

## FAREWELL TO CONGRESS

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

Mr. CURBELO of Florida. Mr. Speaker, politics is the art of what is possible, what is achievable—not the measure of our differences.

We come to this Chamber—we should—to seek common ground, to solve problems, to address challenges. That is what I have done over the course of the last 4 years: work with my colleagues from both sides of the aisle to improve quality of life in our country, in our communities, and to show the American public that this institution is capable of responding to its concerns and its aspirations.

In Congress, progress is measured in small units, the way our Founding Fathers intended.

On climate and the environment, we broke the ice, bringing Republicans and Democrats together in the Climate Solutions Caucus, the first meaningful bipartisan dialogue and collaboration effort on this subject in a generation. We also filed landmark legislation that would make massive investments in American infrastructure while reducing carbon emissions and creating clean energy jobs.

Climate change and transportation infrastructure—twin challenges threatening the future of my home, Miami-Dade County. The Market Choice Act would make it more likely that our children and grandchildren can live out their years in our paradise, an area marked and blessed with countless natural treasures.

On immigration, we forced the House to process and debate comprehensive reform for the first time in nearly a decade. While for many, using this subject and the many victims of a broken immigration system for political gain is the preference, ours was a solution that would secure the border, reform our asylum laws to prevent abuse, keep families together, and secure a future for 2 million American Dreamers—the young immigrants who went to school with our own children and today are contributing to our economy and to our communities.

While the forces of obstruction and cowardice prevailed, this institution grew from the debate, and dividends will be reaped in the future, I have no doubt. This issue is also a special one for Miami-Dade and south Florida. It is personal for us. We are a community of immigrants. We believe immigration should be legal and orderly, and we know immigrants made America great and will continue making it greater still.

Guns—another issue that deeply divides our country. We proposed solutions modeled after what was achieved in Florida in the wake of the tragic massacre at Parkland's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. It is

possible to protect gun rights for law-abiding citizens while keeping deadly weapons out of the hands of those who seek to harm others or themselves. We are reforming our criminal justice system in order to truly give people a second chance.

We secured funding for Everglades restoration, for water quality improvements in the Florida Keys, for important infrastructure projects in south Florida. We honored our troops by guaranteeing them the resources they need and granting them the raises they have earned. We also invested in American children, making it easier for immigrant students to learn English and protecting the accountability framework that put all students at the center of the public education system. And we delivered historic tax relief for Florida workers and families while making American businesses more competitive.

In our hemisphere, I have advocated for the oppressed people of Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua, and encouraged the administration to forge strong relationships with leaders committed to human rights, the rule of law, and economic growth and prosperity in countries like Brazil, Colombia, Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Panama, and others.

In the Middle East, I have worked to support and bolster the critical U.S.-Israel alliance while holding the terrorist mullah regime in Iran accountable for its countless transgressions. And further east, I have advocated for closer relations with important allies like Japan and Taiwan in the face of China's growing hostility.

Most importantly, every day I have put my south Florida community and the country above any partisan or personal interest. My goal has always been to serve with sincerity and decency, to call it honest no matter who might get upset. And even if political consequences would follow, to focus on ideas instead of petty politics, to speak in truth instead of talking points, to be both direct and decorous.

While I have learned much from this institution, it never changed me. I have served to the fullest every day, and I now begin a new chapter in my life overflowing with gratitude for this wonderful opportunity to serve, for the many colleagues I have come to know, for my team, for my family, my God, and for the community that trusted this child of political refugees with the privilege of representing it here in the Congress of the United States of America.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to my colleague, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. RODNEY DAVIS).

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Florida for yielding. I know he is probably worried about what I might say in this final speech here on the floor tonight, but I have got to tell you about a friend that I met just shortly after going to a meeting across the street

where I had the honor of becoming a mentor to a candidate who wanted to run for Congress.

