

20 years ago, and has done a great job to grow the organization and reach more students.

I would like to thank Ms. Murphy and Ms. Orrel once more for helping south Georgians to advance their careers.

SANCTIONS ON THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

(Ms. KAPTUR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge all of my colleagues who voted “yes” on continuous and strengthened sanctions on the Russian Federation. That was the correct vote, and I commend the leadership of Ohio’s Senator SHERROD BROWN, the leading Democrat in the other body on the Banking Committee who fought for this package.

The bill also holds Iran, North Korea, as well as Russia accountable. Specifically, Russia for interference in our Democratic Republic, but also for its ongoing human rights violations, its illegal invasion and occupation of Crimea, and continued military violence in eastern Ukraine with over 10,000 dead due to Russian aggression.

This bill will impose sanctions on people involved in human rights abuses, those who launch cyber attacks and those who supplied weapons to the Assad government in Syria. President Trump and his staff regularly question the intelligence that shows Russia interfered in our election.

Given the President’s priorities lately, it is imperative that Congress send a clear message and make it more difficult to undercut sanctions without congressional approval.

This package tells the world: Congress won’t stand by idly. But what a sad day we have reached when there is doubt whether sanctions against Putin’s Russia, liberty’s proven adversary, will be even signed by this President of the United States.

STOP FUNDING PALESTINIAN TERRORISTS

(Mr. POE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, last Friday night, an Israeli family sat down for Shabbat dinner to celebrate the birth of a new grandchild, but a 19-year-old Palestinian terrorist put an end to this joyous occasion.

The terrorist brutally attacked the Salomon family with a large knife. Pictures of the family’s home show a white floor stained red with the blood of the innocents.

A father and two of his children were murdered that night. Upon learning of the tragic event, Palestinians in Gaza took to the streets to sing, dance, and celebrate. No Palestinian leader has even condemned this grizzly attack.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, this is our U.S. tax dollars at work. The millions the United States sends to the Palestinians are funneled to terrorists and their families through the so-called martyrs fund. The leaders we prop up glorify terrorists and incite violence.

The American people refuse to continue this insanity. We refuse to continue enabling terror against the Israeli people.

And that is just the way it is.

INVEST BORDER WALL FUNDS IN OTHER PROVEN METHODS TO KEEP US SAFE

(Mr. CORREA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CORREA. Mr. Speaker, on Friday we are voting on a crucial funding program for armed services. Yet somehow it also includes \$1.6 billion to begin funding the construction of an unnecessary border wall. Without discussion, the funding for the border wall was added.

This wall won’t make us safer, and it won’t stop drug smugglers, and it will not keep out the bad hombres.

If we are serious about protecting our borders, then let’s invest the \$1.6 billion in programs that have a proven record of success. Let’s invest in drug detection canine teams. Let’s rebuild our Coast Guard. And let’s strengthen our partnership with Canadian and Mexican law enforcement.

These are the proven methods that will keep America safe.

PUERTO RICO’S TERRITORIAL GOVERNMENT

(Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN of Puerto Rico asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN of Puerto Rico. Mr. Speaker, Puerto Rico’s territorial constitution is 65 years old today. An act of Congress authorized the island’s people to pass a charter of the local government.

It did not, however, eliminate Federal authority to govern Puerto Rico in local matters. The island’s constitution names the territorial government a “freely associated State” in Spanish, but we are not a freely associated State because we are not a sovereign nation.

Under the U.S. Constitution, Puerto Rico remains subject to a territorial clause until it becomes a State. Proof of that power is PROMESA, which installed Federal appointees to make final decisions on Puerto Rico’s fiscal matters.

The Americans I represent want to exercise self-government in local matters once again; but, more importantly, want to fully possess that power as the States do.

SECURE FIREARM STORAGE

(Mr. SCHNEIDER asked and was given permission to address the House

for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, communities throughout our country are suffering from an epidemic of gun violence.

In far too many cases, stolen guns represent a growing source of the weapons used in these crimes. According to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, last year alone, nearly 18,000 firearms were reported stolen or lost just from Federal firearm licensees, or FFLs. That is Federally licensed dealers, manufacturers, and importers.

Today I introduced the SECURE Firearms Storage Act to help address the stolen-gun problem by requiring all FFLs to securely store their inventory when not open for business.

Additionally, this bill would require the Attorney General to review and put forth further commonsense security measures to reduce the risk of theft, and require new applicants to detail their security plans before a new license is issued.

There are simply too many innocent lives being destroyed by these stolen guns. I invite my colleagues to join me on this bill to make commonsense improvements for gun safety.

RURAL AMERICA’S CONTRIBUTIONS

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

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ARRINGTON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the topic of my Special Order.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of my friends, my family, my neighbors, and my fellow Americans in rural communities all across this land. I am proud to represent 29 counties in rural west Texas. I am grateful that I grew up in a small town—the town of Plainview, Texas, a little farming community.

We are the sum of many things and many contributions and influences, and I am thankful for the influences of that town. I am grateful to my coaches and my teachers. I was inspired by Ms. Becky Taylor, my first government teacher at Plainview High School. I have countless people to thank, and as I walk the Halls here, and as I stand on the floor of the House and cast my vote for the people I represent, I think about all of those people who have made an investment.

