

2016, and that is the soundness and the dependability of our voting machines and the integrity of our voting process.

Nationwide, authorities are tabulating crucial voting results using faulty, out-of-date electronic voting machines from the era that predated the smartphone. These outdated machines are prone to crashes and screen freezes that can cause unacceptably long wait times. Additionally, old voting machines remain vulnerable to being hacked and elections can be stolen.

My bill, the Verifying Optimal Tools for Elections Act of 2016, otherwise known as the VOTE Act, would allocate millions of dollars to assist States in replacing these aging voting machine dinosaurs. The VOTE Act would also allocate millions of dollars in grants to assist in developing new technologies to assure accuracy in the voting process, to protect voting machine source codes from being hacked, and to train election officials.

The aim of the VOTE Act is simple: the safeguarding of elections by ensuring the very integrity of the voting process, while protecting access to the ballot box.

APPOINTMENT OF INDIVIDUAL TO UNITED STATES-CHINA ECONOMIC AND SECURITY REVIEW COMMISSION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WOODALL). The Chair announces the Speaker's appointment, pursuant to section 1238(b)(3) of the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001 (22 U.S.C. 7002), as amended, and the order of the House of January 6, 2015, of the following individual on the part of the House to the United States-China Economic and Security Review Commission for a term expiring on December 31, 2017:

Mr. Daniel M. Slane, Ohio

HONORING BRAZOS VALLEY JEFFERSON AWARD RECIPIENTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BABIN). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FLORES) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. FLORES. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor Harper Cunningham, age 12, and Maggie Cunningham, age 10, from College Station, Texas, who are recipients of the 2016 Jefferson Award for the Brazos Valley.

The Jefferson Awards are presented annually to honor our unsung heroes, ordinary citizens who have done something extraordinary and that will have a lasting impact on the community. It is fitting that the Jefferson Award be presented to these two young girls, who not only exemplify what it means to serve, but who also share Thomas Jefferson's passion for reading.

Harper and Maggie Cunningham's passion for reading and for helping

those in need led them to create an organization to promote literacy and the well-being of our community students. Their Books and a Blanket program provides a basket of books and a blanket to elementary schoolchildren in need across the Brazos Valley during the winter months.

Their mission is simple and impactful: they want all students to have access to books so that they, too, can experience the joy that comes from reading. Since 2012, Books and a Blanket has given away over 1,200 blankets and distributed over 33,000 books to over 2,500 children in need.

Mr. Speaker, these two young girls have done a tremendous job helping others, promoting literacy, and being inspiring leaders in our community. As President Ronald Reagan once said:

The greatest leaders are not necessarily the ones who do the greatest things. The greatest leaders are the ones who get other people to do the greatest things.

It is evident that Harper and Maggie are models of true leadership, and their desire to serve and empower others is inspiring. Young Americans like Harper and Maggie provide confidence for all of us about the future of our great country.

I congratulate Harper and Maggie Cunningham for their hard work, selfless service, and for being awarded the 2016 Jefferson Award for the Brazos Valley. Gina and I look forward to hosting them in Washington later this year for the National Jefferson Awards ceremony.

I would also like to congratulate the other 2016 Jefferson Award winners from the Brazos Valley: Stephanie Sale, Alma Villarreal, and David Ruesink. Their selfless service to our community is inspiring and also worthy of these special recognitions. I am humbled to represent all of them in Congress.

As I close, I ask all Americans to continue to pray for our country during these difficult times, for our military men and women who protect us from external threats, and for our first responders who protect us here at home.

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

AMERICA'S TO-DO LIST

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WOODALL) is recognized for the remainder of the hour as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. WOODALL. Mr. Speaker, we all got elected. I have been here 5 years now. You are fairly new to this institution. Everybody comes with a dream. You don't come because you are looking for new business cards. You come because you want to make a difference for folks back home. We all have about 700,000 bosses back home, and they want us to make a difference. Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about some of those differences today.

You can't see it from where you are sitting, but I have got a little America's to-do list down here. I didn't have enough paper back in the office to do the entire to-do list. There is a lot out there, as I know you hear every weekend when you go home as well, but I put a couple of the top things out there.

□ 1130

I have "fix our roads and bridges" out there—just a terrible infrastructure issue. What separates America in terms of getting our goods to market around the globe is a world-class infrastructure. Investment in that infrastructure has waned in recent years as we have dangerous bridges and we have roads that are in desperate need of repair. That is one of those things—to maintain the postal roads—that the Constitution uniquely assigns to the United States Congress. That is on the to-do list.

