

unnecessary burdens to make much needed improvements to our national nuclear waste strategy.

This legislation is especially important to the residents of South Carolina. South Carolina ratepayers have invested over \$1.3 billion into Yucca over the last 30 years—that's in addition to the billions of dollars collected from ratepayers across the country. During this time, states like South Carolina have remained de facto repositories for nuclear waste. The federal government should finish what they started and complete the Yucca Mountain license application.

Currently, SNF is stored in 121 different neighborhoods, across 39 states—all waiting to be moved to a permanent location. The Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act will address the concerns of communities across the country, in a cost-effective manner, and passed the Energy and Commerce Committee with bi-partisan support, 49 members voting in favor and only 4 against. I am grateful for the opportunity to support this legislation, and am hopeful that it will provide much needed clarification on the disposal of spent nuclear fuel.

I am grateful that text from my bill, the Sensible Nuclear Waste Disposition Act was included in this bill and thank Chairman JOHN SHIMKUS for his leadership.

SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL: RACISM AND POVERTY 50 YEARS AFTER THE KERNER REPORT

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

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 days legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include any extraneous material on the subject of the Special Order.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, it is a great honor that I rise today to anchor the CBC Special Order. I would like to thank the CBC chairman, Chairman RICHMOND, for his leadership in this effort.

For the next 60 minutes, we have an opportunity to speak directly to the American people about issues of great importance to the Congressional Black Caucus and the millions of constituents we represent.

Tonight, Mr. Speaker, I want to speak about a topic that has affected this country and plagued us all. Over 50 years ago, in the middle of the Detroit riot, President Lyndon B. Johnson established the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, commonly known as the Kerner Commission. The goal of that Commission was to identify the underlying causes of the civil unrest in communities across the country.

This was a time of tremendous tension in our great Nation. Many Ameri-

cans were confused about the root causes of the riots and the unsure path forward.

On February 29, 1968, following several field trips to troubled communities, the Commission released the Kerner Report, a 176-page report that examined cultural institutional racism, from segregated schools and housing discrimination to generational poverty and to limited economic opportunity.

The Commission largely held racism responsible for Black rioting and warned that our Nation is moving to two societies, one Black, one White—separate and unequal. The Commission called for bold policies to counter decades of political failure, such as investment in much-needed social services, housing, and education programs; and incentivizing diversity among law enforcement.

Sadly, President Johnson ignored the Kerner Report and rejected its recommendations. In the midst of that, we had the assassinations of several prominent Americans: President John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and Dr. Martin Luther King.

Fifty years later, America has made some improvements, but African Americans continue to face some of the same issues discussed in the Kerner Report.

Since its release, Black American homeownership has been flat, and unemployment is still twice that of White Americans. The Black prison population has tripled here in America. It used to be two other countries, South Africa during the apartheid years and the former Soviet Union, had more people in prison. Now the United States has more people in prison than any nation in the world.

Black household wealth is less than one-fifth of the national average, and almost 33 percent of Black children are growing up in poverty.

Recently, Fred Harris, the last living member of the Kerner Commission, issued a new report highlighting the persistent issues plaguing the Black community and calling on major investments in education, workforce development, and a living wage. This comes in stark contrast to the severe cuts proposed by President Trump in the fiscal year 2019 budget.

Today, in fact, I attended a meeting for the CEO Council for Growth at Drexel University. The council's mission is to lead our region forward by convening decisionmakers, taking action, and doing the things necessary to strengthen our regional economy.

With poverty at 26 percent in my district, I am committed to working with the CEOs present at today's meeting and others who are using creativity and innovation to help reduce poverty, combat hunger, and spur economic growth.

I also attended a discussion at Temple University in Philadelphia. Although the recently passed budget was by no means perfect, I firmly believe

that our leadership and our actions matter.

So it was great to hear firsthand from professors at Temple University today about how the recent jolt in NIH funding will allow them to keep their research on the rise. If we want to continue moving the needle on poverty reduction, we must make it our priority to invest in all of our neighborhoods.

We are in the business of doing no harm. As elected officials, we are here to help move our neighborhoods forward, not backward, and we must continue to urgently press for commonsense economic solutions for Americans most in need.

I stand before you today to tell you just as I have always done before, we must continue to make ideas matter. We must push for commonsense solutions to help move us past the conditions that led to the Kerner Report.

