

We will miss the Reverend Ronald B. Christian from Christian Love Baptist Church.

□ 2030

RESILIENT FEDERAL FORESTS ACT

(Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, Pennsylvania's Fifth Congressional District, which I am proud to represent, includes the Allegheny National Forest. The forest covers more than 500,000 acres, and the use of its hardwoods has supported the communities of the Elk, Forest, McKean, and Warren Counties for generations.

Mr. Speaker, since these small towns depend on the harvesting of trees from the Allegheny National Forest, I am deeply concerned by the news that, while the amount of timber cut in the forest has increased in recent years, the number sold has sharply declined.

In fact, timber sales have gone down 19 percent in the past 5 years. Furthermore, a majority of the timber harvested is being sold as pulp and not as the high-value hardwood which is used to create furniture, flooring, and as veneers.

This is one of the reasons I cosponsored the Resilient Federal Forests Act, which passed the House earlier this year, as it would enhance the management efforts in our national forests to make sure our quality hardwoods are being used in the right ways.

CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS: RACE RELATIONS IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. KELLY) is recognized for half the remaining time, until 10 p.m., as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Illinois?

There was no objection.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor and privilege to lead tonight's Congressional Black Caucus Special Order hour. For 60 minutes, we have the opportunity to speak directly to the American people.

Before we get to business, I do want to take a moment to express my condolences and the prayers of the Congressional Black Caucus and this Congress to our allies in France after Friday night's attacks in Paris.

Our hearts go out to the victims and their families. No act of terror can shake the resolve of the French people

to live free, and nothing will impede France's ability to live prosperously. I want the people of France to know that the American people and this Congress stand in solidarity with the people of France tonight. I say this with full faith and confidence that no act of terror will deter France or the United States from embracing the principles of liberty, equality, and brotherhood.

Our hearts also go out to those who recently lost loved ones and friends in Beirut and Nigeria.

Mr. Speaker, in this hour, the Congressional Black Caucus will have a conversation with America about the issue of race relations in this country. This isn't a new topic of discussion. To be honest, I really wish there were no need and no appetite remaining in America so as to have to address this topic.

It is amazing that the same nation that saw pilgrims journey to our shores on the Mayflower and that the same nation that saw Founding Father Ben Franklin make groundbreaking discoveries in electric science is the same nation that was able to land a man on the Moon and harness the electromagnetic spectrum for our mobile devices. We still wrestle with the same problem that confronted Ben Franklin and the Founding Fathers so long ago: the issue of race relations in America.

As President Obama so eloquently remarked, the answer to the slavery question was already embedded within our Constitution—a Constitution that had at its very core the ideal of equal citizenship under the law, a Constitution that promised its people liberty and justice and a union that could be and should be perfected over time.

Yet these words were not enough to deliver slaves from bondage or to provide men and women of every color and creed with their full rights and obligations as citizens of the United States.

It is this inherited sin that has guided a national history of challenging race relations in America, from slavery to the Three-Fifths Compromise, to a nation divided and broken over the issue of slavery, to poll taxes and literacy tests, to separate but equal, to Japanese internment, to anti-Semitism, to the Tuskegee experiment, to Brown v. The Board of Education, to the loving Confederate flags at State houses, to the Confederate statues in this Capitol, and to parishioners executed during a Charleston Bible study, executed in the hopes that it would spark a race war. It is the sad truth that, while race relations do not define us as a nation, ignoring and perverting these relations has left a painful blemish on our national record.

Mr. Speaker, many times this year the Congressional Black Caucus has come before you in this hour to discuss the issue of Black voter suppression in America, the mass incarceration of African American males in America, the issue of Black Lives Matter, community fears over unfair and unequal treatment at the hands of bad apple

law enforcement officers, and the economic concerns of communities of color.

These concerns aren't made up. The impact and evidence of these concerns can be found everywhere for proof. Look at Amendments 13 through 15. Look at the issue of African Americans having higher rates of mortality than any other racial ethnic group for 8 of the top 10 causes of death. Look at the Black Lives Matter protests that we have had across the country. These concerns are our reality, and we must know these things to be true. We know more must be done to strengthen our national record on race.