Update our national WRRDA policy, Mr. Speaker. We are going to have wars on this planet—mark my words—not over oil, but over fresh water. Having a freshwater infrastructure, maintaining our natural resources, taking care of and being good stewards of those resources that we have been entrusted with are critically important. It is one of those things that the Federal Government has a dominant role in doing. We have to get on that.

Tax relief, Mr. Speaker. Where is that family back home who isn't trying to figure out how next month works and the month after that and the month after that?

I keep hearing about this economic recovery, and yes, the numbers are getting better slowly, but they are not improving nearly fast enough. The folks cannot afford to support an inefficient Federal Government. Tax relief is on that list.

Medicare, Mr. Speaker. There is not a man or a woman in this Nation who depends on Medicare who does not know it is in fiscal peril. There is not enough money in the Medicare trust fund to meet the promises that we have made to America's seniors. There is not enough money in the Medicare trust fund even though working age men and women begin paying in on their very first paychecks to meet the promises of this generation and the next. We owe America better than that. Fixing that is on the to-do list.

Improving veterans' care, Mr. Speaker. For Pete's sake, talk about something that is uniquely this government's responsibility. We ask so much of the young men and women in uniform who serve and protect this Nation, and they ask nothing of us. We make promises to them, and we must keep those promises. It is hard to open up the newspaper and not read a story of America's failing its veterans. We must do better, and we can do better.

Mr. Speaker, cutting spending. For Pete's sake, when folks back home do send a dollar's worth of taxes to Washington, D.C., they don't believe they

are going to get a dollar's worth of value out of it. They think it is going to get thrown down some rat hole somewhere, on some pet project that is not going to benefit anyone. They think it is going to get wasted on a regulatory infrastructure that isn't modernized for the 21st century. Every family has to do more with less in tough economic times, and the Federal Government is no different. This is just the beginning of the to-do list, Mr. Speaker.

It is dreary outside. There is a steady mist coming down. I haven't seen the Sun out there for days. Sometimes I get back home, and I hear that same kind of spirit coming from folks who are trying to feed and provide for their families. There is a dreariness out there, Mr. Speaker, such that folks feel like self-governance is not serving them in the way that it should. That is why you and I ran for Congress and that is why I have come to the House floor today with good news.

It is true that when you open up the newspaper, it is failure after failure after failure, but that is not telling the story of the work that the good men and women of this Chamber are doing, that Republicans and Democrats are coming together to do, that the House and the Senate are coming together to do, that the Congress and the White House are coming together to do. In this election season of everybody's talking about what divides us, of everybody's talking about what the failures are, I want to talk about those things that unite us and on which we are succeeding for the American people together.

Mr. Speaker, there have been 36 short-term transportation extensions since the last time we passed a long-term transportation bill. Thirty six short-term extensions. If anybody is in the construction business, Mr. Speaker, they know you can't plan to build a bridge in a matter of days. This is a multiyear project. You need long-term planning and you long-term certainty.

Historically, that is what the Congress has provided: Republicans and Democrats coming together in a bipartisan way and Congress and the White House coming together to provide for a multiyear transportation bill. But it has been more than two decades, Mr. Speaker, since this body has passed a 5-year transportation bill—a multiyear transportation bill—that provides certainty to folks back home and that fulfills the commitment that every American citizen expects from the Federal Government in having collected gas taxes on every gallon of gas that the American consumer buys.

We all know about the infrastructure needs in this country. For more than two decades, Congress and the White House had not been successful in fulfilling that responsibility. When Republicans ran the show, we failed. When Democrats ran the show, we failed. When Republicans were in the White House, we failed. When Demo-

crats were in the White House, we failed. But this Congress—the men and women gathered here with this President in the White House—came together, and we succeeded with the first long-term transportation bill in more than 20 years.

Mr. Speaker, 5 years of funding is just the beginning. I won't tell you this is the end of the show. Our Transportation and Infrastructure chairman, BILL SHUSTER of Pennsylvania, wants to do more. This isn't the end. This is the beginning. It is a fantastic beginning, and it is one that we ought to celebrate of \$305 billion going back to communities around this Nation to focus on safety and infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, it streamlines the process—the most dramatic streamlining of the regulatory process. It often takes longer to get regulatory approval to build a bridge than it does to build the bridge itself—years wasted on approval processes that could have been streamlined while we are still being good stewards of our environmental resources. This bill does that. It also eliminates the increase in costs that come with those delays, Mr. Speaker, the increase in costs that come from that bureaucracy so as to make sure the American taxpayer is getting more value for his dollar.

