

Black Caucus and keep faith with this historic role.

To some, they say we are the conscience of the Congress. But I say, under Chair FUDGE, we have been much, much more because we have not relied just on our conscience. We have risen to levels of involvement not achieved very often in this body.

On a personal note, it has been my pleasure to witness the growth and maturity of a leader I am proud to call not only my chair but my close personal friend as well. And I do not mean that in the way that we often use that word on this floor. She is a close personal friend.

Mr. Speaker, as you see here, we come from various backgrounds and experiences. I am from South Carolina; our chairlady is from Ohio. We have had a different set of experiences, which means that we will not always see things the same way. But what has made her an effective leader is the fact that she can look to the west, to Ms. BARBARA LEE, look south to Ms. JACKSON LEE, go down to Texas to Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON, over to Alabama, and bring all of these experiences together and form a cohesive approach.

I am proud to call her my leader and proud to call her my personal friend.

I yield to the gentleman from Detroit (Mr. CONYERS), the dean of the Congressional Black Caucus who, come January 6, will be the dean of the entire United States Congress.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I feel, as all of us do, that we rise today to honor an accomplished public servant, an effective problem-solver, and a tireless advocate for our society's most vulnerable, Congresswoman MARCIA FUDGE of Ohio.

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As she concludes her tenure as chairwoman of the Congressional Black Caucus, she makes us all obligated to share our deep appreciation for her courage and her thoughtfulness.

Since taking office 6 years ago, Congresswoman FUDGE has been a national leader in the fight for job creation, the safety net, access to health care, and quality nutrition, and she has been able to motivate some 43 other Members of the Congressional Black Caucus in supporting these issues that have made her so outstanding.

It is fortuitous that she came to lead the Congressional Black Caucus at a time of unprecedented attacks on the Nation's nutrition-support systems that are essential for saving lives and eliminating the opportunity gap.

She has been unwavering and unstinting in her defense of people who rely on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP—as well as child nutrition and school feeding programs—for survival. There's no better way to reduce inequality than to ensure that children have access to the nutrition they need to prosper.

As the Senior Member of the Judiciary Committee, I am also extremely grateful for

Chairwoman FUDGE's leadership and extraordinary insight and energy in advocating for voting rights and for victims of excessive force.

Chairwoman FUDGE has played an indispensable role in preserving the CBC's legacy as the "Conscience of the Congress."

MOURNING THE LOSS OF JUDY BAAR TOPINKA, ILLINOIS STATE COMPTROLLER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (RODNEY DAVIS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, today, my home State of Illinois mourns the loss of a great friend and a great leader, our State comptroller, Judy Baar Topinka.

I awoke this morning to my phone buzzing incessantly, and I was sad to pick up that phone and hear the news that my friend passed away unexpectedly early this morning. Illinois has lost a great leader.

Judy was somebody who was an institution in Republican politics in my home State. She was the most gregarious politician I have ever met in my life. Judy was somebody who made everyone feel at ease walking through the State capitol in Illinois. I am proud to represent that State capitol now in Springfield, and it is going to be a sad day to walk into that capitol and not see Judy.

Mr. Speaker, Judy was somebody who knew no strangers. If she met you, whether you were standing out in front of the capitol building guarding the door or if you were the Governor of the State of Illinois, she treated you the exact same way.

She is somebody who inspired me to get into this arena of public service. As a young candidate for State representative in 1996, I had the opportunity to have many people tell me that I shouldn't run, but I had Judy Baar Topinka to thank for encouraging me to go for it. I lost that race, but I made so many friends like Judy.

Judy came to my hometown of Taylorville to do some campaign events with me one day. It was summer. It was a long day of events, and Judy went to my house to lay down and rest for a bit. I had a 1-year-old Boston terrier bulldog who decided that he really liked Judy.

He jumped up on that couch and started kissing her in the only way that my dog knew how. He went right to her face. Instead of helping Judy, we took pictures. Since that day, every single time I have seen Judy Baar Topinka, she asks me about that dog. In 2012, when my dog Bruiser passed away, Judy was actually sad when I broke the news.