Tonight I want to use my time to discuss race relations in America, but I want to do so in a way that looks forward and not behind. I want to have a conversation about strengthening our national foundation and about healing the racial wounds of our past. In this conversation about race relations in America, I will highlight areas of need and opportunity that should be examined. Tonight's conversation should be a strong step toward progress.

It is my true honor and pleasure to coanchor this hour with my distinguished colleague from New Jersey, a man who has committed his time in Congress to strengthening communities and bridging cultures.

I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey, the Honorable DONALD PAYNE, Jr., my colleague.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Illinois. It has been a labor of love that we have represented the Congressional Black Caucus in these Special Order hours this year.

Our year is coming to a close. As we look back at the issues that we have discussed over the course of this year, it has been an honor and a privilege to work alongside my colleague, R. KELLY.

As for tonight's issue, we have seen in recent weeks a number of racially charged incidents that have set off protests on college campuses across the country. From the University of Missouri to Yale, students have protested the inadequate responses of their school administrations to racism and harassment against minority students. We have seen the failure of many college administrations to properly address overt racism against minority students on campus.

Adding to the anxiety felt by these students have been threats of violence against African American students and faculty. In many instances, there is a disconnect between students of color and the university leaders.

In many of these instances, administrators have openly acknowledged that their responses to minority students have come too late and that their behavior has failed to take into consideration the concerns of students and the injustices against those students.

This is an extension of the debate over interactions—often deadly—between law enforcement and African

Americans. Many African Americans feel marginalized and unsafe in going about their normal day.

This year an overarching theme of our Special Order hours has been equality and justice. We have discussed how, despite the strides our Nation has made on the journey to a more just society, minorities are still the subject of racism and racial discrimination and face persistent inequities across the board, from health to income, to criminal justice.

Through our conversations and through the ongoing national debate about racial equality, we are highlighting how occurrences like those at the University of Missouri are not isolated incidents of racism; they are part of a larger system of discrimination.

There is a history of racial discrimination, inequality, and bias that still affects African American communities across this Nation. We need to recognize this.

There also needs to be a recognition of the pain and anxiety and fears that it creates in some of these young Americans. As we are seeing right now, many minority students feel that they do not have a home on campus. Many minority students are concerned about their safety at school.

Following reports of threats on social media, students at the University of Missouri were afraid to attend classes. All students deserve a safe environment in which to live and learn. We can't discount the fears of these students; yet, that is exactly what we see happening. It is why so many students across the country are coalescing in support of racial justice.

How can we move forward from here?

Our national conversation about racial justice needs to remain ongoing. As a Nation, we must continue to confront incidents of racism and harassment and bring light to the complacency that too often enables these occurrences in the first place. It has to be more than just a conversation. We have to use the voices of our students and of our communities to drive concrete action on their behalf.

Schools need to ensure the diversity not only of their student bodies, but also of their faculties and staffs to increase racial understanding and bring a broader perspective to their institutions.

Schools also need to make sure that marginalized students have access to services that enable them to share their experiences and to seek assistance to meet their needs. School administrators need to be held accountable for their failure to make their campuses inclusive and safe for all students.

There needs to be an urgency of their handling of racial incidents, and any hate crimes or civil rights violations need to be investigated internally and by law enforcement, as appropriate.

We must never waver in our efforts to address racial disparities and to eliminate racism in our country. The

Congressional Black Caucus is committed to addressing racial disparities by developing initiatives and by working with grassroots and national organizations, such as Black Lives Matter, the NAACP, and the Urban League, to ensure that they know that they have someone in their corner and that there is an effort to work together.

□ 2045

The Congressional Black Caucus is also holding a number of forums to bring African American community resources into the areas of business development, small-business assistance, financial empowerment, inequality, and education.

As a caucus, we will continue to lend our support to those fighting for justice, equality, and opportunity for all.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I yield back to my colleague, ROBIN KELLY.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. I thank Representative PAYNE for those words.

One thing that you talked about with the University of Missouri, I thought it was great that when they did protests and sit-ins, that there were White students, football players, and coaches that also sat with them and gave them support. They were one. So even though bad things had happened, it was good to see that there were all kinds of students and their coaches empathetic with what was going on.

I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey.

