

Mr. Speaker, this Veterans Day comes as services for veterans are improving both on a national level and locally in Alabama's Second Congressional District. I have been impressed by the leadership of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Dr. David Shulkin. He has been making the long-troubled department work better for those it serves.

Closer to home for me, the Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System has improved its service rating and now ranks three out of five stars. This is encouraging news, especially considering that just a few short years ago the Central Alabama VA was one of the Nation's worst. Our VA now has the steady leadership of Dr. Linda Boyle, and there is no question that her guidance has made a difference in making this sustained progress.

□ 1045

I am eager to see it continue. We still have significant issues to address at our Central Alabama VA, which is why I will remain actively engaged in working to turn around the system.

Mr. Speaker, it is my distinct honor to represent a district that is home to one of the Nation's highest concentrations of veterans and retired military personnel. One of the most rewarding parts of this job is being able to advocate for those who have served this Nation in uniform.

I take my responsibility to look after veterans very seriously, whether pushing for better policies or fighting to improve access to the VA medical services or going to bat on behalf of someone the bureaucracy has left behind.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to close by extending my sincere gratitude to everyone who has served this country and their families. Our country is great because of the men and women who were willing to sacrifice on our behalf.

THE ESTATE TAX

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

Mr. BARR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share the amazing story of Rick Corman, the hardworking, hard-charging founder of R.J. Corman Railroad Group in Nicholasville, Kentucky, in my district. Rick's life story is an example of the American Dream, and his tireless spirit, grit, determination, and generosity benefited not only the employees of R.J. Corman, but an entire community.

Unfortunately, because of America's broken Tax Code, the abilities of entrepreneurs like Rick are compromised, and the estate tax, in particular, threatens the future ability of the R.J. Corman Railroad Group to continue to drive economic growth, employment, and charitable giving in Kentucky.

This story is timely. As Congress takes on the task of reforming our broken Tax Code over the next few weeks, critics will undoubtedly protest that

this plan is a tax cut for the rich, and they will cite our changes to the estate tax as an example. But as the story of Rick Corman reveals, the estate tax is not a tax on the wealthy as much as it is an unfair penalty on hard work, jobs, charity, upward mobility, and the American Dream.

In 1973, after growing up in a low-income, five-room house with no interior bathroom, Rick Corman started his company immediately following high school graduation with nothing more than a dump truck, a backhoe, and a tenacious spirit. Driven by his remarkable operator skills, and then by his commitment to safe and reliable service, Rick was able to become a trusted provider in the railroad industry.

But his success would not have been possible without the assistance early in his career from Luther Deaton, a community banker for what is now called Central Bank in Kentucky. As Rick grew his company, he faced debts and cash flow problems. He struggled to get a loan. As Luther said: He had a good company; he just faced a cash crunch.

But Rick invited Luther to the site of a coal train derailment inside a tunnel in the middle of the night to show his work; and Rick, recalling the episode, laughed because he had gotten his banker filthy and covered in coal dust. But after that experience and seeing how hard Rick worked, Luther knew that this man would not fail. So Rick was then able to secure character-based loans that allowed his company to thrive because his community banker was willing to take a risk on him based on what he knew about his business and Rick's drive to succeed.

Today, this type of loan would never be allowed under the overly restricted Dodd-Frank law, but those loans proved to be essential for the growth of Rick's company and ultimately highly profitable for the bank.

Without access to capital, today's entrepreneurs are prohibited from doing what Rick Corman did. Over 40 years he grew his company into what is today known as R.J. Corman Railroad Group, continuously investing profits back into his business, into its workers, and into the surrounding community.

Today, R.J. Corman has field offices in 23 States. The company serves all seven class I railroads, many regional and short line railroads, as well as various rail-served industries.

Rick grew the company into what it is today by treating all of his workers well, working alongside them, and never asking them to do a job that Rick himself was unable or incapable of doing himself. The company's diversity and investment in people gave it the ability to service all aspects of the freight railroad industry at any scale. The company has been critical to restoring service when class I railroads are devastated by flooding or storms like Hurricanes Katrina, Harvey, or Irma.

But now the future success of this company is threatened by the estate

tax, also known as the death tax. In 2013, Rick Corman passed away after a heroic 12-year battle with cancer. It resulted in the transfer of his life's work to a living trust. More than anything, Rick had an intense appreciation for the hard work and loyalty of his employees who had been and continue to be an integral part of the company's success, and he wanted to ensure that he protected their jobs into the future.

Since Rick's passing, the trust has continued to reinvest cash into the company, as he intended, and the company continues to operate and help those who have benefited from it. The company has invested nearly \$110 million in capital assets, and employment has grown by 53 percent, nearly 450 jobs. The company has donated more than \$2.5 million to charitable causes since Rick's passing.

But due to the estate tax, the company has yet to feel the full impact of the tax. But starting in 2019, nearly 30 percent of its annual cash flow will be pulled from the company as a result. This will significantly impact R.J. Corman's ability to create jobs, purchase equipment, and donate to charity. The leadership of the company now tells me that the government will actually lose revenue because the company will not be able to grow and create jobs that would produce more revenue than the estate tax will produce.

This is an example of why it is so important we end this unfair tax. The death tax destroys intergenerational small businesses and family farms throughout the Nation owned by people who started with literally nothing and worked their entire life to build a successful company and jobs.

So as we look at the estate tax and tax reform in the coming weeks, I hope my colleagues will remember the story of Rick Corman. These families and these businesses should not have to fear triple taxation from Washington just because someone passes away.

Our bill immediately delivers relief from this tax, and I hope that we will pass a repeal of the estate tax to honor entrepreneurs, job creators, and philanthropists like Rick Corman.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 51 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

Chaplain Michael J. Halyard, South Texas Veterans Health Care System,