

of those from the past and those present, it adds up to almost \$2 trillion, Mr. Speaker. That is almost 10 percent of our GDP, and it falls unfairly on our small business community, our farmers, and we have got to do better.

We need to reduce the cost of health care, and we are starting to work on that now. I look forward to being part of the solution. We need to ensure that folks have patient-centered health care that is supported by their doctors, not Federal bureaucrats running their health care where it is a one-size-fits-all approach.

I am going to work hard to open up markets for farmers and ranchers. Nebraska has such a great agriculture, farming, and ranching community. We are going to give them that opportunity, and we are going to work hard to do it.

I am going to work hard to reform a broken Tax Code. It is not right that our Nation has the highest corporate taxes, and it puts us at a disadvantage when we compete overseas and with our neighbors. We must fix that.

I want to work hard to rebuild and restore our military's readiness. It is hard to believe, Mr. Speaker, that our readiness is at the lowest level since post-Vietnam, and it is wrong. We have got to fix it.

Finally, I want to work hard to restore our allies' faith in our Nation. Leading from behind has been a failure.

I will close with this thought, and it is something that I communicated much during the campaign. Winning elections is not the goal, but it is a means to an end.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to work hard in this Congress and I am going to be dedicated to working my hardest to deliver results for the American people and our district. It is about defending liberty. It is about ensuring that we have opportunity and prosperity for the next generations. It is about making sure that our Nation stays secure.

I thank the gentleman again for this opportunity to introduce myself.

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. It is good to have the General here.

It is going to be an interesting time. I know you are the last speaker here, but not the last of all of the freshmen. We are going to be doing this more in the coming weeks. But I just know as I watch tonight, it is the passion of your class coming in.

I have watched you all as you have come and gone through orientation and done all of the things together and that there is a bond. I notice you come and sit together and you all talk together, and there is an understanding that you all come here for a purpose bigger than yourselves—and that is exciting to see. So I am excited to have you here. It is going to be a good year.

Mr. Speaker, as we have introduced and talked about these new Members and they have allowed themselves to introduce themselves, one of the things that I wanted to do is just make sure,

as we look ahead, we see folks who have made a place—they made a place in their communities; they made a place in their homes. As they look forward to serving here in this Congress, we are looking forward to having them here.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take just a few moments to discuss something else, and that is, as we move forward and as we continue here, the majority, with these new freshmen and all coming in, are going to be fighting for what matters. It is sort of amazing to me now that, as we enter tomorrow and we take the first step toward repealing, really, what is a disastrous law, it is amazing now the cries of: Oh, what is going to be done? What are you doing now? But it didn't seem to matter just a few years ago when they said: Here is what you are going to have. You are going to take it no matter what it does. You want your doctor? Keep him.

That is a lie.

You want to keep your health provider? Keep him. Your insurance is fine.

That is a lie. It is amazing now how some on the other side are just wanting to start yelling and saying: Oh, you have got to have a plan.

Have a plan?

Let's remind the American people why we are here. The majority is here because of 6 years of poor decision-making. It started at the base and has gone up. And we are going to continue as this majority to put people first, those who get up every morning, who want a job, who want to be able to go to their job and to start businesses and start and use that intellectual capital so that they can continue to do those things without government interference.

I heard just the other day as I was here working on a rule, Mr. Speaker, I heard one of the speakers actually say that we should not put these burdens on government employees because it would make their jobs so much harder.

Please, tell me where the voice is for the American worker out in the field every day just trying to make ends meet. It is in this majority. And we will continue to put forth policy that takes away the government overreach and puts it back where it belongs, and that is in the entrepreneurs, the moms, the dads, the kids, those who have a dream right now in a freshman English class or a science class, that have a dream that one day they will own their own business or go further.

Mr. Speaker, let's put this in perspective. This majority is putting people first, and over the past 6 years, the American people have responded. It is now our time to act. People say, if you don't have a plan, then you are not understanding. This is friends and neighbors that elected us, and we will not fail in this moment.

We have said what we are going to do. We are going to put people first in their businesses, in their jobs, and in their health care. When we do that, that is what makes America great.

So tonight is the first night for letting our freshmen come, share their heart. We have heard their passion. We are going to continue to hear their passion as new and more freshmen come.

Mr. Speaker, you are part of that. There are many others that will be a part. I am looking forward to leading in our majority, putting people first, putting Americans first, and this country is going to be the better for it.

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

□ 1900

#### CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS: THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION NOMINEES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentlewoman from New Jersey (Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

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

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

There was no objection.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I am here this evening representing the Congressional Progressive Caucus in this Special Order hour, and I will be joined by colleagues as we will examine what our future appears to look like as we plan for the transition which is taking place. We are 8 days away from a new President and administration that continues to refuse to put Americans first and complicit with Republican-controlled Congress that will help them execute that mission.