You see, in rural America, they take responsibility for their community.

They believe in making investment in all of those young people who are working their way through the school system, who have big dreams to make a difference in the world, and I was one of them.

I pray I could be a champion for rural America. I pray I will be an effective legislator and that I will be a strong voice for a people that feel often that they don't have a voice. Maybe it is because we don't have the votes, and maybe it is because we don't have as many people, but what we don't have in numbers of people, we more than make up for in our contribution to this country in the food, in the fuel, in the fiber that we produce in rural America.

The folks who I represent help put food on the table of all Americans. They put clothes on the backs of all Americans. They help fuel this great American economy. They give us energy independence.

They allow us to have an affordable, safe, and abundant supply of food. We take it for granted. When you ask folks around the country, especially in urban and suburban areas, "Where does your food come from," many answer, "The grocery store or the food truck."

□ 1730

My colleagues and I are standing today to speak about the virtue and the values of rural America and the contribution to this great experiment in democracy and liberty. We know that it is by the blood, sweat, and tears of farmers and ranchers all across this great land.

I love everything about rural America, Mr. Speaker. I love the people, I love the values, and I love our way of life. We are not just the energy basin, and we are not just the breadbasket. We are the backbone of this country. If you lose rural America, then you lose something very special. You lose those traditional American values that are at the heart of the greatness of this country.

They are counting on us—all of us who represent rural communities—to fight for them. If you think about this Presidential election, more than 70 percent of rural communities and people living in rural areas in the swing States voted for our President. They felt voiceless and powerless. They felt like they were losing their country, and they wanted their country back. They were tired of political correctness. They were tired of do-nothing institutions and politicians that said they were going to change things and then—status quo.

They know, as well as anybody, what is at stake in the next few years and the next several years. This window of time is special. They came out strong in support of our President because they wanted something different. They wanted results.

Rural America defines leadership different than we do. They define leadership as working together to solve problems and deliver results. If you don't

deliver results, you are not a leader in rural America. The proof is in the pudding. So I am especially excited about this opportunity in the life of our Nation. I am exceptionally honored to serve in this august body with so much history.

I am overjoyed that I wear the rural America jersey when I stand on this floor. I am going to do all I can to fight for the future of this country, which means I am going to fight for rural America's traditional values, and I'm not going to apologize for it because, again, where we come from is a lot of who we are, and who we are is a whole lot more important than what we do.

I am rural America. I am traditional values. I am from the land of farmers, ranchers, and public schoolteachers who believe they can have an impact on a kid and inspire him to believe he can change the world. You are looking at one of them.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Miss Becky Taylor, I thank Coach Cunningham, I thank Coach Irlebeck, and I thank youth minister Karl Shackelford. I could go on and on.

I stand on the shoulders of a lot of good people in small town, middle America, and I don't stand alone. I stand in the company of great men whom I have met since I have been here. I know a lot of Americans look at this United States Congress as dysfunctional and do-nothing, and do you know what? They are right in many ways. But I look at the individuals, and I see some of the most impressive, patriotic people who want to make a difference.

I am thankful that in this fight for the heart and soul of this country, in this battle for the identity of our Nation, this constitutional Republic, I have got folks in the foxhole with me.

To start my foxhole friends who stand on the side of rural America, I want to introduce a great American, a dear friend, and the president of our freshman class. He comes from a big swath of rural Michigan, Michigan's First District. He is a general, he is a soldier, he is a businessman, and he is a proud granddad. When I think of JACK BERGMAN, I think of a leader. He is a leader.

I am proud to serve with JACK BERGMAN.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BERGMAN).

Mr. BERGMAN. Mr. Speaker, how do I even start after getting an introduction like that other than to say that I am so blessed to be part of what I will put up against any Congress as the finest freshman class that has come across this floor to be sworn in. I am just proud to be one of Mr. ARRINGTON's colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, when you talk about rural America, how do you know it if you have never been part of it? I was born, raised, and grew up in a little Minnesota farming town. My dad came from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan because there was no work there for 18-

year-olds. He went to Minneapolis looking for work. Of course, he found it, and then he found my mom. You know how that goes. So she told him that is where he was going to live for a while, and so that is where I was born.

I had to walk all of a half a mile to work on a farm to help. It was about a 200-head dairy farm that also had some corn and some soybeans, and they had hay. I learned how to bale hay, I learned how to not fall off the wagon, and I learned how to shoot the silage into the silo and not fall into the silo when you are doing it.

One of the least favorite jobs was cleaning up the dairy barn because it had those unique aromas. On a hot August day, you learn that they are all unique, but they are all important to the betterment of what we are trying to accomplish here.

When you work with your hands—I have seen firsthand how rural America works, the dedication, the hard work, and the life that on a daily basis begins before the sun rises and, in many cases, ends long after the sun sets—that is commitment. It is not only commitment to your family, it is commitment to yourself, and it is commitment to your God that you know that you are blessed with what we have in our land.

