

that Maduro's undemocratic and tyrannical rule is unacceptable.

All options are on the table, and I look forward to continuing to work with this administration and my colleagues here in Congress to stand in solidarity with the democratic opposition and the people of Venezuela.

RAISING THE GAS TAX

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, we begin an unusual week here on Capitol Hill, although unusual is sort of the new usual in Washington, D.C.

The Senate begins deliberations on an 8-year Republican mission to repeal the Affordable Care Act, and they don't fully know what it is exactly they are voting on.

There is uncertainty in the House over both the budget and appropriations, but, you know, there is an opportunity for Congress to take a step back, to do something that will make a huge difference for everybody from coast to coast, something that can bring together a wide coalition of support and meet unmet needs.

□ 1015

I am talking about addressing the unmet infrastructure needs for a country that is falling apart as we fall behind.

We haven't raised the gas tax in 24 years. And in the course of that 24 years, we have watched the value of the Federal gas tax actually erode 40 percent, due to inflation and increased fuel efficiency, while our needs continue to go up each and every year.

Congress has put together a series of stopgap measures—gimmicks here and there—which have not adequately met those needs, and they have actually increased the budget deficit.

I think back to Ronald Reagan making his Thanksgiving Day speech in November of 1982, when he called on Congress to come back from their recess and more than double the gas tax because, he pointed out, it would put people to work and improve road conditions that were actually damaging people's cars more than what modest increase they would pay. Well, Congress did it, and we were better off as a result. I think each of us would do well to look back at that speech that Ronald Reagan gave, calling on Congress to step up and do its part.

The States are not sitting back. Since over the last 5 years, more than half of the individual States have gone ahead and raised their transportation funding. So far in 2017 alone, California, Indiana, Montana, Oregon, Tennessee, West Virginia, and South Carolina raised the gas tax. In fact, South Carolina raised the gas tax by overriding a Republican Governor's veto.

There are opportunities here for us to be able to step forward and build on

this vast coalition. It really isn't a profile in courage to support legislation that is endorsed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the AFL-CIO, contractors, a variety of labor unions, road builders, engineers, trucking companies, and AAA. The widest coalition of people supporting any major issue before us deals with increasing the fuel tax.

And it is interesting, for those who are worried that maybe there is some political downturn, despite the fact that the States have been able to summon the courage. The American Road and Transportation Builders Association did an extensive survey about who were those intrepid legislators that voted to raise the gas tax since 2012. What they found is that those legislators who had the courage and the vision to do what was right for their States were reelected by an over 90 percent rate.

But this shouldn't be about elections. It should be about what is right for the American people. Stepping up, meeting our obligations, so that the Federal Government is a full partner, working with State and local governments, working with the private sector, to be able to meet the over \$1.1 trillion of critical transportation needs between now and 2025 ought to be the order of business.

I would hope that my friends in Republican leadership would allow us to have just 1 week of hearings on this issue so that we can hear from the president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the president of the AFL-CIO, the truckers, AAA, Republican legislators of principle, people across the country who talk about the need to rebuild and renew America, make our communities more livable, our families safer, healthier, and more economically secure.

STUDENT DEBT CRISIS

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

Mr. PAULSEN. Mr. Speaker, we continue to hear about the challenges for college students who borrow more and more to pay higher tuition rates and then are saddled with huge debt loads that they will have great difficulty paying back.

The average debt for a 4-year college student today is nearly \$37,000. We need to explore new ways to ensure that every student has the opportunity to go to school, to develop their skills, and then pursue their dreams without feeling deterred by the price tag.

I think we need to look at a new approach, an approach that would help students pay for college. It is a concept known as an income-share agreement. It is a concept that would provide students the funding that they agree to pay back as small, affordable portions of their income over the years following graduation.

Income-share agreements are interest free, and students only will make those payments if they are employed and if they receive an income that meets a certain threshold. This method of financing puts less pressure on students to keep up with fixed high-interest payments while they are faced with job uncertainty.