At 1 a.m. this morning, 51 Republican Senators voted to repeal the Affordable Care Act with no replacement. After 6 years of hollow grandstanding, Republicans now know that their plan to repeal the ACA would dump massive costs on families, businesses, and the Federal budget. The facts are clear, Mr. Speaker.

Republicans' repeal of the ACA would result in the loss of 2.6 million jobs and more than 250 billion—that is billion, B—of gross State products in 2019 alone. Family budgets and State budgets alike would be rocked by the reverberations of the repeal. And we cannot forget about our healthcare providers.

The repeal of the ACA will crumble our critical healthcare infrastructure, decimating hospitals' and healthcare systems' ability to provide services, weaken local economies that hospitals help sustain and grow, and result in massive job losses of healthcare professionals. While Republicans claim to champion reducing the deficit, OMB calculates that the Republican budget

resolution and repealing of ACA would lead to significantly larger deficits in each year and add more than \$2 trillion in debt over the next decade.

Taking away 30 million Americans' health care, blowing a hole in our budget, and saddling future generations with debt is the height of irresponsibility. It is important to note that just 20 percent of Americans support this repeal and delay plan.

In fact, the American people want Congress to focus on raising wages and creating good-paying jobs for everyone everywhere in America. The American people want to be assured that their Federal Government is working for all of their interests. That is what I want to do as well. I stand ready to work with anyone who is serious about these priorities.

Mr. Speaker, the nominees that this President-elect has put forth are focused on everything but the true interests of the American people. Maybe they are focused on the personal interests of the President-elect. Today, the nominee to lead the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Dr. Ben Carson, could not even promise that not one decision or dollar would go to benefit the President-elect or his family. This is a problem.

Maybe they are focused on rolling back hard fought freedoms or protections. Yesterday, New Jersey Senator CORY BOOKER reminded us that the nominee for the Attorney General, Senator JEFF SESSIONS, has not demonstrated a commitment to the central requirement of the job, that is to aggressively pursue the congressional mandate of civil rights, equal rights, and justice for all. This, Mr. Speaker, is a problem.

Perhaps maybe they are not even interested in siphoning money from children and public schools. Nominee Betsy DeVos, the nominee for the Secretary of Education, has made a career of advocating for the shutdown of public schools and supporting legislation that has reduced oversight and accountability in Michigan charter schools. Her life work is the very antithesis of everything that the Department of Education represents.

This is a problem, and to speak to this problem I would like to yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO), who has experience in standing up for public education for our children.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I thank my dear colleague, BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN, for yielding to me.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my strong opposition to the nomination of Betsy DeVos for Secretary of Education. To start, President-elect Trump's nominee to lead our country's education policy has absolutely no experience in public schools: not as a teacher, not as a student, and not as a parent. That lack of experience makes her efforts to privatize public education particularly shameful.

I was a public schoolteacher for more than 24 years—I taught high school—

which means that I have spent at least 24 more years in a public school classroom than Betsy DeVos. If she actually stepped inside of a classroom in a public school, here is what she would find: she would find teachers who are giving everything they can, their passion, their time, and often their own money to give kids the best education possible. She would find facilities in need of repair, classrooms in need of modern equipment, and programs in desperate need of funding. She would find students who deserve to receive an exceptional education that will help them reach their potential.

But Ms. DeVos has no interest in supporting America's public education system. Instead, she will insert a profit motive into our children's education that will cripple our public schools and punish the millions of children who attend them every day. The Obama administration pushed public schools on a race to the top. Betsy DeVos will create a race to the bottom line.

The result of her work in Michigan serves as a warning to schools across America. By using her personal fortune to influence policy, Betsy DeVos engineered a massive influx of for-profit charter schools into the State of Michigan. Michigan taxpayers now hand for-profit charter schools \$1 billion every year, and, in return, many of those schools underperform public schools while evading accountability.

The opportunity that comes with a good education is what makes the American Dream possible for each new generation. If we abandon our public schools, we abandon the millions of children and parents who rely on them as a path to a brighter future.

It is very simple. The Senate should not confirm a Secretary of Education who does not believe in public education. Senate Democrats and Republicans must send a clear message to parents, teachers, and students across the country that we stand by our public schools. I hope they will do so by rejecting this nomination. I thank my dear colleague from the State of New Jersey. I appreciate this opportunity to let my views be known and to make a plea with our colleagues in the other house to do their duty and hold out for a Secretary of Education who actually believes in public education.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. I want to thank my colleague for coming and taking the time and speaking on behalf of public education and students everywhere. We talked about it before, and I am happy to announce that we will be working as part of the House Public Education Caucus and looking very closely at those issues that are being brought forth and those plans that are being offered.