It is such important work. DANIEL WEBSTER said:

"Let us not forget that the cultivation of the earth is the most important labor of man."

"The farmers, therefore, are the founders of civilization."

It is so easy to believe that when the lights go off at the grocery store at night that the food just magically appears on the shelves. It is amazing how that just happens. Well, we know it doesn't just happen. It is the last in a series of long steps. Rural America knows better than anyone what it takes to get the food on those shelves. Rural America feeds the world, produces resources that are used in other industries, acts as job creators and the foundation of the economy, provides food security, and contributes to the moral fabric of our society.

Farmers face so many challenges already. They are at the mercy of the weather, crop volatility, and ever-changing prices. Why is the government so insistent on adding more rocks to the pack of the farmer who is already overburdened in so many ways? They don't need any more headaches.

I have often said that if something works in Michigan's First District, it will work anywhere. We are largely rural. We have got a lot of big water shoreline, and part of that big water shoreline provides the water to cultivate our fields. We grow a lot of potatoes up there. Anybody who really loves potato chips, chances are they came from a potato that started in Michigan. We grow sugar beets, cherries, and apples, just to name a few. In fact, just this past weekend, back in the district, I had a chance to really taste the cherries that we picked off

the tree because it is that time of the year.

We should be looking forward and looking to rural America as the example for success, not trying to hold it back with bureaucratic regulations and out-of-control government spending. It is time to cut through the red tape. Rural and urban survival depend on it. Power belongs in the hands of the individual—the farmers, the loggers, the fishermen, the miners, the ranchers, and every other hardworking man and woman in so many districts around the country and especially in our First District of Michigan.

Mr. Speaker, speaking of hands, people who work with the land know when you are working with your hands that you don't just go right to the harvest. You first must till the land. You have to plant. You have to manage the growing season. Only then, after that long process that you cannot shortcut in any way, then comes a successful harvest. It has to happen in order. There is no other way. So anyone who expects good things happen easily has never been a farmer and has never been working with their hands.

It is our job not just to honor but to raise rural Americans up as an example that hard work and traditional American values are still something to be admired so deeply.

Mr. Speaker, it is an honor just to be talking about this subject tonight. It actually makes me want to somehow figure out a way to get back to the district right away to finish up the cherry harvest. It looks like we are going to have a really good one this year because God has blessed us with good weather.

Rural America is who we are, and it is who we fight for. I am proud to be a Member of the 115th Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARRINGTON) for the opportunity to speak on something that is so passionate and dear to my heart.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Michigan for his wonderful, beautiful, and heartfelt words about where he comes from, how that shaped him, and how deeply he believes in the people in the country, as we say in west Texas. He talked about a lot of things. He talked about the folks who work the land, and he talked about traditional American values. Mr. Speaker, I think you are going to hear some common themes from my colleagues this evening.

The gentleman also mentioned the burden of Big Government. I said, coming into this office and after 8 years of the advent and explosion of Big Government, that when our economy in urban and suburban is like a patient who is sick, the rural patients are in the ICU because small businesses, community banks, and family farmers bear a disproportionate burden when it comes to the trillions of dollars and the cumulative effect of all the rules and regulations out of the last year.

So rescuing the American economy is about helping a sick patient. Rescuing

the rural economy is getting the patient stabilized and off life support so we can live to farm, to fight, and to have the kind of quality of life that we love for another day.

Mr. Speaker, I have got a good friend that I have made since I came to the United States Congress. The gentleman is from the 12th District of the great State of Georgia. He is a son of a farmer. I bet he knows something about working the land. I bet he knows something about a work ethic. I bet his daddy taught him something about that.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. ALLEN) who is my friend and a businessman. The gentleman received the Augusta Metro Chamber of Commerce Small Business of the Year Award, and he will talk about rural America and why it is so important to making America great.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, Congressman ARRINGTON, for this Special Order and for this opportunity to talk about what makes America great.

Mr. Speaker, I am a product of rural America. I did learn a lot about work ethic and about values. I can't think of any other way to grow up, to be honest with you. Sure it was difficult, and sure I probably had some times where I thought I would like to be somewhere else. But I will tell you, there was nothing like it, and I take and cherish those memories. I have tried to instill those in my children as well.

□ 1745

It is the greatest honor of my life to represent the people of Georgia's 12th Congressional District, which is largely rural. We have 18 counties. About 15 of those counties would be considered rural. My district is home to the Masters Tournament and the growing cyber industry in Augusta, but it is our rural farms that are the true heart of my district.

Georgia's 12th District is rural, and I am proud to say it is truly God's country. You won't find more steadfast, faithful Americans than in rural Georgia.

Agriculture is the number one industry in my home State of Georgia. It is also the number one industry in my district. Our farmers have been forgotten by out-of-touch politicians and unelected bureaucrats here in Washington, particularly over the last 8 years.

Farm income, for example, is down more than 55 percent, largely due to what our President has talked about, which is our trade policies. However, as of last November, we are approaching a new day. This is President Trump's day and President Trump's America. That is why I am proud to have a President that knows that rural Americans deserve more.

