

also from the United Way was Brian Whitney and Kerry Conaghan; Ron Johnson, CEO of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Family Services Inc. in Springfield; Andrea Marion, executive director of Lorraine's Soup Kitchen; Shannon Rudder, executive director of Kate's Kitchen in Holyoke; Betty Medina Lichtenstein, founder and executive director of Enlace de Familias in Holyoke; Mindy Domb, executive director of the Amherst Survival Center; and Neftali Duran, the chef and food activist at Nuestras Raices in Holyoke;

The musicians who kept us entertained along the way: the Expandable Brass Band, Double Edge Theatre, and Hopkins Academy Band;

Western Massachusetts small businesses, including: BridgeSide Grille; Magpie Pizza; Ashfield Lake House; Union Station in Northampton; Berkshire Brewing Company, who kept us nourished along the way; Ben Clark of Clarkdale Fruit Farms; and Tea Guys of Whately, Massachusetts, for their wonderful tea in honor of the march, and for their continued generosity and friendship;

The Sheriff's Departments in Hampden, Hampshire, and Franklin Counties, as well as the Deerfield Police helped provide escorts for us during the entire 43 miles.

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I am grateful to Mr. Michael Brooks and the students of Smith Vocational School in Northampton for making the shopping carts we used during the march.

I am grateful to the countless students—elementary, middle school, and high school students—who raised money and greeted us along the way; members of the Tibetan community who greeted us as well; and all the other incredible individuals from our community who joined us on the march, like my dear friends Chia Collins, Steve “the Hippie” Fendell, Georgiann and Rick Kristek, Kristen Elechko, Erin McKeown and Emily Lichter from the Ashfield Lake House, and so many others; as well as industry partners who helped support this effort through their generosity.

I want to thank two of my wonderful district staffers, Keith Barnicle and Seth Nadeau, for their efforts in helping to organize the march and for assisting me every step of the way.

Lastly, I want to thank my son, Patrick, who marched with me by my side during this entire time.

Mr. Speaker, I was proud to join so many of my constituents and neighbors in western Massachusetts to bring attention to the issue of hunger and raise much-needed funding for The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts.

I am so honored to be part of this march each year, but I need to remind my colleagues in this Chamber that charities alone cannot end hunger. To do that, it will take further investments in our federally funded programs like SNAP, WIC, and school meals.

As we look toward the next farm bill, the next budget, and the upcoming appropriations cycle, I plead with my colleagues to maintain and increase investments and programs to help those struggling with food insecurity. Please don't do anything to make hunger worse in this country.

In the United States of America, the richest country in the history of the world, it is a disgrace that any child goes to bed hungry, that any senior has to choose between lifesaving medication and a decent meal, that any veteran who risked his or her life in the defense of our Nation doesn't have enough to eat, and that any individual suffers from hunger. But, still, 42 million Americans remain food insecure.

Food is a right, and it is up to this Congress to finally take a stand in supporting efforts to end hunger now.

EXPRESSING GRATITUDE TO IGOR BIRMAN, CHIEF OF STAFF

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

Mr. McCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my gratitude to my chief of staff, Igor Birman, who will be leaving the House of Representatives on December 5 to begin a new career in financial management. He and his wife, Kim, are expecting their first child in April and will be moving to New York.

Igor Birman's story sums up the best of America and is testimony to the exceptionalism of American founding principles, how they beckon to oppressed people around the world, and how much those who come here legally bring to our Nation.

Igor was born in Moscow to parents who desperately yearned for the fundamental rights they were denied in the Soviet Union. At the time, they were called refuseniks, Russian Jews persecuted for their religious beliefs and denied exit visas because of their technical knowledge.

Finally, after many years, as the Soviet Union began to collapse, glasnost opened an opportunity for the Birmans finally to realize their dream. Igor remembers hurriedly learning English on borrowed phonograph records. A week before their departure, the family returned to their tiny apartment to find the place upended by a last-minute KGB raid. Igor's mother comforted her children by saying: “In a few weeks, we will be in America, where this can never happen.”

Igor was 14 when they arrived in California to begin a new life. He entered UC Davis, where he quickly rose to public prominence after a column he had written expressing his libertarian views was censored by the politically correct apparatchiks on the campus newspaper. The irony wasn't lost on anybody, and it became a prominent story on northern California talk radio.