I know if you look at my district in my State of New Jersey, you see some of the finest public schools in the country. At the same time, just 12 miles away, you see some of the most challenging. I know in my district that, if Elizabeth DeVos would take a look at

what is happening in my district, she would see schoolteachers anxious to teach but have textbooks in what is considered advanced placement classes that don't even have the cover on the top of the book that those children are using. I know this because I have seen it for myself.

So higher education is, indeed, that issue, that opportunity, that difference between living a life of poverty and being able to educate yourself and prepare yourself for a future that we must stand up for, and we will. I thank the gentleman for the time that he has given us.

Mr. TAKANO. If I might join in a little more, I became a teacher—more than, wow, gosh, it must be 30 years ago now—having experienced the disparity in the public schools in the Boston, Massachusetts, area; some days being a substitute teacher in Brookline, Massachusetts, and other days being a substitute teacher in inner city Boston. The contrast between the wealthy Brookline School District and then the inner city Boston where you walk through a metal detector woke me up. And I really believed that if we did not address the achievement gap in our country, that if the American Dream of social economic mobility was only available to some and not all of our students, that our very democracy would be in jeopardy.

It pains me to see from the incoming Trump administration such a superficial, extreme profit-driven notion of improving our schools. I wish that both President-elect and Betsy DeVos could see some of the great work that is being done at my schools in my congressional district where we have a teacher—I am blanking on his name, but he is responsible for one-fourth of all the Latinos in the State of California that score 4s and 5s on the physics AP test. Remarkable work being done in a regular school that does not cherry-pick its students. It is a public school in the Val Verde Unified School District that is making remarkable strides. This work is not being looked at carefully, is being overlooked, and it is a shame that we have a nominee for Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, who has such a terrible history, who is committed to actually tearing down our public school system.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. By nominating TOM PRICE as the Secretary of Health and Human Services, President-elect Trump will continue his assault on the health of Americans. The HHS nominee has made a career on lining the pockets of insurance companies at the expense of the sick, on behalf of the rich, and his unwavering support of cuts to Medicaid and Medicare are forever known.

This signals yet another broken promise by the incoming President to pledge to leave the essential Federal programs alone, and he is doing the opposite. This is, indeed, a problem.

Defending the sanctity of American democracy is more important than any

partisan consideration. Yet, after reports of Russia's attack on our democracy were confirmed, Rex Tillerson, nominee for Secretary of State, wouldn't say if he would support sanctions against the country. In fact, Mr. Tillerson admitted that he had not yet spoken with the President-elect about the conflict. This is a huge problem, not the least of which is one whether or not we can believe it.

I now yield to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE), a champion for all progressive needs and for all families.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman from New Jersey for yielding, but also for her tremendous leadership on so many issues, including as a champion for women and women's health and reproductive health care, and also for this important discussion tonight.

□ 1915

I just want to mention that I serve on the Budget Committee, and you mentioned a nominee, Congressman TOM PRICE of Georgia, for Secretary of Health and Human Services. Once again, we see President-elect Donald Trump making recommendations of those individuals who want to dismantle the safety net and dismantle health care within the agencies that they are going to run. This is a very, very troubling development in terms of these cabinet appointee nominees.

I note that—and many know—President-elect Trump ran one of the most divisive and prejudiced campaigns that we have witnessed in modern history. Since winning the Presidency, he has nominated billionaires to serve in his cabinet, proving that he will govern just as he campaigned. Also, he has nominated individuals who want to dismantle, for the most part, the agencies that they will have jurisdiction over.

Another example is his choice for Secretary of State, which Congresswoman WATSON COLEMAN mentioned, and that is Rex Tillerson. I serve on the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee and understand the importance of our diplomatic initiatives, our USAID initiatives, and our efforts to really bring education and health care to the poorest of the poor around the world. Our Secretary of State serves as the Nation's chief diplomat and represents America's interests around the world. I have the opportunity and the privilege to serve on the committee that funds the majority of these efforts.

So the nomination of Secretary of State Rex Tillerson really troubles me. His extensive ties to the Kremlin raises the question: Whose interest will he represent?

Our country cannot afford a Secretary of State who will place private corporate interests over the needs of the American people and our national security interests. His recent confirmation hearing revealed what we have known all along in Republican-con-

trolled Washington, that cabinet officials will cater to special interests, not to American families, based on the nominees that we have seen come forward.

