

**MEMORIAL DAY -- HON. HENRY A. WAXMAN (Extensions of Remarks
- May 21, 2009)**

[Page: E1262]

HON. HENRY A. WAXMAN
OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Thursday, May 21, 2009

- Mr. WAXMAN. Madam Speaker, each year Memorial Day is an important time to honor the fallen, renew our support to the wounded and recognize the commitment and heroism of those who serve the United States.
- In my district this weekend the headstones of the Los Angeles National Cemetery, as those in hundreds of cemeteries across the country, will be surrounded by flowers and by loved ones paying their respects to the departed. In the hustle and bustle of everyday life, these serene and mournful fields honor those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of the freedoms we so cherish.
- The sanctity and preservation of our nation's battlefields, monuments and institutions are of utmost importance to ensure that future generations can pay their respects to those who have fought. One of my constituents, Leon Cooper, has been tireless in his efforts to raise awareness about the build-up of garbage and debris at Red Beach in Tarawa Atoll in the remote Pacific island nation of Kiribati. On this site, in a span of just a few days in November 1943, nearly 1700 Marines and Navy personnel were killed and over 2000 more wounded in heavy fighting.
- I applaud Mr. Cooper for his commitment. Recently his story about the Battle of Tarawa and its aftermath, Return to Tarawa: The Leon Cooper Story, debuted on the Discovery Network. This documentary, narrated by Ed Harris, provides a remarkable window into the events surrounding both the battle itself and Mr. Cooper's involvement, and is a great service to future generations.
- I encourage our local U.S. Embassy in Fiji to work with the Government of Kiribati on sanitation and conservation projects that would provide long-term solutions for maintaining the coastline and preserving the area. It would be a tribute to our veterans and a great benefit to the Kiribati people.

- While we honor those fallen and veterans from generations past, we must also honor the needs of our soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. The past three years have seen a remarkable increase in support for our nation's veterans, including the strengthening of quality health care, funding increases to treat traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder, a record increase in veterans' educational funding, and other improvements to address deficiencies in medical facilities and housing.
- The 30th congressional district is home to the West Los Angeles Veterans Medical Center, the largest VA hospital in the continental United States. The West LA VA was built on land that was generously donated in 1888 to serve as an Old Soldiers' Home. I am pleased that a State Veterans Home is being constructed on the property and that the VA is moving forward to develop long-term therapeutic supportive housing on the campus. In addition, I am delighted that the Fisher Foundation has built a facility on the property where veterans' families can live while their loved ones are getting medical treatment at the hospital. These are all appropriate uses that are consistent with the deed and will benefit our nation's veterans.
- I remain opposed, however, to the VA's consideration of any plan that would divert portions of this land for commercial uses. That is why I am pleased that Senator *Dianne Feinstein* and I were able to have legislation passed by Congress and signed by the President to prohibit the sale or commercialization of the campus. I will continue my work with local veterans groups, elected officials and the community to ensure that the property of the West LA VA is preserved for programs that benefit and serve our veterans.
- As Americans join together this Memorial Day, let us properly thank those who stand in harm's way, far from home, living under continual risk and fighting under the stars and stripes to preserve and defend the freedoms that all Americans cherish and hold dear. We owe these brave men and women an enduring debt of gratitude.

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