

with, for forestry officials and stakeholders across the country. Tackling this problem has become a collaborative and holistic national policy effort, and the policy proposals we have produced are reflective of this fact. They are also bipartisan.

But, Mr. Speaker, we can't let this just be a rhetorical exercise. We are united in demanding Congress do something. This Chamber has the knowledge and aptitude to deliver policy solutions. Now we need the political will to turn that knowledge into congressional action. Only then will huge portions of the country finally see some relief from these disasters.

When your home is on fire, it is straightforward, it is a nonpartisan issue. You call the fire department, and after the problem is dealt with, you make sure that you eliminate what caused the fire so that you don't see it again.

Mr. Speaker, our Nation was on fire this year, and I demand that we, as this Chamber, unite in the same spirit of decisive problem solving as we do for our natural disasters. Let's put these fires out, and then let's stop the brunt for next year's fires before they start.

In my four terms as a Congressman from Arizona, I have had to witness the largest catastrophic fire in Arizona history, and also the most catastrophic life-taking, the Yarnell fire. The first was the Wild Well fire in northeast Arizona, and the second was the Yarnell fire that is now in the movie theaters that took the lives of 19 firefighters. That is a travesty.

This is something that gives when it is managed right. The people back home know the right answer. Let's give them the tools, the working power, and the policy that allows them, instead of being victims, to be stalwart solutions for a policy that gives back.

As the gentleman from Arkansas said, as Teddy Roosevelt said: Leave our natural resources better than we found them.

Mr. Speaker, the speakers tonight shared their stories. We want America to hear those loud and clear. These are natural disasters no different than hurricanes, but these, in one case, are different. They are manmade.

Let's bring this commonsense policy that Mr. WESTERMAN has put forward. He is a true advocate and smart in regards to those reforms; that is why we want to make sure that H.R. 2936 gets moved through this Chamber, and then put the onus back on the Senate, so that we actually reward the people for good policy and making sure that the victims are turned upside down and made stalwart solution makers.

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

COMMEMORATING THE 100TH BIRTHDAY OF FANNIE LOU HAMER

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KUSTOFF of Tennessee). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January

3, 2017, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. THOMPSON) for 30 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, tonight, I am privileged to rise in support of recognizing a true hero in not only the State of Mississippi, but this country as a whole. Her name is Fannie Lou Hamer. Fannie Lou Hamer will be 100 years old this week. I am happy to say that part of who I am can be attributed to my association with Ms. Hamer.

Mr. Speaker, before I get into my message, I would like to yield to the gentlewoman from New Jersey (Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN).

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague and my friend, Mr. BENNIE THOMPSON, for organizing this important Special Order hour honoring his fellow Mississippian, Ms. Fannie Lou Hamer.

Yesterday, *Cosmopolitan* published an article written by Zerlina Maxwell, aptly titled "Trust Black Women." In the article, Maxwell, a fellow New Jerseyian, quoted her colleague, who said: "Black women have been a part of every great movement that has happened in this country. We always show up."

Tonight, we celebrate the birth of Fannie Lou Hamer, a black woman who, like many of us, always showed up. In 1964, Fannie Lou Hamer showed up at the Democratic National Convention to speak on behalf of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and highlight the hurdles, both physical and political, that were preventing Blacks in the South from showing up at the ballot box.

During her testimony, she recounted her 26-mile journey to Indianola, Mississippi, to register to vote at the county courthouse where seven other men and women were looking to do the same. On the way, they encountered coordinated opposition from local and State law enforcement and men and women who sought to deter them from exercising their right to vote.

Upon returning home, Fannie Lou Hamer found that she had been fired from her job. According to *The New York Times*, she said: "They kicked me off the plantation; they set me free. It is the best thing that could happen. Now I can work for my people."

That same year, Fannie Lou Hamer ran for Congress as a candidate from Mississippi's Second Congressional District. And even in her defeat, Ms. Hamer continued to show up and work for her people.

