

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS, Illinois

□ 1730

THE BLUE COLLAR CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. VEASEY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. VEASEY. 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 this Special Order.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, we are going to talk today about something very important: our economy, jobs, and the state of America in regards to those subject matters.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from the State of South Carolina (Mr. CLYBURN), who is a good friend of mine, our colleague, and our assistant leader, to come address us on a very important issue that relates to many of those things that we talk about.

I would like to invite Leader Clyburn to come and talk to today. I really appreciate his coming and taking the time to be part of this hour.

Mr. CLYBURN. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, Congressman VEASEY, from the great State of Texas.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today as part of the observation of Black History Month to continue my series of remarks recognizing HBCUs, Historically Black Colleges and Universities. I ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating Benedict College in Columbia, South Carolina.

Founded in 1870, just 5 years after the end of the Civil War, by the American Baptist Home Mission Society, Benedict was originally named Benedict Institute, after Stephen and Bathsheba Benedict of Rhode Island, Baptist abolitionists who had donated the funds to acquire the property on which the campus sits. Formerly the site of a pre-Civil War plantation, the first classes were held in a dilapidated mansion on the grounds. Benedict Institute was formerly chartered by the South Carolina General Assembly in 1894 and renamed Benedict College.

From its founding through 1930, Benedict was led by northern White Baptist ministers. In 1930, Reverend John Starks, an alumnus of Benedict, became the school's first African-American president. The heart of its campus has been designated the Benedict College Historic District, consisting of Morgan Hall, Pratt Hall, Duckett Hall, Antisdel Chapel, and Starks Center.

Like Allen University, its neighbor, Benedict College has a long legacy of

activism for civil rights and social justice. One of the very first civil rights campaigns in South Carolina was organized at Benedict College in 1937. Students participating in a national NAACP campaign led a demonstration in support of antilynching legislation pending in Congress.

One of Benedict's early graduates was Reverend Richard Carroll. Born into slavery in Barnwell, South Carolina, Reverend Carroll was a prominent Baptist minister in the late 1800s who received honors and appointments from both President William McKinley and President Theodore Roosevelt. Other prominent alumni include Modjeska Simkins, a prominent civil rights and public health champion; General Matthew Zimmerman, who served as Chief of Chaplains of the United States Army; and I.S. Leevy Johnson, the first African-American president of the South Carolina State Bar Association.

In the modern era, under the leadership of President David Swinton, Benedict has grown to a student body of more than 2,800 undergraduate students. In 1995, Swinton revived the football program and marching band 30 years after they had been shut down. He also championed a new sports complex on Two Notch Road in Columbia, which includes a football stadium, tennis courts, baseball fields, and fitness facilities. The liberal arts curriculum now offers degrees in 30 different disciplines. President Swinton also has led the efforts to preserve and restore many of the historic buildings on the campus, in part paid for with Federal funds from the HBCU Historic Preservation Program that we in this Congress have championed.

President Swinton will retire this summer after 23 years of service to the institution. I wish him well and thank him for his leadership.

Today, on the same land where Blacks once toiled in slavery, their descendants are now learning the tools they need to live up to Benedict College's motto: to be powers for good. Like so many HBCUs, Benedict offers a unique religious experience in which students from many different backgrounds share a common struggle for equality, and I am pleased to recognize them today.

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the leader for his comments and for participating tonight. I really appreciate his words and that recognition.

I want to thank everyone that is with us today to talk about our Blue Collar Caucus and jobs in this country. I think that there is nothing more important to any individual—any man or woman—than the ability to be able to have a good job, to take care of your family, and to be able to be a part of the American economy and to contribute to that economy.

I want to start off talking about President Barack Obama. Under President Barack Obama, the American economy added 9.3 million jobs and

overcame one of the worst economic crises our Nation has ever seen.

In Arlington, Texas, which is part of the district that I represent in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, we have a General Motors plant. As you know, we could have lost our car industry. We have probably the most profitable plant in the General Motors family. All of the cars that you see around here at the Capitol, all of the Yukons, all of the Suburbans, the Tahoes, the Escalades, we make those in Arlington, Texas. We are very proud of our plant, very proud of the company being there all those years and for the UAW workers there that help make that plant great.

Despite the gains that we have seen with President Obama's saving the auto industry with the 9.3 million jobs and our overcoming one of the worst economic crises, again, that our country has ever seen, many workers across the U.S. felt that the economic recovery had left them behind. The rise of automation and outsourcing pushed many of those workers out of jobs that they absolutely loved. The frustration felt by these workers is understandable. Everyone—everyone—wants a good job that lets them, for their family, be able to take care of themselves, be able to pay their bills, send their kids to college, and buy a car.

President Trump appealed to many blue-collar workers during his campaign with a populist message and pledges to help working America, but his actions since taking office directly contradict so many of his promises. President Trump is playing one of the slickest political scams we have ever seen on hardworking American families. It is a scam. It is not real.

On his first day in office, President Trump signed an executive order that raised mortgage rates for new homeowners. Those same people that live in those Rust Belt States are those same individuals that were Democrats that went on television and went on social media and said they were going to give this guy a chance. What does he do on the very first day? We are going to raise interest rates on new homeowners, people trying to live the American Dream. There is nothing more that embodies the American Dream than being able to buy that first home. It was a slap in the face to those blue-collar workers and a boost to Wall Street.