Mr. Speaker, I have my colleague from California (Ms. LEE) here, who is someone whom I have watched and observed. As a matter of fact, she is the chair leading the effort from the Democratic perspective on attacking this issue of poverty. She has been in the forefront of this particular issue, and her voice is heard throughout this entire Nation, the Honorable BARBARA LEE from the 13th District.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE).

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, first, let me thank Congressman DWIGHT EVANS for, once again, hosting this very important Special Order and for really continuing this fight for racial and economic justice both here in the House of Representatives but also in his congressional district. So I thank the gentleman very much for his tremendous leadership.

Fifty years ago at the height of the civil rights movement, violence erupted in cities across America. Over generations, systemic racism had produced what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., called a tale of two cities. One city was bright and full of opportunity for a select few, and another city was shrouded in darkness and locked in a never-ending cycle of poverty.

African Americans, suffocating under the pressure of institutional racism and discrimination, took to the streets.

After race riots erupted in Watts and Chicago; Newark, New Jersey; and Detroit, our government took notice. President Johnson convened the Kerner Commission, which Congressman EVANS laid out, which had three goals to investigate the root cause of the unrest.

Many activists and civil rights leaders were concerned that the Commission wouldn't reveal the true facts. But to our surprise—and I remember this very clearly—the report was brutally honest.

According to the report, White racism was responsible for the rising tensions and explosive violence ripping our Nation apart. So that should have been a wake-up call.

□ 2030

Racism had created two societies: one Black, one White, separate and unequal. The report identified the problem and proposed a series of targeted solutions that could right this terrible wrong.

According to the report, there were three options for our government:

One, do nothing, which would result in more riots and economic devastation and racial division in our country;

Two, we could make robust investments into African-American neighborhoods and schools;

Three, take racism and discrimination head-on, removing discriminatory barriers that lock African Americans into poverty and prevent them from accessing the basics and a basic standard of living.

Option three, of course, could have drastically changed the lives of millions of African Americans. Sadly, the Kerner Commission's report was largely ignored. Again, Congressman EVANS laid that out.

Instead of investing in education, employment opportunities, livable wages, raising incomes, and pathways out of poverty, this country, unfortunately, has allowed institutional racism to divide this Nation. Of course, we have made some progress, but this updated report clearly shows that is not nearly enough. We really are still a divided country. As a result, the findings of the 1968 Kerner Commission's report remain constant to this very day.

In 1968, almost half of all students of color, primarily African Americans, went to majority-White schools. Today, that number has plummeted to 20 percent.

In 1968, the unemployment rate for African Americans was 6.7 percent. Today, 7.5 percent of African Americans are unemployed.

In 1968, African Americans were 5.4 times as likely as Whites to be in prison or in jail. Today, African Americans are 6.4 times as likely as Whites to be incarcerated.

Five decades have passed and economic inequality still prevents the African-American community from accessing the American Dream.

I represent the 13th Congressional District of California, which includes Alameda County. While some are witnessing and experiencing enormous wealth and economic growth in my district, 43 percent of African-American children in Oakland are living in poverty, 23.6 percent of African Americans in my district are locked in poverty, and the average income for African-American families in the San Francisco Bay Area is \$46,571 a year, compared to White families, who make more than \$109,000. That is in my district in the San Francisco Bay Area. This gap is one of the hugest gaps in the country. It is a total disgrace.

We should be leveling the economic playing field for African Americans across the Nation. Instead, we throw Black workers meager wages and apply

trickle-down economics that only benefit the rich.

Our Federal Government should provide the impetus, incentive, and investment for good-paying jobs for African-American workers. Instead, this administration is attacking unions and produced a budget that guts job training programs and a tax law that makes it easier to ship jobs overseas.

We should be investing in affordable housing, which, yes, is a basic human right for everyone, including the African-American community. Instead, this administration is weakening fair housing laws and rationing off affordable housing funding.

The majority of this administration's proposed budget—the cuts, especially—will disproportionately negatively impact African Americans and people of color. This really is a twisted and sick reality that shouldn't be possible in the United States of America.

But members of the Congressional Black Caucus are here tonight to say that we continue to be determined to change this reality because, yes, Black lives do matter. We are here to tell the truth about what is dividing America: racism. It is manifest in many forms in our policy, in our budget, in our funding priorities, and in many, many ways.

