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I commend Sign-Zone for bringing great business and excellent products to our community, but I also thank them for contributing to an industry that is so critically vital to our State.

Congratulations, Sign-Zone, and thank you for what you contribute to the great State of Minnesota.

MINNESOTA'S OWN PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLAR

Mr. EMMER of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate one of Minnesota's best and brightest, Sartell High School senior Gopi Ramanathan, who was recently named a 2016 Presidential Scholar.

Every year, up to 161 students can be named Presidential Scholars, making it one of the highest awards a high school student can receive. It is safe to say this achievement has gone to an incredibly deserving scholar.

Gopi Ramanathan has had an exceptionally successful high school career, and his resume includes a very long list of accolades and achievements. He is a two-time champion of the Minnesota State Geography Bee, and he was captain of the United States team that took first place at the 2013 National Geographic World Geography Bee.

Additionally, he is a member of the National Honor Society, a Big Brother mentor, a member of the student council, the president of the Minnesota Association of Student Councils, and a member of the Sartell soccer team.

Perhaps most notably, Gopi earned a perfect score of 36 on his ACTs, an accomplishment that puts him in the top one-tenth of 1 percent of students across this country.

It is an honor to recognize a student of such distinction here today, and I can say with absolute certainty that we will see more great things to come from this young man in the future.

ANOKA EDUCATOR HONORED AT THE WHITE HOUSE

Mr. EMMER of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Anoka High School math teacher Paul Kelley for recently being honored at the White House in a ceremony for exceptional educators.

In addition to teaching math at Anoka High School for the past 29 years, Mr. Kelley serves on the board of directors for the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Along with four other teachers from around the country, Mr. Kelley was nominated for this recognition by the staff at the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics headquarters.

During the ceremony at the White House, Paul had the chance to meet hundreds of other extraordinary teach-

ers as well as the Secretary of Education, John B. King, and Deputy Assistant to the President for Education, Roberto Rodriguez. Mr. Kelley also heard from President Obama, thanking the educators for their roles in educating today's youth.

A good teacher molds minds, sparks creativity, and gives students keys that can open all of life's doors. Congratulations, Mr. Kelley, on your recent achievement, and thank you for helping Minnesota students achieve their full potential.

THE STATE OF HOMELESSNESS IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MAXINE WATERS) for 5 minutes.

Ms. MAXINE WATERS of California. Mr. Speaker, today I rise once again to discuss the harsh realities of homelessness in America and to call attention to the Republicans' so-called poverty agenda that simply ignores the fact that men, women, and children are sleeping on the streets of America, eating out of garbage cans, and using our sidewalks and streets for restrooms.

Homelessness is one of the most tragic and disappointing reminders of the overwhelming poverty in this country. According to the latest estimates, almost 600,000 Americans are homeless. It is a problem in virtually every district, and it affects people from very different walks of life: 37 percent of the homeless population are represented in families, 15 percent are chronically homeless, 8 percent are veterans, and 6.5 percent are children.

While there is a claim that some progress has been made to decrease homelessness in some communities, a lot more needs to be done, especially in some of our largest cities where homelessness is, sadly, increasing exponentially: in my hometown of Los Angeles, homelessness increased 20 percent between 2014 and 2015; in New York City, homelessness increased 11 percent between 2014 and 2015; and in Chicago, there was an 8 percent increase in that timeframe.

As public policymakers and Members of Congress, we have a responsibility to deal with problems and circumstances that undermine and harm our way of life. We are a people who cherish religion. In every religion, there is a reference to feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, and clothing the naked.

Where are the Republican Members who regularly hold prayer meetings, who attend church on Sunday in their districts, but yet they are supporting this fake poverty agenda that does not even mention homelessness? Where are the Members who claim to honor our veterans, yet walk past them on the sidewalk in their tents and sleeping under our bridges?

We know that we can functionally end homelessness and alleviate poverty in this country. We know that Federal

resources and the social safety nets are incredibly effective at lifting up struggling families. We know that if we properly support the Department of Housing and Urban Development and other Federal agencies that we could create the necessary housing units and provide the social services that our neighbors need to get off the streets.