Mr. PAYNE. Absolutely. To that point, this is the United States of America, and we have to come together as a Nation to eradicate this ill that has plagued this Nation since its inception. So we need people that understand and like-minded people to also join in. This is not a one-sided discussion. This is a discussion that we need to be having that encapsulates the entire Nation.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. In my diversity training that I have done for many years now, we have always talked about groups need allies. Allies give you support and encouragement and the strength to go on.

At this time, I yield to the gentleman from California (Ms. BARBARA LEE).

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congresswoman KELLY and Congressman PAYNE for organizing this Special Order and for your continued leadership on so many vital issues and for staying the course and holding down the fort for the Congressional Black Caucus. It is so important that our message of unity and our message—which really describes what many of the issues are that all of our communities are faced with—that that message goes out. Both of you have really been tremendous in this effort.

So I rise this evening to join this critical conversation on race relations in America and to challenge our colleagues to work with the Congressional Black Caucus to realize progress for racial justice and equality.

I join Congresswoman KELLY and Congressman PAYNE in sending my condolences to the families and the victims of the horrific terrorist attacks in Paris, Lebanon, Nigeria, and also in Egypt. Know that we join in this quest for global peace and security throughout the world.

Now, tonight's Special Order is an important part of our work to address the discrimination and racism that still plagues our Nation, specifically as it relates to African Americans, but we know that it impacts all communities of color. It is manifested in many ways, and it affects our entire country. As Congressman PAYNE said so eloquently, we are the United States. So when one is affected, all are affected.

All across the country at universities like Mizzou and Yale; in places like Baltimore and Ferguson; and in high schools like Spring Valley High in Columbia, South Carolina, we are witnessing the painful impact of institutional racism in our communities.

Very recently, we saw this in my home district at Berkley High School. In one of the most progressive and enlightened cities in the country, Black students were subjected to threatening messages on campus. But I am so proud of the students at Berkley. They walked off—it was not only Black students; it was all students—and marched out peacefully through the city to protest these terrible, despicable messages.

This is unacceptable. All students have a right to learn free from violence and from threats. As long as Black students and any student of color feels unsafe in their classrooms, our work for justice remains incomplete.

This crisis isn't limited to our schools. Tragically, people of color face institutional racism from the moment they are born. According to a report released earlier this year by the Joint Economic Committee and the Congressional Black Caucus, more than one in three Black children are born into poverty.

This cycle of poverty and inequality continues in our school system where Black students account for 42 percent of preschool student expulsions. Mind you, now, that is preschool. That is students from about 2 years old to 4 years old. Black students account for 42 percent of preschool student expulsions, despite accounting for only 18 percent of enrollment. I can't figure out how any student aged 2 to 4 is expelled from school. That is outrageous. Yet 42 percent of preschool student expulsions are African American babies. These kids don't even get a start, let alone a head start.

Outside of the classroom, African Americans are overpoliced, overcriminalized, and underemployed. A report published by the New York Times in April found that there are an estimated 1.5 million Black men between the ages of 24 to 54 who are missing from civic life, just missing it. These missing men, who account for

one in every six Black men, have been victims of mass incarceration or premature death. And this crisis of inequality extends to the structures of the community and have persisted from generations.

Over the past four decades, the average unemployment rate for Blacks has been double the rate for White Americans. For many Black families, it feels like this is a permanent recession.

Mr. Speaker, this must be our call to action. That is why I am so proud of our young people throughout the country and students who are standing up to racism and injustice in their communities. It is time for Congress to listen to the young people, saying that Black Lives Matter and Black students matter.

Earlier this month, I held a forum on racial justice in my district to address these issues. More than 300 East Bay residents from all backgrounds attended and raised their voices for justice. This was the second forum that I have held throughout the last 3 months. Now, I have been able to reach over 1,000 East Bay residents.

So, tonight, in this dialogue, which Congressman PAYNE and Congresswoman KELLY have talked about, this dialogue leads to action. Hopefully, our colleagues would think about hosting these types of forums and listen to what people are saying, listen to what the impact of some of our policies are on their daily lives. We must be part of the conversation and the solution, but we must listen. We must hear the pain and the suffering that people are experiencing as a result of discrimination and racial injustice.