In 2014, 50 years after her testimony and her run for Congress, residents in New Jersey's 12th Congressional District elected me, the State's first ever African-American woman to represent them here in the House of Representatives.

During my freshman term, I joined my two amazing colleagues, Representative ROBIN KELLY of Illinois and Representative YVETTE CLARKE of New York, to form the first ever Congres-

sional Caucus on Black Women and Girls, a body of elected officials who work to ensure that Congress shows up for us.

And in 2016, I stood at the Democratic National Convention, standing on the shoulders of Ms. Hamer's legacy, and proudly told America that this Nation is stronger when everyone has a chance to succeed.

Ms. Hamer would beam with pride knowing that my colleagues and I continue to beat back hurdles placed at the feet of minorities and the poor that restrict their access to the vote.

Ms. Hamer, however, would be very sad to know that, instead of being fired for trying to exercise the right to vote, they change polling places or amend requirements for valid identification. It is the same game, she would recognize, it is just different tactics.

I am honored to stand here to honor the birthday of Ms. Fannie Lou Hamer, walk alongside her footsteps of greatness and, like she so often did, lift as I climb. We as women, and women of color, have to be the standard bearers we have been and continue to be. We have always and will continue to fight for what is right and what is necessary, even if we must do this alone.

As we battle back against the racism, the sexism, and the bigotry that runneth over in this administration, we must always be awake, alert, and to show up.

Today, in honoring the birthday of Fannie Lou Hamer, we simultaneously celebrate the strength of women, the ways we can encourage one another to be our sisters' keepers, and continue to build a future for the next generation of women ready and waiting to show up and to lead.

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I will tell the gentlewoman from New Jersey that I had the opportunity to meet Ms. Hamer as a young college student at Tougaloo College. Facts about it, one of the first campaigns I worked on as a college student was Ms. Hamer's campaign for Congress, even though, as the gentlewoman indicated, she lost. But I now represent the Second District of Mississippi, and it was Ms. Hamer's spirit that still lives on.

In Sunflower County, Mississippi, the majority of the population is African American. At the time she registered to vote, we had no African Americans elected officials in Sunflower County. I am happy to report to you now that the sheriff is African American; the chancery clerk, the circuit clerk, four of the five county supervisors are African American; so Ms. Hamer's work has not been in vain.

As you also indicated, the Devil is busy creating tricks to disenfranchise people—voter ID, closing voting polls, making it more difficult for people in rural areas to get to the polls to vote, especially in areas where you don't have public transportation.

So, Ms. Hamer's 100th birthday should be spent rededicating ourselves

to her legacy. One of the things that everyone loves to quote is Ms. Hamer's words that she is "sick and tired of being sick and tired." Well, that goes a long way, especially given the administration we are being challenged with here in Washington now. Hopefully, Ms. Hamer's spirit will live on.

Congresswoman KAREN BASS and myself visited Ms. Hamer's grave this past Saturday in Ruleville, Mississippi, and it was very touching. The community, in her death, has really embraced not only she, but her husband, Pat, and created a monument downtown Ruleville to her memory.

When I was a freshman Member of this body, I named the post office in Ruleville, Mississippi, after Ms. Hamer, and I am happy to say that the mayor of Ruleville, Mississippi, now is an African-American female.

So Ms. Hamer's legacy, her involvement with SNCC, her involvement with the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, all those things have made not just Mississippi, but this country a better place—affordable housing, all those things that she wanted, access to not only healthcare, but access to affordable healthcare, many of those items she talked about.

As a Christian woman, she believed in nonviolence, but she also believed in direct action. She was assaulted in the Winona, Mississippi, jail for advocating the right to vote.

□ 2015

In spite of what she encountered, she served as a shining example of what a truly committed individual can accomplish.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. I yield to the gentlewoman from New Jersey.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I did not ever have the pleasure and honor of meeting her in person, but I remember watching television during that Democratic National Convention, which was taking place in my home State in the great city of Atlantic City.