Mr. Speaker, it shores up the highway trust fund, and we will talk a lot about trust funds in this time today. The highway trust fund was going bankrupt. The highway trust fund didn't have enough money to meet the needs of the American highways, so \$70 billion has been transferred into that trust fund to make sure that we are keeping the promises that we have made to America.

Mr. Speaker, it has been two decades since America has had this kind of transportation success. We did that together. Open up the newspaper and see the divides and see the failures, but know that this is a success that we had together.

Mr. Speaker, I had water resources on America's to-do list. It had been 6 years since we had passed water resources legislation in this body, not in 2008 when Republicans controlled the White House, not in 2009 when Democrats controlled everything, not in 2010 when Democrats controlled everything, and not in '11 or '12 or '13, but we have come together, and we have gotten that done. It is not easy. It is hard. It doesn't happen quickly. It happens slowly and deliberatively. It has been 6 years since we have been able to succeed together in passing what we call the WRRDA bill, Mr. Speaker. Now it is done. Now it is the law of the land.

I want to make that clear, Mr. Speaker. I am not talking about bills today that the House has passed and are going nowhere. I am not talking about bills today that the House has passed and the Senate has passed but that are going nowhere. I am talking about bills today on which the House has worked entirely through the proc-

ess, on which the Senate has worked entirely through the process, and those which the President of the United States has signed into law—bills that are laws and are making differences for America's families.

This WRRDA bill, the Water Resources Reform and Development Act, is the most comprehensive policy reform bill, again, in two decades, Mr. Speaker. It accelerates project delivery because, again, there is no more urgent need—as we see in Flint, Michigan—than having a stable and safe water infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, it goes into \$18 billion worth of projects—projects that have been on the books for years but have failed, projects that folks have not committed the time and resources to complete—and it pulls those back in. It cancels all of those projects, saves that money, and rededicates it to projects that the American people can benefit from; and it strengthens the oversight and accountability because these are American taxpayer dollars we are talking about here. When they go out the door to localities back home, folks deserve to know they are being used responsibly. It is an increase in oversight and accountability. Again, it has been more than two decades since we have seen something of this kind. We got it done together—Republicans, Democrats, House, Senate, and White House.

Mr. Speaker, tax relief is on the list for American families, and tax relief was delivered by this body—this Congress—and this White House. Mr. Speaker, what Republicans failed to be able to do—and I am not knocking them. It was a difficult environment. I am a hardcore Republican from the great State of Georgia, but when George Bush was in the White House and when Republicans were running the House and when Republicans were running the Senate, they provided tax relief, but they couldn't make it permanent. They didn't have the votes to make it permanent, so it languished out there—families uncertain about what the tax future would hold, businesses uncertain about what the tax future would hold. Together, in this body, with the President's signature, we provided 99 percent of Americans the certainty that even George Bush and a Republican House and Senate could not do.

Divided government is hard, Mr. Speaker. Divided government is hard. The differences that we have on policy are dramatic, but there is still more that unites us as a Nation than divides us as a Nation. That is true in this Chamber as well, so we came together on tax policy and did that. Taxes were going to go up, Mr. Speaker. In this tough economy, taxes were going to go up on almost every family in the land. We prevented that income tax increase from hitting 99 percent of all Americans.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to prevent the tax increase on 100 percent of Americans, but I couldn't get the votes to get

that done, and I know you would have joined me in that. Sometimes you have a choice between can you get something done or will you get nothing done. Mr. Speaker, I promise you, if you are working hard in trying to provide for your family back home, you do not care who is to blame for a problem; you just want the problem fixed. We could have stood around this Chamber and we could have argued amongst ourselves about whether the perfect is the enemy of the good. We did not. We struggled to find agreement, and we found that agreement, and we made a difference for 99 percent of Americans in the struggling economy to date. That counts, Mr. Speaker.