President Trump also signed an executive order that made it easier for Wall Street bankers to make money on risky bets. His Labor and his Treasury Cabinet nominees both have track records that are very unfriendly to the middle class and have no understanding what middle class workers face.

It is clear that President Trump does not have a plan to fight for the working man and woman as he promised on the campaign trail. That is why my colleagues and I—BRENDAN BOYLE who is here with me from the State of Pennsylvania, we formed the Blue Collar Caucus to address challenges facing

blue-collar workers in today's economy. We are going to stand up to the Trump administration when he turns his back on working class America.

Our mission is to listen directly to middle class America's concerns and translate their needs into policies that allow them to adapt to the changing job market. We have to be able to equip our blue-collar workers with training that leads to jobs and opportunities. We just can't say "job training." Those training opportunities have to lead to something of substance, which is a real job with a paycheck and some benefits.

This year alone, the U.S. is expected to add 2.5 million middle-skill jobs, the majority of which employers are telling me—and they have been to my office, and Mr. BOYLE has probably heard the same thing. They are saying that these jobs are hard to fill. The Blue Collar Caucus is going to prioritize training and retraining initiatives to provide real opportunity and security to working class Americans.

I have a lot more to say, but I do want to turn it over to BRENDAN BOYLE from Pennsylvania, my good friend, who also has the same passion to represent and really stand up for working class America, for blue-collar America—not just promise them things, not just get them pumped up with a bunch of hype, but to really talk about real policy initiatives that will help them be able to put some food on the table, put some money in the bank, be able to buy that first house and buy that car that they always wanted. I thank the gentleman very much for his dedication to blue-collar America.

Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania. I am very excited to be joined in this effort with the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, this comes out of a number of conversations that my colleague, MARC VEASEY, and I have had just in the back of this Chamber about both of our experiences growing up, which are very similar, coming from working class or blue-collar parents who worked very hard to make sure that their children had opportunities that they may not have had. In many ways, that is the American experience: people who work hard, play by the rules, pay taxes, raise their kids, and hope that their kids will have opportunities that they didn't have. That is what built the American middle class.

What is so difficult about the time in which we are living is that it is not just about an economic growth that is 2 percent; it is not just about the statistics that we often cite on this House floor. It is about a loss of hope in the power of the American Dream.

There was a statistic that came out—having just said it is not about statistics, let me cite one—that I think is, in fact, very telling and really shocking. Ninety-two percent of the World War II generation went on to earn more than their parents did. For the generation of which I am a part and MARC is a part, taken at exactly the same point in life, that figure is exactly one-half—46 percent.

Consider another statistic. Compared to the year 2000, in inflation-adjusted figures, the middle class has less wealth today than at that point 16, 17 years ago. That is the only decade-and-a-half that you can look at in American history in which the middle class is worse off than the decade-and-a-half that preceded it.

So while these are presented as just "economic issues," really, they are much more than that. They strike at the very heart of who we are as Americans and what we stand for. So we are going to be talking, as part of this caucus and over the next close to an hour or so and for many weeks and months to come, about what we can do specifically for the blue-collar economy, for those who work with their hands and for those who have been, in many ways, held back because of transitions that our economy has faced.

I have many things that I want to talk about as part of that, but I don't want to go on too long because we have been joined by someone who doesn't just talk the talk, but has walked the walk, a union worker himself, an ironworker, I believe, a good friend of mine from Massachusetts, and someone who works hard himself both in his previous occupation and now standing up and fighting for working people.

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from the State of Massachusetts (Mr. LYNCH).

□ 1745

Mr. LYNCH. It is wonderful to join Mr. BOYLE and Mr. VEASEY from Texas. I thank them for creating the Blue Collar Caucus. I think the time is perfect for the challenges that we face as a country, and I think also, as a Democrat, embracing some of our tradition. I think, in some cases, we have drifted from that.

I do want to talk about the blue-collar economy and what is happening to people who work in the building trades and work as truck drivers and nurses and people who are really the backbone of this country.

As BRENDAN mentioned, I was an ironworker for about 20 years. I know what it is when you are trying to work from paycheck to paycheck, strapping on a pair of work boots every single day.

I also want to focus tonight on one part of Mr. Trump's executive orders and policies that have really hurt people in our demographic: regular working people. I want to speak specifically about veterans.

As most people heard, President Trump, when he came into office, initiated what was called a Federal worker hiring freeze, stopping any workers from going to work for the Federal Government. I just want to remind people out there that about 30 percent of those workers are veterans. So 30 percent of the people who go to work for the Federal Government are veterans. By putting a freeze on Federal workers, you are blocking almost one-

third of workers who are veterans who would be trying to go to work.

The Federal Government is expansive. That includes workers at the VA; it includes workers at the FAA; it includes workers at the Defense Department, the State Department; on and on and on. So this is really freezing out veterans from going to work.

I had a young veteran in my office the other day who had some skills in radiology. He learned that through his military service in the Navy, but also when he got out, with the GI bill, and trying to go to work at the VA. I had to explain to him that President Trump, when he came into office, put a hiring freeze on, and that we were going to have to try to figure out another way to put him to work.

Well, that case is playing out over 50 States, and thousands—probably tens of thousands right now—of veterans are being denied the opportunity to go to work for the Federal Government. Many of them have skills that are necessary.

