officer Rick Silva and Washington State Trooper Brent Hanger, who both tragically died in the State of Washington in the line of duty.

I begin with Washington State Trooper Brent Hanger.

Trooper Hanger died on August 6, 2015, while investigating a marijuana grow in a small town called Yakima, Washington. He was 47 years old. He had a wife, Lisa, and six children: Emily, Erin, Kailey, Erik, Kyle, and Kevin. Trooper Hanger served with the State Patrol for 17 years, all of which were spent in the State Patrol's District 7, which includes Washington State's Snohomish, Skagit, and Whatcom Counties. Early in his career, in 2000, Trooper Hanger received the Award of Merit from the State Patrol for assisting and saving the life of a suicidal person.

It is one of the things we forget about with regard to police officers. We are really peace officers, and we are there to protect people and keep the peace. The vast majority of us who go into law enforcement enter into law enforcement to protect people and to save lives, and that is what Trooper Hanger did in 2000 on just one occasion that he was recognized for.

I also recognize Chehalis Police Officer Rick Silva.

Rick was 60. He died in Chehalis on June 18, 2015, in Centralia, Washington. He had a wife named Cindy and a daughter named Shannon. From 1986 to 1988, he was a Lewis County corrections officer. From 1988 to 2002, he was an officer with the Lewis County Sheriff's Office; and he was employed, when he passed away, with the Chehalis Police Department. He was a self-taught master fabricator, race car driver, automotive restorer, and carpenter.

Since the first known line of duty death in the year 1791, more than 20,000