

funding is needed to avert the destabilization of entire regions and to support refugees fleeing into neighboring countries.

Earlier this year, a bipartisan group of Members proposed that the U.S. allocate \$1 billion in emergency funding for famine response. Thanks to those efforts, Congress pledged to provide \$990 million in emergency funding in fiscal year appropriations.

Foreign aid is an investment. It makes our country, and those overseas fighting for us, dramatically safer. With leadership comes responsibility. Providing aid is a moral imperative.

WHAT DO WE HAVE TO LOSE: NATIONAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Ms. PLASKETT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

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

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

There was no objection.

Ms. PLASKETT. Madam Speaker, it is with great honor that I rise today to anchor this CBC Special Order. For the next 60 minutes, we have a chance to speak directly to the American people on issues of great importance to the Congressional Black Caucus, Congress, the constituents we represent, and all Americans.

Tonight, we will highlight the President's action to undermine our national security, including, but not limited to, abruptly firing FBI Director Comey in order to ease pressure on the Russian investigation just 1 day before sharing classified information with a Russian official.

Madam Speaker, many in this country believe Congress continues to have trouble accomplishing the basic requirements of its job. Up until a few weeks ago, we were still scrambling yet again to complete spending legislation to prevent a government shutdown.

If the only measure of national security success during the President's first 100 days were avoiding catastrophe, okay, President Trump has succeeded: no attacks on the U.S., no new wars, no nuclear Armageddon.

These are good things, and in the moment we can breathe a sigh of relief. However, these outcomes, arguably, owe more to the national security machine built by the President's predecessors than any decision of the 45th President.

President Trump's first major budget proposal will be released tomorrow. It is reported to include massive cuts to Medicaid and will call for drastically

and unprecedented changes to anti-poverty programs.

As for Medicaid, the State Federal programs that provide healthcare to low-income Americans, Trump's draconian budget plan would follow through on a bill passed by House Republicans to cut more than \$800 billion over 10 years.

The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that this would cut off Medicaid benefits for 10 million people over the next decade. That is unacceptable.

The dysfunctional relationship between Congress and the Trump administration has helped to bog down and complicate the fiscal 2017 budget process and has stymied the work of this Congress when it comes to passing legislation that will help our constituents.

A recent survey found that 48 percent of Americans now prefer increased government spending in areas like healthcare, veterans care, education, and infrastructure—things that the people of my district, the Virgin Islands, desperately need, with a 15 percent unemployment rate and 33 percent of our children living in poverty.

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It is time for Congress to get back to work for the people that have put us here.

I want to highlight three pieces of legislation that I have introduced that will help my constituents in the Virgin Islands in various ways.

With a special counsel now having been appointed to look into the distractions the White House has created, it is time that Congress focus on our job and proceed to hold hearings on these bills followed by a vote on the House floor, and, hopefully, these commonsense bills will be signed into law by the President.

Healthcare: President Trump and the Republican Congress are planning to cut more than \$800 billion out of Medicaid funding over 10 years while converting the program to a cap block grant to the States and territories and eliminating ACA's Medicaid expansion. These provisions are in the American Health Care Act, the House GOP's ObamaCare repeal bill.

As a Member representing the Virgin Islands, I believe we need to get back to doing the work of the people, and that is working to pass laws that better the lives of our constituents.

I introduced improving the treatment of the U.S. territories under the Federal healthcare program, which would eliminate existing inequities the territories face under Medicaid and Medicare. There are numerous bills that my other colleagues have introduced to assist their constituents and all Americans in areas of healthcare. We need to bring those bills to the floor and vote them up or vote them down.

Veterans: There are few places in the United States with higher per capita rates of military service than the

United States Virgin Islands. As a Member, I am committed to ensuring Virgin Islands veterans have full and equal access to health, housing, education, and employment benefits they have rightfully earned. Our constituents have deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq more than 30,000 times since September 11, and about 120,000 military veterans live in the territories, yet none are allowed to cast a ballot to choose their Commander in Chief.