Rather than accruing debt under the traditional student loan structure, this makes the investment in these students' future more equity-based. Their payments are guaranteed to be affordable, rather than fixed, and a certain price.

This is a much more manageable plan for students, Mr. Speaker, who are eager to get a career underway after graduation and want to make sure that they are putting their degrees into practice in a field that they have studied and have a passion for, rather than feel constrained by the impending weight of paying back loans right away.

That is why I am co-authoring the Investing in Student Success Act. It is modeled after a program at Purdue University. At Purdue, an average student received a little over \$13,000 in funding for tuition, paired with a student promise to pay back that money in 6 to 10 years after graduation in small percentages of their income.

The bill provides a legal framework for private organizations to invest in individual students through implementing similar income-share agreements. Doing so creates more options for payment and increases accessibility for higher education.

Today, the cost of tuition at a public 4-year university is nearly quadruple what it was back in 1974. Due to rising tuition costs and the increased need for a college degree in the workforce, it is more important now, more than ever before, to address the student loan debt crisis and provide students with the resources they need to graduate with minimal loans.

Income-share agreements also provide the flexibility that students need when faced with an uncertain job market and provide an alternative to the traditional student loan repayment structure.

Mr. Speaker, as we look for ways to make higher education more affordable and more accessible, we should be advancing new innovative solutions to help students go to college without that burden of high debt after graduation, and income-share agreements are another way of accomplishing this.

SNAP CUTS IN HOUSE BUDGET

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

Mr. McGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, just weeks after President Trump released his devastating budget which guts SNAP, our Nation's first line of defense against hunger, House Republicans

have joined in that effort, proposing drastic cuts to our anti-hunger safety net in the budget that they marked up last week.

In their budget, House Republicans have laid out their dangerous agenda: dramatic increases in defense spending and tax cuts for millionaires, billionaires, and corporations—all paid for by cuts to programs that help working families and those struggling to make ends meet.

Among the proposed cuts, House Republicans are seeking \$160 billion in cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, known as SNAP, over 10 years. \$150 billion of these cuts come from structural changes to SNAP and harsher work requirements and time limits, and an additional \$10 billion would be fast-tracked through the reconciliation process.

Mr. Speaker, SNAP is not an ATM. It is not money to be used for tax breaks for the wealthy, additional weapons systems, or any corporate handouts. It is intended to help our most vulnerable neighbors purchase groceries and put food on the table when times are tough. Simply put, SNAP helps people eat.

For a meager \$1.40 per person, per meal, SNAP helps alleviate poverty, reduce hunger, and improve nutrition. It is one of the most efficient and effective Federal programs. But it is only \$1.40 per person, per meal. And my friends are proposing more cuts in this program?

Mr. Speaker, I serve as the ranking member on the House Agriculture Committee, Subcommittee on Nutrition. Since 2015, the committee has held 23 hearings on SNAP. In our hearings, we have heard from over 80 witnesses—Republican and Democrat—about ways to make SNAP even better. But none of these witnesses—not one—ever suggested changes like the ones proposed by President Trump and House Republicans.

These Republican proposals are mean-spirited, and they are just as heartless as they are reckless. They do not reflect the realities of the program or seek to understand the challenges faced by those living in poverty. They don't help struggling Americans find work, and they certainly don't help address the “benefit cliff,” as some of my Republican colleagues have proposed doing.

If Republicans were genuinely interested in helping struggling families rise out of poverty, they would join Democrats in advocating for higher wages, more jobs, and better work supports like childcare and transportation. They would address affordable housing shortages and help to improve access to healthcare. They would increase investments in job training and career and technical education. They would finally work with us to make college more affordable.

But instead of working on these priorities, House Republicans are hell-bent on pursuing an agenda that belit-

ties the struggles of the working poor and tears apart our safety net. Their awful budget is no exception.