Illinois is going to lose not just my friend, but we lose our comptroller who was just reelected. Illinois mourns the loss of Judy, and I stand here today—with no intention of coming to the House floor—to talk about my friend. I mourn the loss of my friend.

Illinois will never be the same without Judy Baar Topinka, and America will never be the same without leaders like her.

THE FAA'S REPORT ON THE RESPONSE TO THE SABOTAGE AND FIRE AT CHICAGO CENTER

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

Mr. FOSTER. Mr. Speaker, it is far too common for Members of Congress to come to the floor of this Chamber to weave their narrative of incompetent Federal bureaucracies, lazy and unresponsive members of the unionized Federal workforce, and greedy and irresponsible Federal contractors. I rise today to tell a very different story.

On September 26, 2014, commercial flights in nearly every airport around this country were delayed or canceled after the Chicago Air Route Traffic Control Center, also known as Chicago Center, in Aurora, Illinois, was disabled in an act of sabotage by a disturbed individual.

A fire destroyed the communications equipment that processes flight plan data and enabled air traffic controllers at the facility to communicate with pilots in the 91,000 square miles of airspace for which they are responsible. This could have led to a tragic loss of life. However, due to the efforts of controllers at Chicago Center and adjacent air traffic control facilities, all planes in the air when Chicago Center lost communications were landed safely.

Nearly 200 of the controllers at Chicago Center then traveled to 12 air traffic control towers and terminal radar approach controls throughout the Midwest to help direct air traffic. At the same time, technicians, mechanics, and electricians were working around the clock to replace damaged equipment and restore the Chicago Center facilities.

In total, they replaced 10 miles of cable, dozens of racks of computers, and 835 communication circuits to restore the center's voice communications, radar flight planning, and weather capabilities.

As a scientist who has installed giant experiments and accelerators on tight time scales, I respect what they have accomplished. Professional restoration crews also removed fire, soot, smoke, and water damage from the affected areas, and all of this was accomplished in just over 2 weeks.

Mr. Speaker, despite significant challenges, Chicago airports were able to operate at more than 90 percent capacity within days of the fire. One week after the fire, Administrator Huerta visited Chicago Center with me and my colleagues in the Senate to assess the progress of the restoration.

While it was clear that the damage had been extensive, I drew confidence from what I saw. Everyone understood what they needed to do for the sake of

the traveling public. They set an aggressive schedule for repairs, and they kept it.

The air traffic controllers, FAA employees, and contractors who responded to this crisis performed admirably and deserve our sincere thanks and appreciation. Under difficult circumstances, members of the National Air Traffic Controllers Association from throughout the Midwest rose to the challenge and kept the flying public safe. Within 4 days of the fire, O'Hare Airport regained its title as the busiest airport in the world.

I would like to say a special thank you to Toby Hauck, the Chicago Center NATCA Facility Representative; Gerry Waloszyk, the Chicago Center PASS facility Representative; Bill Cound, the Chicago Center Air Traffic Manager; Mike Paulsen, the Chicago Center Technical Operations Group Manager; and everyone else who worked to restore Chicago Center. Because of all of you, by October 13, repairs were completed, and Chicago Center returned to full capacity.

Mr. Speaker, important lessons have been learned, that the fire that crippled Chicago Center not only affected flights departing and arriving in the Midwest, but also those flying through Chicago's airspace to reach their destinations.

Between Friday and Sunday, more than 3,000 flights were canceled at O'Hare alone. The estimated cost to the airlines has been reported to be more than \$350 million in total. However, what made this crisis unique wasn't the number of delays or cancelled flights. It was that just one person was able to disrupt the travel plans of so many thousands of people.

The systems that protect the flying public must be made more robust. Although the fundamental redundancy had been built into the system—the ability for nearby radar systems to see into the Chicago airspace—the FAA must and is improving contingency plans to restore service much faster than it was able to do.

In the long term, the best way to ensure the safety and reliability of the National Airspace System is to facilitate the transition to the NextGen air traffic transportation system.