That is where I first became aware of Igor, and that year, I was fortunate to have him work in my State senate office as an intern. He left to attend law school, and when he returned, he did an amazing job as my finance director in a hard-fought campaign for Congress in 2008. Hiring him as my chief of staff was the easiest decision I have ever made in my years in public office. He came to Washington at the age of 28—I believe the youngest chief of staff then serving.

He has ably run my congressional office for nearly a decade, and during those years, he has assembled the most competent team I have ever had the honor to serve with. I have found his judgment impeccable, his insight keen, and his honesty and integrity spotless.

Charles de Gaulle famously observed that the cemeteries are filled with indispensable men, but General de Gaulle had never met Igor Birman. I can say definitively some people truly are indispensable, and Igor is one of them.

I am obviously not the only person to hold this opinion. The founder of Cablevision saw these same qualities in him and, beginning next week, he will be placing his operations and foundations in Igor's capable hands.

Igor once ran a very credible race for Congress himself, and I hope that he will not give up on his ambition to serve our Nation. I believe a time may be coming when Americans may lose the memory of freedom and they will need to turn to leaders like Igor for a passionate reminder of just how valuable a commodity is our freedom.

“There is a time to every purpose under Heaven,” and for now the time has come for Igor and Kim to enjoy their new family, to enjoy the fruits of their new labors, and to embark upon a promising future together. I wish them the very best in their many happy years ahead.

NATIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. O'HALLERAN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. O'HALLERAN. Mr. Speaker, today is the final day of National Native American Heritage Month.

I rise today to honor and celebrate the rich history and traditions of Native Americans and to note the work we are doing in Congress to invest in infrastructure, education, and healthcare across the entire Indian Country.

It is an immense privilege to work with Tribal communities across Arizona's First Congressional District. With more than 12 Tribes and nations in my district, I see the impact of Native American heritage in every town I visit, especially their strong commitment to family, community, and traditions—traditions, by the way, that people from all around the world come to see every year.

It has been inspiring to see the many tributes my colleagues have shared here with this body throughout the month. It underscores the immense and immeasurable contributions of Native Americans to this country. Yesterday I spoke about the Navaho code talkers and all the code talkers and the veterans who have come from Native American lands.

As a member of the congressional Native American Caucus, I am proud to work with Tribal leaders to strengthen the relationship between our country and their sovereign nations. There is a great deal to do to ensure rural, Tribal communities have access to 21st century infrastructure, education, and healthcare, but I am confident that the work we are doing will make these critical investments.

Mr. Speaker, one of the founding principles of this great country is the celebration of diversity of its people. When we recognize that as a strength, we truly are a more perfect union.

HONORING TROOPER DAMON ALLEN

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

Mr. FLORES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Texas Department of Public Safety Trooper Damon Allen of Mexia, Texas, who passed away on November 23, 2017.

Damon Allen was born in Morgantown, Kentucky, on October 4, 1976. His family moved to Mexia in 1984, where he lived until his passing.

In 1995, Damon graduated from Mexia High School, where he was a member of the varsity football team. Damon went on to marry his high school sweetheart, Kasey Pickett. Happily married for nearly 24 years, Kasey and Damon had three daughters and a son: Chelsea, Kaitlyn, Madison, and Cameron. Damon was also the proud grandfather to his grandson, Quest.

After graduating from Mexia High School, Damon worked for the Mexia State School, a rehabilitation school for students with learning impairments. He then worked for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice for 5 years before pursuing his passion to become a Texas DPS State Trooper.

Damon was an exemplary DPS Trooper for 15 years and was known to those in his unit as a model gentleman. He was fair and polite to all he came in contact with, and he treated all around him as if they were his life-long friends. His calling to serve in law enforcement came from a desire to be the man who people turn to in their time of need. Tragically, he was murdered by a criminal while serving the people of Texas on Thanksgiving Day.

In his free time, Damon enjoyed hunting, fishing, and off-road driving in his Jeep, especially over the dunes at the beach. He had a strong faith in God, attending both the Cowboy Church in Freestone and the First Assembly of God Church in Mexia.

Mr. Speaker, Damon Allen worked tirelessly to serve our central Texas communities. He is loved, and he has certainly left an enduring impression on the people of Mexia. He will be forever remembered as a great State trooper, a public servant, a community member, a husband, a father, a grandfather, and a friend.