We have people retiring and leaving Federal employment on a daily basis. We have nurses that are retiring at the VA and folks that work for the EPA are leaving at the end of their working lives. They are retiring. Yet, we are blocking these veterans from filling those positions because of the President's hiring freeze.

Seeing that, I actually drafted a bill that I am happy to share. It is H.R. 1001. It will basically create an exception. It will keep the President's freeze in place, except for veterans coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan, veterans who have served in previous conflicts. Anyone who has put on this country's uniform as a veteran would be exempt from the hiring freeze so that we can do the right thing.

Each and every one of these young men and women—and there are a lot of women—I have been to Iraq 17 times now; Afghanistan, about 9 times; and I am amazed at the number of young women who serve our country in uniform.

I already have, including my colleagues here, 23 Democrats who have signed on. I would love to get some of my Republican friends on this bill. This should not be a partisan issue, trying to put veterans to work. I am sure we have got some good Democrats and Republicans out there that agree on this, and this should be a bipartisan issue. We can stop the—let's be hopeful it was unintended consequences of the hiring freeze. We can stop this by coming together. Sign onto H.R. 1001.

Again, I thank my colleagues for their advocacy on behalf of workers.

I notice today that the President's nominee for Labor Secretary, Mr. Puzder, who had a very bad record with workers, withdrew his nomination. He has withdrawn from consideration. I think it is because of the hard work that Mr. VEASEY and Mr. BOYLE have done in speaking out on behalf of American workers and pointing out the

bad decisions and the wage and garnishment issues that Mr. Puzder had. I just think that their advocacy helped enormously in having him withdraw that nomination.

I thank my colleagues again for the great work that they do on behalf of all American workers, and I appreciate their service to the country.

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE).

Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania. We are planning, actually, to talk about someone who was, quite frankly, the worst Labor Secretary nominee in our Nation's history; literally putting the fox in charge of the henhouse. You can tell I am from the city because I botched that metaphor, but maybe MARC will be able to help me with that.

To put someone in charge of the Labor Department who had a complete history of ripping off fast food workers, paying in some places, in some Hardy's, below minimum wage because they were falsely classifying workers, I can't think of really someone who, in many ways, epitomized the kind of greed that we see in our economy today than the former Labor Secretary nominee.

That actually works to a point that I wanted to raise. I think it is a big part of what has been happening in our American economy today.

In the post-World War II era, for roughly three decades we had large gains in productivity and large gains in wage growth. That is from roughly the mid-1940s to about the late 1970s. You saw workers becoming more productive, working harder and smarter and better than ever, and you saw wages growing to almost exactly the same percentage: 97 percent increase in productivity, 91 percent increase in wage growth.

But then, over the last 30 years, something quite different has happened. The productivity growth has continued. The American worker is more productive than at any point in our Nation's history and is the most productive workforce in the world. That is not boasting; that is an economic fact.

Yet, since the 1970s, wages have barely gone up at all. Those are the averages. That doesn't account for the fact that when you are talking about the blue-collar economy, when you are talking about those who don't have a higher education, when you control for just that group, wages are actually lower today than they were 30, 40 years ago.

Now you might wonder: Well, how are CEOs doing? Have they shared in the pain?

Well, 50 years ago, CEOs made 20 times what typical workers make. As of 2013, they make just under 300 times a typical worker's pay—from making 20 times more than your average worker to more than 300 times your average worker.

I believe in capitalism and I believe in the market, but clearly something is deeply wrong in our economy, the structure of it, when we have that sort of situation, when workers are not being rewarded for their hard work.

I recall my colleague, Mr. VEASEY, talking a little bit about his family experience and the similarities to my own and the fact that blue-collar workers like our parents actually have fewer opportunities in America today than they did when we were growing up: fewer job opportunities for lower wages and not as rich benefits. I say not as rich benefits, but, actually, very insecure benefits in terms of health care and a lack of a defined pension.

If Mr. VEASEY would possibly talk more about that and other parts of the heart and soul of our Blue Collar Caucus.

Mr. VEASEY. One of the things I remember growing up in Fort Worth, Texas, was that we were blessed to have several manufacturing facilities that were union shops. We had General Dynamics, which is now Lockheed Martin. When I was growing up, it had about 30,000 employees out there.

We had Bell Helicopter, which is owned by Textron now. There are lots of employees out there. We had Miller Brewing Company, which is still there. Now it is MillerCoors. We had several places, like General Motors, which I think I mentioned a little bit earlier.

So we had several places that had good benefit. I had family members that worked at many of those places. Good benefits, good jobs that people could really be proud of. One of the reasons why we have seen the decline of pay in this country is because of the Republicans and their efforts to undermine labor.

When you start talking about undermining labor and when you turn on these talk radio shows—you turn on The Rush Limbaugh Show, you turn on Mark Levin, you turn on these shows—they are always talking about how bad unions are in this country. But when I think about my own experience growing up in Fort Worth and I think about towns like White Settlement; towns like Benbrook; the community that I grew up in, Stop Six and Como; and I think about the middle class jobs that many of these union shops brought to all communities, again, whether it was the White community, the Hispanic community, or Black, they allowed people to be able to put some food on the table.

I have got to tell you, I was really kind of tickled and shocked at the same time by an article in the opinion section in The Wall Street Journal back on September 3, 2015. It was titled: "The Shop Steward in the White House." It was taking a shot at President Obama for all of the things that he was doing for American workers, and many of the things that the Wall Street guy that wrote the article was complaining about, saying all these things about President Obama, they

were all actually really good things that the President was advocating for.