We talk about the to-do list as to the Medicare trust fund. Mr. Speaker, back in the late 1990s, when Newt Gingrich was the Speaker of the House and when Bill Clinton was the President, they made an effort to protect the Medicare trust fund from going bankrupt. This is something that has been on the minds of Americans all the way back to 1965. The Medicare trust fund has never been properly funded. Healthcare costs have always had a rate of inflation that has been higher than that of other services, and we have struggled with how to make the math work. They came up with a plan back in 1997 to fix it. The plan didn't work, and it was going to cause a dramatic reduction in what doctors were reimbursed and a dramatic reduction in the benefits that were available to senior citizens.

Mr. Speaker, so what happened in 2003, when it came time for those first painful cuts to go into place, the first effort to protect the Medicare trust fund?

Congress kicked the can down the road. They delayed those cuts from going into place for 1 year.

What happened the next year?

They delayed it for a year again. The next year, they delayed it again. Then the next year, again and again and again and again—17 times, Mr. Speaker. We had come together and passed legislation that was designed to protect the Medicare trust fund, and when it came time to actually do the heavy lifting, we kicked that can down the road, all the while having the trust fund becoming more and more and more unstable. We all knew there was a problem, but nobody wanted to take the responsibility of fixing it.

Mr. Speaker, in this divided Congress, in this divided government, in this Washington that supposedly can't come together to fix American problems, we passed H.R. 2. It was the first bill out of the gate. Well, it was the second bill out of the gate, but it came right out in front. H.R. 2 was the first Medicare reform proposal to be signed into law in more than 10 years, and it solved a problem that had been created almost 20 years ago but that no Congress before or no President before had had the courage to permanently fix.

Mr. Speaker, we talk about Medicare as one of the third rails of politics—

don't touch that rail, or else you will be defeated. This body is not about who wins and who gets defeated. This body is about who can make a difference. We needed to make a difference for folks who were relying on Medicare. There were 392 House Members and 92 Senators who supported this bill. We hadn't been able to fix it for almost 20 years. We hadn't been able to fix it, so the can had been kicked down the road 17 times.

We came together, grappled with it, struggled with it, but ultimately came up with a proposal that almost all of the House and almost all of the Senate could support. They called it the sustainable growth rate, the SGR, that eliminated this failing piece of Medicare policy, that bent the long-term cost curve of Medicare, extending the life of the trust fund. In fact, it cuts the actuarial deficit in Medicare by almost 10 percent.

□ 1145

This is heavy lifting, Mr. Speaker, that Congress has punted on and punted on and punted on. With the leadership we have here today, with the collaboration that we have here today, not only did we pass it, not only did the Senate pass it, but we were able to pass it into law.

There are many parts of Medicare, Mr. Speaker. There is part A, part B, part C, part D. \$2.4 trillion, Mr. Speaker, is the way we bent the cost curve on those various components of Medicare in order to protect and ensure Americans for another generation that Medicare would be there for them.

Veterans: Mr. Speaker, again, you cannot open up the newspaper today without seeing the way that the system is failing our veterans. There is nothing that brings us together more in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, than standing up for those who have stood up for us.

We did that in the Veteran Access, Choice, and Accountability Act, Mr. Speaker. It was the largest overhaul of veterans health care, again, in more than a decade.

When Republicans ran the whole show, we couldn't get it done. When Democrats ran the whole show, they couldn't get it done. When we are divided, but focused, on crisis in this country, we have come together and we have gotten it done for the first time, Mr. Speaker.

For the first time in the history of veterans health care, we have said: If the veterans healthcare system is failing you, but you, as a serviceman or -woman, did not fail us, we are going to give you a process to get outside of that veterans system. We are going to give you a chance to go see your own doctor. We are going to give you a chance to go see any specialist you need. We are going to give you a chance to get the care that we promised you, but that the bureaucratic healthcare system has failed to deliver.

Mr. Speaker, in all of these many years of budget cutting that we have

talked about—trying to clamp down on spending, trying to make sure that all taxpayer dollars are being accounted for—so many accounts are going down, but veterans spending is going up.

Why? Because budgeting is about prioritizing. And when we come together not as Republicans or Democrats, but as Americans, we prioritize those who have served us.

It is the biggest change in health care for veterans in over a decade, Mr. Speaker, and folks are finally able to get the health care that they need. That is not it. There is more.

There is still a system in place that is failing veterans, Mr. Speaker. We couldn't come together on reforming the entire Veterans Administration. But we did come together on saying that: If you work at the Veterans Administration and you are failing our veterans, there is no place for you on the Federal payroll.

