

the U.S. have a very keen interest, and I raise it today in a friendly but firm voice. That is, namely, the status of Northern Ireland under the Good Friday peace accords.

Unfortunately, Mrs. May, in her announcement yesterday, indicated that that was the one issue, that her efforts to protect the Good Friday peace accords were going to be renegotiated and possibly dismantled.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to remind the House that the Good Friday peace accords, which were signed 20 years ago last April 10, have the active and supportive involvement of the U.S. Government and the U.S. Congress.

The Clinton administration in the 1990s, at the invitation of the Irish and British Governments, named former U.S. Senator George Mitchell as Special Envoy to Northern Ireland, and he chaired the all-party peace negotiation over a number of years, which led to the Good Friday peace accords. His work, along with his successor, Richard Haass, was crucial to the success of the talks and the execution of the agreement.

In the U.S. Congress, members of a bipartisan group of lawmakers, including our colleague RICHARD NEAL of Springfield, Massachusetts, were frequent visitors and participants during the negotiations.

To this day, Mr. NEAL and bipartisan members of the Friends of Ireland Caucus, of which I am a member, continue to monitor the progress and success of the Good Friday peace accords and are deeply, deeply concerned that Brexit, if it reinstates a hard border on the island of Ireland, will undo one of the great diplomatic successes of our time.

Mr. Speaker, the successful results of the peace agreement cannot be denied. During The Troubles, which preceded the accords, more than 3,600 residents of the six counties of the North lost their lives due to sectarian violence and 763 servicemembers of the British Government and the Northern Irish Government lost their lives. To put that in perspective, 464 U.K. troops have lost their lives in the long war in Afghanistan. The economic results have also been undeniable.

Mr. Speaker, I have a little bit of experience because in 1973 and 1974, I was a student in England and spent the Christmas break in Northern Ireland visiting a fellow student in the town of Enniskillen. I took the train from Dublin to Belfast. In the border town of Dundalk, where I was asleep, I was awoken by a British soldier heavily armed, poking me to look at my backpack.

While we visited in Enniskillen, there was a bombing in the village. Looking around, it was clearly a depressed economy because of the hard borders and because of the isolation of Northern Ireland.

Fast forward, I took a trade mission from the State of Connecticut to Belfast 2 years ago, and it is a transformed city. It is thriving. It is healthy. Clear-

ly, allowing the Northern Irish economy to participate both in the full island as well as Europe has had beneficial effects. That is why the people of Northern Ireland actually voted "no" on Brexit.

Mr. Speaker, we are at a point today where the British Government clearly has to make a decision about whether to preserve one of the great diplomatic successes, which provides a roadmap for sectarian violence all across the world. Diplomacy succeeded in Northern Ireland. It is imperative that those in charge there protect the hard-fought work and remember that there are stakeholders outside of England and Great Britain, including the United States Government and the United States Congress, which have skin in the game and have investment in terms of the great success over the last 20 years.

Protect the Good Friday peace accords. Protect the peace that has flowed from it. Protect the prosperity that has improved the lives of the people of Northern Ireland, the Irish Republic, and the world at large.

DEMOCRACY REFORM

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

Ms. SCANLON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank Speaker-designate PELOSI, Whip HOYER, and Representative SARBANES for honoring the will of the American people and pledging to make democracy reform a top priority for the 116th Congress.

One of the greatest promises of our democracy is that our government is of, by, and for the people. Our democracy has always been a messy experiment. It is not perfect. It is not a spectator sport. But it is our greatest hope. At this point in time, unfortunately, many of our democratic structures are under attack.

In my home, Pennsylvania, over the past decade, we have seen the impact of antidemocratic policies. The cards have been stacked against the voices of Pennsylvanians through unconstitutional gerrymandering, repressive voter ID laws, and restrictive absentee ballot deadlines. These tactics have been used to muzzle the voices of our constituents, as well as voters in North Carolina, Wisconsin, Georgia, and other citizens across the country.