In April, President Trump created the Interagency Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity to be led by Secretary of Agriculture and fellow

Georgian, Sonny Perdue. This task force was created with one goal in mind: to promote economic growth and innovation in rural America. As a member of the House Agriculture Committee, I look forward to working with Secretary Perdue on this mission, as well as the next farm bill, which is critical to the lifeblood of our farmers.

From looking at cotton to peanuts, to specialty crops and the programs they are using, I have participated in numerous hearings on how to make the next farm bill successful for all of our farmers. I am working hard to make sure the commodities most important to Georgia's 12th District are protected.

We also have a crisis in our community banking system. Community banks are the lifeblood of the creation of small business. We continually lose our community banks. That is why I am so proud of Chairman JEB HENSARLING and his work to pass the CHOICE Act.

The CHOICE Act reduces the regulatory burden on our community banks. It allows them to thrive and to provide the capital to grow the small business community in our rural areas. Small business in our rural communities accounts for about 75 percent of all new job growth.

We also have to fix healthcare. We are losing a number of our community hospitals. I know in Congressman ARRINGTON's district, in small towns, the community hospital is the largest employer in that community, and it is critical that we repurpose those hospitals, that we fix healthcare and we provide healthcare for our rural areas.

We also need to look at technology. There is a tremendous need for broadband and expanding our broadband capabilities. I know the President is talking about a major infrastructure package. Broadband needs to be a part of that infrastructure package because the 12th District of Georgia, through technology, could be the new Silicon Valley of the East Coast. We would like to see that trickle down into our rural areas, and it can, but we have to have the capability of the broadband.

As far as the future of rural America, we are seeing tremendous strides made as far as technology, as far as farming. Last year, I planted peanuts. I was operating a tractor, which I remember operating as a child and a teenager and having to pay attention to all the moving parts. I tell you, I sat on this tractor and I planted 17 inches over from the year before, and I never touched the steering wheel. The technology is amazing.

I was with a group of farmers the other day and we were talking about God is blessing us with a lot of rain and if it continues, we are going to have a bountiful crop, a great yield. They said: Yeah, we are good 8 inches down, but the other 8 inches we are a little concerned about. They have these probes that are measuring how much water we are receiving.

So we have a lot going on in our rural areas. We just, as a body here, need to provide our farmers, our small business people, with the tools they need to get the job done, and they will get the job done.

Again, I want to thank my distinguished colleague from Texas, Congressman ARRINGTON, for shining the spotlight on rural America tonight. It is the lifeblood of this country. I want to see rural America become everything it needs to be.

We are seeing improvement in the economy through many pieces of this legislation that we are passing. I hear it from the business community and some of our city centers. It is time for that to trickle down into rural America.

Again, I thank the gentleman for shining this spotlight.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Georgia for his personal experience in agriculture, in a farming family, and a man who loves all that is good about rural America and knows that what is good about rural America is what is helping make this country great.

I have got other colleagues that I want to invite to speak. We have got folks from Illinois, Michigan, and some colleagues from Texas.

I am looking at a guy from the Commonwealth of Kentucky, another new friend, a dear friend, and a friend of agriculture. He is a guy who not only knows agriculture because he took a loan out right after graduating from Western Kentucky and started a farming operation—he claims it is successful today. I believe him—he was also the ag commissioner of Kentucky. He served in the Kentucky House, and now he is lending his expertise and his love for this country and all things about rural America to the First District of Kentucky.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. COMER).

Mr. COMER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative ARRINGTON for shining the spotlight on rural America today.

I am proud to be a product of rural America. The great thing about growing up in rural America is you learn values, you learn morals, and you learn a work ethic. Not every individual in America has that opportunity. So those of us that grew up with that upbringing in rural America should appreciate that.

That is why, when I took the oath of office as a brand-new Congressman back in November, I said my number one priority is to promote agriculture and restore and revive rural America. I believe we can. I believe in the future of rural America. But we are going to have to work together.

Rural America has many challenges right now. The number one challenge is the economy. We need to help create good-paying jobs in rural America, because in rural America we are faced with a brain drain. That is why our best and brightest young people grad-

uate from the good public schools that we have in rural America, they go off to college or technical school, but they don't come back. There aren't the same opportunities, unfortunately, in many of the rural communities as there are in the more urban and suburban areas.

I believe that we can change that because rural America has so much to offer. We have work ethic. We have available skilled workers. We have communities where everyone knows everyone. Everyone has a spirit of community. We have good churches, good schools, and good rural hospitals.

So I believe that we need to spread that message as Members of Congress. As Members of Congress, we also need to invest in rural America.

As was mentioned earlier, one of the President's main priorities is an infrastructure bill. I believe that we need to invest in infrastructure. I believe in a limited government, I believe in small government, but I do believe it is the government's responsibility to do certain things. One of those things that is the government's responsibility is to invest and maintain infrastructure. When we talk about infrastructure, it is not just interstates and airports. It is also things that we need in rural America, like broadband and wireless technology.

I believe that we can create an environment with public-private partnerships where we can make that investment to help revive rural America and help to create jobs in rural America to keep our best and brightest in rural America.