In January, a group of nearly 100 religious leaders came together to issue a unity declaration on racism and poverty. Mr. Speaker, I include in the record a letter, a document, entitled, "Unity Declaration on Racism and Poverty," and a document entitled, "Circle of Protection."

UNITY DECLARATION ON RACISM AND POVERTY

As leaders from diverse families of U.S. Christianity, we are called by the Spirit to work together with new urgency against the resurgence of racism and the persistence of poverty in America. We see around us an increase of harmful attitudes and policies toward people of color and people in need. That painful reality and the current push for trillions of dollars in cuts to anti-poverty programs are bringing us together in a new way. While we have different positions on other questions, we are united on the gospel and biblical teaching on poverty and racism—feeling invited to do so by the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

WE BELIEVE THAT RACISM AND POVERTY ARE THEOLOGICAL ISSUES

The integral relationship between poverty and racism unifies us against both. They are both issues to which the gospel of Jesus Christ speaks—which also calls us to love our neighbors, without exceptions. Our unity on these issues is because they are theological issues for us, not merely political or partisan ones. These fundamentally biblical concerns challenge all of us and both of the major political parties.

Racism is a sin that goes back to the founding of our nation. At its root, racism is in conflict with the opening declaration in Genesis 1, that we are all made in the image and likeness of God. Racism literally throws away the biblical principle of *imago dei*—the image of God in all of us, with no exceptions. Racism is a sin against God and all of God's children. Therefore, the whole counsel of God calls us to preach against the sin of racism from all of our churches' pulpits and call for repentance.

The body of Christ is perhaps the most diverse racial community in the world. When people of color in the body of Christ suffer—while many white members of the body of Christ do not acknowledge their pain—we are violating the principle laid down in 1 Corinthians 12: that we are one body with many parts, who suffer with and honor one another. As Galatians instructs us, "there is no more Jew or Greek, bond or free, male or female, because we are all united as one in Christ" (3:28).

The historical sin of racism lingers on in America today, continuing and evolving in our social systems of economics and education, policing and criminal justice, housing and gentrification, voting rights and suppression, in our racial geography, and, painfully, in the continued segregation of our churches, which adds to our own complicity. Racism is more than individual behavior, language, and overt hostility toward particular people. Racism is systematic and structural in America and harms people of color in very specific, measurable, and tangible ways.

The failure to defend the lives and dignity of people living in poverty, by individuals or governments, is also a sin against God, with 2,000 verses in the Bible clearly outlining God's fundamental concern for people who are poor, vulnerable, and oppressed, instructing the people of God to protect and help them and holding political leaders responsible for them. Jesus says, in Matthew 25, that how we treat the "least of these" is how we treat Christ himself.

The world and our country have made progress against poverty in recent decades. It is possible to make further progress—perhaps virtually end—hunger and extreme poverty in our time. We see the alleviation of material misery as an experience of God's loving presence in our own time, and believe that God wants us to seize this opportunity.

TO OUR CHURCHES: WHAT WE ARE DOING AND CAN DO

Most of our churches are active in helping people in need, struggling people within their congregations or in their communities. We need to do more, but many of our churches directly help millions of people every day. Local church leaders often work to bridge the racial divides in our communities, and many are searching for authentic and specific ways to address the rise of white supremacy.

Since the God of the Bible requires social justice and charity, our churches and many of our members also work to influence public policies. Christians have a wide array of political viewpoints. But a majority of the leaders of national church bodies have spoken out repeatedly against cuts to programs that provide help and opportunity to hungry and poor people in our country and around the world. We have also spoken out against renewed expressions of white racism, ethnic nationalism, and hateful attitudes toward people of color, immigrants, refugees, Jews, and Muslims. Many of us are active in support of immigration reform, criminal justice reform, and voting rights for all.

We are deeply troubled by the budget proposals coming from Congress and the president. They outline more than \$2 trillion of cuts in programs for hungry and poor people in our country and around the world. These cuts would hurt struggling people of all races, including millions of low- and middle-income people who need safety-net programs at some time in their lives. The hardest hit would be African American, Latino, and Native American communities, where the poverty rate is already high, and among people in the poorest countries in the world.

The threat over the coming year of this broad assault on anti-poverty programs that

support families struggling to make ends meet is unifying us—bringing us together in a more vigorous, multiracial Christian movement to maintain a circle of protection around all people in poverty and God's children of color in particular, who are disproportionately impacted.