We need to remember that nearly 4 million Americans call Puerto Rico, Guam, the Virgin Islands, the Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa home, a combined population greater than 22 States. We represent those Americans in the U.S. House who cannot vote for their interests on the House floor. Our constituents are denied representation in the U.S. Senate and are barred from the general election for President and Vice President. When the Presidential vote was tabulated in 2016, it was as if 4 million Americans we represent do not exist. There is a time, however, when our people are counted—when the country goes to war.

I have introduced H. Res. 91, which proposes an amendment to the Constitution of the United States regarding Presidential elections, voting rights for residents of all United States territories and commonwealths.

Education: We have to fix the education system. We have to give our young people better choices. We need to allow our children to be able to be educated in a place that is hospitable to learning. That does not occur right now in many places in the United States. The President's budget cut would remove support to schools for infrastructure, for afterschool programs, and for summer reading programs.

We cannot continue with this if we want to have national security. National security is the security of our young people to be educated and to grow safely. That is not happening in the Virgin Islands or anyplace in the United States at this time.

I recently introduced the United States Virgin Islands College Access Act of 2017, which will allow college students who are residents of the Virgin Islands to receive more reasonable tuition rates at participating 4-year institutions of higher education.

It is time for Congress to stop doing business as usual. With budget decisions impacting everything from national security to infrastructure investment, Congress needs to focus on doing its job and doing it with more than the next few months or current fiscal year in mind. Moving forward, we as Members of Congress need to make sure that we deal with our legislative and budgetary responsibilities with more thoughtfulness and foresight.

Congressman DWIGHT EVANS represents the wonderful city of Philadelphia and the people of Pennsylvania. He is a legislator of many years. Although he comes here as a freshman,

none of us consider him as a freshman having served in the legislature in Pennsylvania for more than 20 years. I would ask him to speak on the topic that the Congressional Black Caucus' Special Order hour has introduced: What Do We Have to Lose: National Security.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. EVANS).

Mr. EVANS. Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from the great Virgin Islands, and I really appreciate her leadership.

I would like to thank my colleagues for bringing forward such an important topic for tonight's Special Order hour. National security is an issue of utmost importance to all of us.

The bottom line is this: If the President thinks it is okay to share classified information with our adversaries, we have a big problem. I will be reemphasizing that point: If the President of the United States of America shared classified information with our enemies, then the lives of the American people are at risk.

Regardless of political party, if, in fact, President Trump did willingly share classified information with Russia, then this further proves that the President does not understand the consequences of his actions. It proves that he doesn't understand how much we stand to lose as a result of these actions.

The bigger question now that people are asking is: Do you think the President is in so much trouble?

It is clear from the news that the Russian investigation is the gift that keeps giving. But I want to be really, really clear with you. I did not vote for President Trump. I did not support him when he was running, and I fought hard to stop President Trump from becoming elected.

If you want to know, I think the President is in trouble. I will tell you this. President Trump and his administration are not ready for prime time. The campaign is over. The President needs to focus on governing, and we have not seen him do that yet. He needs to learn how to govern.

We know that the Comey firing has sent a potential signal of the President's collusion with Russia. For this reason, I called for the special prosecutor and the independent commission so that the American people truly can know the Trump-Russia connection.

I am glad to see former FBI Director Bob Mueller named as special counsel to oversee the investigation, but we still need to make sure that Congress is able to conduct an independent investigation into the Trump administration's ties to Russia and interference in the 2016 election. The American people deserve to know the facts. The American people deserve to know the facts.

I was in my district over the weekend in Lower Merion, and all anyone asked to talk about was Comey and Russia.

They want answers, and they want to get to the bottom line of this.

I want to, but what I want to do is to raise the dialogue on the issues that really matter here, the issues that we really have a lot to lose on. For example, last week, I hosted a briefing on middle neighborhoods. Middle neighborhoods are neighborhoods caught between bust and boom. They are communities doing just well enough that our cities aren't focusing our resources or attention on them.