I remember the conscious bearing energy that evolved around all of that activity, and it made me very proud. And I would say that, indeed, Fannie Lou Hamer's work has not gone, has not been in vain. But she also is smiling down knowing that what she started, you are continuing on, and that you are serving in the very district that she loved enough to fight for way back when.

It is my honor to know you, and to know that you have been touched by her. So that means that with less than 6 degrees of separation, I have been touched by her, and that is my blessing.

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I would also like to say to the gentlewoman that that 1964 Atlantic City Democratic National Convention set the tone for opening up the Demo-

cratic Party to people of all races and colors because Mrs. Hamer challenged the all-White makeup of the Mississippi delegation by saying Black people couldn't participate. They were systematically excluded from the selection process, and she appealed to that convention to do better.

I am happy, as you know, to report that the convention heard Mrs. Hamer and decided that an all-White delegation from the State with the highest percentage of African Americans in the country could not be justified. So the delegation was not only integrated at the convention, but, for a time, we shared the chairmanships of the party. We had a co-chair that was White and a co-chair that was African American. So Mrs. Hamer's spirit still lives on.

One of the real issues that really touches most of our hearts is that she was a very humble person. She had the kind of spirit in her delivery that you just had to pay attention to. She had the aura when she walked in a room that whatever you were doing, you had to stop and pay attention to this very simple person who came in. But every time she opened her mouth, something very prophetic would come out.

So for a lot of individuals who think that Fannie Lou Hamer's time has come and gone, I think it is fitting and proper that at this 100th birthday celebration, we recommit ourselves to many of the things that Mrs. Hamer stood for: inclusion; not leaving people out because they don't live in the big house on the hill; to make sure that our children receive the best education possible. All of those things Mrs. Hamer was noted for.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. I yield to the gentlewoman from New Jersey.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I think it is vitally important on this 100th anniversary of Ms. Hamer's birth to also recognize that we are still fighting for the unfettered access to the vote, and that here in Congress, we have the opportunity to eliminate barriers and to fix the problems with the Civil Rights Act that just negatively impacts access and unfettered access to voting. There are just so many fundamental things that we could be doing today that honor the work that she did and that she gave her life's work to.

In closing for me, I want to just say that I thank the gentleman so very much for doing this because I know that there are people who listen to these moments of Special Orders hours on C-SPAN, or catch it in some other form. It is important for our communities to recognize just how significant this woman's role was in ensuring that they have the access to the things that they have access to today, and to demand their right to vote, and to exercise that right to vote every chance they get.

I am very grateful for the gentleman carrying this message this evening.

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for the very kind comments. But to talk about Mrs. Hamer and her work is easy. It speaks for itself. I am very privileged, as I indicated, to have known her, to have participated in a number of meetings.

One of the other things that I realized, she didn't—as we used to say, there were no big Is and little yous. She saw everyone the same. It didn't matter whether you belonged to the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, or the Black Panther Party, or the Deacons for Defense and Justice. You still had room at the table under Mrs. Hamer's tutelage. Many of us are privileged to have known her in that way, and we try to pattern our lives after her.

The National Council of Negro Women really worked very hard with Mrs. Hamer in producing affordable housing and to making sure that farmers cooperatives could be developed in the Mississippi Delta. Because as some would choose to forget, Mrs. Hamer was put off the plantation that she lived on because she was encouraging people to register and vote.

But those were the times that we all lived in, and we saw it. When I ran for Congress, there were people who worked on farms who were required to work overtime so that they couldn't go to the polls before they closed. So there are a lot of things that we saw during Mrs. Hamer's time. The tricks are still being played.

So it is in the spirit of Fannie Lou that we pay tribute tonight to her. It is in that spirit of Fannie Lou that we wish her a happy 100th birthday. But it is also in her spirit that, as they say in South Africa, "the struggle continues," "a luta continua."