It is not just the Secretary of State we should be concerned about. Here at home, President-elect Trump has nominated cabinet officials that would turn back the clock on progress. His nomination for Secretary of Labor, Andrew Puzder, is another millionaire CEO who benefits from an economy rigged against families struggling to make ends meet. He earns more than \$1 million a year, but opposes a raise for low-wage workers earning just \$15,000 a year. He says that food assistance programs keep low-wage workers like those he employs at, I believe, Carl's Jr. and Hardee's—he says that if low-wage workers apply for these food assistance programs, then the programs actually discourage work. There are millions of people who are working two jobs being paid minimum wage who need food assistance, who need food stamps, because they can't survive in today's economy.

So the working, poor, low-income individuals, should be very troubled by this appointment as Secretary of Labor, which is supposed to look out for the rights of working men and women. We need a Labor Secretary committed to helping working families and addressing the epidemic of poverty, not one who caters to the most affluent.

Also, by nominating Senator SESSIONS to lead the Justice Department, President-elect Donald Trump is making it clear that he will abandon our fundamental civil and human rights. Senator SESSIONS has a long history of opposing civil rights and equality. I am very proud of members of the Congressional Black Caucus for really setting forth his record and his history, such as laying out the fact that he was rejected from serving as a Federal judge due to his blatantly racist comment. He forcefully degraded the LGBT community, opposed the Violence Against Women Act, and violated the Voting Rights Act, calling it an intrusive piece of legislation.

Clearly, someone who has publicly shown prejudice and intolerance is not qualified to serve as the chief law enforcement for our civil rights laws. Once again, you see a nominee who really doesn't believe in the values of liberty and justice for all, a person to head an agency that is supposed to be an agency that ensures the civil and human rights for all. Let me be clear, these nominations are a chilling indication of how a Trump administration intends to govern.

Our Nation has made tremendous progress in the fight to protect, preserve, and expand civil rights, civil liberties, and human rights for all Americans. We will not allow a Trump administration to drag us back into the past.

Finally, let me just say something that is troubling me tremendously at

this point in our history. Our Nation prides itself on being a democracy. We actually promote democracy abroad through our democracy programs, which, of course, I have historically opposed. The point I am trying to make and want to make clear is that this new administration, when you look at the majority of cabinet nominees, they are very, very wealthy and do not fundamentally believe in a strong public sector and in many ways do not support the mission of the cabinets they are actually asked to lead.

Privatizing Medicare and other public sector programs that ensure that the most vulnerable have a safety net and an opportunity to live the American Dream by privatizing these agencies is dangerous. It will lead to chaos. Private sector takeover of the government is dangerous and it erodes our public institutions that are required in a democracy.

So, Congresswoman WATSON COLEMAN, I believe this is the dangerous, slippery slope that this administration has embarked upon, and we need to expose every step of the way who these individuals are, their background, and we have to urge that they comply with the ethics requirement and submit their financial disclosure statements and all the required ethics forms so that the public will know who they are. We must be transparent and, of course, we would like for our President-elect to release his income taxes also.

Again, we kind of see what is taking place now. We knew this during the campaign. I thought that we were going to see now more of an effort to unify the country, but, unfortunately, I think these nominees show us which direction, unfortunately, this new administration will take.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. I thank the Congresswoman. It is true. As we see the unfolding of some of the drama that is taking place, including that which affects us and is associated with Russia, it is even more important than ever that the President show us that he is not hiding anything regarding his relationships that potentially present a contradiction of his first and foremost responsibility to us and show us his tax returns.

I thank the gentlewoman from California very much for being here.

I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. NADLER).

Mr. NADLER. I thank the gentlewoman from New Jersey for yielding, for hosting this Special Order, and for granting me this opportunity to speak.

Since the first nomination was announced by President-elect Trump's transition team, phones in my office have been ringing off the hook; and not a day goes by when I do not hear from my neighbors, friends, and constituents of their angst, frustration, and discontent. I share their anger and dread—that feeling of being punched in the gut—as name after name has been released. Each nomination from President-elect Trump has put the fox in charge of the henhouse.

We are not talking about simple differences in partisan ideology. We are talking about nominees who have devoted much of their professional lives to undermining the small-d democratic institutions that are the foundation of our country. This new administration is so extreme that we cannot, in any good faith, give this President-elect the traditional deference to name a cabinet that represents his governing philosophy because the appointments show it to be a philosophy that seeks to corrupt, if not fully destroy, our institutions, traditions, and values.

Senator JEFF SESSIONS, the nominee for Attorney General, was considered too racist to serve on the Federal bench by a Republican Senate, much less to head the Justice Department, and is someone who has so little respect for women's rights he voted against the Violence Against Women Act and called *Roe v. Wade* a colossal mistake.

Ben Carson, the nominee for HUD Secretary, said today in his confirmation hearing that he was against protecting LGBT Americans from housing discrimination because protecting them from housing discrimination would be granting them extra rights, refusing to recognize that LGBT Americans deserve equal rights.