You know how hard it is to get rid of failing Federal employees, Mr. Speaker. We came together in a bipartisan way to say: If you are in the upper echelons of the VA, we are asking more of you. If you are in charge of serving our veterans, we are asking more of you. If you fail, we are going to ask you to leave so we can get somebody else in there.

We streamlined the firing process, Mr. Speaker, to get rid of ineffective employees as we had not done before in Federal employment.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk budgets. You know ending budget deficits is one of America's priorities. You know getting out of the businesses of mortgaging our children's future is one of America's priorities.

From 1966 to 2009, Mr. Speaker—and I chose that time because that was the beginning of Medicare and Medicaid, which are two of the largest spending programs on the ledger today. They are two that have ballooned much larger than their authors ever suggested that they would. This is when we got into some really difficult entitlement spending decisions.

From 1966 to 2009, that 43-year period, the debt in this country went up by 55 percent relative to GDP. It is still these mandatory spending programs that are driving our debt, but over a 43-year period our debt went up 55 percent.

Mr. Speaker, in the first 3 years of the Obama administration, our debt went up another 34. For 43 years, it had gone up 55 percent, way too much, but a gradual increase. In 3 years, it went up 35 percent. We went from going up about 1 percent a year to going up 10 percent a year, Mr. Speaker.

Today, with this Congress, this House, this Senate, divided government, from 2012 to 2015, when we have been grappling with this issue together, when we have been looking for answers together, when no side had complete control, but we had to work together to find solutions, we have collapsed that increase back down to that

1 percent a year. There is so much more to do, but we just disagree.

The President introduces a budget every year. That budget never balances, not this year, not next year, not 10 years from now, not 100 years from now. The President has different investment priorities than I do.

I serve on the Budget Committee. We do a budget every year. It always balances. So I have budgets that balance and budgets that never come to balance. Clearly, that is a big gap to bridge.

We have begun to bridge it, Mr. Speaker, collapsing the dramatic increase in the debt to levels that are still too high, but don't threaten our security as years past have. But no one ever believed we would be able to come together to do that. No one ever believed we could work with the President to get that done, and, yet, we have.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of that comes from the Budget Control Act. One of the best votes I have taken in this institution was the vote for the Budget Control Act. It was the largest reduction in Federal spending in the history of the republic. Hear that, Mr. Speaker.

In divided government—in fact, there was a Republican House, Democratic Senate, Democratic President, dramatically divided government. Power of the filibuster in the Senate. Hard to get anything done. We came together because America needed us to, to reduce spending in the most dramatic way in the history of the republic. It is not because somebody had all the votes and they jammed it through, but because we worked together to find a policy that made sense.

Mr. Speaker, people always think, when you talk about big budget and deficit reductions, that you are talking about some sort of phony Washington, D.C., math. You have seen the examples where you raise spending by \$5 instead of \$10 and then you call that a cut. We have all seen that math. Non-sense.

When I talk about budgets, I am talking about real numbers. I am talking about money going out the door. I am talking, even though we have 10,000 men and women a day qualifying for Social Security and Medicare, 10,000 new applicants every day for Social Security and Medicare, working together, we reduced the total amount of money going out the door not just for 1 year, but for 2 years. That is not funny Washington, D.C., math, Mr. Speaker. Those are real numbers, real dollars, going out the door.

We bent the curve together. Some of my colleagues might say we did too much. I would say we haven't done nearly enough, but we came together and we made a difference for deficits.

Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest differences we can make for deficits is putting folks back to work. It turns out you can't pay taxes if you don't have a job. You have to have money coming in the door in order to be part

of the system. So we focused together on creating American jobs. We focused together on putting families back to work. Again, this is something that unites us. It does not divide us.

We have done it in the spirit of trade, Mr. Speaker. We have done it in the spirit of manufacturing. We have passed legislation here that the President signed into law that is working today to make sure, if you work in a manufacturing industry in America, you are not disadvantaged relative to foreign competition.

If we are trying to export the best products made in the world today, those manufactured by American hands, we are tearing down the trade barriers that are preventing those products from getting into the hands of customers who want them overseas. We have done that together.

When it comes to tearing down those trade barriers, Mr. Speaker, America is already virtually a free trade zone. We always say we will play fair with other nations, but other nations don't always say that to us.

So this Congress empowered the President to go out and do those negotiations, to tear down those barriers, to make sure that American working families always get a fair shake on the global scene. Mr. Speaker, we haven't seen that happen in a decade.

