coming days, I will be entering these students' written testimonies into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD so my colleagues can also benefit from their experiences.

As I have said, hateful attacks against members of our community cannot and will not be tolerated, and it is incumbent upon each and every one of us to condemn hate wherever and whenever it appears. I look forward to carrying this message to my colleagues and community as we work together to rise above and appeal to the better angels of our nature.

IMPEACHMENT BEGINS TODAY

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

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, again, I am honored to be accorded the privilege of standing in the well of the Congress of the United States of America.

Mr. Speaker, the American poet, Robert Frost, penned a poem with the words: ''Two roads diverged in the woods, and I took the one less traveled. . . . ''

Mr. Speaker, in a metaphorical sense today, sometime after noon, shortly after 12 p.m., I will take the road less traveled.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that no one take this journey with me. I am absolutely convinced that this is a road worth traveling, but I have not asked that others travel this road and will not.

Mr. Speaker, after noon today, I will present Articles of Impeachment. There are many who want to know: What is next? What will happen after there is a vote?

Mr. Speaker, I will satiate those concerns after the vote. But I will take the road less traveled, and I believe that it will make all the difference.

DEFENSE DEPARTMENT BUDGET

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

Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, several times over my 29 years in Congress, I have wondered whether there are any fiscal conservatives at the Pentagon. It seems that the Defense Department is just like every other gigantic bureaucracy. When it comes to money, the refrain is always more, more, more.

On November 14, the House passed what one Capitol Hill paper described as a $700 billion compromise Defense bill. It was $80 billion over the budget caps and many billions more than even President Trump had requested.

I opposed almost all the major initiatives of the Obama administration, but it was false to say that the Defense Department had been depleted or eviscerated during those years or that now we must rebuild the military. In fact, public relations experts in future years should conduct studies about how the Defense Department has been able to convince the public it has been cut when it is now getting more money than ever.

□ 1030

Defense Department appropriations have more than doubled since 2000. In addition, the Department has gotten extra billions in several supplemental or emergency appropriations bills.

The military construction bill is a separate bill that has added another $109.5 billion over the last 10 years. It would be hard to find any U.S. military base anyplace in the world that has not had several new buildings constructed over the last few years.

In fiscal year 2016, we spent over $177 billion on new equipment, tanks, guns, et cetera. We have spent similar amounts for many years. Most of this equipment does not wear out or have to be replaced after just 1 year.

It is ironic that the only President in the last 60 or 70 years who has tried to rein in defense spending is the only President in that period who spent most of his career in the military.

In Evan Thomas' book, ''Ike's Bluff,'' when told by his top staffer that he could not reduce defense spending, President Eisenhower said if he gave another star to every general who cut his budget, ''there would be such a rush to cut costs, you'll have to get out of the way.''

The book also quotes Eisenhower as saying: ''Heaven help us if we ever have a President who doesn't know as much about the military as I do.''

Therein lies an explanation for a big part of what has caused much excessive and/or wasteful defense spending and the willingness, even at times eagerness, to go to war and support permanent, never-ending wars.

Only 18 percent of the current Congress has ever served in any branch of the military. Members are afraid that if they do not vote for an increase in defense spending or if they question waste by the military, some demagogue will accuse them of ''not supporting the troops.''

It would be a huge understatement to say that I usually do not agree with New York Times editorials, but the editorial board, on October 22, published an editorial entitled ''America's Forever Wars,'' pointing out that ''the United States has been at war continuously since the attacks of 9/11'' and now has ''troops in at least 172 countries. . . .''

The board wrote that so far, the American people have ''seemed to accept'' all this militarism, but ''it's a very real question whether, in addition to endorsing these commitments, which have cost trillions of dollars and many lives over 16 years, they will embrace new entanglements. . . .''

The New York Times added that ''Congress has spent little time considering such issues in a comprehensive way or debating why all these deployments are needed.''

Backing these words up was a cartoon in the October 25 issue of Politico, a Capitol Hill newspaper. The cartoon showed six Senators sitting at a hearing. The first Senator, reading a newspaper, says: Who knew we had troops in Niger?

The second says: Heck, we don't even know how the military budget gets spent.

Finally, the cartoon shows a Senator saying: War is hell. I say we just give the Pentagon an extra $80 billion and call it a day.

Washington Post columnist Richard Cohen, himself a veteran, as am I, wrote on October 23: ''But there is something else at work here: the slavish veneration now accorded the military. You can see it every time someone in uniform testifies before Congress.''

Since now that less than 1 percent of the people serve in the military, it may be that many people who never served feel, perhaps even subconsciously, that they must bend over backwards to show their patriotism. However, it is not unpatriotic to oppose wasteful defense spending or very unnecessary permanent, forever wars.

President Reagan once said: ''Our troops should be committed to combat abroad only as a last resort, when no other choice is available.''

We have far too many leaders today who seem to want to be new Winston Churchills and who are far too eager to send people to war. No true fiscal conservative could ever justify spending many billions more than even President Trump requested.

Our national debt recently went over the $20 trillion level. A few days ago, it was reported that the deficit for fiscal year 2017 was $666 billion. This fiscal year, it may be even higher.

Conservatives used to be against huge deficit spending. They also used to be against massive foreign aid. Much of what we have been doing in both Iraq and Afghanistan, training police and farmers, repairing electrical and water systems, even making small business loans, is pure foreign aid.

