

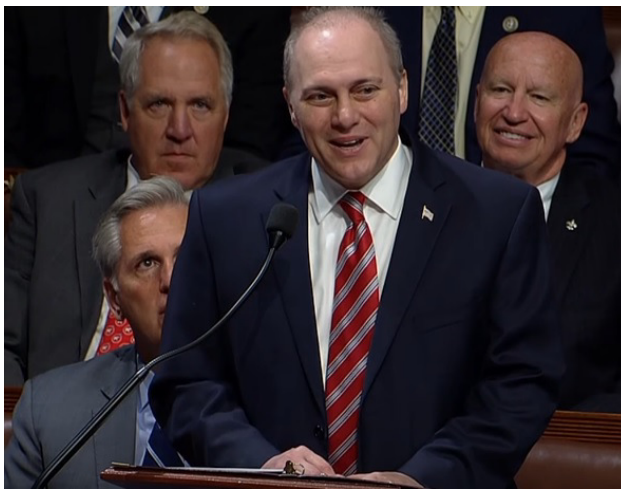


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Steve Scalise

Floor Speech Marking Return to Congress Following the Congressional Baseball Shooting

delivered 28 September 2017, The People's House, Washington, D.C.



[AUTHENTICITY CERTIFIED: Text version below transcribed directly from audio. Stuttered words cut for continuity.]

You have no idea how great this feels to be back here at work in "the People's House." As you can imagine, these last three and a half months have been pretty challenging times for me and my family. But if you look at the outpouring of love, of warmth, of prayer -- my gosh, Jennifer and I have been overwhelmed with all of that outpouring. And it's given us the strength to get through all of this and to get to this point today.

And it starts with God.

For when I was laying out on that ball field, the first thing I did, once I was down and I couldn't move anymore, is I just started to pray. And I'll tell you it gave me an unbelievable sense of calm knowing that at that point it was in God's hands. But I prayed for very specific things. And I will tell you, pretty much every one of those prayers was answered. And they were some pretty challenging prayers I was putting in God's hands.



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But, He really did deliver for me and my family; and it just gives you that renewed faith and understanding that the power of prayer is something that you just cannot underestimate.

So I'm definitely a living example that miracles really do happen.

The first place I want to go to thank true angels along the way starts with the United States Capitol Police. When I was elected Majority Whip -- as you know the elected leadership has a security detail. And if anybody ever wondered why we're assigned security detail, I surely found out that day. And let me tell you, I want to specifically mention Crystal Griner and David Bailey. Crystal and David were assigned to my security detail that morning. And day in and day out they're part of our family. Jennifer and I truly do treat them as part of our family because they are with us everywhere we go.

And on that day it was no different. On June 14th, they came, 6:30 in the morning, we arrived at the baseball field just to play and practice for a game of charity baseball. And nobody would have suspected what ensued. And yet as soon as those shots were fired -- I'll tell you, when I was laying on the ground, one of the things I prayed for is that David and Crystal would be successful in carrying out their duties.

And both David and Crystal are incredibly well trained, incredibly professional. But when I was laying there, not long after the first couple of shots were fired, I could hear a different caliber weapon; and that told me that they had immediately engaged the shooter. And let me tell you, if they didn't act so quickly -- and even after being shot both themselves, continued to engage the shooter and ultimately got him down, which not only saved my life, but saved the life of a lot of other people that are here in this chamber today.

Crystal couldn't be with us today.

But David Bailey is with us.

David, you are my hero. You saved my life. Thank you so much.

Tiger blood.

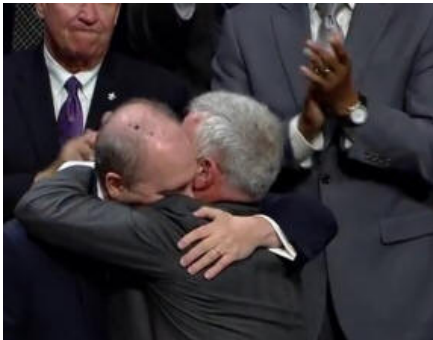


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I also thank -- owe thanks to lot of the people that were on the field with me. Right after the shooter was down, a lot of my colleagues came and ran to come check on me. And one I want to mention in particular is one of those things that Jennifer and I call the "little miracles" that happened that day and throughout the next few months of our recovery.

Happened to have Brad Wenstrup on the field that day, and he was one of the first to come to my side. And as you know, Brad's not only a doctor, but he's a decorated Army Ranger who served in combat. And one of his roles and missions was to take care of people that were wounded before they went off on the helicopter to go get prepared. Who would have thought that God would have put Brad out there on the field with me; because the tourniquet he applied, many will tell you, saved my life so that I could actually make it to the hospital in time with all the blood loss.

So, Brad, where are you at?



Love you, brother.