A Republican Congress came together to work with a Democratic President to say we are all in this boat together. Putting families back to work is not a Republican priority alone, though it is a Republican priority. It is not a Democratic priority alone, though it is a Democratic priority. It is an American priority. That is why America's House and America's Congress and America's President work on it together.

Mr. Speaker, that takes me back to where I started. I will put America's to-do list up here on the board. I talked about the dreary weather outside and kind of the dreary spirit that I feel sometimes when I talk to folks about how Congress is operating and how Congress and the President are working together and how America, in the spirit of self-governance, is succeeding or failing at addressing America's priorities.

Mr. Speaker, we did the first roads and bridges bill, \$305 billion, in more than two decades. It is more long-term certainty than America had seen in 20 years because it was the right thing to do.

We updated the national water policy, Mr. Speaker. We have done more—it was the most substantial, positive improvement to delivering clean water to American citizens than we have seen in more than a decade. We did that together.

Tax relief: Mr. Speaker, working together, we prevented taxes from going up on 99 percent of American families. Working together, we did things that George Bush and a Republican Congress couldn't do because they didn't

have the votes 15 years ago. We did that together because it was the right thing to do in this tough economy.

Mr. Speaker, we came together on Medicare reform. There were 17 short-term extensions, kicking the can down the road, Congress and the President afraid to take a stand and solve a problem. We came together and did that, Republicans and Democrats, House and Senate, President Obama and America's Congress.

Improving veterans health care: Mr. Speaker, for the first time in American history, if the veterans healthcare system is failing you, we give you an exit ramp to go and see your physician, your specialist, the best that America has to offer, because, as a serviceman or -woman, we have made promises to you and, in a bipartisan, bicameral way, we are committed to keeping those promises. It is the biggest reforms in more than 10 years.

Mr. Speaker, we have cut spending. We have cut spending not with phony Washington, D.C., math, but with real dollars going out the door. The biggest deficit-reduction package in American history we did together, a divided government, divided Congress. But it is the right thing to do for the American people, and that is what this Congress is about.

Mr. Speaker, that is just the beginning of the to-do list. I don't want to feel like I am tooting the horn of bipartisanship in this institution. I didn't even have education reform on that list. I didn't have education reform on that list. But we have done it.

We have come together in a bipartisan way, bicameral, with the White House, signed into law the biggest evolution of education policy that we have seen in 10 years. Again, it has been more than a decade since we have come together to make sure that principals, teachers, and parents have more control over the education of children in our communities.

We repealed 49 different programs, Mr. Speaker. I am not saying hardcore conservative Republicans repealed them. I am not saying liberal Democrats repealed them. I am saying together we scoured the entire Federal education landscape looking for ways to do better for our families back home.

When we rolled up our sleeves, when we took off the Republican and Democratic labels, when we all sat down as parents and grandparents and community leaders about how to do better for our children, we found 49 programs, all of which had a constituency out there, all of which had somebody making a buck off of them, but they were programs that were failing our children and we ended them. We ended them together because it was the right thing to do. It is the biggest education reforms, Mr. Speaker, again, in more than a decade.

Mr. Speaker, I don't have the time to go through the difference that we are making together. From our veterans,

H.R. 91, H.R. 203, H.R. 313, H.R. 2499, on and on and on, not bills that we have passed here in the House, though we have, but bills we have passed in the House, bills that have been passed in the Senate, bills that the House and Senate have come together on, bills that have been sent to the President's desk, and bills that the President has signed into law, making a difference.

□ 1200

Mr. Speaker, reducing the size and scope of government. H.R. 1626, H.R. 2029, H.R. 2048, and the list goes on and on and on. Doing things together for our bosses back home because they are going to make a difference.

Mr. Speaker, creating jobs and expanding economic opportunity. Again, H.R. 2029, H.R. 22, H.R. 1000, S. 535. Mr. Speaker, yes, there are even some bills that originated in the Senate that are delivering for the American people. I am proud to say most of them start with H.R., but there are even a few Senate bills in there. Good ideas from the other body that we took on, that we made better, that we sent to the President's desk, that he signed.