TO CONGRESS AND THE WHITE HOUSE: OUR UNITED APPEAL FOR HEALING AND REFORM IN OUR NATION'S POLITICS

We appeal to the president and Congress to work together for the common good. We especially call upon political leaders who are also people of faith to protect all the people in our country and world who are struggling with economic deprivation and frustration, hunger and poverty, disability and disadvantage—and racial bigotry that often contributes to inaction and hard-heartedness.

God's love for all people moves us to reach out to people and leaders all across the political spectrum. We respect and pray for all those who are in authority—that our nation and world “may lead a quiet and peaceable life” (1 Timothy 2:1-2). Conservative and liberal people, and those with differing political philosophies, may disagree on how to live up to our nation's ideals, but our loving God calls all of us to work together for liberty and justice for everyone.

We appeal to all people, especially Christians, to actively work against racism and poverty—in their personal and local engagement and as advocates for public policies that foster racial equity and healing, shared prosperity, and peace in our country and worldwide. The spiritual power of a fresh, energetic, multiracial Christian movement against both racism and poverty is our prayer. So help us God.

SIGNATORIES

Rev. Eddy M. Alemán, Strategic Director of Leadership Development and Hispanic Ministries, Reformed Church in America

Rev. Dr. David Anderson, Founder/Senior Pastor, Bridgeway Community Church; President and CEO, BridgeLeader Network

Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Diocesan Legate and Ecumenical Director, Armenian Orthodox Church

Bishop Carroll Baltimore, President and CEO, Global Alliance Interfaith Network

Dr. Jay Barnes, President, Bethel University

Bishop George E. Battle, Senior Bishop, AME Zion Church

Rev. David Beckmann, President, Bread for the World

Rev. Traci D. Blackmon, Executive Minister of Justice and Local Church Ministries, The United Church of Christ

Bishop Charles E. Blake, Presiding Bishop and Chief Apostle, Church of God in Christ

Rev. Samuel Borbon, Associate Missioner for Latino/Hispanic Ministry and Program Development, Episcopal Church USA

Rev. Dr. Peter Borgdorff, Executive Director Emeritus, Christian Reformed Church in North America

Carol Bremer-Bennett, Director, World Renew USA

Dr. Amos Brown, Chair, Social Justice Commission, National Baptist Convention USA, Inc.

Bishop Rosetta Bryson, Presiding Prelate, The Reconcile Group

Sister Simone Campbell, SSS, Executive Director, NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice

Dr. Tony Campolo, Co-Founder, Red Letter Christians

Rev. Galen Carey, Vice President of Government Relations, National Association of Evangelicals

Mr. Patrick Carolan, Executive Director, Franciscan Action Network

Mr. John Carr, Director, Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life, Georgetown University

Dr. Iva Carruthers, General Secretary, Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference

Dr. Fernando Cascante, Executive Director, AETH & The Justo Center

Rev. Noel Castellanos, President, CCDA

Rev. Walter Contreras, Vice President, NaLEC; Pasadena Presbyterian Church

Dr. Leslie Copeland-Tune, Director, Ecumenical Poverty Initiative

The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry, Presiding Bishop and Primate, The Episcopal Church

Rev. Joshua Dubois, Founder and CEO, Values Partnerships

Rev. José García, Senior Advisor for Prayer and Strategic Initiatives, Bread for the World

Mr. Vince Gonzales, Chair, Racial and Social Justice Task Force, Churches Uniting in Christ

Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, General Secretary Emeritus, Reformed Church in America; Chair of Board of Directors, Sojourners

The Most Reverend Wilton D. Gregory, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Atlanta

Dr. Jeffrey Haggray, Executive Director, American Baptist Home Mission Societies

Dr. Cynthia Hale, Founding Pastor, Ray of Hope Christian Church; Member, Disciples of Christ

Forest E. Harris, Sr., President, American Baptist College, Director of Black Church Studies, Vanderbilt University Divinity School

Dr. Frederick D. Haynes, III, Chairman, The Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference

Richard B. Hays, George Washington Ivey Professor of New Testament, Duke Divinity School

Rev. Mitchell Hescoc, President and CEO, Evangelical Environmental Network

Dr. Roberto Hodgson, Director, Multicultural Ministries Church of the Nazarene

Dr. Shirley Hoogstra, President, Council of Christian Colleges & Universities

Rev. Teresa Hord-Owens, General Minister, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Dr. Joel C. Hunter, Faith Community Organizer; Chair, Central Florida Commission on Homelessness; Chair, Community Resource Network