I know in the Congressional Black Caucus we call ourselves the conscience of Congress. We have to be. If we don't speak up for many of the people that Mrs. Hamer loved the most, who will? We were sent here to care for the opposition on behalf of the people who can't afford to hire lobbyists; on behalf of the people who can't get on a plane and fly to Washington and talk to their congressperson; on behalf of the little child who not only is struggling to get into the Head Start program, but whose parents are having a hard time.

So our representation as members of the Congressional Black Caucus is predicated on many of the things that Mrs. Hamer stood for in her lifetime. We can't ever forget her spirit. We can't ever forget her energy. And even though we have the opportunity as Members of Congress to meet people from all over the world, one of the things that she used to say is: "You know, I walked among kings, but I have always kept the common touch."

It is in that spirit that I appreciate the gentlewoman helping me carry forth this time for Mrs. Hamer as she celebrates here 100th birthday. If the

gentlewoman has some closing comments or something she would like to add, I yield to the gentlewoman from New Jersey (Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN).

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I would just like to note that there was an amazing demonstration of people in front of the Supreme Court demanding that we do something about gerrymandering because that is another way of negatively impacting the impact of one man and one vote.

So it is, again, fitting to be honoring this woman who gave her life's work to ensuring that everybody who was eligible to vote was given the right to vote; to eliminate any obstacles that were placed in their way so that we could open up opportunities to elect people who would be fair in the policies that are important; to ensure that there is equality of opportunity in this country for all people, predicated upon their ability to do the intellect and their willingness to work hard, therefore, the content of their character versus the color of their skin. So it is indeed an honor to have shared this moment with you. Thank you for the invitation.

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Thank you very much Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN for your participation.

The last point I would like to make is, in Mrs. Hamer's day, it was poll tax. It was: How many bubbles are in a bar of soap? How many grains of sand are on the beach?

Now it is moving the polls in the interest of saving money, but you are disenfranchising people who don't have the ability to go further. It is the gerrymandering of districts so that you have the richest people in an area in the same district as the poorest people in that area. There are no real communities of interest.

If I am worried about paying the light bill or the rent, then there is a great possibility that I won't go vote. But if I own a house and own a car and know where my next meal is coming from, I will go vote. So we have what we call communities of interest, and Mrs. Hamer talked about that.

So, again, we wanted to make sure that this week did not go by without giving Mrs. Hamer her due recognition for her 100th birthday. There will be a lot of other activities after this Special Order hour in memory of Mrs. Hamer.

We have a movie that will be produced talking about her life and legacy and her contribution to this great country of ours. I look forward to that as well as making sure that our children and grandchildren understand who this great woman was and what she meant to this country of ours and so many of us who pattern after her. So, again, thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to call attention to President Trump's lack of concern for the thousands of Americans affected by the hurricanes throughout the U.S. and most recently in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, which has reminded us of the devastation Hurricane

Katrina caused. Instead of showing compassion to those suffering, the president and his administration have condemned African-American athletes and a Black, female sports commentator for exercising their constitutional right to protest and voice their opinions.

Today, I stand with the athletes who choose to take a knee during the national anthem and those who speak out fighting against racial inequality that still persists throughout this country.

I suggest President Trump spends less time tweeting discriminatory comments and more time focusing on the issues of our country.

Tonight, I recognize a civil rights hero whose work is no small part of the reason I and many other African-American members of Congress are able to stand before you today.

Ms. Fannie Lou Hamer was born in 1917 in Montgomery County, Mississippi. During the civil rights era, Ms. Hamer, at the age of just 6-years-old joined her family picking cotton on the plantation of W.D. Marlow in Sunflower County, Mississippi.

Though, she began to pick cotton at a young age, Ms. Hamer was able to complete many years in school learning how to read and write, which helped her serve hundreds of African-Americans throughout her life.