My question and what I want to know and what I want Rust Belt workers and people all around the country to ask: Is this Presidency, is this administration going to embody and really embrace those same principles that were talked about for President Obama when he was really trying to protect these workers? Is this President going to do the same thing? Are his partners in the legislative branch, our colleagues on the other side of the aisle, the Senators on the other side of the Capitol that are Republicans, are they going to also stop going after American wages, stop going after American workers and their benefits, and start standing up for these workers so they can put some more food on the table?

That is what I want to know. Those are the type of questions that we should be asking and we should be talking about.

President Trump can put out a statement on this right now if he wanted to, but obviously he has a lot of other things going on.

The Davis-Bacon Act, as many of us know, is the rule that ensures all Federal contractors are paid a fair wage while they are working on public works projects.

If there was ever a repeal of Davis-Bacon, we would see a decrease in the quality of blue-collar jobs, and we can absolutely not afford that. Stagnating wages, like I talked a little bit about earlier, has left workers unable to care for their families. As a result, one-third of blue-collar families are enrolled in one or more social safety net program.

That is not what blue-collar workers want. They want the ability to be able to take care of their own families. They don't want these social safety net programs. They want to be providers and be proud of their jobs.

The Blue Collar Caucus intends to defend the Davis-Bacon Act and fight any attempts to decrease wages for America's already struggling working class. We know that we can build an economy that works for everybody if we just work together. So work with us as we stand against President Trump's unfulfilled promises and stand up for these blue-collar workers. That is what we want our friends on the other side of the aisle to do.

But what I would really like to see right now, even before President Trump reaches out to, again, his Republican friends in the legislative branch, is for him to come out and make a statement for these blue-collar workers, for these people in the Rust Belt, for these people in the South, for these people in Dallas-Fort Worth, and all over the country. I want him to come out and make a statement on where he stands on Davis-Bacon.

□ 1800

It is one thing to just talk in broad categories about bringing jobs back to

our country, stopping our jobs from going overseas. This is an actual policy that we know has been good for many workers in Mr. BOYLE's district and in mine and, again, everywhere. Where is the President on this issue? Why is he not saying anything about Davis-Bacon? I want to hear what he has to say. I know that Mr. BOYLE knows about just how important things like Davis-Bacon are and other issue areas are.

Another area is the Supreme Court nominee, Mr. Gorsuch. Where is he going to rule when it comes to working families? That is what I want to know. That is the type of thing that I hope that people on the factory floors and shops across this country start talking about is how is this man going to rule? We already know that he has made several bad rulings as it relates to working families, rulings that will directly affect how big their paychecks are, literally has made rulings that have taken money right out of their pockets, right out of their bank accounts. Those are the types of things that we need to be talking about, not all this 35,000-feet-up-in-the-air-type stuff, but actual policy details that we know can impact and hurt families.

Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, MARC is exactly right. I was so glad that he brought up unions and the important role that they play because when I talked earlier about the fact that for 30, 40 years we had an economy that was working well, that saw productivity gains but also wage gains in roughly equal proportion. And then suddenly in the last 30 years you have seen that change. You have seen the productivity gains continue, but you have seen wage growth at practically zero.

Well, it is not a coincidence that for three, four decades you had strong unions, from the mid-1940s until about the late 1970s or so. They were there fighting for workers, fighting for increased wages, fighting for a secure retirement, fighting for real health benefits.

Then you saw an economy beginning in the early 1980s where the power of unions declined. The number of workers involved in the workforce who were unionized declined. I don't think it is a coincidence that just as you saw the number of workers in unions decline and the number of unions decline and the power of unions decline, you also saw real wages decline. Certainly no coincidence. For 70 years, worker wages and the strength of unions have moved in tandem, going up together or going down together.

Critical to the strength of the American workforce are provisions like Davis-Bacon that have existed since the late 1940s that guarantee a prevailing wage on Federal projects. It helps not just those workers who are unionized. It lifts all workers because when you have a union that is out there fighting for higher wages and fighting for better benefits for its

members, it helps all workers. It helps all of those in the workforce.

I talked earlier, and I was thinking about this when MARC was talking about his family's experience in those towns in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. I remember from my own family's experience, we were very lucky that my dad, without a college education, with the equivalent of a high school education, after many years of trying, was able to break in to Teamsters Local 169 as a warehouseman. It simply means he worked in a warehouse for Acme Markets. He did that for 25 years. There were a couple thousand such workers who were employed in the city of Philadelphia.

Then in the late 1990s, around the year 2000, they closed all those warehouses. They laid off close to 2,000 workers. They decided that they would set up shop, instead, in a place where they could pay the workers half the wages, reduced benefits, and not as many workers. Fortunately, things worked okay for my dad. He ended up on his feet. He spent the last 16 years as a worker, as a janitor for SEPTA, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority.

Many of the guys who got laid off in their 50s and 60s weren't as lucky. Many of them never found, again, a job as well paying or as secure. Some of them turned to alcohol. Some of them turned to drugs. A couple even committed suicide. Again, I want to show that these are not just economic issues. Sometimes the elites—and I mean elites not just on the Republican side; elites of all political ideologies—sometimes look at these as just economic issues. They are real-life issues.