Under the guise of “State flexibility,” their budget proposes a block grant-like approach to administering SNAP.

Make no mistake, block-granting SNAP would make hunger worse in this country, plain and simple. It would undermine the successful structure of SNAP—its ability to expand as the economy struggles and contract in times of economic prosperity. The proposed structural changes would likely result in drastic funding cuts and reduced eligibility for the program.

If State flexibility is the true goal, then my Republican friends are in luck. SNAP already has a number of options that States can adopt. What is ironic is some of these State exceptions are exactly the provisions House Republicans are seeking to do away with.

The Republican budget also calls for additional work requirements of SNAP, relying on dangerous rhetoric that suggests that hardworking families who rely on modest food benefits don't want to work or are somehow lazy. That couldn't be farther from the truth.

I would like to point out that the majority of people on SNAP who can work, do work. Most people on SNAP are not expected to work or cannot work—they are kids, senior citizens, and people who are disabled. But that is exactly who Republicans will hurt if these dangerous proposals advance.

If we are talking about how we can help transition people who can work into the workforce, you don't do that by cutting the program by billions of dollars or by cutting people off from food aid. That does nothing to help people find jobs. It only makes people hungry.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my Republican colleagues to join me in rejecting these damaging cuts, and to support investments in our anti-hunger safety net that will help end hunger now.

HONORING THE LIFE OF TROY BOWLING

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

Mr. BARR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of an American patriot and hero, Mr. Troy Bowling of Lexington, Kentucky, who completed his life's service on June 17, 2017, at the age of 90 years old.

His military service during World War II and his commitment to supporting our veterans and the men and women in uniform throughout his life is an inspiration to us all.

At the age of 19, Mr. Bowling began his service as a United States marine and was a proud member of the Easy Company, 2nd Battalion, 27th Marines, 5th Division. During the United States campaign to end the war against Japan, Mr. Bowling's unit was among the first to arrive on the beachheads of Iwo Jima.

While attempting to secure Mount Suribachi, his unit came under intense and concentrated fire, completely overwhelming his unit. Two projectiles struck Mr. Bowling in the chest and leg, leaving him critically wounded on the battlefield.

At that moment, Mr. Bowling said he looked to the heavens and committed to serving mankind for the rest of his life if he survived. Miraculously, a combat photographer and medical team then carried Mr. Bowling to the safety of a landing craft, where he witnessed the planting of the American flag atop Mount Suribachi, an iconic image that persists as one of the most legendary and triumphant moments of the war. The U.S. Marines eventually took control of the island. However, this victory came at a heavy cost, as over 6,800 U.S. servicemembers gave their lives during the battle of Iwo Jima.

In keeping faith with his commitment to God made during that battle, Mr. Bowling devoted over 78,000 hours of volunteer service to others at the Lexington VA Medical Center. For over 66 years, Mr. Bowling rose through the ranks within the Disabled American Veterans organization, holding nearly every position possible, including State commander.

□ 1030

The Bible teaches in Proverbs 21:21 that “He who pursues righteousness and love finds life, prosperity, and honor.”

Mr. Bowling has brought great honor upon himself through his dedication, determination, and love for serving the people of our community. Without a doubt, he has remained true to the commitment he made on the rocky terrain of Iwo Jima.

Mr. Bowling embodies the best of American ideals, values, and commitment to serving others, never abandoning the Marine motto of *semper fidelis*, “always faithful.”

On behalf of a grateful nation, I would like to thank Mr. Bowling, a model member of the greatest generation, for his many years of service to our country and our community. He is truly an outstanding American and an inspiration to us all.

Troy Bowling, may you rest in peace.

CONCERNS OF THE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, this is a somber day today, and it is a very important day in the history of the United States of America.

I have joined with Senator FRANKEN, who indicated that, today, Senators of the United States Senate will make one of the most significant votes, if not the most significant vote of their career, and it will be a vote that they will long remember because, rather than the serious and difficult decisions