Of course, we need to get to the bottom line of collusion between Russia and the President. I want to, and we will get to the bottom line of this as the American people deserve the facts. At the same time, I want to make sure we are fighting for dialogue on the ways we can make a difference and make an impact on our communities in need.

We need to find ways to tackle food insecurity, help our public schools, and expand access to capital and credit on every corner to build stronger neighborhoods block by block. This will not be easy. We need to work together. It is in our collective interest to ensure national security is not a partisan issue. It should be a bipartisan issue.

So I stand here in the well of this House, Madam Speaker, to indicate that I want to ensure that national security is important. I hope, Madam Speaker, that the President also understands that it is important.

Ms. PLASKETT. Madam Speaker, I thank the Congressman so much for his comments.

I think it was very interesting that the gentleman was saying that the American people and people that he spoke with over the weekend want the truth. I think that is what we all here in Congress want. We want the facts. We want to hear specifically what has happened so that the people of the United States can make a decision about what happens next.

I am not here to ask for impeachment or ask for any rash decision, but I am asking that the American people be able to see a transparent Congress and a transparent process that allows them to then speak to us as Members of Congress as to what they would like.

Several months ago, almost 2 months now, several colleagues of mine and I wrote a letter to the Department of Justice, to the Acting Attorney General, requesting that he institute a special counsel, a special prosecutor, in this matter. We are grateful that that has happened. But a special counsel cannot replace an independent, outside commission and vigorous congressional investigation.

The appointment of a special counsel speaks to the urgency of investigating the Trump connection to Russia's interference in our election and the gravity of the President's abuse of power in trying to shut down the FBI Director; but the American people need to understand that, while a special counsel could bring charges against those indi-

viduals who were, in fact, if the facts prove to be so, in collusion with the Russians, it cannot do anything to the President except bring a report to this Congress for this Congress to act on.

This Congress needs to remember that we are a separate branch of government than the White House. This Congress seems to be acting as if it is part of the White House, an extension of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, when, in fact, this Congress stands alone.

We have a separate set of rules, a separate power, and a separate responsibility than the President of the United States. As such, Madam Speaker, it is important that we demonstrate to the American people that we are acting that way. A special counsel within the Trump-controlled Justice Department cannot replace a truly independent, outside commission, because it is the commission which would then be able to make a decision about our President.

I say it is our President because we all respect the Office of the President, and we want the world to know that we respect and hold in reverence the individual who holds that and hold him accountable for that position that he holds. An independent, outside commission, as special counsel, Director Muller's actions will still be subject to review and approval by the President Trump-appointed leadership of the Justice Department.

Congress must act to create an independent, outside commission that is completely free of the Trump administration's meddling. A special counsel cannot be used as a pretext for Republicans to shut down investigations by Congress or hide the facts of the President's wrongdoing from the American people.

Now, I have heard the Justice Department and others talk about this being a criminal investigation, that the special counsel is using it as a special criminal investigation. As a lawyer, as someone who has been a prosecutor, I understand that the burden of proof for criminal charges are much different than this Congress would hold for a President if it were to ask for impeachment.

So this Congress must not abdicate its responsibility because the work needs to be done. Jobs need to be created and infrastructure needs to be put in place so that commerce can be done in this country. Healthcare needs to be put in place for Americans. We cannot lose more Americans' healthcare. We need to gain more Americans having healthcare. We need to settle the issues of immigration.

Madam Speaker, never mind criminal justice reform. It seems that this Congress has completely forgotten that, in the last Congress, we agreed, both Republicans and Democrats, to reform criminal justice. We are seeing our young people die not from the Justice Department and not just from what is happening on the streets, and never mind what is happening in our criminal

justice system. I understand that a bill is going to be coming on the floor asking for minimum mandatory sentencing for a slew of charges which will again increase the school-to-prison, cradle-to-death pipeline of prisons in this country.