Hyepin Im, President and CEO, Faith and Community Empowerment

Rev. Dr. Dale T. Irvin, President and Professor of World Christianity, New York Theological Seminary

Rev. John K. Jenkins, Pastor, First Baptist Church of Glenarden and Board Member, National Association of Evangelicals

Sister Carol Keehan, DC, President and CEO, Catholic Health Association of the United States

Eric LeCompte, Executive Director, Jubilee USA Network

Rev. Dr. Jo Anne Lyon, General Superintendent Emerita, The Wesleyan Church

Mr. John Lyon, President, World Hope International

Rev. Carlos Malavé, Executive Director, Christian Churches Together

Sister Donna Markham OP, PhD, President and CEO, Catholic Charities

Rev. Dr. Walter Arthur McCray, President, National Black Evangelical Association

Rev. John L. McCullough, President and CEO, Church World Service

Bishop Vashti McKenzie, 117th Elected and Consecrated Bishop, AME Church

Bishop Darin Moore, Presiding Prelate of the Mid-Atlantic Episcopal District, AME Zion Church

Rev. Dr. Otis Moss, Jr., Co-Convener National African American Clergy Network

Rev. F. Salvador Orellana, National Coordinator for Latino Ministries, Intercultural Ministries American Baptist Home Missions Society

Rev. Rubén N. Ortiz, Latino Field Coordinator, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

The Most Reverend Richard E. Pates, Roman Catholic Bishop of Des Moines

Rev. Dr. James C. Perkins, President, Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.

Rev. Daniel Prieto, M.A.R. Chairman, National Hispanic Commission; Missional Coach & Hispanic Multiplication Coordinator, Foursquare Church

Agustín Quiles, Orlando, Florida

Soong-Chan Rah, Professor of Church Growth and Evangelism, North Park Theological Seminary

Ms. Diane E. Randall, Executive Secretary, Friends Committee on National Legislation

Senior Bishop Lawrence Reddick, CEO, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church

Bishop Frank Madison Reid III, Presiding Bishop, AME Ecumenical & Urban Affairs

Dr. W. Franklin Richardson, Chairman, Conference of National Black Churches

Jose Luis (Pepe) Romero, Hispanic Affairs Specialist, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Andrew Ryskamp, Executive Director Emeritus, World Renew

Dr. Stephen Schneck, Director of the Institute for Policy Research & Catholic Studies, The Catholic University of America

Dr. Ronald Sider, President Emeritus, Evangelicals for Social Action

Rev. Arthur Simon, President Emeritus, Bread for the World

Dr. T. DeWitt Smith, Co-Convener, National African American Clergy Network

Rev. Eldridge Spearman, Pastor, Mt. Jezreel Baptist Church, National Baptist Convention, USA Inc.

Gregory E. Sterling, Henry L. Slack Dean and Lillian Claus Professor of New Testament, Yale Divinity School

Ervin R. Stutzman, Executive Director, Mennonite Church USA

Rev. Lori Tapia, National Pastor for Hispanic Ministries, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Rev. Adam Taylor, Executive Director, Sojourners

Dr. Steven Timmermans, Executive Director, Christian Reformed Church in North America

Bishop Joseph W. Walker, III, International Presiding Bishop, Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship International, Inc.

Rev. Jim Wallis, President and Founder, Sojourners

Colin P. Watson, Director of Ministries and Administration, Christian Reformed Church in North America

Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner, Co-Convener, National African American Clergy Network; President, Skinner Leadership Institute

Rev. Jim Winkler, President and National Secretary, National Council of Churches

Bishop Jesse Yanez, Director, Church of God of the Prophecy N.A.

CIRCLE OF PROTECTION,
January 29, 2017

DEAR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS: As the president and Congress are preparing their plans for this year, almost 100 church leaders—from all the families of U.S. Christianity—are sharing a common “Unity Statement” on racism and poverty. As Christians, we are grounded in God's love for all people, and we feel called to ask our churches and political leaders of both parties to work together to overcome racism and poverty which are theological, biblical, and gospel issues for us, not merely political or partisan ones.