Defending America's freedom and security, patient-centered healthcare solutions. Mr. Speaker, everybody talks about the President's healthcare bill. You are either for it or you are against it. It is a divisive issue. Nobody talks about the fact that there are parts of the President's healthcare bill that I believe are broken from the hard core right and that my friends on the left believe are broken, too. And so we have come together not once, not twice, not three times, not five times, but almost a dozen times to repeal parts of the President's healthcare bill that we all agreed were not serving the American people.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, it is not about who can be a good Republican or who can be a good Democrat. It is about who can be a good public servant, and that is never going to make the front page of the newspaper. It is never going to be a part of this Presidential election cycle. It is never going to be in a commercial on TV talking about how successful we are when the cameras go off, when the labels come off, and when we are focused on what we all came here to do, and that is to make a difference.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to keep going on through this election cycle. There is going to be more division, there is going to be more strife, and there is going to be more finding out who is to blame and whose fault it is.

I have gotten to know the men and women in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker. I confess, there were some of them that I wanted to dislike from the get-go. Oh, I wanted to dislike them. I had seen them on TV, and I knew they didn't have any merit, didn't have any business being here, didn't have any desire to serve the American people.

Mr. Speaker, my confession here today is I was wrong. I was wrong.

There are colleagues on the other side of the aisle with whom I disagree with about virtually everything, but for that one small issue on which we find some common ground, they will roll up their sleeves and they will bleed with me and sweat with me until we find a way to make a difference for families back home in their district and mine.

Mr. Speaker, there are folks on the other side who come down here on this floor and rail and rail and rail, and it is every partisan tagline that you could imagine, but when the camera goes off, they roll up their sleeves and they get to work on making a difference for their district and for mine.

Mr. Speaker, my voice is not loud enough to drown out all the division that is in a Presidential election campaign. Mr. Speaker, my voice is not loud enough to drown out all the commercials going on all over the country and all the headlines all over the country that talk about how Washington is a big cesspool, and it is broken, and we should just give up on self-governance altogether, but not me. My voice may not be loud enough, but it will be tireless.

I believe in self-governance. I believe that my district has priorities that are going to be different from priorities in another district, and that is okay. I believe that division sometimes brings out the best of ideas, and that is okay. I believe that my colleagues believe that there is no challenge too big for America to confront when Americans confront it together.

I do not know what November holds, but I know this: We have the best system of governance on the planet. It is not easy. It is not clean. It is not simple. But when you put the American people in charge, it is effective.

Mr. Speaker, you are not going to sell good newspapers talking about the difference that we make together in self-governance, but we are going to make that difference together. Folks here didn't come for the headlines. They came to do the things that mattered, and I am proud to work with folks on both sides of the aisle to get that done.

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

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 2908. An act to adopt the bison as the national mammal of the United States.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed bills of the following titles in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 1635. An act to authorize the Department of State for fiscal year 2016, and for other purposes.

S. 1875. An act to support enhanced accountability for United States assistance to Afghanistan, and for other purposes.

S. 2845. An act to extend the termination of sanctions with respect to Venezuela under the Venezuela Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society Act of 2014.

IMPORTANT ISSUES IN THE NEWS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, as I listened to my good friend—and I think it is important that we note that our colleagues are good friends and Americans who care. That is why I have come to the floor to challenge the hearts and minds of my colleagues, for my discussion today, as the gentleman that preceded me, will be in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD for my colleagues to peruse and for the American people to peruse.

I do take note of the fact, as the gentleman recounted the history of budgets—and I might say that I, too, spent time working on the 1997 budget. I have been privileged to serve from that time when a bipartisan effort—with everyone, in essence, putting down their obstructionist perspectives—generated one of the best health insurance programs for our children, called CHIP, that the Nation has seen, that millions of American children are now insured.

But it is important to note that the present Republican majority failed to put a budget on the floor for us to vote up or down, primarily because there were Members in their own conference that would not vote because the cuts were not sufficient, even though trillions of dollars were cut from education and many other services that the American people need.

Now, I know that the American people are very independent. There are States that have worked very hard to ensure that their particular citizens in their State are well taken care of, but the one thing I know about the Federal Government, it is the umbrella on a rainy day.

I will go home to my district, having suffered the terrible impact of major flooding, 20 inches of rain devastating young families, devastating people who flooded just less than a year ago in May of 2015. Oh, we pulled ourselves up by our bootstraps, tore out carpet, threw out all of our personal possessions, but we needed the umbrella, FEMA, that is en route to my district now to help those who cannot help themselves or those who had never flooded in 50 years. So we cannot discount the role of the Federal Government.

The United States military is the finest in the world. The Affordable Care Act, yes, needs to be fixed in certain areas, but 20 million Americans have gotten insurance, and more Americans have private insurance because they said, you know what, it is the right thing to do.