□ 1030

The H.R. 1 package being advanced by Representative SARBANES and the Democracy Reform Task Force is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to restore the American people's faith in our institutions. History has shown us that our American experiment is at its best when we face complex challenges head-on and we are better for taking them up.

H.R. 1 is our path forward to a more perfect democracy. Our elections are

the bedrock of this Nation, and the sanctity of those elections must be protected from threats, both foreign and domestic.

We can make it easier, not harder, for eligible Americans to vote. We can end the dominance of Big Money in our politics. We can ensure that public officials, from the White House to Members of Congress, put the interests of the American people first. We can do all of those things, and we must.

Public opinion polls show that the American people's distrust of our governmental institutions is at staggering levels. We must work together, Democrats and Republicans, to change course and restore the people's faith. We have real work to do, and Members of the incoming class are ready to roll up our sleeves. The voters have charged us to restore the balance of our political institutions and make sure that everyday Americans have a seat at the table.

When we listen to people instead of special interests, we can raise the minimum wage and create good-paying jobs; we can lower prescription drug prices and give people better access to healthcare; we can make real investments in our infrastructure; we can reduce gun violence; and we can increase funding for job training programs and public education.

Mr. Speaker, we owe it to the generations before us who worked to establish this democracy and we owe it to the generations that follow to ensure that we have a Government that is truly by and for the people. We can work on this together. It is up to us to get it done, and this work starts now.

THANKING FIRST RESPONDERS TO THE CRANSTON FIRE

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

Mr. RUIZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the communities affected by the Cranston fire, one of the largest wildfires my congressional district and eastern Riverside County has ever seen.

While the Cranston fire was contained in August, many of my constituents are continuing to piece their lives back together, and anytime severe rain is forecasted, they once again go into high alert for mudslides from the burn scar.

The Cranston fire started on July 25, 2018, and within a matter of a few hours residents of Idyllwild and the mountain communities were immediately forced to evacuate from their homes. Without hesitation, first responders from the Idyllwild Fire Department, the Idyllwild Volunteer Fire Company, CAL FIRE, the California Highway Patrol, the U.S. Forest Service, and countless others from all over the Nation sprang into action.

Thanks to their efforts, no lives were lost and the fire was fully contained by August 10, having burned more than

13,000 acres. Months later, I am left with the image of police officers walking through smoldering neighborhoods with megaphones, making sure no one was left behind.

Today, Idyllwild continues to embody that spirit of community and togetherness. They are rebuilding homes, clearing debris, and preparing for the next wildfire that threatens our communities. Friends and neighbors continue to support one another, and I continue to be inspired by their compassion and determination.

Throughout this rebuilding, our communities have expressed something profound: gratitude. Rarely have I seen such an outpouring of support for our first responders.

I have seen fences papered with handwritten signs thanking the firefighters and countless tributes to their courage and sacrifice at local festivals and benefits.

The affected communities could not have made it this far without the support of religious groups, nonprofits, local businesses, and generous neighbors. During the fire, volunteers with the American Red Cross and the FIND Food Bank delivered food to evacuation centers. So did local restaurants, including Idyllwild Bake Shop & Brew, Cafe Aroma, Coyote Red's, the Mile High Cafe, and many others.

The Ace Hotel, V Palm Springs Hotel, and Grand Idyllwild Lodge were just a few of the businesses that generously opened their doors to displaced residents.

That generosity extended to our four-legged friends, too. I visited the San Jacinto Valley Animal Campus, where staff provided shelter for more than 160 local pets.

Their legacy of compassion lives on through community organizations like Young Idyllwild, who hosted a music festival and benefit to raise money for neighbors still struggling to piece their lives together.

I was particularly moved by the generosity of local musician Ernesto Ale and his family, who lost their home in the fire. In the midst of this hardship, Ernesto found the strength to perform, bringing music to his community and raising money for neighbors who, like him, lost so much in the fire.

Ernesto is proof of the kindness and strength exhibited by every neighbor, firefighter, police officer, and business owner who pitched in after the Cranston fire.

Government should follow the example of communities it serves, pulling together in times of crisis and lending a hand to those in need.