This moment in time and the clear movement of the Spirit have brought diverse multi-racial church leaders together over the last several months for dinner conversations and times of prayer. Out of those moving times together, we developed a Unity Statement on Racism and Poverty. It has attracted many more racially and theologically diverse church leaders and is now

embraced by the Circle of Protection, the broadest group of Christian leaders focused on poverty. The leaders who have signed this statement are from African-American, Hispanic, Asian-American, Native American, Evangelical, Catholic, Pentecostal, and mainline Protestant churches; and many national faith-based organizations. We are all committed to help build a fresh, newly energetic, multi-racial Christian movement to make the integral connection between racism and poverty and seek the spiritual power to end both. We are also committed to working in alliance with other faith communities on the crucial intersection of racism and poverty as it is worked out in public policies. While the Circle of Protection is a Christian group, we believe this statement reflects the values and principles of people of diverse faiths.

We are purposefully sending you this statement before you go to your respective retreats. In addition to reading this statement thoughtfully, we ask for the following three things: first, we ask you to discuss this statement and the issues central to it—racism and poverty—at your retreats; second, we ask you to incorporate these concerns into your policy decisions and legislation in 2018 and beyond; third, we ask you to convene meetings with faith leaders in your communities to plan follow-up action on these issues in your states and districts. Racism and poverty are systemic issues that are central to the Bible and the teachings of Jesus. Therefore, they are critical to policy choices made by political leaders of faith and conscience. We will be following up with you directly to see how we can be helpful and useful to you as you consider these deeply biblical and theological issues.

We believe if we Christians from diverse backgrounds and traditions were known, not mostly for our divisions, but for our unity in a shared commitment to faithfully address both racism and poverty—together—it could be powerful force—both for our churches and the country. So help us God.

REV. JIM WALLIS,
*President and Founder,
Sojourners;*

DR. BARBARA WILLIAMS-SKINNER,

*Co-Convenor, National
African-American
Clergy Network and
President, Skinner
Leadership Institute;*

REV. DAVID BECKMANN,
*President, Bread for
the World;*

REV. CARLOS MALAVÉ,
*Executive Director,
Christian Churches
Together USA (in his
personal capacity).*

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I want to share a passage from the unity statement that was developed. This was an ecumenical group of over 100 religious denominations: “Racism is more than individual behavior, language, and overt hostility toward particular people. Racism is systematic and structural in America and harms people of color in very specific, measurable, and tangible ways.”

Mr. Speaker, the Kerner report, unfortunately, was ignored, and 50 years later, we are still feeling and reaping the consequences. The difficult truth is that, until we address the impact of the middle passage and slavery of generations of African Americans and believe that truth and reconciliation

must happen, 50 years from now, two cities will have destroyed the very fabric of our Nation.

As the unity declaration goes on to say: “Racism is a sin that goes back to the founding of our Nation.”

We know what is plaguing our society, and we know what to do about it. The time for talk is over. It is time we do what is right for all Americans. Yes, Black lives do matter.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I heard the gentlewoman say, obviously, 1968, and we are now in 2018. I yield to the gentlewoman to tell me what she thinks, in terms of the conditions in 1968, which were obviously the riots, to where we are in 2018. I know there has been some progress, but in terms of things moving back.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, in many communities, housing was segregated. We passed fair housing laws. Affordable housing now is out of reach for many African Americans. This administration is now gutting all of our fair housing programs, our public housing programs, our Section 8 programs.

The banks, of course, did target African-American communities for these subprime scam loans. Unfortunately, any equity that had been built in the homes that we purchased after 1968 is gone. So the wealth gap is huge. It is greater than what it was probably in 1968.

When you look at the number of African Americans who were unemployed in 1968, I believe it was a little over 5 percent. Now we are looking at 7 percent.

When you look at the incarceration rates for the war on drugs, the marijuana laws in this country, especially in the eighties and the impacts of that, we have so many of our young African-American men incarcerated for misdemeanor and felony charges for marijuana distribution and use. We are looking at mass incarceration that has taken place since 1968 of African-American young men and women.

So, yes, we have made a lot of progress. I stand here as the 100th Black Member of Congress. Mr. EVANS is here. We have a Congressional Black Caucus that has increased in size. We have many, many allies in our fight. But I think what we haven't addressed is the issue of racism and institutional racism, because it is so subconscious for so many people until many decisions are made which negatively impact the African-American community.

So from 1968 to now, we have made some progress. We have some great professionals, people doing wonderful things in our community. We have great leaders. We have great scientists, lawyers, doctors, teachers, firefighters, and workers. We have so many people who have been able to lift themselves into the middle class, but we have left so many behind.