Once I arrived at MedStar Hospital, I was a little bit out of it at that point, but luckily I ended up in the trusted hands of Dr. Jack Sava and his great team over at MedStar. They gave me a second chance at life. And through many, many surgeries, where my life was truly in the balance in a few of those, they did a wonderful job at making sure that I was well taken care of, and ultimately made it through that point, so I could get to Dr. [Robert David] Golden and his team who actually put me back together again, which was quite a task, to the point where I'm actually able to relearn how to walk again. So Dr. Sava, Dr. Golden, thank you for being here. And thanks for your teams' work.



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Above all else, I want to thank my lovely wife, Jennifer. Those of you who know her know how strong Jennifer is. She's an incredibly warm and loving wife. And she's an incredible mother to our children. And somehow through the late nights and the surgeries and all the other things, she managed to hold our family together, to make sure that Harris and Madison were cared for as well. And still to this day, she's not only by my side but she's also serving as a great mother. I am lucky to have you. Thanks for being here. Love you, sweetheart.

And while it's been a challenging time for my family, the thing that really overwhelmed us from the start was the outpouring of love and warmth and prayers from Southeast Louisiana, the district that I represent. We saw blood drives at Saint Catherine. We saw prayer groups at First United Methodist Church in Slidell.

But what we also saw were prayer groups and well-wishes being given from people that we'd never met before, throughout all of your districts. And you shared it with me. And it was one of those things that was hard for us to completely comprehend -- that you had people from all walks of life that had never met me before, and yet they saw what had happened and they just wanted to offer prayers. And let me tell you to each and every one of you -- and please convey it to your constituents; and I sure convey it to my constituents back home -- that warmth and love gave us just incredible strength that you can't imagine during some really, really difficult times. And so that is one more example of the power of prayer.

Something else I saw firsthand wasn't a surprise to me, but it was the outpouring of love from you, my colleagues, both Republican and Democrat, right after the shooting.

We were practicing on the Republican side and the Democrats were practicing, too. And my colleague and friend and sometimes archrival in baseball from back home in New Orleans -- unfortunately, the star of the game too many times -- Cedric Richmond somehow figured out which hospital I was sent to, and got there -- probably the first person there on the scene -- in his baseball uniform to check on me. So many others of you -- again, both Republican and Democrat -- reached out in ways that I can't express the gratitude and how much it means to me, Jennifer, and our whole family. It really does show the warm side of Congress that very few people get to see.



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And so I want to thank each and every one of you for that. You don't know how much it meant to me. And when I come back into this chamber here today...just seeing the faces of all of you, it just means more to me than you can imagine. So thanks for all of that love and support.

A lot of people asked, "Did this event change you?" And I think those of you who know me know I'm an optimistic person. I'm, you know, just a fun-loving person. I'm from South Louisiana and we believe you work hard and you play hard and *Joie de vivre*.¹ Is an event like this going to really change that? And the first thing I can tell you is, yes, it changed me, but not in the ways you might think. It's only strengthened my faith in God. And it's really crystallized what shows up as the goodness in people. I got to see that goodness in people.

And so while some people might focus on a tragic event and an evil act, to me, all I remember are the thousands of acts of kindness and love and warmth that came out of this and kept me going through all of it; and again, just re-emphasized just how wonderful most people are and how much compassion there is out there.

And finally, I want to talk about something that I guess hit me and probably struck me more than anything that I was not expecting. And that was the outpouring of love and support from world leaders, people I've met and have known. Benjamin Netanyahu and I have had some incredible conversations from the hospital. Theresa May reached out. King Abdul of Jordan, who so many of us have met, reached out.

But other world leaders also reached out, people I'd never met before. And that touched me in a different way. Because, each and every one of us, we come here and we fight for the things that we believe in. I have passionate beliefs. For some reason some of you don't agree with all of those. But it's so important that we come up here. We are the People's House. This is the place where these ideas are supposed to be debated. And we fight through those issues, but ultimately we come together on whatever the board shows is 218. If you can put the majority together, that's what rules the day. It's so important that as we're having those political battles, we don't make them personal.

Because one of the things I saw -- and I guess this is the thing that really kept coming back to me as I tried to to make sense of all this and comprehend the outpouring of love that I saw -- it kept coming back to those world leaders.



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You know, why would leaders from around the world that I'd never met before reach out and say, "Steve, we hope you can get back to work." "We hope you can come through this." And what it says is, sure, they cared about my well-being. But more than that, they saw this as an attack on all of us. They saw this as an attack on the institution of the United States Congress and our government. And they really count on us to be successful.

Look, we all know the United States is the leader of the free world. It's something that we frankly had the honor as a country to hold as a distinction for generations. And yet, when you look at that title, what it really means is that there are people all around the world that want freedom, maybe that have freedom, but they know the United States being strong is critical to the rest of the world having the opportunity for freedom.

But that's why I'm so excited to be back, because as we're fighting through the issues of the day, let's just keep in mind that we rise above the challenges of the day; and understand that it's not just us and our constituents and the country, the United States, that's counting on us being successful. People all around the world that believe in freedom are counting on us as well. And we will deliver for them. That's why I am so honored to be back here in the House serving with you.

God bless each and every one of you.

And God bless the United States of America.



¹ French for "Joy of living"