So these are the things that we as Congress need to be concerned with. The national security issues that our President has are things that we need to continue to look at.

There is an old Washington cliché: personnel is policy. The same reflects the wisdom that any President's agenda depends on his political appointees to refine and implement that vision. Trump's White House has failed first and most spectacularly in this requirement. That failure may not even be the President's failure at this time but the people he has put in place by both building a dysfunctional White House and National Security Council and by failing to staff his national security agencies with the appointees necessary to oversee and direct foreign policy.

For now, the failures of Trump's political favorites with his new establishment professionals likely mean incoherence on the national security front for some time, with the White House lurching from one crisis to the next, its actions and words disconnected from any broader doctrine.

Bad personnel decisions have also dogged the Trump administration during its first 100 days. Michael Flynn and K.T. McFarland hardly did well in leading the NSC during their brief sojourns there. Low-level hires have also continued poor performance.

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The most obvious foreign policy failures are that there is no policy, no doctrine, no strategy that knits together Trump's desired ends with the government's ways and means. That should be of concern to my Republican colleagues who want this Republican President to succeed. If you want him to succeed, you need to help him. The help needs to come in terms of the personnel that he has put in place, in terms of the transparency, and as they said, cleaning the swamp, getting rid of the swamp, so that there can be those professionals and those above reproach in the White House carrying out the mission of this President.

At the agency level, the Trump's White House political appointments machine has been incredibly dysfunctional, reportedly because of fights between the White House factions over personnel picks.

This has starved the Pentagon, State Department, Justice Department, and other agencies of under secretaries, assistant secretaries, deputy assistant secretaries, special assistants who actually are carrying out the President's agenda.

In the absence of an entire team, the uniformed military leadership and career civil servants of these agencies have carried on, but with significant

friction given the personal disdain for these people during the campaign and afterwards.

The personnel failures have worsened the second category of the failures, those of process. If there was personnel, we also have process failures going on right now.

The NSC was codified in 1947, along with the modern Defense Department, CIA, and Joint Chiefs of Staff to correct perceived process failures during World War II. The big idea behind the National Security Act was to create a process that could withstand poor personnel by ensuring the institution of the presidency was well served by its national security agencies and could, therefore, make better informed decisions.

Despite its aspirations to run the White House like a fine-tuned machine, the administration has uniformly failed to implement processes to serve its agenda. Indeed, at times—an example being the 63-hour rush to strike Syria with cruise missiles or its announcement of a tax plan before the details were ironed out—the White House seems at war with the very idea of process, as if budgets, planning, and coordination were toxic features of the Washington swamp, to be rejected at all costs.

The biggest process failures have been those that affected the entire government. Trump's failure to develop detailed budgets, let alone to agree with Congress on the funding levels and priorities, nearly led the country to the brink of a government shutdown. All indications point to the impasse being settled, but the outcome will likely be a continuing resolution once again that punts all the major budget decisions and keeps agencies in limbo on major programs, including, if we are talking about national security, major weapons systems, acquisitions, spending on important training and exercises, and outlays for servicemembers and military families. This is something that is going to cause all Americans to suffer, spectacularly in some cases.

One of the President's biggest campaign promises, the pledge to build a wall on America's border with Mexico, has stalled for lack of funding, and proposals will likely remain stuck in the government contracts process for months, if not years.

His immigration orders have been held unconstitutional because of errors that his Justice Department or Department of Homeland Security lawyers would have caught and corrected had they been there or had a chance.

In some cases, the process failures have had deadlier consequences. President Trump ordered a risky special operations raid on Yemen over a dinner meeting with his senior staff with scant process or coordination. The raid went badly, as military operations sometimes do. Instead of taking responsibility, the White House blamed the military, both for the substantive

failure on the ground and the faulty decision process that put the SEALs there. Disconnects between the White House, Department of Defense, and the U.S. Pacific Command resulted in a confusing saga regarding the movements of a U.S. aircraft carrier, resulting in the dilution of any deterrent value that President Trump's words might hold in Moscow or Beijing.