That is the point, I think, that, while this new report shows that some of us have progressed, we didn't do what was necessary to bring everyone along with

us, to lift everyone out of poverty in the Black community and provide for a level playing field for equality, for parity, and for a pathway into the American Dream.

That is really very sad and very shameful, but I have a lot of hope that our young people and that we here in the House and that the country really begin to understand that we have to address the root causes of what has happened in this country as it relates to the middle passage and slavery, and to understand that what we see today in these respects that cause these economic and racial disparities go right back to the unfortunate, devastating, and horrific middle passage.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman to speak about the panel she is leading on poverty.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, several years ago, we established the Whip's Task Force on Poverty, Inequality, and Opportunity. For so many years, I wanted to see our caucus talk about more issues relating to low-income and working people and people of color. I really appreciate our whip, STENY HOYER, and our leader, NANCY PELOSI, for rallying around this concept of looking around all these issues of poverty, inequality, and opportunity.

We put together this task force to begin to look at the policies that not only we need to support that are lifting people out of poverty, but what we need to do to fight against some of the policies and funding priorities that would lead more people into the ranks of the poor.

This task force now has over 100 people. We have meetings with experts, with organizations that are doing wonderful work throughout the country in communities of color and low-income communities and the Black communities, really demonstrating that there are some grassroots efforts and community efforts that, while here in Congress we haven't been able to change many policies, at the grassroots levels and the community level there are some wonderful people doing some great things to help lift people out of poverty and into the middle class.

So we try to highlight and showcase those organizations and individuals so that we can replicate them around the country, so that, until we can get the policies right, we can support those efforts that are taking place that are really doing a wonderful job.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON), someone I had the pleasure of spending time with. We have a little running conversation with the Eagles playing in the Super Bowl. He has turned out to be a very good friend in spite of that.

He has traveled this Nation and been very thoughtful in his comments and the things he has said. He wanted to really weigh in on this subject. He has been in the forefront of economic opportunity, poverty reduction, racism, and income equality. He has been in there.

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, even though the gentleman from Pennsylvania's football team, the Eagles, beat the Vikings pretty badly, I forgive him for that because at least they beat New England and Tom Brady.

Now, on to the serious business.

I thank the gentleman, Mr. EVANS, for hosting this Special Order talking about the Kerner Commission.

I was born and raised in the city of Detroit. I am honored to represent Minnesota. I am a Minnesotan and very proud of Minnesota, but I started life out in the city of Detroit.

I remember 1968. I was born in August of 1963. I distinctly remember the riots. As a small child, my father was a medical professional, and I remember him being gone for long hours, coming home extremely tired. I remember the earnest conversations my parents were having, talking about the riots.

I remember looking outside my door and seeing military-style vehicles driving by, which is something we didn't really see. I remember being afraid because we heard some noises, and my mother had me and my brothers get under the bed.

I had no idea, really, what was going on, but those memories for me are very vivid because, when you are a child and your parents are afraid, you can feel it. I don't think I will ever forget it.

As I got older, I wanted to know more about the causes of the riots, and I learned and read about the Kerner Commission. The Kerner Commission's report was designed to focus on all of the civil disturbances that had been happening in the United States, including the Detroit riot, which I was alive and have some memory of.

□ 2045

I think it is difficult for young people who want to understand the Kerner Commission report—a report that was prophetic, a report that was thorough and important, a report that was actually a pretty good piece of literature that had good recommendations that our country has never really taken seriously.

But to understand this report and to really delve into the roots of it, I think it is important, Mr. Speaker, to understand that, before 1968, before there ever was a Kerner Commission report, our country, the United States, was a slave-holding nation for about 250 years. If you mark African-American presence in the United States from 1619 and you say slavery officially ended in 1865, America, our country, the United States, was a slave-holding nation longer than it was not one—longer, actually longer. This country held men, women, and children in bondage in absolute absence of freedom for longer than it has not, which is particularly ironic, given that our country is dedicated to liberty and freedom.

Literally millions of Americans existed in a state of anti-freedom, which is slavery. We have yet to contemplate it.

I remember going to law school studying property and contracts. We never talked about America's greatest amount of property, which is human property. We never actually asked: What is the law about leasing on slaves? What is the law about property ownership on slaves? What is this species of property?