When we see the diseases of hopelessness that are happening right now in places like western Pennsylvania or Texas or Kentucky or, really, all parts of our country—and, by the way, White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, what we are talking about touches all races, all ethnicities, all backgrounds—these diseases of hopelessness that have been on the dramatic rise are a real problem for our society, but to look at them as just a drug problem or just an alcohol problem or just a mental health problem and not see the economic link is very naive and incomplete and will never solve the real problem, go to the heart of solving the real problem.

Mr. Speaker, MARC and I both look forward—he had mentioned it to me—to periodically coming to this House floor and talking about this new President's record when it comes to addressing these issues. He talked a lot during the campaign, made a lot of promises. He is great at making promises. In fact, you would probably say he is the best ever at making promises. Well, we are going to be showing his record, to see if he is keeping those promises to the American people.

On some issues, he sounded like a Democrat. On some issues, when it came to infrastructure or trade, he said things that I can agree with and do

agree with. Now that he is President, let's see if the record matches the rhetoric. We are going to be here to hold him accountable, to hold both sides accountable because, you know, the fact is this town, for many decades, has not looked out for the blue-collar worker. We are quick to indict the other side where they are wrong, and I think appropriately so.

This Blue Collar Caucus is for all those who really want to make a difference in the blue-collar economy, for those who want to put the American worker first and foremost. I can say President Trump is not off to a great start with some of his Cabinet picks, who look more like the board at Goldman Sachs than any union hall. I hope that this first month will not be a sign of more to come, but whether he is getting an A or an F, we are going to be here to grade his performance on these real-life, meat-and-potato issues that matter to the vast majority of American families.

Mr. Speaker, MARC and I represent two different regions of the country, two different areas, yet, in many ways, exactly the same kind of folks. I wanted to know what MARC is hearing as he goes out into his community in Fort Worth about how things are going for American workers and what they want from this administration.

Mr. VEASEY. Absolutely. When I am back in the district in the Dallas-Fort Worth area—and Dallas and Fort Worth are the two most recognizable cities that I represent in the district, but there are other cities. We have Irving that is there, we have Grand Prairie, we have Arlington where the Cowboys stadium is located, and a lot of people are asking: When are we going to get these good jobs back? We want to see some of these good jobs come back. I have got to tell you, the President made a lot of promises when he was on the campaign trail about bringing some of these jobs back, and I want to see those jobs come back, too.

I think that with everything going on right now, with the resignation of General Flynn and there being so much talk about campaign operatives on the Trump campaign talking to Russian intelligence officials, I think that he is going to be too distracted to help these workers. I think that Republicans are going to be too distracted to help these workers in the Rust Belt, to help these middle class, these blue-collar workers.

I have got to tell you, during our retreat last week while we were in Baltimore, I opened up *The Wall Street Journal* first thing in the morning. I saw this article about how—and it was about jobs still pouring in to Mexico, and it was really one of the saddest things that I ever read. For some manufacturers, Mexico is still the best move. They specifically were talking about a corporation called the Rexnord Corporation.

It really broke my heart when I was reading the articles about how they were asking the workers at this plant

in America, in our country, to actually train individuals from foreign countries to replace them. They wanted them to train them for the jobs that they currently had here in our country and asking them to, you know, train these people so we can ship your job out of the country and you can be replaced. How demoralizing to go to work knowing that you are training someone next to you for your job to be sent overseas or sent out of the country, your livelihood, everything that you have known. For a lot of these little, small towns, these companies really are the face of the town.

In Texas, and I am sure it is like this in Indiana and in other parts of the Rust Belt and other parts of blue-collar America, Friday night football is a really big deal, maybe the local high school basketball game is a really big deal, but also that ranks right up there with both of those two athletic activities in these towns, their identity is driven by their job. I thought that was such a sad commentary about where we are now.

Again, with all of the executive orders, when you start talking about the travel ban on citizens from Muslim countries, when you start talking about the executive order to raise interest rates on first-time homeowners, no executive orders whatsoever to protect the American worker. We are a month into the administration. No executive order, no action, no comments on Davis-Bacon, nothing to reinforce the fact that we are with these guys, and it is really sad.

I am sure that these workers out there, in America, in New Jersey, in other States, I bet you they are sitting back watching, saying: How in the world is this President going to help us with all of the distractions that are going on over there? When is he going to help us? He has done all these other things with the executive order, why not do something for the American worker?

Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania. We have been joined by DONALD NORCROSS, our colleague within the Democratic Caucus and here in the House, and my neighbor from just the other side of the Delaware River. MARC brought up football a couple times. Yes, he is a diehard Cowboys fan. Well, as a Philadelphia Eagles fan, I am glad to have been joined by another Eagles fan, someone much like STEPHEN LYNCH, someone who doesn't just talk the talk but has walked the walk, who has worked with his hands and is someone who brings great credibility to these issues, as someone who himself was out as a blue-collar worker every day and now gets the chance to fight for them here on the House floor where that fight is badly needed.

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. NORCROSS).

Mr. NORCROSS. Mr. Speaker, I thank BRENDAN—Representative BOYLE—and MARC for putting together

a Blue Collar Caucus just to remind ourselves what we should be doing here is focusing on jobs. Jobs, which is the best social program I have ever been with.

I entered my professional life as an electrician, as an electrical apprentice. I went through the other 4 years of school. It was called an apprenticeship. I worked on bridges, refineries, pipelines throughout the Delaware Valley. I understood how tough it is sometimes for people to make it. When work got slow, we got laid off. We collected unemployment. Those are the struggles that men and women in our great country are going through each and every day. If anything, this last election cycle reminded us of that, that sometimes the dignity of being able to take care of your family, send your kids to school, and retire with dignity is the most important thing we can do.