TOM PRICE, the nominee for HHS Secretary, wants to eliminate Medicare and Medicaid as we know them, repeal the Affordable Care Act without a second thought for the millions of Americans who would lose coverage or would be subject to limits on preexisting conditions and would be subject to lifetime and annual limits, and has so little understanding of women's health that he insisted that not a single woman would lose access to contraception if contraception coverage were eliminated.

Betsy DeVos, the nominee for Education Secretary, advocated for years to move taxpayer dollars away from public schools and towards for-profit, private schools that would leave behind low-income students, minority students, and children with disabilities.

Scott Pruitt, the nominee for EPA administrator, does not believe in climate change and is so linked to the fossil fuel industry that he has sued the EPA a dozen times to block environmental regulations designed to protect us from the effects of climate change.

The list goes on and on, each more horrifying than the one before. These are not the values the majority of Americans voted for in November, and I don't just mean because Hillary Clinton won the popular vote by 3 million. I cannot imagine that the voters who wanted to drain the swamp and voted for Mr. Trump for that purpose and have the needs of working people represented are thrilled to see him name the wealthiest cabinet—with the greatest collection of Wall Street insiders—in American history.

The fact is, President-elect Trump and the Republican Party do not have

any mandate from the people to carry out the dystopian horror show this cabinet presents. Rather than rubber stamping the most extreme cabinet I have seen in my 25 years in Washington, the Senate should reject these extreme nominees, and then both Houses should do their constitutional duty to conduct oversight of the administration.

I am ready to do that work. Over a month ago, along with my Democratic Judiciary Committee colleagues, I sent a letter to Chairman GOODLATTE asking him to hold hearings on the conflict of interest and ethics provisions that apply to the President of the United States. I have not heard a response. Every Democrat in this House signed on to the Protect Our Democracy Act, legislation to create an independent, bipartisan-appointed commission to investigate Russian hacking in the 2016 election and to make recommendations to ensure nothing like that happens again. It is interesting that not a single House Republican has joined us.

I join my constituents and millions of Americans in wanting to know why Republicans are working so hard to protect President-elect Trump from having to answer questions about Russian influence in this election. Why are Republicans working so hard to support President-elect Trump's extreme and out-of-touch cabinet? Why aren't Republicans asking the same questions about how President-elect Trump will avoid conflicts of interest?

I have served in this body for nearly 25 years. I have seen this body take on the big questions of our time—the role of government in the lives of everyday Americans, the threat of terrorism in the city I call home and around the country, the right of every American to marry whomever they love, the right of every American to vote free of intimidation, and the right of every American to make their own healthcare choices. I have seen us come through those battles bruised and battered but stronger.

That is why I refuse to despair. I refuse to put my head down and hide. I refuse to give up on America. I will stand here and fight for the country we all believe in. I will do everything in my power to represent the strong progressive values of the men and women who sent me here.

I will work with my colleagues here in the House and the Senate to stand united against any effort to undermine the rights we have fought so hard to achieve, whether it comes from the other end of the world or the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue.

But if there is to be any check on this administration, congressional Republicans will need to join in that fight, and it starts with rejecting the shameful slate of nominees.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. I thank my colleague for sharing his insights and his experience with us. We have a lot of work to do, and we are ready to do it.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to those that my colleague has mentioned, I would like to bring attention to some of the other nominees that we should be considering here.

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We haven't mentioned the Department of Energy and the nominee, Governor Rick Perry, who disregarded this agency so much that he couldn't even remember that he wanted to eliminate it when he was running for President, or even Linda McMahon, who is the wife of a billionaire. It seems to me that this litany of nominees belongs to the millionaire-billionaire club. They know each other well, and the one thing that they are committed to is ensuring that their interests and the interests of this President-elect, in his private life, are advanced. I think that the people in this country need to understand how troublesome this is.

I yield to the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. CLARKE), the co-chair of the Caucus on Black Women and Girls and a fighter for the rights of all working families and all vulnerable families.

Ms. CLARKE of New York. I thank the gentlewoman from New Jersey (Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN).

Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the nomination of Betsy DeVos as Secretary of Education.

I know that my colleagues have been talking about their concerns with regard to the troubling nominations of Donald Trump, and I want to add my voice with respect to the Secretary of Education.

About 90 percent of Americans—Republicans and Democrats alike—send their children to public schools; and as a proud graduate of the New York City public school system, I, myself, know firsthand of the importance of both primary and secondary education as part of early childhood and young adulthood. Most public schools in the United States are operated by the city, town, or county for the benefit of the public, and all of the resources that are allocated to public schools are used to support the development of students and to prepare them for success in the 21st century.