What we need is, simply, the political will to get it done. Unfortunately, we do not have the support from Republicans whose sham of a poverty agenda released this week would only exacerbate homelessness and punish the poor.

Take the Republican approach to housing assistance, for example. For years, they have cut funding for HUD programs, leaving more than 75 percent of eligible families without any housing help at all. And their latest poverty plan recycles some of the most harmful changes Republicans have sought for our housing programs. They refuse to acknowledge the realities of unaffordable rents that require families to earn almost triple the minimum wage to be able to afford a modest two-bedroom apartment.

And they want to impose these so-called work requirements that simply don't work if you ignore the already high unemployment rates in certain areas as well as the need to invest in job training, education, child care, and other social services to make it possible for individuals to obtain stable employment. What the Republicans have put forth is truly the wrong way forward.

Fortunately, Democrats know what it takes; and when we talk about issues of homelessness in particular, there is a very simple solution to this very real problem. That is why I have introduced H.R. 4888, the Ending Homelessness Act of 2016.

Now, a lot of people will say: Oh, my goodness, did you see how much money is in that bill? This bill would devote over \$13 billion over 5 years to housing assistance programs and create the housing units and services that we so desperately need to get people off the streets.

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So while others will point to this bill and talk about the cost of it, the fact of the matter is, this is the richest country in the world, and we spend money on so many other things that are not as important as taking care of our most vulnerable population.

So, yes, this is a \$13 billion bill. We have to stop playing with this issue and thinking it is going to go away simply because we don't want to acknowledge it. We have to pay for the possibility of ending this homelessness. I cannot bear the thought of children sleeping in their cars every night and getting up and going to school the next day.

ADDRESSING THE NATIONAL DEBT

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

Mr. CURBELO of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss one of the most serious issues facing the United States: the staggering national debt of over \$19 trillion. This equates to \$59,409 for every person living in our country.

While the national debt has grown almost \$9 trillion since President Obama was sworn in, here in Congress, we must work together to debate solutions that will address our country's debt and get our fiscal house back in order. Every day, families in south Florida sit around the dinner table and make tough decisions on how they will spend their money. They stick to their budgets, and their government should be no different.

Last October, I was proud to support a 2-year bipartisan budget agreement that implemented new caps on discretionary spending for both fiscal years 2016 and 2017. Too often, enormous sums are wasted due to unpredictable budget cycles and government shutdown threats. With the adoption of this 2-year budget, Congress was able to reduce wasteful government spending by providing certainty to agencies as they plan for the future.

The budget also contains reforms to entitlement programs. It is important that we protect Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid—the invaluable safety net for those who need the help—while working to implement reforms to make these programs solvent for future generations.

Mr. Speaker, I will continue to work with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to advance solutions that will rein in our national debt. It is our duty as elected officials to leave our children and grandchildren the same economic opportunities as previous generations had. That is my highest priority in Congress.

RECOGNIZING JOSEPH GEBARA

Mr. CURBELO of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Joseph Gebara as he retires from his post as president of the Miami-Dade County Council PTA/PTSA. Mr. Gebara has been integral to the organization's mission of unlocking the potential present in every child.

Mr. Gebara, who held his post since 2014, has always maintained an unwavering focus on his goals, and has used his position to effectively serve our community. For years he has been at the helm of a movement which seeks to engage with south Florida families and provide them with the tools necessary to empower their children and set them on a path towards success.

Mr. Gebara has been firmly rooted in the south Florida community, which is evident through his service as board member of The Children's Trust as well as chairman of the Miami-Dade Public Schools Title I District Advisory Council. In those roles, Mr. Gebara worked tirelessly to facilitate collaboration between educators and families as well as increasing inclusivity so that every voice was heard, respected, and taken into consideration.

I commend Mr. Joe Gebara for his service to the south Florida community, and congratulate him on a job well done. Mr. Speaker, I can personally attest to the fact that he is the most passionate advocate for children and families in our schools that I know.