Now, the Congress must act to start addressing the systemic racism that degrades our institutions and threatens our communities. It is past time for us to get serious about us addressing the lack of opportunity for Black and minority families in this country. Right now, today, in this Chamber, there is legislation that can start moving the needle forward.

We need to empower our communities to build greater trust between law enforcement and communities of color, and we need to address chronic recidivism, which would be a huge step toward returning some of our missing men to their families and communities. To do this, Congress should pass the Safe Justice Act, sponsored by Congressman SENSENBRENNER and Congressman SCOTT. Congress should also pass the Stop Militarizing Law Enforcement Act, H.R. 1232, to stop the militarization of our Nation's police forces. We also should pass the Police Accountability Act, H.R. 1102, and the Grand Jury Reform Act, H.R. 429, so we can ensure that deadly force cases are heard by a judge and that there is more accountability for police officers.

As we reform our broken criminal justice system and work to help repair those families hurt by mass incarceration, we will be strengthening America. We will have people who really can

make a contribution, not only to their families and their communities, but to the entire country.

The Federal Government shouldn't continue to put up barriers to work for those trying to rebuild their lives after making a mistake and should ban the box totally by Federal contractors and by Federal agencies. We also need to repeal the lifetime ban on Pell grants for those formerly incarcerated as it relates to drug felonies, the ineligibility for public assistance and food stamps.

We need to remove these barriers so that people of color, primarily African American men and Latino men, can get back into society, get a job, and take care of their families. Once again, this is an example of public policy that racism wreaks its ugly head in our own institutions and policies.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we must address the poverty that plagues communities of color all across the country. We have the Whip's Task Force on Poverty, Income Inequality, and Opportunity, which I am proud to chair with our whip, Mr. HOYER. We are working with more than 100 of our colleagues now to advance policies that give all families, including African American families living below the poverty line both in urban communities and in rural communities, a fair shot.

This effort includes our Half in Ten Act, H.R. 258, which calls for a national strategy to cut poverty in half in the next decade. That is more than 22 million Americans lifted out of poverty into the middle class in just the next 10 years by being strategic and coordinating our existing programs.

Our Pathway Out of Poverty Act, H.R. 2721, would create good-paying jobs. It would lift families out of poverty into the middle class while strengthening our safety net for those who are still struggling. Ultimately, the only way to end institutional racism is to give African Americans and people of color a seat at the table, and we need to pass legislation and policies that begin to remove these barriers.

My mentor, the Honorable Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm, used to say: "If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring in a folding chair." That is what our young people are doing around the country.

So I want to thank all of the people across our country who are bringing in folding chairs and ensuring that these important conversations happen. We hear you. We support you, and we will keep fighting for you for ensuring liberty and justice for all, which means just that. It means for all. In doing so, we will make the United States a stronger country.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Congresswoman KELLY and Congressman PAYNE for organizing this very important Special Order. I know that out of this discussion, we are laying out what can be done, and it doesn't take another generation to end racial injustice in our country.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Representative LEE, I like your analogy about "if you are not at the table, bring your folding chair." I would like to say: "If you are not at the table, your issues would be on the menu." But I like the folding chair analogy also.

I think a good point that you bring up that people don't realize, when we talk about African American men in jail, incarcerated, people might think, well, if they are doing something wrong, they should be in jail.

To use Ferguson as an example, while comprising two-thirds of Ferguson's population, African Americans represent 85 percent of vehicles stopped, 90 percent of citations, and 93 percent of arrests made by the Ferguson Police Department. But while African American drivers are twice as likely as White drivers to be searched on a vehicle stop, contraband was found on Black drivers 26 percent less frequently than White drivers.

So these discrepancies, coupled with incidents of overly aggressive police tactics and a police force that is racially and ethnically underrepresented of the large Ferguson community, instill the culture of distrust and anonymity. So you can see why these things happen.

I yield to the gentlewoman from California.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congresswoman KELLY for raising that issue because I think this is a clear example of what we talk about when we talk about racial injustice. It is very clear that many of our policies—Federal, local, and State policies—the impact and the result end up being a result that has racial components, and that is what our young people are talking about when they are talking about systemic and institutional racism.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from California as well for always making very clear and thoughtful comments and for being a leader in this House for many years and taking bold steps in your beliefs and your principles. Sometimes when it looked grim, that you might be stepping out, history has been kind to you and shown that you were right. So I appreciate your leadership in this United States House of Representatives.