□ 1815

I have seen firsthand what happens with minimum wage. They tend to think it is all a bunch of kids flipping hamburgers. Well, it is much more than that. It is a woman I spoke to, who had a child 8 years old, who had to work two jobs just to make sure that in the winter, when her daughter needed a coat for winter, that she could take care of her. And she recalled to us how badly she felt that her daughter's teacher for PTA wanted her to come in and help. She had to decide whether or not to keep food on her table or participate in her child's school. That is a tough decision when we both want to help.

When we look at what we have done as a country, as compared to elsewhere in the world, it is very different when we look at the blue collar, particularly in the building trades where I came from. Throughout Europe, particularly in Switzerland and Germany, they look at working with your hands with just the same dignity as going through college. This country doesn't always do that. Guidance counselors tend to push them into college as the only measurement.

College isn't for everybody. I have three brothers. They went the traditional college route. I decided I really enjoyed working with my hands. I went and became an electrician. Those jobs, we are on over 20 years ago, I still talk to my kids about it today—the dignity of working with your hands.

This country is starting to change, particularly when you need an electrician. When Mr. BOYLE's lights in his house go out, who does he call? That electrician is worth his weight in gold, isn't he?

And I know Mr. BOYLE's story. His parents came over here as first generation and are living the American Dream. They have to be so proud of him.

And in Mr. VEASEY's district, those refineries are important for jobs, as they are in mine. I think we absolutely have to keep the focus on making sure

that we have renewables, that we have clean energy. But we also understand with each of those decisions comes whether or not somebody is going to be able to go home and say: Honey, I lost my job today.

Today was a remarkable day—the first withdrawal of a nominee for the Department of Labor. And I guess this is where, during the election cycle, I see the difference.

It is very clear that the President wanted to talk about jobs, good jobs, putting America back to work. And then we have the secretary nominee put up—who talks about minimum wage is a bad thing, talks about robots are things you don't have argument with. He wants to outsource. That is not the way to rebuild the economy.

Mr. BOYLE talked about the discrepancy between those who work for a living, the average worker on the line, and those who are the CEOs. When I grew up, there was an implied partnership with so many of those companies. Those who went to work in a first-generation company, that CEO knew every employee's name. But time after time, when that company gets sold, that disconnect comes in. They forget about that. And that is where those relationships, that partnership that is so important, starts to break down.

We had a conversation in our Education and the Workforce Committee the other day about the NLRB, which is the group from the Department of Labor that judges whether or not elections with unions are done fairly. There was a suggestion somehow that they are not being treated fairly. It couldn't be any further from the truth. If workers want to have a voice, they should have that voice and choose whether or not they want to join with the union. That is the American way—that democracy. Yet, the nominee for Labor wanted to do away with the NLRB. In fact, when we look at the total case history, it is like putting the fox in charge of the henhouse, unless, of course, you own the henhouse, and then it is okay.

I want to finish up by saying to Mr. VEASEY and Mr. BOYLE how appreciative I am of keeping this focus on the forefront of what we do here in Congress. I created a Building Trades Caucus, along with a colleague, Mr. MCKINLEY, out of West Virginia. We could try to move this forward, create an infrastructure package that puts America back to work and keeps our roads, our bridges, and our grid safe.

Let's remember one thing: a fair day's pay for a fair day's work and the dignity of a job. I appreciate what you have done.

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. NORCROSS). I really appreciate his heartfelt words. I thank him for telling us about his journey, employment, and how much electricians mean to this country, and other people that work with their hands.

I think it is sad that in a lot of our public schools that type of work has

been—quite frankly, there is no other way to say it—some of it has been put down. But those workers are important. We need to stop having people rank jobs and make sure that we know that all jobs in this country are important.

Since 2000, the United States has lost about 4.8 million manufacturing jobs. That is a 29 percent decrease in jobs for blue-collar workers. Again, manufacturing jobs are good-paying jobs. Manufacturing jobs pay about 20 percent higher than service jobs do. So any manufacturing job that we lose in this country is bad.

One of the saddest stories—and there are so many sad stories about these plants that have closed down, and so much of the focus has been on the Rust Belt, and rightfully so. And MARCY KAPTUR may tell me if I am pronouncing the name of this city correctly. But there is a story about the closing of a Rubbermaid facility in a place called Wooster, W-O-O-S-T-E-R. They said that they were shutting down this Rubbermaid facility in Wooster, Ohio, but they were going to keep the big outlet mall open. And I thought to myself: How in the world can people afford to go to the outlet mall, or any shop, if the jobs are gone? It is just another sad story about how America is losing manufacturing jobs.

Luckily, we have people like the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR), who fights for her State and fights for manufacturing jobs, and not just in her State, but for the entire country.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Ms. KAPTUR for her dedication to the working class men and women in this country and for all blue-collar workers.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR).

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. VEASEY) for his great leadership in bringing us together in this Blue Collar Caucus. I feel very comfortable. I actually have blue on today.

I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE) of the greater Philadelphia area, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. NORCROSS), and myself from the Toledo to Cleveland, Ohio, part of our country to bring to the attention of the American people the fact, for example, that workers in northern Ohio, since the year 2000, earn on average \$7,000 less than they did at the beginning of the century. They have taken some great hits. They are hardworking people. They are fighting back, but they need our help.