Many of our foreign interventions have been done under the auspices or authority of the United Nations.

Conservatives used to be the biggest critics of the U.N. and world government. Most of our so-called ''coalitions'' have been funded almost entirely by American taxpayers.

Most interventionists at some point resort to a slur referring to their opponents as isolationists. This is so false.

Traditional conservatives support trade and tourism and cultural and educational exchanges with other countries and they agree with helping during humanitarian crises.

They just don't believe in dragging war out forever, primarily so defense contractors, think tanks, and military bureaucrats can get more money.

One last point: We have far too many officers. In Scott Berg's biography on Woodrow Wilson, it says during World War I, we had one officer for every 30 enlisted men.

Eisenhower once said we had too many officers when there were nine enlisted for every

officer. Now we have one officer for only four and a half to five and a half enlisted (varies by branch).

This is very expensive, both for active duty and retirement, but it also makes it much more likely that we will get involved in every little conflict around the world and/or continue basing troops in almost every country.

We simply do not have enough money to pay for defense of so many countries other than our own nor the authority under our Constitution to try to run the whole world.

NAFTA

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

Mr. LAHOOD. Mr. Speaker, the American economy stands today at a crucial moment.

With globalization and advancement in technology, the world economy continues to become more intertwined than ever, as countries trade goods and services at rates never seen before.

It is easy to look at this change and turn inward in an attempt to shore up America's position in the world economy, but that will only set us up for more struggles down the line.

Here in America, we make and produce the best goods in the world, but tariffs and regulations put American goods at a disadvantage in too many countries. That is why it is so crucial we continue to support free and fair trade, working to better our trade agreements, like the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, to help American businesses and families.

In my district, Illinois' 18th Congressional district, agriculture remains the largest portion of our economy. In fact, we are the eighth largest agriculture district in the country. Some of the most fertile farmland in the entire world is located in the 18th District.

As great as the products we grow may be, our farmers and agriculture industry must have markets to sell their goods. That is why free trade agreements like NAFTA come in, removing barriers that allow our corn and soybeans to be sold all over the world at competitive prices.

Since the implementation of NAFTA, American agriculture exports have more than quadrupled from $8.9 million to $38 billion annually, bringing more money back to our rural and agriculture communities. It is so important that this amount of money comes back to our district and it is the reason why our agriculture sector now supports over 21 million jobs here at home.

Other sectors of our economy are just as affected by trade, especially in manufacturing. With 95 percent of the world's consumers living outside of the United States, protectionist tariffs and policies in other countries put American goods at a disadvantage.

Since NAFTA's implementation, we have seen these barriers come down and more markets opening up to our exports. That is why our trade agreement partners receive half of all exports of American manufactured goods. The benefits of this are passed on to hardworking families, with jobs linked to trade paying 15 to 20 percent more and accounting for more than 38 million jobs across our country.

While NAFTA and free trade have allowed for this kind of prosperity and growth, we must also be mindful of the problems that can arise. For example, recent Canadian policies creating quotas for American poultry and dairy have threatened those industries here at home. That is why it is time to take a fresh look at our trade agreements, not with an eye to withdrawing from the global economy, but with the goal of making our trade fairer and better.

As President Trump and his team continue to renegotiate the terms of the NAFTA deal, it is my hope that they can keep in mind the businesses, farming operations, and families of districts like Illinois' 18th. Free trade is a win-win for our Nation, and it is vital that we work hard to make these agreements fairer to keep America at the forefront of the world economy.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 38 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. ROGERS of Kentucky) at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer:

Loving God, thank You for giving us another day. We thank You on this day for the example of St. Nicholas, who fed the hungry, brought hope to the imprisoned, gave comfort to the lost, and taught the truth to all.

May all who work here in the people's House strive to imitate him by putting You first in all we do.

Give us the courage, love, and strength of St. Nicholas so that, like him, we may serve You through our service to all our brothers and sisters.

May all that we do be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. O'HALLERAN) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. O'HALLERAN led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain up to 15 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

TAX REFORM

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, with the leadership of Ways and Means Committee Chairman KEVIN BRADY from Texas, the House has passed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

The tax cuts bill that the House Republicans supported makes the Tax Code simpler and fairer, allows hardworking taxpayers to keep more of their own money they earn, and gives small businesses more room to grow and create jobs.

Our Senate colleagues deserve credit for listening to the people of the country and voting to pass tax cuts last week. Now we stand on the doorstep of history. As we move to conference committee, we have the chance to overhaul the antiquated and notoriously confusing Tax Code for the first time in a generation.

When the conference process is finished, the President will be able to sign a tax cut bill that serves the interests of American families and businesses rather than those of politicians and special interests.

As Speaker PAUL RYAN has said, these opportunities come around only once in a generation, and now is the time for us to seize the moment.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September the 11th in the global war on terrorism.

THE REPUBLICAN TAX PLAN

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

Mr. SIRES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in continued opposition to the Republican tax plan.

Earlier this week, the House of Representatives agreed to go to conference with the Senate on H.R. 1, which gives breaks to the wealthy and corporations at the expense of the needs of the American family. This bill eliminates deductions used by those who need it most: students, teachers, veterans, the