The personnel and process failures contribute to policy failures across the national security chessboard. The most obvious Trump foreign policy failure is that there is no policy, no doctrine at this time. We deserve better in the Middle East, in Afghanistan, in China, in North Korea, but most importantly, here on the home front. We as Americans deserve a coherent, comprehensive process oriented as well as personnel driven with career intelligence individuals at the helm and within the ranks of each one of these agencies because we have a lot to lose.

We have our young people to lose if we go into wars that have not been thought out and have not been process driven. Our young people deserve better. Our world deserves better because the world is looking to America to still be the ones—although we seem to be abdicating our responsibility, whether it be in war or in the other forms of diplomacy that we engage in—to keep this a safe place. Famines that are going on in Sudan, in Yemen, and in other places, it is the American might, the might of our aid and our support to them, that keeps democracy alive, not just on the ground and in fact, but in the hearts and minds of those who yearn for it in other places.

That is the national security that this America needs to be engaged in, and it is that kind of national security that this Congress needs to be concerned with. We need to get back. We have a week of bills that are dysfunctional in themselves that do not serve the best interests of the American people. This Congress needs to stop scuttling legislation, scuttling bills that their colleagues are trying to put forward. Vote them up or vote them down. Let the American people know where you stand on every issue. We need to stop the voice votes that are going on in committees that allow Members to hide behind what their positions are with their constituents. I know it is not easy, but that is why we are all adults here. We want to put on our big girl pants and be the kind of people who can stand for what we believe.

So let's bring those bills forward. Let's support the infrastructure jobs activity, as well as national security and support for the world abroad. That is what we have to lose if we do not hold this President, this White House, and all of his agencies and his Cabinet accountable for the work that they are doing.

Madam Speaker, it appears that I do not have additional Members who would like to speak in this Special Order hour.

Madam Speaker, how much time do I have remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has 35 minutes remaining.

Ms. PLASKE. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, protecting our national security should be among one of the top concerns of any administration—Republican or Democrat. Yet, President Trump has demonstrated an alarming disregard for the national security interests of the United States.

There have been a number of incidents that I believe warrant additional scrutiny by Congress and the American people. Just last week, it was reported that President Trump revealed highly classified information to the Russian foreign minister and ambassador during a White House meeting. In direct contravention of standing diplomatic agreements with our closest allies, President Trump also reportedly divulged the source of that highly classified information. Not only did this blatant disregard for protocol damage our credibility among the international community, but President Trump may have very well also exposed extremely sensitive information about U.S. and allied intelligence operations abroad.

Earlier this month, President Trump also took a bold step in firing former FBI Director James Comey in the midst of an investigation into his administration and alleged ties to Russian officials. Shortly after Director Comey was fired, an unnamed White House source revealed that President Trump told Russian officials during the same meeting that he did so in order to ease some of the pressure from the Russia investigation. This is deeply alarming, if not simply just ironic.

During the Presidential election, House Speaker PAUL RYAN criticized Hillary Clinton over her mishandling of classified emails on a private email server. He stated, "individuals who are 'extremely careless' with classified information should be denied further access to such info." Today, I have yet to hear Speaker RYAN—or other key House Republicans—speak out against this blatant mishandling of classified information. It is hypocrisy in its purest form.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot afford the unauthorized divulging of classified information and national security secrets, especially to hostile nations such as Russia. I find it deeply troubling that a sitting president would display such a blatant disregard for the safeguarding of U.S. national security interests. I continue to join my colleagues in calling for an independent commission to investigate any possible collusion between the Trump Campaign and the Kremlin.

ARMED FORCES DAY AND MEMORIAL DAY

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

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BERGMAN. Madam Speaker, before I begin, I ask unanimous consent

that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on the topic of my Special Order.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. BERGMAN. The topic of today's Special Order is to recognize the importance of Armed Forces Day and Memorial Day.