In the last 3 weeks, if we take a look at President Trump's term thus far, we begin to see the real Donald at work, if I might quote one of the news media. After months of grandiose campaign promises to renegotiate NAFTA, bring back American manufacturing jobs, and make America great, we can begin to assess where he is putting his attention. I think this is really important for us, as we represent blue-collar

America, what is he doing for them. I think the proof is in his actions, or lack thereof.

After roughly 20 executive orders and actions, we see President Trump has a penchant for mediagenic events and moments with a hodgepodge of executive orders, but apparently not sending any legislation up here yet. And most striking is his clear motivation to assist his wealthy friends on Wall Street with appointments to the administration, such as Secretary of Treasury, rather than paying attention to average Americans who voted for him. He exhibits a great penchant for public approval rather than a focus on efforts to improve the current economic stagnation of average Americans.

We are noting that he is filled his Cabinet with billionaires and multimillionaires who simply can't figure out how to walk in the shoes of blue-collar America. His actions to help the wealthiest Americans will have significant consequences.

So what happened with his promise to drain the swamp?

I thought in the first month we would have had something that would really resonate out in the heartland.

While all of this happens just miles away at the White House, our Republican congressional colleagues remain either silent or moving the car in reverse.

Why would they criticize activity that helps those who fund their elections?

We need campaign finance reform to dominate their political focus and write their policy objectives, like taking away today here in the House the ability of workers to save money for their own pensions, for heaven's sake.

In Trump's first days, he took action to roll back the financial reform bill called Dodd-Frank and tried to eliminate protections for seniors as they seek retirement investment advice. We know there are a lot of sharks out there in the financial waters.

Why wouldn't you want to help the American people rather than hurt them more?

He did nothing to address the trade issues, which were in his power to do on day one, and propelled his victory through our part of the country. I note my colleagues come from Texas, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and me being from Ohio. It was actually the Midwestern States that lifted this President to victory. He hasn't declared China as a currency manipulator. He could have done that already.

He had no elimination of the Buy America waiver, which affords access to U.S. Government contracts for all firms and goods from 45 World Trade Organization nations and 16 additional U.S. Free Trade Agreements that exist. Not a word about that.

No NAFTA renegotiation. He could have pulled the plug on that on day one. Nothing.

Where is the negotiating team in place to take care of what NAFTA has

done to the people of the heartland and our country in general?

What will President Trump do for ongoing negotiations he inherited on the U.S.-China Bilateral Investment Treaty, the Trade in Services Agreement, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership? Will he put American workers, global workers, and environmental concerns at the forefront of negotiations? Or will he continue to allow corporate and wealthy financial interests to dominate and run roughshod over workers and communities?

Candidate Trump promised the 15,000 steelworkers laid off due to a flood of unfairly traded imports that he would support America's manufacturing and industrial base. He came to Ohio and said that. He promised to protect our industries from the Chinese and to keep jobs at home. But in the pipeline of executive action, he actually enforced the trade agreement Buy America waiver, negating his promises to help America's steelworkers. How about that? That was done in the first month.

Just recently, the U.S. Department of Commerce released a report that showed the U.S. trade deficit hit a 4-year high as it rose to over half a billion dollars for 2016. Middle America isn't surprised this trade deficit continues to hollow out U.S. manufacturing jobs and depress incomes across our great Nation. Reducing our trade deficit should be a top priority for the new administration. I hope the President puts a big scoreboard in front of the White House on his progress on this front. It would do wonders to fix the economy for working Americans if we balanced that trade deficit.

As Congressman VEASEY has said, the Democratic Party has long championed issues for blue-collar America that create real life success for working class people. Lost in the political dialogue is the reality that Democrats have always stood for individual and economic rights for average Americans of all backgrounds. Each of us in our own lives represents that, and it is a privilege to serve here in this House.

For blue-collar families, education remains a vital stepping-stone in upward mobility. Democrats continue to prioritize early childhood literacy and STEM education, efforts to make Americans globally competitive in advanced manufacturing, science, medicine, and research and development. Democrats continue to expand apprenticeship options to allow young people to enter the workforce trained and without the enormous burden of student loans.

Meanwhile, Republicans push policies that exacerbate the ever-expanding wealth gap, even allowing it to invade our school systems. Just watch the opposition Mr. Trump and his newly minted Education Secretary Betsy DeVos have towards public schools.

In closing, let me thank our esteemed leaders here in the Blue Collar Caucus, Congressman VEASEY and Congressman BOYLE. I don't see that this

President is draining the swamp. He is actually digging deeper into it. I really thank them for being an accountability wing here in the first branch mentioned in the Constitution—the legislative branch. I congratulate both of them. It has been a great privilege to join them this evening.

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative KAPTUR and everybody that has participated tonight.

I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 1830

ISSUES OF THE DAY AND REFLECTING BACK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, in our Judiciary Committee today, we have been marking up what should have been a couple of rather simple bills, but it is really as if the instructions on the Soros-funded website, manual, things telling people how to obstruct the current majorities in the House and Senate and administration, could possibly be carrying over here into the Capitol itself because there are so many amendments being offered and things being drug out and people saying the same thing over and over. It is about Russia and corruption and one thing and the other—on and on and on.