Growing up in Monroe County, which is a rural community in south-central Kentucky, I had the opportunity to go to Monroe County schools, where I knew every student in my class. I knew the teachers, I knew where they lived, I knew where they go to church. I played every sport I could play and excelled in none, but I enjoyed that opportunity and learned a lot about it. Of course, we went to church on Sundays.

Throughout my business career as a farmer, the president of the Monroe County Chamber of Commerce, a State representative, and as a commissioner of agriculture, I always worked hard to try to promote and be positive about rural America. Now as a Member of Congress, I want to join with my fellow colleagues that represent rural areas like the First Congressional District of Kentucky and make sure that we make that investment to where we can take rural America to the next level.

So I appreciate Congressman ARRINGTON creating this opportunity tonight to talk about rural America. I pledge to work with him and our colleagues to see that we can make a brighter future for rural America.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Kentucky for his passion and his resolve to be a voice for rural America and for agriculture. It has been great to serve alongside of him on the Agriculture Committee.

I have got another dear, new friend and fellow freshman Member of Congress who is a great American. He hales from the great State of Louisiana, my wife's home State. He represents the Third District. I was about to say I have a couple more racehorses for rural America in the stable. He actually was raised on a horse ranch near Covington, Louisiana.

He is a veteran and highly decorated law enforcement officer. He is a man of deep and abiding faith. I say that God probably hears all of our prayers, but when he speaks and prays with that thick Louisiana accent, I think he enjoys his prayers more.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. HIGGINS) and prayerfully ask him to speak about rural America and why it is important to this country.

Mr. HIGGINS of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas for yielding.

I recognize my friend, Representative JODEY ARRINGTON, as exactly the type of American that our Founding Fathers envisioned serving within the House of the people.

Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to highlight the importance of American agriculture and the spirit of the American farmer. Being raised on a horse ranch, I learned at an early age the value of work and that rural America wasn't just a place, but a way of life.

Now my wife and I live in a 1,000-square-foot, 65-year-old, wood-frame home in the middle of farm country in south Louisiana. We have nine pecan trees, two magnolia trees, and two bushes with flowers on them. I am not sure what they are, but I know she knows. She enjoys them. They bloom once a year.

Other than that, it is just an honor to represent my district, which is deeply agriculturally centered: farmers, ranchers, fishermen, oil and gas workers, petrochemical workers. They are salt-of-the-earth folks who know what it is to earn a living. They understand sweat. They understand labor. In representing my district in Louisiana, these are the industries that stand up our rural communities. They are the backbone of our economy.

My district is home to the heart of sugarcane for the entire country. Cane farmers in south Louisiana account for about 20 percent of all sugar production in the United States.

My district is also home to the rice capital of America. Crowley, Louisiana, right in the heart of Cajun country, is home to more rice mills than anywhere else in our Nation.

Those two crops, alone, account for billions of dollars in economic output every year and employ tens of thousands of hardworking Americans.

Given a level playing field and opportunities to compete on a global scale, American farmers will always win.

□ 1800

That is why we are working to put American farmers first to open new

markets, expand American exports, and create jobs in our communities. We are rolling back regulations that slow growth, stifle innovation, and restrict the agricultural industry's access to the resources and manpower it needs to thrive.

We have made great strides this year to help our farmers, and we will continue to do so. Just last week, a groundbreaking rice export agreement with China, the world's largest rice consumer, was announced. This opens a massive new market to United States rice farmers.

These are the type of landmark policy victories that elevate American farmers and bring economic growth to our rural communities. I am committed to an America First agriculture policy where American farmers compete and win. Agriculture is a critical industry that bolsters economic growth and ensures American independence and national security.

In my home State, we understand that our economy is run on the sweat of hardworking American patriots.

As Congress moves forward, I will continue to work tirelessly with my colleagues on behalf of our farmers and producers to provide Louisiana's agricultural industry with critically needed support. I am proud to represent a district so strongly rooted in the spirit of rural America, and I am honored to stand with my colleagues today in loud and vocal support for the Americans who we serve in rural America.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from the great State of Louisiana for his comments and his heartfelt commitment to his district, to the farmers, and the ranchers like the ranch he grew up on. This is personal for CLAY HIGGINS, and I know when he says he is going to be a champion for rural America, you can take that to the bank, and I want to thank him for his comments.

I have other colleagues who are here and want to speak loudly and proudly for the folks from rural America who are counting on us. What we lack in numbers up here, we got to make up for in strength of leadership. I am looking at the bench right now, and I am believing that we can overcome those numbers with effectiveness and with the strength of leadership and courage that it takes to get something done in this town and in this institution.

The next gentleman who I want to introduce to the American people who are watching with great anticipation is another freshman wonder from the great State of Georgia, whose district is home to a portion of western Georgia. He went off and got his dental degree and came back to where he grew up, West Point, Georgia, came back home to small town America, and I reckon he did for a lot of reasons, but probably at the top of the list was he wanted to raise his kids in small town America.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Georgia's Third District (Mr. FER-

GUSON), to talk about that and anything else, and there are lots of great things to talk about with respect to rural America.