Mr. Speaker, currently, the ground-based radar system is the foundation of the National Airspace System. NextGen will rely on GPS satellites that are more accurate than ground-based radar. It will also include a transition from radio voice communications to a digital network that is similar to the mobile phone service. This transition to NextGen will enable air traffic controllers to reestablish air traffic control services much more quickly after this type of disaster.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in commending the FAA's response team on a job well done and to support the President's request for full funding for implementing NextGen in the 114th Congress.

THE OPEN ACT

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

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about the 30 million Americans who suffer from a rare disease. One in ten, Mr. Speaker, 10 percent of the country suffers from a rare disease.

Over 95 percent of these diseases have no treatments because each rare disease impacts a small number of patients. That is why I introduced the OPEN Act, the Orphan Product Extensions Now Accelerating Cures and Treatments.

My bill has the potential to help millions of people, and the idea was born from an event in my district. Over the summer, I held two 21st Century Cures roundtables in my district. The 21st Century Cures is a bipartisan initiative to examine and improve the discovery-development-delivery cycle.

Treatments for patients suffering from chronic and rare diseases, whether it is from medical devices or medicine, must be discovered on the ground level through basic science; developed into a practical, usable, and marketable product; and delivered to the patients so that the treatment may be effectively utilized.

Mr. Speaker, the first roundtable featured patients and patient advocates. From some of those patients, I heard about the importance of repurposing drugs. This led to the introduction of the OPEN Act. My bill will leverage the free market to incentivize drugs to be repurposed to treat rare diseases and pediatric cancers.

Repurposing drugs has a twofold benefit. First, the OPEN Act has the potential to result in new treatments for individuals with rare diseases. As I mentioned, the vast majority of individuals suffering from rare diseases don't have treatments, let alone cures; yet I hear often about individuals with rare diseases who will take medication that has not been tested for their condition.

The OPEN Act incentivizes the testing of mainstream drugs on rare diseases. This bill opens the door for new treatments. The OPEN Act can also create a new surge in biotechnology jobs and investments. Creating jobs and helping the sick are laudable goals, Mr. Speaker. My bill takes a step toward accomplishing that.

This bill can help millions of people. It will ensure repurposed medications are safe and effective for rare conditions and can be reimbursed through insurance coverage—so important. This is a bipartisan piece of legislation which I introduced with my colleagues, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Mr. MCCAUL, and Mr. HASTINGS.

Helping those with rare diseases is a cause worth supporting, and I am proud to have introduced the OPEN Act.

AMERICA'S BRIGHT ECONOMIC FUTURE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. KELLY) for 5 minutes.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to take note of the historic gains our economy made last month. With the recent addition of 314,000 new jobs, unemployment under 6 percent, and the best single-year job creation since the 1990s, our economic future looks bright, but we still have work to create a better economic future for American families.

I recently held my second annual hiring event where 400 jobseekers met with 75 employers looking to hire. I also hosted five job search boot camps where we taught jobseekers interview skills, how to prepare a resume, and strategies to successfully navigate hiring events.

My district is home to many innovative centers that will serve as engines in driving America's economy. I recently visited job training facilities like the Kankakee Area Career Center and the Canadian National job training center which are preparing people for careers in trades and transportation.

□ 1045

With centers like these and workers like the ones we have in Illinois, I am optimistic about America's continued economic recovery. I look forward to working with my colleagues to continue growing jobs here at home.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge two women. The first we have heard about already, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. FUDGE), the great leader of the CBC. MARCIA has taken the CBC to another level. Also, MARCIA has taken a special election freshman like me and helped me make it through my first session.

MARCIA, I want to thank you for the faith you have in me for asking me to become the next CBC Health Care Brain Trust chair. I thank you and I salute you. The CBC is not only fortunate to have you, the Deltas are, the Links are, Congress is, and the great State of Ohio. Thank you so much.

Lastly, like my colleague Representative RODNEY DAVIS, I want to acknowledge the passing of Illinois' comptroller, Judy Baar Topinka. Judy was a true public servant who combined service and fun. She definitely made her mark in Illinois serving as the first female treasurer, the head of the Republican Party, and then as comptroller. Judy had a special way of relating with all people. My thoughts and prayers are with Judy's family, friends, and staff.

THE CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS

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

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, the constitutional issues involving the