It is just interesting when people are talking about their dramatic concerns over Russia, who, for years, have been totally silent. When everybody I know of on the Republican side here had been asking that President Obama and his administration do something about the terrible hacking problem from Russia, China, North Korea, Iran, he didn't seem terribly bothered.

I mean, it was as if he were afraid he might hurt Putin's feelings or Khamenei's feelings in Iran and maybe they would want to kill Americans in a more brutal way, the Iran terrorists being paid. I can't help but think that there will be people in the next 4 years who are Americans, who are Muslim, Jews, Christians—especially those groups—who would be killed because of the billions and billions of dollars that this administration forced into the hands of the largest supporter of terrorism in the world: Iran.

It was as if the world—and in particular, the United States—had not been punished enough for the mistakes of the Carter administration in thinking that by pushing the Shah of Iran—not a great man. Apparently, he could be pretty brutal in his own right, but he kept radical Islam at bay.

When President Carter encouraged his forcing out of office, much as President Obama did the same thing with the President of Egypt, in both cases, it created a vacuum that was immediately filled by radical Islamists. The

Muslim Brotherhood is who filled it in Egypt. In Iran, yes, it was radical Islamists. And probably for the first time since the Ottoman Empire, radical Islamist leaders were given a country, a country's military with which to wreak their havoc on the world.

It is just hard to believe that, in the intervening years between President Carter leaving office in January 1981 and President Obama coming in in January of 2009, all history had been forgotten or possibly even not really learned.

I guess, if you are learning at the hands or at the feet of Jeremiah Wright, who has such contempt—GD America was his feelings and expression—or if you are at the feet of Bill Ayers, who felt that blowing up police stations, things like that, hadn't quite served the purpose, or perhaps if we take over educating college students who will one day train elementary students and high school students, then we can ultimately create the anarchy that we were trying to create in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Back then, we were unsuccessful, but great inroads have been made here recently. You would just have to believe that America was the problem for the world in the last 100 years, and apparently there are those who feel that way.

But for those of you who have talked with friends of different religions—Muslim, Christians, Jews, secularists—in different parts of the world, those who are actually fair minded make it very clear: the United States has been the greatest force for good as a nation that the world has ever known since the Dark Ages. It just has.

And thank God we have had such wonderful allies in the endeavors that we have undertaken. Of course, in the liberation of Kuwait from Saddam Hussein's hands, we had many other countries who joined us. President George H.W. Bush was going to liberate Iraq. So many Democrats had screamed at President George H.W. Bush as troops were moving into Iraq after the liberation of Kuwait, screaming: Stop, stop, stop. They are giving up. They are giving up.

President George H.W. Bush ordered the stoppage, and immediately thereafter, the Democrats that screamed for him to stop began berating Bush because he didn't finish the job in Iraq. Some of those same people were around to condemn his son George W. Bush when he actually did finish the job.

There was yellowcake uranium that was taken out which showed that Joseph Wilson had apparently said one thing to CIA agents and testified to something totally different, who said something totally different from his original interview when he got back from Africa. Of course, he was heralded a hero by the mainstream media.

But it has just been amazing to see the ebb and flow of international relations. And reflecting back as I did earlier today, as so much from my Democratic friends in Judiciary was made

about connections between the Trump administration and Russia, it is just hard not to remember so vividly the comments by Mitt Romney in a debate with President Obama in 2012 that Russia was potentially the greatest threat.

I may be mistaken, but it seems like President Obama even said something glibly like, you know, "The 1980s called and they want their foreign policy back," something rather cheeky like that, when, actually, my friends across the aisle, in Judiciary at least, have come to realize that that was one thing Mitt Romney was right about and President Obama was wrong about.

But if you look at what the Obama administration did, as soon as President Obama took office, instead of taking a principle stand—and I know there was a lot of perceived hatred by those coming in with the Obama administration for George W. Bush. Perhaps it goes back to President Obama's days when he was growing up in Indonesia and he commented in his book, "Dreams from My Father," about how his stepfather was apparently paid off by these fat-cat guys from Texas, oil guys, fat cats from Texas and Louisiana, something to that effect, and you realized, holy smokes, he has had a great disdain for Texas, for Louisiana going back to, you know, preteen years. You couldn't help but wonder if, in policies, it was carried through. Of course, he didn't appreciate his stepfather for working, and working with the Americans back in those days. But perhaps that has affected him.

So if George W. Bush took a principled stand against Russia after Russia assaulted the independent nation of Georgia—I mean, some of us remember that President George W. Bush, trying to look for the good in people, came back from meeting Putin and said, you know: I looked into his eyes and saw his soul. He thought that is what he saw—may have been looking into shark eyes. But in any event, he soon learned the error of his ways. And that is one of the things I liked about President George W. Bush. If he made a mistake, he was big enough to say that wasn't the right way to go, and he would try to fix it.

That is exactly what he did in his relationship with Russia. When Russia attacked Georgia—unprovoked, really—President George W. Bush, his administration, properly took a very principled stand. Some didn't think it went far enough, but he immediately caused a cessation of the great relations that had been going on and took some steps to chill those relations because of Russia's unilateral attack against Georgia, hoping to wake Putin up that you can't just go attack a neighboring country like that. Even if you want the old Soviet Empire back, you can't just do that without repercussions. So because of Putin's imperialistic attack, Bush took a strong stance and let Russia know: We don't approve of what you have done, and we are cooling things, we are freezing things.