Mr. FERGUSON. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the Representative from Texas (Mr. ARRINGTON), for highlighting this most important part of our American culture, the rural America.

As you mentioned, I came from a small town, like many small towns across this Nation, and we have seen our area fall into decline, but we have seen what happens when you have a tremendous rebirth in your local economy.

But there are so many parts of our great Nation in my great State of Georgia that simply don't have the opportunities that other areas do, and that is not necessarily new. It is something that we have faced in America before, and our country has always stepped up to find the right answers, to give access to success to the people in rural America and, in my case, rural Georgia.

And if you think about that, we have done that in multiple ways. We have built infrastructure there that includes highways. We have built electric grids to the rural parts of our communities, telecommunications. It has been absolutely amazing to see what happens and the benefits to this Nation that come when we invest in infrastructure to rural Georgia and to rural Alabama and any other State in this great Nation.

One of the things that we have got to recognize is all of the wonderful things that we have going on that have been highlighted by our colleagues here tonight, the agricultural industry that exists, from everything like our colleague from Louisiana talked about, my colleague from Georgia, the farming communities. In our area, we have a tremendous number of cattle farmers, dairy farmers, folks who grow pine trees.

All of those things are important, but we have got to talk about enhancing that in a new direction for rural America. As has been talked about here tonight, a big part of that has to be new infrastructure and an information highway known as rural broadband that goes into America.

We have companies right now throughout this great Nation that are wanting to invest in many areas. A lot of times all they are asking us to do is to get out of the way and let the private sector take over and do it.

If we do that and we build that infrastructure but we fail to educate our children in a 21st century economy, then we have built infrastructure that will never reach its full capacity.

So not only is building broadband to the rural community so vitally important, pairing our education system to that is vitally important, too. I believe in our rural communities there is a wealth of talent, people of all backgrounds, ages, demographics that have

incredible talents that are yet to be tapped into.

I believe that we can tap into those talents, and I believe that those talents can be highlighted, they can be brought out, and they can be enhanced by allowing our education systems to be adaptive, to be able to train these young people, young adults, the future of rural America, to give them the skills that they need so that they can become a competitive part of the 21st century economy.

I think that many of our States that have large metropolitan areas like we do in Georgia with Metro Atlanta have a desire to tap into this wealth of talent in this workforce that exists in rural Georgia, and I believe that it gives families a chance to stay together because it creates economic opportunities for families in rural Georgia that simply do not exist right now.

So think of a vision for rural America where we are connected with new infrastructure and information technology systems that allow the talent that we have congregated in rural Georgia, every small town across this great Nation, to be able to harness that power, to tie it back into our metropolitan centers, to create vibrant economic opportunities, let us figure out ways to harness that economic opportunity to be able to generate revenue to further enhance our school systems and enhance our communities in rural America.

We have incredible talent, and we need to bring that talent to the top. We need to make sure that the talent stays in rural Georgia and all of our communities, and I believe that we can do that.

We have got to make the commitment to build infrastructure across this Nation as we have in the past, and I believe the future of rural America is with rural broadband creating business and educational opportunities where we are going to harness tremendous talent and reap tremendous benefits.

Rural America is so important to the fabric of our Nation. It is so important to the people, to the leadership, to our economy, to who we are. The greatness and the freedoms that we enjoy are exemplified nowhere better than in rural America.

I am proud to be from rural America, I am proud to raise my family there, and I believe that the future is bright.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Georgia for his comments, and what a strong leader he has been for our freshmen class, and what a great representation of his district in the great State of Georgia.

And who knows better about the challenges of sustaining rural communities than a mayor who is fighting the fight at the local level. And so I am just so grateful that he spoke from his heart this evening about our friends and family and our neighbors back home in small town America.

I have got another good friend and a guy who knows something about rural

America. His district takes up almost the entire State of Nebraska. He has had Nebraska as his home and his family's home for six generations.

He served at the local level and at the State level, but his greatest claim to fame is that he married a good friend of mine who served with me in the George W. Bush White House, Andrea. And I didn't know him before Andrea, but she has done a great job of cleaning him up, and I look forward to his comments.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the Representative from Nebraska's Third District (Mr. SMITH).

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congressman ARRINGTON for yielding. It is great to join him and others here this evening to really celebrate rural America.

A lot happens in rural America. Oftentimes, it kind of flies under the radar. That is okay. That is generally the way rural Americans like it. It is interesting. As I represent the 75 counties of Nebraska's Third District, it is part of two different time zones and just a diverse perspective there of many different Nebraskans.

I would say that anecdotally, at least, the most common request among my constituents is to be left alone. And it is interesting that when we talk about policies like waters of the U.S. or various—healthcare, interestingly, you know, a lot of promises were made there that haven't panned out, and so I am grateful that I can represent so many Nebraskans who are focused on solutions, and I seek to really reflect their ideas as solutions here in Washington.

Obviously, there is a lot happening now. I would say all too much or all too often there is so much bickering that we can't get to the solutions that we know will help the American people.