In the 1960s, Ms. Hamer joined the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, an organization providing African-Americans the opportunity to register to vote. Ms. Hamer taught Black Mississippians how to read and write in order for them to pass discriminatory literacy tests designed to prevent Black Americans from registering to vote.

In 1962, Ms. Hamer along with 17 Black Mississippians traveled by bus from Ruleville, Mississippi, to Indianola, Mississippi, to register to vote. Upon arrival, the group was blocked from entry by local law enforcement. But, Ms. Hamer and one of her fellow travelers were able to fill out a voter application and take the literacy test, but due to discrimination the two were unable to register. This did not deter Ms. Hamer's passion and willingness to fight racism throughout Mississippi.

On the group's way back to Ruleville, the bus was stopped by local police officers and the driver was arrested. In that very moment of racism and trail, Ms. Hamer began to sing Negro spirituals leaving a clear message to her oppressors that she would never give up.

Her leadership was a beacon of hope for so many Black Mississippians that in 1964, Ms. Hamer ran for Congress to represent Mississippi's Second Congressional District as a Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party candidate, a party which she founded to promote equal rights for African-Americans in Mississippi.

During the 1960s, very few women especially women of color threw their hat into the ring for a Congressional bid. Her willingness to run in Mississippi at that time was and continues to be a powerful act in itself. Though she was unsuccessful, her speeches, messages and visits to African-Americans around the state resonated.

Ms. Hamer provided inspiration for me to work for the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, while I attended Tougaloo College continuing Ms. Hamer's work to get African-Americans across Mississippi registered to vote. I remember volunteering for Ms. Hamer's Congressional campaign and getting inspired to serve the people of Mississippi. Today, I

represent Mississippi's Second Congressional District, and I cannot help but think that Ms. Hamer is smiling down on me. Her courage and brilliance is one of the reasons I stand on this floor today.

I am honored to be able to give time to honor a legend and civil rights icon. Ms. Fannie Lou Hamer's legacy will forever live on, and I stand here today along with my colleagues to pay homage to a true hero.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks on my Special Order.

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

There was no objection.

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

Ms. FUDGE. Mr. Speaker, let me first begin by thanking my friend and colleague Rep. BENNIE THOMPSON for leading today's effort in honoring the life and legacy of Fannie Lou Hamer. October 6th marks the 100th anniversary of her birth in Montgomery County, Mississippi.

An honorary member of Delta Sigma Theta, Fannie Lou Hamer dedicated her life to the fight for civil rights. Born in 1917, she was the daughter of sharecroppers and the youngest of 20 siblings. By the age of six, she was helping her family in the cotton fields.

Fannie Lou Hamer was a woman of courage. She used her voice to raise awareness about the plight of African Americans in the Mississippi Delta. She was a woman of strength who was able to channel the injustices committed against her into activism.

Working for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Hamer helped African Americans register to vote and worked to end segregation.

After attempting to register to vote herself in August 1962, Hamer lost her job and was kicked out of her home. The following year, she and fellow activists returning from a training workshop were unjustly jailed and severely beaten. While the beating left permanent damage, the officers were later acquitted by an all-white jury.

Hamer was also a trailblazing political activist. She helped to found the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and the National Women's Political Caucus. She almost derailed the re-election of President Lyndon Johnson and changed the Democratic Party's delegate selection process. In 1968, she would become the first African American to serve as an official delegate at a national-party convention since Reconstruction and the first woman ever from Mississippi.

Although unsuccessful in her bids for elected office, Hamer remained committed to voting rights and antipoverty efforts. She filed a lawsuit to push forward desegregation efforts in local schools, led the cotton pickers resistance movement and helped to bring a Head Start program to her community.

Fannie Lou Hamer's contributions to the American Civil Rights movement and our nation are undeniable. As then UN Ambassador Andrew Young eulogized at her funeral, "None of us would be where we are now had she not been there then." His words still ring true 40 years later.