Mr. Speaker, I believe Betsy DeVos has a very different approach to education, and that is extremely clear. She and her family, over the years, have devoted millions of dollars to replacing public schools in Michigan with charter schools, most of which have recorded test scores in reading and math that are well below the State average. Let me repeat that—most of which have recorded test scores in reading and math that are well below the State average.

Recently, the Detroit Free Press released an article that explained, while families in Detroit have the choice of many different charter schools, few of these choices actually offer a quality education.

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned that Betsy DeVos has used donations to provide to Republicans in the Michigan

State Legislature to prevent State agencies from investigating as to whether charter schools are providing students with a comprehensive education that will prepare them for the future. I am alarmed that the system that was developed by Betsy DeVos, which allows for-profit corporations to operate charter schools, realigns those resources intended for schoolchildren into the pockets of shareholders—making a profit off the backs of children.

Since 1959, the DeVos family has operated Amway, which is a business that has been labeled as a pyramid scheme—paying out millions of dollars in fines and cheating working families. We cannot allow Betsy DeVos the chance to extend those same basic principles used during her time at Amway to affect our education system—enriching wealthy investors at the expense of our children's education. It is not a solution. It is a problem.

I thank my colleague for giving me the time. I hope that the American people are watching very closely as to what is taking place here because, indeed, it is a travesty.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. I thank my friend and my colleague.

Mr. Speaker, defending the sanctity of American democracy is more important than any partisan consideration. We are at a juncture at which we will experience a President-elect who has displayed breathtaking ignorance about the powers and the basic functions of government and who has identified the nominees for these cabinet positions who, if confirmed, will dismantle equality, equity, and opportunity at every turn, capped off by a Republican-controlled Congress that would rather make good on divisive rhetoric instead of working in the best interests of Americans.

There is just so much at stake as we go forth in the next couple of weeks and as the President-elect identifies and puts forth his nominees. Whether it is in the Department of State or in the Department of Education or in Energy or in HUD or in Health and Human Services or in Justice or in the Environmental Protection Agency—where a nominee, as Attorney General, spends his time dismantling and litigating against the Environmental Protection Agency—or whether it is Labor, where the Labor Secretary doesn't seem to care about working individuals and protecting workers' rights, or whether it is an SBA administrator who doesn't have any idea what it is to be a part of a working class or a middle class, or whether it is even the Treasurer of the country, who comes from massive wealth and Big Business, each of these illustrations, in combination with there being the decisions already to dismantle—to take health care away from millions of families, to create the loss of jobs as a result of dismantling the Affordable Care Act without placing anything in its place—represent the dismantling of the democracy that we have fought so hard to sustain.

If we are going to watch these serious attacks on the equality and opportunity for all people, then we must make sure that the people in this country see these things. I have a question for all of us to answer. As we look toward all of these issues, either individually or collectively, at what point do we conclude with the question: Is what is happening in America un-American?

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HIGGINS of Louisiana). Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President-elect or a sitting Senator.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, as a senior member of the House Committees on the Judiciary and Homeland Security Committee; Ranking Member of the Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security, and Investigations, and the Congressional Voting Rights Caucus, I rise today to express my views regarding the more troubling nominations made by the President-Elect to fill the important Cabinet posts at the Departments of Justice, Health and Human Services, and Energy.

Let me begin with the nomination of U.S. Senator JEFFERSON BEAUREGARD "JEFF" SESSIONS III of Alabama to be the next Attorney General of the United States.

Mr. Speaker, those of us who oppose the nomination of Senator SESSIONS to be Attorney General owe a responsibility to the public to clear and forthright in stating the reasons they believe he should not be confirmed as the Attorney General of the United States.

Many of the senator's supporters, ranging from his Republican colleagues in the Senate to current and former staffers to home state friends and constituents, praise the senator for his modesty and courtesy and manners.

The four-term senator and former state and federal prosecutor is, we are told, learned in the law, a person of deep faith, a good man who loves his family, his state, and his country.

We can, as the lawyers say, stipulate that these assertions are true.

But that does not make him an appropriate and deserving candidate to be Attorney General of the United States.

And that is because the office of Attorney General and the Department of Justice he or she leads is different in a very fundamental way from every other Cabinet department.

Unlike the Secretary of Transportation or Commerce or Education, or even the Secretary of Defense or State, the Attorney General leads a department that is charged with administering the laws and enforcing the Constitutional guarantees and protections that directly affect every American, all 320 million of us.

To quote then-Senator JOSEPH BIDEN during the 2001 confirmation hearing of Attorney General nominee John Ashcroft:

"This Cabinet position is the single most unique position of any Cabinet office."