I am proud to represent the top producing agriculture district in the country, and of course, with 75 counties, we have a lot of production, whether it is livestock, whether it is row crops. I am happy to have helped start the Modern Agriculture Caucus, and I am grateful for colleagues participating in this effort to focus on new ways of doing things in terms of agriculture.

We know that, obviously, agriculture has been around a long time, and things change. Resources can change oftentimes, but I am glad that we can focus on new ways of doing things that we know are good for the environment. We conserve resources, natural resources and others, as we focus on research that has led to increased yields for our crops so that we can help feed the world.

We know that many countries around the world look to America as leaders in agriculture, especially production agriculture, and so I am glad to help reflect to those successes, help celebrate those successes.

Who would have thought that not so long ago, who would have thought that

today, we can have record yields amidst a drought. That not only helps producers, that helps consumers, and that literally helps every person around the world.

And America is a big country, we know that, and oftentimes there seems to be somewhat of a disconnect between rural America and urban America.

Interestingly, I like to share this story. There was a very well-meaning civil servant who visited rural Nebraska a while back, and we were touring part of Nebraska. We turned onto a gravel road, and this well-meaning individual said it had been about 20 years since he traveled on a gravel road.

I don't think there was any intended disrespect at all, but certainly a difference of perspective. And so here we are, literally raising the awareness of all of America in terms of what we can do in rural America as we do focus on helping feed the world, helping feed America, certainly, but applying biotechnology out across the fields and across the prairies of rural America.

And when it comes to trade, we know that we are good at producing agriculture products. We want to sell our products around the world, especially when 96 percent of these customers reside outside our country. So that is why I hope that we can focus on trade policies moving forward so that we can bring some prosperity to the home front amidst a struggling ag economy.

Let us be honest about that. Crop prices are not what they were, but property taxes are still high, input costs are still high, and we want to do what we can to bring stronger market prices to agriculture.

□ 1815

That is why we want to and we need to focus on the global economy that is so important.

I am grateful to have the opportunity to stand here and really celebrate rural America, as we do have so many of the solutions that our country needs right now.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Mr. Speaker, I am honored that the gentleman from Nebraska joined us to lift our voices high, as our flag of rural America flies high in this House. We think about those families, those middle and working class families, every day as we govern on behalf of the people we represent.

Mr. Speaker, I have got another gentleman who I am learning a great deal from as I serve with him on the House Agriculture Committee and the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. He is a very passionate man from the great State of Illinois' 12th District. He is a firefighter, the son and grandson of coal miners, and a proud daddy.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST).

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas for hosting this Special Order on rural America.

I am a proud resident of a rural district in southern Illinois. If you are

from Illinois, you understand that the "S" is capitalized on the word "southern"; and that is because it is a unique area in itself. It is nowhere near—and there are great people in the Chicago area, but we are farther—well, actually the district starts just across from St. Louis and goes south to where the Mississippi River and the Ohio River come together. There are a lot of farming communities there.

In my opinion, though, we don't talk enough about our rural communities here on the House floor. So, I am really glad that we are having that opportunity tonight.

In so many ways, you have to realize that our rural areas are the backbone of this country. But if you listen to the media and the advertisers and the Hollywood producers, you would think there wasn't anything between the East Coast and the West Coast. But, let me tell you, I am here today to say that there is.

Too many of these small communities are struggling, trying to get through, and, quite often, are weighed down by things that we do here in Washington. They want investment. They care about the growth of their communities and they care about jobs.

But when the press talks about jobs, the same industries that come up every time are the tech startups, the consulting firms, the real estate companies, and the new restaurant chains. Those are all good, but one group that doesn't get talked about enough is our farmers.

And let me tell you, that is not something new. It has happened over many years. This Nation's farmers have planted and kept us fed for all the years this great Nation has been in existence.

And I am going to tell you that Benjamin Franklin called farming the only honest way to acquire wealth. Thomas Jefferson said our government would remain virtuous as long as it remained chiefly agricultural. Illinois' own Abraham Lincoln was born into farming and described agriculture as a great calling.

In southern Illinois, beginning farmers tell me their cost of doing business is climbing and their income is shrinking.

This is not the first time this has happened. I want to kind of express a story that took place several years ago.

Right now, in the Agriculture Committee, we are working on the farm bill. Well, the first farm bill came into existence because then-President Ronald Reagan began to hear from the farmers around this Nation of the problems that they were facing and the concerns that they had. And one in particular farmer, a man by the name of Herman Krone, who lives in a little town called Du Quoin, Illinois, about 18 to 20 miles from my home, wrote a letter. Because back then you didn't send emails and you didn't send texts. You actually wrote letters. He sent it to the

President, not thinking that he would get a response, but he just wanted to voice his concern of his son Rick, and was Rick going to stay in the family business. Well, he really couldn't because of the high risk of doing business in our agricultural communities.

Well, one night—as a matter of fact, it was a Sunday night, if I remember correctly, because I heard this story from Herman himself before he passed—the phone rang. Now, I understand it wasn't a cell phone, like we have now. It was actually hardwired to the wall. The phone rang, he reached over and picked it up, and someone asked: Is this Herman Krone? Mr. Krone?