One of the issues that we also find around racism is mass incarceration, which is a topic that has come to the forefront. The President is taking bold steps in that direction to try to have a discussion and correct those issues. There is no reason why the United States of America, which comprises 5 percent of the world's population, has 25 percent of the incarcerated population in the world. That number is mind-boggling.

We are talking about these schools that are having racial issues and they are not being addressed.

□ 2100

There is no mistake that when you look at the issue even around cocaine

and the disparity in the length of time that you receive for having crack cocaine, which has predominantly been in African American communities, as opposed to powdered cocaine, which has predominantly been in the major population's community, but the sentences for crack cocaine are so much stiffer and longer that you can see a racial component in even those sentences given out by the justice system.

We are dealing with a systemic institutional issue, and sometimes I even think that it has been so ingrained and embedded in the larger population that it is not even realized that there are issues. This is the way of life. This is the way things are. This is how it has been. We have to break that cycle. It is just unconscionable that these young people who have done what we have asked them to do—do well in school, move on to college, and get an education so you can be a productive citizen in this country—have to worry about these types of issues as they are trying to get their education.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, first, let me thank the gentleman for his kind remarks, but also for really digging deeper into this subject and really raising, in many ways, the unconscious biases that are reflected oftentimes in the policies and in the laws of the land.

One example that Chairman BUTTERFIELD and myself, co-chair for the Congressional Black Caucus, and Reverend Jackson have really been true leaders in, and that is the effort with the tech industry in terms of the diversity of the tech industry.

We have learned and the data shows that many companies next door to me in the Silicon Valley, 2 to 5 percent may be African Americans and Latinos—maybe. To their credit, they are trying to figure out how to address this; but one of the areas that some of the companies are exploring now is looking at unconscious bias and how that is reflected in the hiring policies of their managers as it relates to the discrimination actually that takes place against people of color, especially African Americans.

It is embedded in this whole system here in our country, both in the private and in the public sector, and we have to really begin to talk about it to raise the level of awareness so people understand we are not talking about individuals and we are not going after people. We are talking about biases that are embedded in our programs and policies and in the law of the land.

Mr. PAYNE. Absolutely.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. I also think something that contributes to that, your ZIP Code shouldn't dictate the quality of your education, like it shouldn't dictate the quality of your health care. In too many places in this country, your ZIP Code does dictate the quality of your education and the schools that have every sport, every technology, and those kinds of things, and schools that barely have books.

They are not going to be at the same level when they graduate from high

school, if they even make it through high school; and that is part of it, too, just the STEM, as we talk about, or STEAM, just the type of education that students are getting because of the way in some cases the schools are funded or the concentration of poverty in the school system, in some school systems.

Mr. PAYNE. We are talking about the school systems. We are talking about Silicon Valley. I am doing a lot of work now with the insurance companies and finding out that based on your economic background and where you live and what your ZIP Code is will constitute what your rates on car insurance are. There is a built-in formula to that as well. It is just amazing how systemic and institutionalized these issues are.

Even a young man like me, who was raised by my father not to get in trouble and do the right thing, I was still a young man, and sometimes I didn't do the right things. One time I was in downtown Newark, New Jersey, and I made a U-turn on one of the major thoroughfares in the city. A policeman pulls up on his motorcycle.

Just my luck, I would make the U-turn and there would be a policeman coming, but that is the story of my life.

This police officer approached me, very angry, very mean, yelling at me. It was my cousin's car, so I wasn't exactly sure where the credentials were in the car. I was about 20 years old at the time. The police officer finally says to me: Boy, if you don't find those documents—and he didn't use "boy." He used a word that we can't use on the floor of this House of Representatives. But he said: If you don't find those documents, I will throw you so far under the jail that they will never find you.

That was very frightening because he looked like he meant it.

I was able to produce my license, and at the time my father was a councilman in the city of Newark. It was amazing the change in his attitude. He became very concerned about my welfare and my well-being all of a sudden. He says: Well, don't you know that that is dangerous, and you shouldn't do that? You know, you could hurt yourself or hurt someone else. All of a sudden, I became someone because of what my last name is.