"For it's the only one where the nominee or the Cabinet officer has an equally strong and stronger, quite frankly, responsibility to the American people as he does to the person who nominates him."

At that same confirmation hearing, Sen. DICK DURBIN of Illinois observed that "the at-

torney general, more than any other Cabinet officer, is entrusted with protecting the civil rights of Americans."

The Attorney General is not the lawyer for the President; the Attorney General is the lawyer, and the Department of Justice the law firm, for the American people.

That is why I agree so strongly with then-Senator BIDEN when he said in 2001:

"[F]or the office of attorney general, first, the question is whether the attorney general is willing to vigorously enforce all the laws in the Constitution, even though he might have philosophical disagreements."

"[The second question is] whether he possesses the standing and temperament that will permit the vast majority of the American people to believe that you can and will protect and enforce their individual rights."

Put another way, the U.S. Attorney General and Justice Department is not only the instrument of justice but also the living symbol of the Constitution's promise of equal justice under law.

Mr. Speaker, the nation's greatest Attorney Generals conveyed this commitment to equal justice by their prior experience, their words and deed, and their character.

Think Herbert Brownell, Attorney General for Republican President Eisenhower, who overaw the integration of Little Rock's Central High School.

Think Robert Jackson, Attorney General for Democratic President Franklin Roosevelt, who led the prosecution team at the Nazi War Crimes trial in Nuremberg, Germany.

Think Robert F. Kennedy, for whom the Main Justice Building is named, bringing to bear the instruments of federal power to protect Mississippi Freedom Riders and to stare down Governor George Wallace in the successful effort to integrate the University of Alabama.

The nomination of Alabama Senator SESSIONS as Attorney General does not inspire the necessary confidence.

As a U.S. Senator from Alabama, the state from which the infamous Supreme Court decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* originated, Senator SESSIONS has failed to play a constructive role in repairing the damage to voting rights caused by that decision.

He was one of the leading opponents of the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act.

He is one of the Senate's most hostile opponents of comprehensive immigration reform and was a principal architect of the draconian and incendiary immigration policy advocated by the President-Elect during the campaign.

And his record in support of efforts to bring needed reform to the nation's criminal justice system is virtually non-existent.

In 1986, ten years before Senator SESSIONS was elected to the Senate, he was rejected for a U.S. District Court judgeship in view of documented incidents that revealed his lack of commitment to civil and voting rights, and to equal justice.

And his Senate voting record and rhetoric has endeared him to white nationalist websites and organizations like Breitbart and Stormfront.

As a U.S. attorney, Senator SESSIONS was the first federal prosecutor in the country to bring charges against civil rights activist for voter fraud.

Senator SESSIONS charged the group with 29 counts of voter fraud, facing over 100 years in prison.

Senator SESSIONS has repeatedly denied the disproportionate impact of voting restrictions on minorities and has been a leader in the effort to undermine the protections of the Voting Rights Act.

Senator SESSIONS has spoken out against the Voting Rights Act, calling it “a piece of intrusive legislation.”

Senator SESSIONS criticized Attorney General Eric Holder for challenging state election laws, claiming they are necessary to fight voter fraud.

However, evidence supports that voter fraud is almost nonexistent, with 31 confirmed cases out of more than 1 billion ballots cast.

As Attorney General of the state of Alabama, Senator SESSIONS fought to continue practices that harmed schools predominantly attended by African-American students.

Senator SESSIONS led the fight to uphold the state of Alabama's inequitable school funding mechanism after it had been deemed unconstitutional by the Alabama circuit court.

In the state of Alabama nearly a quarter of African-American students attend apartheid schools, meaning the school's white population is less than one percent.

Although Senator SESSIONS has publicly taken credit for desegregation efforts in the state of Alabama, there is no evidence of his participation in the desegregation of Alabama schools or any school desegregation lawsuits filed by then Attorney General SESSIONS.

Mr. Speaker, The United States has been blessed to have been served as Attorney General by such illustrious figures as Robert Jackson, Robert Kennedy, Herbert Brownell, Ramsey Clark, Nicholas Katzenbach, Eric Holder, and Edward H. Levi.

Nothing would do more to reassure the American people that the President-Elect is committed to unifying the nation than the nomination and appointment of a person to be Attorney General who has a record of championing and protecting, rather than opposing and undermining, the precious right to vote; the constitutionally guaranteed right of privacy, criminal justice reform, and support for reform of the nation's immigration system so that it is fair and humane.

Regrettably, Sen. JEFF SESSIONS of Alabama is not that person and he should not be confirmed by the Senate to be the nation's 84th Attorney General.