I am not going to give a history lesson here tonight, but, rather, a series of personal remembrances that started when I was about 5 or 6 years old in the early 1950s.

My father, a World War II veteran, and some of his fellow veterans organized the local VFW in Minnesota where I was born. We would spend Memorial Day in the morning visiting three cemeteries in our local town.

At each cemetery, the color guard would post the colors, the rifles would give their report, and taps would play. Everyone who attended—and when I say everyone who attended, that was really the whole town—came out in a long train of automobiles to go to these three cemeteries to honor the veterans who were no longer of this Earth.

I remember the solemnness of that day. I remember the tears for family members and friends who had passed on, those who had worn the cloth of our Nation both in peace and in war. Those kinds of memories, as I stand here and talk tonight, are very vivid in my mind.

Some years later, in the mid-1960s, we were involved in Vietnam, and I was a sophomore in college. Because of the fact that my parents had both stepped up during World War II, I felt—and with their support—it was the right thing to stand up and take the oath that sent me into the Marine Corps to serve our country.

When you go into harm's way, you don't know what the outcome is going to be, but you do know that those you serve with are going to give it their all and you are going to remember them and honor them for as long as we walk this Earth.

I was very fortunate to have absolutely spectacular commanding officers along the way that taught me what it was like to be a young leader and what it meant to take care of your Marines—most notably my commanding officer in Vietnam, who, thankfully, is still with us. He was the kind of individual that made the tough calls because he understood the sacrifices needed and the outcomes that were required.

One by one, we all pass. Memorial Day is our opportunity to remember, share stories, share tears, share laughter for those who have now gone on into God's hands. The past and the present set the tone for the future.

As David French said:

Sacrifice sustains our Nation far beyond the battlefield. As iron sharpens iron, so one

man sharpens another in times of stress. In times when we are under great duress, that ability to sharpen not each other's bodies but each other's souls carries us on.

We remember on Memorial Day those who have made that effort.

In the Marine Corps, we believe a lot of things, but three words encompass them all: honor, courage, and commitment.

Tonight we honor those who fought for our country, who made the ultimate sacrifice and gave their lives in the service of our country, and those who have passed on since their service. It is our job to make sure that their sacrifice wasn't in vain.

Courage: there is moral courage and there is physical courage. You never know until the time comes whether you have the physical courage, but you do find out. It is the moral courage that we know from the beginning, and it is set by our predecessors that sets our attitude and our mindset in stone that we know that we have that. And when it is tested, we are ready.

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Commitment: Our commitment is always to the mission and to one another. We never leave anyone behind. Never. No one is more invested in peace than our men and women in uniform. They take the risks. They make the sacrifices, and they bear the cost of the battle in full force. Those rows of white headstones across the bridge in Arlington remind us of their commitment every day, and for that we owe them more than gratitude. We owe them every effort to keep our world at peace.

On Memorial Day in 1982, President Reagan said:

"War will not come again, other young men will not have to die, if we will speak honestly of the dangers that confront us and remain strong enough to meet those dangers.

"It's not just strength or courage that we need, but understanding and a measure of wisdom as well."

We owe it to our men and women who have fought and died for our country to take a stand, to prepare for peace not by ignoring the dangers we face and placating the enemies of freedom but by facing them head on.

Madam Speaker, I am honored to yield to my fellow Members who will be presenting and speaking tonight. I yield to the distinguished gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. LEWIS).

Mr. LEWIS of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, I, too, am honored to join my colleagues here tonight to recognize the bravery and the sacrifice of those who serve in our military. I also want to thank General Bergman for his years of dedicated service and for his leadership tonight.

While May is Military Appreciation Month, it is important that every month we continue to recognize those who are fighting and still putting their lives on the line each and every day. Since the founding of our country, there have always been brave men and