HOMESTEAD VETERANS CLINIC

Mr. CURBELO of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer my strong support for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in allocating funds to create a new VA medical clinic in Homestead, Florida. As it currently stands, the Homestead Veterans Affairs Community Based Outpatient Clinic rents a medical office that does not meet the needs of military members and veterans in our south Florida community. With the establishment of a new clinic, Homestead would be able to serve more than 10,000 military personnel, veterans, and eligible family members in Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties, which would be a substantial improvement from its current capabilities.

Though this new clinic would be a step forward, there is still significant work that must be done to help our veterans and servicemembers living in the Florida Keys. They do not have a local clinic and must travel up to 4 hours to reach the nearest VA facility. These brave men and women deserve more easily accessible options, and I will continue fighting for them.

Supporting our troops and veterans is essential to paying our profound debt of gratitude to the very people who have put their lives in danger to defend our freedoms. It is because of brave people like our veterans that America continues to have the strongest military in the world, and we must always honor them.

CREATING A BETTER NATION FOR MY NEW GRANDCHILD AND FUTURE GENERATIONS

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

Mr. CÁRDENAS. Mr. Speaker, 2 weeks ago, Norma and I became grandparents. Our daughter, Vanessa—with our son-in-law, Brian, present—delivered a healthy baby boy, full of life and full of possibilities. His name is Joaquin Cruz de la Rosa.

From the moment I first learned I would soon be a grandfather, I was excited to welcome our grandson into this great world. I am grateful that Joaquin was born in the greatest nation in the history of time, these United States of America, a country that strives to live the principles of hard work, persistence, and equality. He was born to a nation of native Americans and immigrants whose foundation and future relies on the grit and determination of millions of people who will persist so their family can achieve that American Dream.

We were elected to the House of Representatives to serve all of our con-

stituents and put our country first. Joaquin's arrival has encouraged me to reflect on what we do here. He has made me think about how Congress' words, actions, and obstructions are affecting the livelihood of all Americans.

I want Joaquin to live in a nation where his right to love whomever he chooses and to marry the person he falls in love with, regardless of gender, is respected. I am grateful that he was born healthy and in a safe, clean hospital full of skilled doctors, nurses, and technicians.

I am also grateful Vanessa and Joaquin Cruz received top notch health care, care that until recently was out of reach for many families. The Affordable Care Act has allowed countless pregnant women and newborn infants to see a doctor without risking bankruptcy. This sets them on the path of a healthy, productive life here in America. Now that 20 million more Americans have true access to health care, Congress must stop the efforts to repeal the healthcare law. Instead, we must come together to make sure we expand access, ensure the marketplace is working, and keep health care affordable for all Americans in this great country.

Every Member of Congress has a responsibility to the next generation and the one after that. We are responsible for their future. We face a short 12-week session in this 114th Congress.

What will we accomplish during this time? Will we vote on partisan bills that will go nowhere? Or will we face the challenges affecting our Nation and the world? Or will we, once and for all, think of the children and ensure future generations inherit a nation that remains the global leader, full of opportunities?

We hold the power to make things better for our kids and grandkids. For my grandson, and all grandchildren, I will fight for a future where a quality education doesn't put students and families into 6-figure debt. Every child deserves a world-class education that provides them with the knowledge and skills to achieve their dreams and uphold our place as a global leader in innovation.

For my grandson and grandchildren of his generation, I will continue to be a vocal advocate on the need to create a just and equal criminal and juvenile justice system that is worthy of our Nation. We spend \$12,000 to educate a child in America, but we are willing to spend more than \$150,000 to imprison that child for 1 year. And yet every year funding for education ends up on the chopping block.

How can we justify that?

My grandson was born into a great country, but sometimes, Mr. Speaker, this Congress does not live up to the potential that this Nation deserves. A child in the United States is less likely to die from a disease than from a gunshot. We are better than that, Mr. Speaker. It is our responsibility to address this reality.