ADDRESSING THE HOUSE FOR THE FINAL TIME

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New Mexico (Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM) for 5 minutes.

Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I rise for

what will likely be the last time I address the House.

First, I thank the people of New Mexico for entrusting me to represent you in Washington, holding me accountable, and giving me direction. From my first day in Congress to my last, every constituent or stakeholder who stopped me on the street or walked into my office, your office, to tell me about their issues and priorities was my boss. It has been the honor of a lifetime to work with you.

Thank you to our team of brilliant, passionate staff who worked early mornings, late nights, and weekends because they knew just how important our work was to the people we served. Our team secured hundreds of millions of dollars in Federal investments in our State's economy and returned almost \$5 million in earned benefits to New Mexico veterans, seniors, and taxpayers.

Your dedication to New Mexico changed lives. Lastly, thank you to all the Members with whom I had the pleasure of serving who helped ensure that my time here was a success.

Whether it was Congressman MEADOWS helping me launch an investigation into SNAP mismanagement in New Mexico, Congressman COLE for helping pass Care Corps grants to assist caregivers, or Congressman O'HALLERAN for working with me to pass the first-ever economic development broadband grant program in the farm bill, I have worked with and learned from Members on every part of the political spectrum. And regardless of our differences, I have found a universal passion for solving problems and public service.

Every Member here understands the privilege and responsibility of working in the most powerful institution in the world and the immeasurable potential of this body to address the problems that we were elected to solve. Our shared values and commitment to each other is always and has been this institution's greatest strength.

To paraphrase Thomas Jefferson: Let us never forget that the differences of opinion are not differences of the fundamental principles that unite us as Americans. We are all Democrats. We are all Republicans.

I believe that we can embrace our differences of opinion in a shared effort to form a more perfect union while never allowing polarization, politics, and short-term political expediency to undermine our obligation to make a difference in the lives of those who sent us here.

Always remember that power is short lived, politics is cyclical, and one day someone else will fill our shoes.

As Congressman CUMMINGS used to say when I served with him on the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee: We only hold these positions of power, leadership, and trust for a short period of time. What better way to honor the great leaders who came before us and the people who

entrusted us to serve in their footsteps than by seizing every opportunity we have to work together and to pass the reins of our Nation to future leaders better than we found it.

To all the new Members: Stand tall, no matter how tall you are; be courageous; don't take "no" for an answer; and never stop working to tear down the roadblocks that stand in the way of advocating for your constituents who count on you every day.

And to the people of New Mexico, thank you for the honor of representing the First Congressional District, and thank you for entrusting me to revolutionize our education system, lead the Nation in clean energy development, and create an economy that prioritizes hardworking families as your next Governor. I look forward to continuing to work for you in your Roundhouse next year.

Mr. Speaker, although I yield back for the final time, I have never been more hopeful about our future and the next generation of Members who will stand here, address this Chamber, and commit to the shared values that form the foundation of progress after I am gone.

VOTER SUPPRESSION

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

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about a troubling development, which is called voter suppression, and its use as a tool in political combat today. President Trump wrote the playbook on sham claims of voter fraud, and now, sadly, my friends on the other side of the aisle are putting that playbook to use.

During the 2016 Presidential election, then candidate Trump warned that the election would be rigged. Once in office, the President then made unsubstantiated assertions that there were more than 3 million illegal votes cast in the United States, just coincidentally the margin of popular advantage his opponent, Hillary Clinton, had over him.

The President then established a so-called election integrity commission that alleged substantial evidence of voter fraud, found none, and had to be disbanded. That purportedly independent commission was headed, by the way, by Kansas Secretary of State at the time Kris Kobach, a known proponent of voter fraud conspiracy theories that then justified voter suppression on a large scale.

The President used his bully pulpit to claim that midterm ballots were massively infected and called for a halt to vote counts in legally mandated recounts in Georgia and Florida.

Here is what is really going on. When an election is too close to call, rather than encourage the democratic process to play out by counting every vote, Republicans are flipping through Trump's voter fraud playbook to sow distrust in democratic processes.