My wife, Gina, and I offer our deepest and heartfelt condolences to the Allen family. We also lift up the family and friends of Damon Allen in our prayers. I have requested that the United States flag be flown over the Capitol to honor the life and legacy of DPS Trooper Damon Allen.

As I close today, I urge all Americans to continue praying for our country during these difficult times, for our military men and women who protect us from external threats, and for our first responders who protect us here at home.

GUN VIOLENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. KELLY) for 5 minutes.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise yet again because Americans are dying and this House is doing nothing. Correction, we aren't doing nothing. House Republicans are planning to make the situation worse.

Yesterday, the House Judiciary Committee considered the so-called Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act, which should be called the "Exporting Gun Violence Across State Line Act."

In addition to threatening the safety of our communities, this bill, H.R. 38, is not only a threat to innocent citizens, but a direct threat to the brave men and women who protect and serve our communities.

So far this year, 42 law enforcement officers have been shot and killed in the United States.

I come from a law enforcement family. I have police officers—uncles, cousins, and nephews—serving in New York City and Chicago. I know the fear that law enforcement families feel, the constant worry that they may not come home, that you might get that call in the middle of the night or a knock on the door from the police chaplain.

If this House passes this dangerous bill, more law enforcement families will get these calls and get these late-night visits that no family should ever get.

H.R. 38 is opposed by many law enforcement organizations, including the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the Police Foundation, the Police Executive Research Forum, Major Cities Chiefs Association, the Hispanic American Police Command Officers Association, National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives, National Associations of Women Law Enforcement Executives, the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators, and many others.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD a letter of opposition from the National Law Enforcement Partnership to Prevent Gun Violence.

NATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT PARTNERSHIP TO PREVENT GUN VIOLENCE

STATEMENT OF THE NATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT PARTNERSHIP TO PREVENT GUN VIOLENCE ON THE CONCEALED CARRY RECIPROCITY ACT OF 2017—S. 446 & H.R. 38

WASHINGTON, DC.—The National Law Enforcement Partnership to Prevent Gun Violence urges members of Congress to oppose both the House and Senate versions of "Concealed Carry Reciprocity"—The Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act of 2017 (H.R. 38), sponsored by Representative Richard Hudson (R-NC), and The Constitutional Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act of 2017 (S. 446), sponsored by Senator John Cornyn (R-TX), respectively.

The National Law Enforcement Partnership to Prevent Gun Violence (the Partnership) includes nine national law enforcement organizations dedicated to serving the Nation's more than 900,000 sworn and civilian law enforcement officers, executives, and professional staff.

The Partnership has opposed previous legislative attempts to mandate concealed carry reciprocity nationwide because such schemes severely undermine successful, well established state laws governing carrying concealed firearms.

H.R. 38 and S. 446 would require each state—even those with strong permitting standards and stringent training requirements—to allow anyone to carry a concealed firearm so long as the person's own home state allows it. These misguided bills would preempt local and state perspectives on what's best for communities by forcing states to accept weaker concealed carry standards of other states and eliminates every state's ability to determine who may exercise the enormous responsibility of carrying a firearm, concealed or otherwise.

Training is a vitally important aspect of carrying a concealed firearm. Law enforcement officers are extensively trained to understand responsible firearm use, including making split-second decisions about when deadly force is appropriate; they also attend periodic in-service training and regularly requalify with their service weapons, most at least semi-annually. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, states require an average 92 hours of firearms skills and judgment training before certifying someone to carry a gun as a police officer. While a majority of states require a minimum number of hours of training to be eligible for civilian concealed firearm permits, several states do not require any training at all to carry a firearm in public. No state should be forced to accept a person carrying a concealed firearm who has not received gun safety training.

In addition, during public contacts, police officers will face the daunting task of verifying the validity of different carry permits from the states that issue them. Twelve states require no permit whatsoever to carry a concealed gun, taking away an officer's ability to determine if a person is carrying legally. Reciprocity would leave law enforcement helpless to keep guns out of the wrong hands when a person claims "constitutional carry" authority. This obvious step in the wrong direction would sow chaos and uncertainty, making a cop's job harder and citizens less safe. Under the House bill (H.R. 38), attempting to verify a permit or identification card comes with potential legal liability for law enforcement, an outrageous outcome for an officer trying to protect his or her community.