His name was CARLOS CURBELO, and I knew we were going to get along well when I called him the first time on the phone and he said: "Why are you my mentor?" I said: "Because you have Key West in the district you are winning in. I would like to come visit you."

He took my first joke well, and we hit it off and became very close friends. And imagine my glee when, on election night, in 2014, my mentee became a newly elected Member of Congress. And to see him walk into this institution, to see him immediately become, not just a friend to me and to many others, but a legislator and one of the best legislators I have ever had the opportunity to serve with.

It is bittersweet for me to stand here tonight and wish him the best in his next endeavors. I know he will have plenty of opportunities to spend a great deal of time with his wife Ceci and their two lovely young daughters in one of the most beautiful places in the world, in Miami-Dade.

But I have got a feeling this isn't going to be the last for my friend, Mr. CURBELO. And this speech may be the last one he delivers as a Member of this institution, but whether it is he comes back here or whatever his next step is, he knows that it is not only me who is going to be standing there right behind him, but so many of his colleagues and friends that he has met along the way and has meant so much to.

I thank him for being a great friend. I thank him for being a member of the wolf pack, and I will always know him as my good friend, CHUCK CURBELO.

Mr. CURBELO of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Illinois, who indeed is a wonderful friend. Sometimes his jokes aren't as good, but his advice has been very good here since I started running for the House for the first time in 2013.

The people of southern Illinois are blessed to be represented by Mr. DAVIS. He is a wonderful family man. He is a great friend, and even though I am moving on, I am very happy to know that people like RODNEY DAVIS will remain a part of this institution working for his community and for our wonderful country.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I yield to my colleague from Pennsylvania (Mr. COSTELLO), another wonderful friend. We have shared many great experiences together. We have worked hard on the issues that are important to our communities, to our districts.

Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I thank CARLOS for his service to this country, to his constituents. He has been an exemplar of what it means to be a gentleman, somebody who comes in to work here every day in the Halls of Congress, serving the people, doing his best, giving it 110 percent.

What I would like to do, if I could, is just thank those residents in my congressional district residing in Chester

County, Pennsylvania; Montgomery County, Pennsylvania; Berks County, Pennsylvania; and Lebanon County, Pennsylvania, for the opportunity to serve you here in Congress for 2 terms.

This was always, admittedly, a dream of mine, and it is something that I took great pride in doing. It has been a very humbling experience. In some respects, it has been a very rewarding experience. In other respects, it has been challenging and frustrating at times. But when you are someone who puts your name on a sign and gets elected to this institution, you carry with yourself a certain humbleness and a certain sense of purpose that every single one of the 434 Members that I have served with—probably more since there has been resignations and reelections—but everyone who I have served with in this institution takes their job very, very seriously, and I just hope the American people realize that even as we have differences here, we have a lot more that binds us together as Americans, and everyone is here trying to do their very best.

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I would also like to, real briefly, just thank my parents, Sherry and Tony, for their support through the years; my wife, Christine; my children, Ryan and Caroline; and the many great members of my staff who have just done an absolutely wonderful job. I think one thing that every single Member of Congress can universally agree to is that the staff is underappreciated, undercompensated; but without them, this institution would not run, and we would not be able to be as effective as we are day in and day out.

I would particularly like to recognize Lauryn Schothorst and Dante Cutrona, my chiefs of staff through the years; Kori Walter, my district director; Jason Carver, my constituent services director; and if I start naming all the other staff persons, I would probably forget one. But I just want each and every one of them to know how personally grateful I am for their service to Pennsylvania's Sixth Congressional District, this country, and myself.

And for all those whom I have served with, from the bottom of my heart, thank you for being a friend and being an advocate for this country and for your constituents all across this country.

This is a very special institution. It has been a real privilege to serve in it. God bless each and every one of you, and God bless America.