#### THE WALL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) for 30 minutes.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, it is Thursday evening in the House of Representatives, and I continue to hear friends, fellow Members of the House, and reporters in anguish over the issue of a potential wall between the United States and Mexico; so I thought it was worth looking at some information about Mexico—our closest neighbor to the south. The data should be recent.

They have got nearly 120 million people in Mexico. The gross domestic product is around 2.1 trillion in pesos. They have 2.1 percent growth—terrible. It is about like the Obama economy. The average income is around \$17,000 per capita. Inflation is 4.0 percent.

Yet, you look at the economics of Mexico in the world, and you think, wow. You look at their resources—extraordinary resources, just extraordinary resources. We know they have got hardworking people because we know, from the people of Mexico who have come to the United States, that people constantly indicate, gee, they are the best workers we have, these hardworking folks from Mexico.

So you have got hardworking people in the nation of Mexico, and you have got incredible natural resources that have never been tapped—or not adequately tapped. We don't even know the full potential—oil, gas, copper. There are all of these different minerals that Mexico is supposed to have. You look at what people have done over the thousands of years—I mean, advanced civilizations. Why is Mexico not one of the top 10 or even top five economies in the world? It is listed 62nd in the world.

They have got plenty of land. I can personally testify that they have some of the most beautiful terrain in the world—beautiful beaches, mountains, farming regions; just magnificent land, minerals, and hardworking people. Why is it 62nd in the world as an economy? That is an interesting question.

It would seem to be because—from hearing people who have looked at Mexico and who have either tried to start a business there or who have looked at it to start a business there, to start manufacturing there—of course, there are many who have set up manufacturing shops down there, but they are easily persuaded out of it if they can find a more suitable place. The reason it is often easy to persuade people to set up shop somewhere else is because of the drug cartels, the corruption that the drug cartels bring to Mexico.

What is it the drug cartels are making billions of dollars off of that allow them to corrupt police departments? city governments? the Mexican border patrol? the Mexican military?

Obviously, the people in all of the Mexican Government are not corrupt. I have met too many who want desperately to make the nation of Mexico one of the greatest in the world, and it is possible that could happen but not so long as the drug cartels are, potentially, the most powerful entities in Mexico. I mean, they are right next to the United States. They really should be one of the top, at least 10—if not the top five or the top three or four—economies in the world, but they are nowhere close.

Drug cartels, we have found—and we know—make money, particularly off shipping illegal drugs into the United States. They have made a fortune off of it. I have heard from friends of mine in Texas who are in the drug enforcement business, both Federal and State. When the U.S. Congress took action to make it more difficult to get SUDAFED, which is used in the cooking of substances that are put together in order

to create methamphetamine, that meth lab became much more rare, especially in east Texas, where I live, where we have got lots of trees, woods—terrain where people can easily hide out, set up a lab, cook some methamphetamine, especially as developed during my time on the felony bench, where people in Texas learned how to cook methamphetamine, create methamphetamine with a cold cooking process that didn't subject them to quite the danger and didn't create quite the nasty smell that often got meth labs reported to the authorities.

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By drying up so many of the meth labs, we were told it is going to be a great day for America. We dry up the meth labs by making it tougher to get Sudafed because you have to ask, give your driver's license, and you are restricted to a very limited amount of Sudafed. We were told that is going to dry up drugs. Methamphetamine is going to be a thing of the past. We will cut it out next to nothing.

Well, it is true. It is not as widespread as it used to be, but I am told that more pure drugs with much more devastating results and much more addictive are coming up from Mexico in greater numbers, greater quantities. It is even worse than it was when methamphetamine was being cooked because of the purity of the substances and the addictive nature. Also, as a result of drying up so much in the way of methamphetamine, we have much more of the heroin epidemic crossing America.

Additional drugs have come from Mexico across our porous border that seems to have grown during the Obama administration dramatically. Why? Because our border has really not particularly been all that enforced.

It turns out that it is not just other drugs that are coming across our border. Since we have been able to eliminate so many meth labs, especially in Texas, we see stories like this one from Bob Price, January 5, “Feds Seize Nearly \$7M in Meth At Texas Border.” That is a story about the seizure of methamphetamine at two international border bridges in south Texas in 1 week. The Customs and Border Protection, CBP, that was assigned to the World Trade Center International Bridge in Laredo, this article reports how they had caught two drug traffickers with 200 pounds of crystal meth in one vehicle, and that was December 22, 2016.

We also know that the border security under this administration has become just almost nonexistent. We had an article from January 12, today, from McAllen, from Fox News, entitled, “Cartels, Smugglers Exploit Border Wall Fears Ahead of Trump Presidency.” So apparently they are using this time before President Trump is sworn in next week to scare people into coming now. Bring your drugs now. Come illegally now into the U.S. before Trump becomes President.