I am concerned about all the young men that can't produce something like that at that point in time. There are more of those stories, of the ones unable to produce than the ones that can produce. What does that say for young men in this country? There are many stories like that coming up that I could stand here and tell for several hours of experiences that I have had with the institutional racism in this country.

Ms. LEE. Congressman PAYNE, you are talking about racial profiling and driving while Black, which so many of us experience throughout the country. I am glad we are having this discussion and you raised it because you come

from a middle class family. You come from a great family.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you.

Ms. LEE. Your father was a giant and raised you and your family to be law-abiding citizens, and still this happened to you.

Also, with regard to redlining, this is another level that we have to look at as it relates to racism. When you look at how financial institutions targeted African American and minority communities with subprime loans, our communities lost all of our wealth as a result of that, and now have to start all over in terms of wealth accumulation. So you just go one aspect after another of what America has done in terms of the past that has not been corrected yet, and we have to really do that.

Congresswoman KELLY, I just want to mention the phenomenal job you are doing as the chair of our Health Braintrust. We had a meeting this weekend in South Carolina with our great leader, Mr. CLYBURN. We talked about health disparities in communities of color. You are talking about ZIP Codes. I know in my district—I mentioned this at the forum—there is a gap. Depending on where you live, depending on the ZIP Code, life expectancy where Black people live can be 10 to 15 years shorter.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Right. In the leading causes of death, African Americans are number one in eight of them.

Ms. LEE. The mortality rate, that is right.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. We don't want to be number one in 8 out of 10.

Ms. LEE. That is right. That is right. The importance of the work you are doing in closing healthcare disparities, which sometimes people don't understand, there are racial and ethnic disparities that, again, are reflected in our historical policies that have really severely impacted communities of color and African Americans.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Representatives, we have about 5 more minutes. I don't know if you have anything to add.

Mr. PAYNE. I just want to thank you for working with us through this year in bringing these topics to the floor. We want the viewing public to understand that we have raised these issues because they are issues that plague our country. We are looking for African Americans and Latinos to have the same opportunities as everyone else. It is not about special treatment or anything. It is about equal treatment. Everyone should rise based on their ability. Just having an equal opportunity is key.

Ms. LEE. I will just close by saying, we pledge allegiance to the flag, and we say, "and liberty and justice for all," and that is what we mean.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Thank you, Representative LEE and Representative PAYNE.

Mr. Speaker, as we reflect on this evening's topic, the issue of race relations in America, we want to talk

about, just in closing, what can we do. We must do more, we must care more, and we must understand more about the diverse cultures that make up this Nation.

A long time ago, as director of community affairs for the Village of Matteson, it has been 19 years now I have worked with a team hosting diversity dinners in our area to grow friendships and nurture relations among residents of the south suburbs of Chicago.

Tonight as we discuss race relations in America, I want to reflect on what I see as the way to bridge the differences we experience in understanding in different communities.

Earlier this year, I along with colleagues, Democrat and Republican, hosted the Second Annual Congressional Diversity Dinner. Forty Members of Congress—Black, White, Asian, and Hispanic from both parties, including both Republican and Democratic leadership—showed up and enjoyed a meal with their colleagues. During the dinner, we weren't Democrats or Republicans. We were colleagues with some great stories to share.

At this year's dinner, I saw a microcosm of our Nation, a crowd made up of Members from coast to coast with truly diverse backgrounds coming together to enjoy each other's company. If we can put aside our racial and partisan blinders to break bread together, I am confident we can find ways to work together. That is what America wants and needs, and that type of leadership is the kind of leadership we deserve.

Today we have the opportunity to celebrate diversity and show that America is only strengthened when we embrace the fact that we are a beautiful, I will say, pot of stew. There is much that communities can do to stanch out the rhetoric that divides us and find creative ways to bring people together. It was a small action, but that was what the diversity dinner sought to do.

Now it is time for us to come together to address the reforms needed to rebuild trust between communities. Let's show the American people that we are a diverse people, we are proud of it, and we celebrate it.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, this has been a challenging year for race relations in the United States. Between the recent events at college campuses across the country and several incidents involving law enforcement, it is clear that strong racial tensions still exist within our communities.