He said: Yes.

They said: Can you hold for the President?

Herman said: The president of what?

The man on the other end said: The President of the United States, Mr. Ronald Reagan.

He said: Well, you are kidding me?

The man said: No, Mr. Krone. It really is.

Sure enough, the President himself called Herman.

He said: Herman, I read your letter, and I realize that you understand what the problems are that the rural farmers are facing today.

He said: I will tell you what I would like to do. I would like to come to your farm. You bring a group of your agricultural people together and I want to talk with them.

And, sure enough, the next month or so, President Ronald Reagan came. The conversation he had, along with other conversations he had around this United States, led to the first farm bill.

We are working on that farm bill right now. But farming and ranching operations are getting squeezed, due to low commodity prices, just like they were then. And the need for increased credit, in order to expand the diversity, has to be done.

Small family-owned businesses are most affected. We hear about corporate farming, but the fact is, 97 percent of American farms are family-owned farms.

That is why one of the bills that I have introduced is known as the BALE Act, which is to modernize the Guaranteed and Direct Loan program at the USDA to better reflect the costs of farming because times have changed. It is our job here in this House to remember that we are dealing with those rural areas and the farmers that are in them.

Now, this will help the next generation of producers make their mark on the industry. As Republicans and Democrats, we need to work together on more ideas like this one. We need to keep focused on the heartland because these are the red-blooded Americans who love their country and deserve a voice.

By addressing the needs of hardworking families who are too often forgotten, we can strengthen these com-

munities for generations to come. It really is all about the next generation.

Each one of us in this House hopes and prays that this Nation holds and grows, and the next generation has to come up. We need that generation of farmers to make sure that they stay on the farm.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Illinois for his heartfelt comments about rural America. I am so proud to be shoulder to shoulder with him in this righteous cause.

Mr. Speaker, I now have the greatest privilege of the night for me, because this man has been a mentor and a friend for many years and has probably done as much as anybody to welcome me and coach me up so I can represent west Texas to the best of my abilities. He is from the 25th District of Texas, and he is an all-American baseball player. Let me tell you, he won back then and he is winning now. I am just so proud that he is on the side of rural America and helping rural America win in the outcomes of public policy so we can keep it strong and vibrant and keep America great.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. WILLIAMS).

Mr. WILLIAMS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for that nice introduction. I thank him for what he is doing, and I thank him for bringing rural America together tonight in the people's House.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this time to recognize rural America and the impact it has on our Nation. Rural America makes up 72 percent of our country's land, and roughly 46.2 million Americans simply call it home.

Our country has been relying on rural America since the beginning. It is where our roots are, where our values are, and where our heritage began.

The 25th District of Texas, which I am honored to represent, has tens of thousands of hardworking men and women who are employed in the agricultural industry. These men and women make up a large driving force that help supply our Nation's families with products we would be unable to get otherwise.

But it is more than that. These folks instill values, such as hard work, ethics, taking days on and not taking days off, doing the right thing, and taking care of your neighbor. This is the fabric of our Nation that is passed on from generation to generation.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to highlight a few specific rural areas in my district that are truly making a difference.

Located in Stephenville, Texas, the Tarleton State University's Southwest Regional Dairy Center is a one-of-a-kind facility. This establishment is home to hundreds of cows that are used for teaching purposes, research for higher education, and directly contributes to the dairy industry in Texas and all of the Southwest. I am proud to represent this unique institution that not

only provides goods to our Nation, but also serves as a learning institute, so we can train the dairy farmers of tomorrow.

I would also like to recognize the Comanche Peak Nuclear Power Plant, located in rural Glen Rose, Texas. This power plant has been providing reliable clean power to Texas' electric grid for almost 27 years. Taking up approximately 10,000 acres of land, this plant can power about 1.15 million homes. Their standard of quality is what has made Comanche Peak one of the best nuclear power plants in the Nation, and I am proud to represent it in our district.

It is because of rural places like these and the people that work there that our country is able to run dependably and efficiently. It is why America is the greatest country in the world. And we sometimes think Texas might be the best place in America.

I applaud their efforts, and I look forward to continuing to represent them here in the United States Congress. And I remind you that you need to go see the 25th District. You are going to like it.

But the people in the 25th District just ask several things. They just ask that we believe in the Constitution. They just ask that we have a conscience. They just ask that we listen to them. And they also just ask that we read the Bible. I am proud to represent the people in the 25th District.

In God we trust.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from the great State of Texas. I appreciate his friendship, his mentorship, and that acid test that he taught me when I first stepped foot on the floor of the House of Representatives—your conscience, your constituents, the Bible, the Constitution. If you vote that way, you are going to do right by your children and grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, I thank ROGER WILLIAMS, a great American.

Mr. Speaker, I have another colleague here. He came here because he feels so passionate about rural America. I am so grateful that he is here.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to my colleague from the great State of Texas (Mr. GOHMERT).

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. ARRINGTON for his dedication to rural America. That is the heartland. I thank him for knowing that and representing his district so well.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas for those remarks.

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

HEALTHCARE

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