



CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

TODD RUSSELL PLATTS
19TH DISTRICT, PENNSYLVANIA

February 27, 2011

To: The Family and Friends of First Lieutenant Daren Hidalgo

On behalf of the United States House of Representatives, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to all who have gathered today to remember and pay tribute to our loved one, our friend, a true American hero - First Lieutenant Daren Hidalgo. Although I am currently out of the state and thus unable to be with you in person, please know that you are, and will continue to be, in my thoughts and prayers during this very difficult time.

My family and I were greatly saddened to learn of Daren's death in combat. As I shared with his parents, Jorge and Andrea, in a phone conversation several days ago, Daren's death is a solemn reminder of the tremendous price that is being paid, as it has been paid throughout our nation's history, for the unparalleled freedoms and security we enjoy every day here at home. All Americans are forever indebted to Daren for his courageous and dedicated service on the front lines of democracy.

Daren comes from a family who strongly believes in service to country and defense of the important principles for which our great nation stands. Daren was continuing this tradition of selfless and devoted service at the time of his death in Afghanistan. It was a true privilege for me to nominate Daren, in 2004, to both the United States Naval Academy and the United States Military Academy at West Point, from where he ultimately graduated. It was readily apparent to members of my Academy Nomination Committee and me that Daren's academic and extra-curricular achievements, his strong character, and his dedication to serving his fellow citizens embodied a young man destined to become the remarkable and courageous leader that he was.

In gathering to pay tribute to Daren for making the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our nation, you are also honoring all members of our military who answered our nation's call to service and gave their lives in doing so. It is all too easy for us to take for granted the blessings we enjoy as Americans. Today's service will hopefully remind all citizens in our community that freedom is not free. Rather, it comes with a heavy price. First Lieutenant Daren Hidalgo paid that price for all of us.

I know that each of you will join me in keeping Daren's family, as well as all of our nation's courageous men and women in uniform, and their family members, in your thoughts and prayers. May God bless and watch over you as you mourn the loss of Daren and may God continue to bless and watch over our great nation with Daren at his side.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Todd R. Platts".

TODD R. PLATTS
Member of Congress
19th District, Pennsylvania