Renewed efforts to disenfranchise select groups of voters by gutting the Voting Rights Act or segregating neighborhoods in violation of the Fair Housing Act have contributed to the divisive elements of our society. These efforts run counter to everything that we as a nation have tried to eliminate in bringing diverse individuals together under common values—and there is still much work to be done.

The fight for racial equality and inclusion has been a constant struggle for individuals of color throughout our long history. Despite important victories during the Civil Rights era, a new struggle has emerged in our time to tackle more subtle and implicit racial biases that exist within our society.

Recognizing these challenges and maintaining open and civil dialogue is the only way that we can seek to end these senseless divisions once and for all. While it is also important to learn from the lessons of our past, how we decide to move forward will truly come to define the future of our nation.

As we look to overcome our differences, we must reflect on our values and determine what kind of future we would like to see for our children. Do we want to leave behind a divided nation where individuals quarrel over race or socioeconomic status? Or do we want to live in a nation united under equal opportunity and justice for each and every American? I, for one, choose to support an equal and just America.

Mr. Speaker, there will continue to be challenges ahead. However, the lessons that we carry with us into the future will help guide our decisions to build for a stronger and more prosperous America. I urge my colleagues to speak out against this blatant discrimination so that we can heal our country and move forward as a nation.

FIGHTING TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ROUZER). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. COSTELLO) is recognized until 10 p.m. as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.

Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to host this Special Order tonight.

Less than 100 hours ago, we were provided another tragic reminder of the world that we live in, a world where radical terrorists are engaged in a violent war against the U.S. and our allies. Our thoughts, prayers, and condolences go to our ally, France, here this evening.

□ 2130

Prior to Friday night's events in Paris, tonight's Special Order was going to focus on recent incidents of terrorist-led violence across Israel. Yet Friday night's events are not dissimilar from the escalation of violence we have seen across Israel in recent months and in other places of the world.

The attacks have been indiscriminate in their targets. The attacks have been intended to instill fear. And the at-

tacks are a direct affront to the daily lives and the way of life of innocent, peaceful civilians.

I want to share with you the words of Prime Minister Netanyahu this weekend:

"In Israel, as in France, terrorism is terrorism, and standing behind it is radical Islam and its desire to destroy its victims. The time has come for the world to wake up and unite in order to defeat terrorism. The time has come for countries to condemn terrorism against us to the same degree that they condemn terrorism everywhere else in the world.

"We should remember—we are not to blame for the terrorism directed against us, just as the French are not to blame for the terrorism directed against them. The terrorists who attack us have the same murderous intent as those in Paris."

Mr. Speaker, we know that ISIS has claimed responsibility for the Paris attacks, but while we can condemn those attacks here this evening, it seems very evident to me, and I think Americans all across this country, as we ask, I think, the same question: Are we safe, and are the policies of this administration and its foreign policy and the refugee admissions policy making us safer, or are they cause for concern and require more discernment and a more scrutinizing eye by this Congress and the American people?

This year alone, there have been at least 49 alleged supporters of ISIS in America charged with related crimes, and it is reported that there is an estimated 20,000 foreign fighters in Iraq and Syria likely holding Western passports.

In May, FBI Director James Comey said:

Thousands in the U.S. may be consuming ISIS propaganda on the Internet.

Tonight, in light of the horrific terrorist attack in Paris and the escalating violence in Israel, as we stand to express our solidarity with our friends and allies affected by violent and extreme acts of terror, we must also be thinking about what we as Americans can do to defeat—not contain—but eliminate radical jihadists and terrorists who are hell-bent on undermining the U.S., our allies, and our way of life.

A little bit later I will speak more on my views on our present foreign policy and the refugee admissions policy, but we have over the course of the next hour many Members from across the United States of America condemning indiscriminate terrorist attacks, radical Islamic jihad, and violence across the world.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to our first speaker this evening, the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. ELLMERS).

Mrs. ELLMERS of North Carolina. I want to thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania for his leadership on this issue and for holding this very important leadership hour talking about the issues that obviously affect our allies in the world but also the safety of the American people.