Mr. CURBELO of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, Mr. COSTELLO, for his kind words, and I also want to commend him for his great service to our country. The people of Philadelphia's suburbs have been blessed to have been represented over the last 4 years by a thoughtful, honest, decent man, someone whom I worked with very closely on issues like the environment, like immigration, the difficult issues, the controversial

issues, the issues where legislators are required to take risks if they are going to have a positive impact.

My final message is just extreme gratitude to this wonderful institution, to my community for this privilege, this opportunity. To my parents, Teresita and CARLOS CURBELO, when they arrived in this country with nothing except the desire to be free and to work and contribute, I don't think they could have ever imagined that their son would be able to serve in this fine institution. Only in this wonderful country can we tell stories like that. Only in this wonderful country do these miracles happen.

I also want to thank my wife and my two daughters—Cecilia, my wife, and Sylvie and Carolina, my daughters—because public service is difficult, especially on young families, and my wife and my daughters have sacrificed a lot. Of course, we have done it with the support of our family, my in-laws, my parents, my friends, and everyone.

Again, to all my colleagues, I wish you the best. I will be rooting for you. Please continue trying to help strengthen this country, continue trying to do the right thing every day and serve with a servant's heart.

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

#### HOUSE FREEDOM CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MEADOWS) for 30 minutes.

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to encourage my colleagues to stay in the fight to make sure that we help this President deliver on a promise that he made years ago.

I am sad that tonight we are here, and we are on a backdrop of a potential government shutdown; but, really, what it is is more a function of the fact that we have not done our job like we should have done already.

The President, many, many months ago, said that he would not sign another funding bill unless we gave him wall funding. So what did this House do? It passed a bill to fund the Department of Defense and passed a short-term CR. And they said: Do you know what? We are going to have that fight, but we are going to have that fight after the midterms.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it is after the midterms, and we are here with a number of my colleagues tonight to say that we are ready to fight on behalf of all the freedom-loving Americans to make sure that we have secure borders and that never again do we have to worry about terrorists and drug traffickers coming across our southern borders.

So I have a number of my colleagues tonight, Mr. Speaker, who want to speak on this to encourage the American people to stand with us in this fight.

I yield to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. BIGGS).

Mr. BIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I am grateful that my colleagues are here standing up for the crisis, to solve the crisis on the border.

Securing the United States and the American people, this border, is a fundamental, constitutional responsibility of the Federal Government. We have Members of the House and Senate who are still unwilling to ensure we have control over our borders, unwilling to ensure we know who enters the United States, and unwilling to enforce our immigration laws.

Some of the opposition has forgotten their previous support for border walls back then, before they didn't fundamentally disagree with border security or the border wall. But now they simply don't want President Trump or elected Republicans to get a win. What they want is open borders.

In 2006, some of the Democrats still in the Senate today, including Minority Leader CHUCK SCHUMER, voted in favor of the Secure Fence Act to build a southern border wall.

For now, Republicans still control Congress. Rumor is that our leaders are negotiating a deal to avert a shutdown and fund the government through February 8. Once again, we are kicking the fight for border security down the road.

When are we going to stand up and fight, if not now?

Our coalition of Members here have drafted an amendment that would allow us to deliver on our promise to make the necessary policy changes to end catch and release, increase the number of immigration judges, and provide \$5 billion in border wall funding.

In all of the debate about borders and illegal immigration, many of the headlines focus on those who have come here illegally, but I urge you to remember people on the American side of the border. Remember the ranchers and residents living along the border who are impacted by smuggling and trafficking that goes on because of our lack of will in this body. Remember our Border Patrol agents who risk their lives every day trying to keep us secure.

I urge my colleagues in the House and our leadership to think about what is best for America. Is it the status quo, or is it standing up to fight for the security and sovereignty of our Nation?

Clearly, we must stand up and fight now. I urge my fellow Members to support funding for the border wall before January 3 comes; and if we have to, I am willing to stay here to make sure that happens.

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Speaker, I yield to another gentleman from Arizona (Mr. GOSAR).

Mr. GOSAR. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from North Carolina for yielding.