We talked about real estate. We talked about other forms of property. We talked about intellectual property. But for many years of this Nation's history, the predominant form of property was human property in the United States, and we never stopped to even slow down.

I bet you there is not more than two or three law schools in the United States that take on this topic so that people can really understand the ground upon which we stand. We are in the U.S. Capitol, built by people who were not free. In this cathedral of freedom, the people who built it were not free for 250 years.

People stand by and say: Why don't you all get over that? You are always talking about that.

I say: Well, you all still celebrate the Fourth of July.

We are all proud on the Fourth of July that happened in 1776, but we are not supposed to talk about an institution that prevailed in the United States for most of its history.

And it wasn't quite over in 1865, was it?

No. In 1865, we passed the 13th Amendment banning involuntary servitude. We passed the 14th Amendment granting citizenship in, I think, 1868. In 1870, we passed the 15th Amendment granting Black men the right to vote.

This is essentially war measures. I am glad they exist, trust me. I am quite grateful they exist. But when you consider that over 200,000 Black soldiers took up arms to keep the Union—the Union—it was the very least that could happen that Black men would get to vote. Black women didn't get to vote.

But then after that, it is important, Mr. Speaker, to bear in mind another phenomenon took place. By 1877, the Tilden-Hayes compromise was effected, in which there was a dead heat political election. And the Republicans of that day, who, ironically, were the people who were against slavery at that time and against racism and bigotry, they said: We are tired of fighting about racism, slavery, and what is to happen with the Freedman. We will pull Union troops out of the South if you Democrats give us the election.

That allowed Rutherford B. Hayes to become President. Samuel Tilden did not become the President, but the Southerners, Democrats at that time, got what they wanted.

This phenomenon that occurred after that was the end of reconstruction. Lynching, slavery by another name, and true terrorism, under the auspices of the Ku Klux Klan, reined in America at this time. Pulaski, Tennessee, was

the home of the Klan. But there were many other White supremacist groups that received the sanction of our government. In fact, one might even argue that the whole government of the State of Indiana at one time was dominated by the Klan.

People interested in this phenomena can study a very important piece of film and book called "Slavery By Another Name," that talked about convict leasing. The 13th Amendment says that you cannot hold anybody in an involuntary servitude unless convicted of a crime.

That loophole allowed our country to use the criminal justice system to push Black men into it to take advantage of their labor through convict leasing. And even though the industry in Alabama of steelmaking really had not taken root during slavery, it did take root after slavery. The people who mined the iron ore and who worked in those mines were, essentially, in convict leasing.

Convict leasing prevailed in our country up until the 1930s and 1940s. In fact, cotton production dropped after the Civil War, but then went back up because of convict leasing because Black men and women were held in bondage through an unjust criminal justice system that forced them to work cotton up until mechanization made hand cotton picking not advantageous anymore. That, together with the sharecropping system, maintained that system.

We think about the Kerner Commission report, we think about the riots of 1968, 1965, and 1966, all of these things, Black rage exploding on the national scene, and people ask: What are they mad about?

Two hundred and fifty years of slavery and 100 years after Jim Crow after that might make you a little upset.

Black people never missed a war. African-American soldiers helped fight for the Union; African-American soldiers helped fight in Korea; the Spanish-American war. As a matter of fact, you can't name a military conflict that Black people didn't fight for this country and die for it. Yet, after the service, usually we came back to racism and discrimination.

There is a great movie out now called "Mudbound" about this very phenomena. If people want to learn more about this, they can look at this film "Mudbound" about a Black soldier who comes back, gets treated with human dignity in Europe, comes back to Mississippi, and then gets lynched.

This is our country. I am proud of my country and I love my country, but I am not blind to it.

The Kerner Commission tried to open our eyes and tell us what was really going on. One of the phenomena—and I would like to just note this—is that one of the many ways that racism manifested itself is through residential segregation. Blacks were not allowed to live in certain areas, work in certain areas, and, in 1903, the great Woodrow

Wilson kicked Black people out of Federal employment. His reason was that we carry disease. This is in the modern era. Black people were relegated to living in certain neighborhoods. And, actually, when it was found to be illegal to say Blacks can't live in this neighborhood by the Supreme Court, then that is when redlining took hold.

Residential segregation was so effective, Mr. Speaker, for 50 years, that we now in America today—and I am talking about 2018—if you survey White Americans and you ask them, Have you had a significant and meaningful conversation in the last 6 months, who are those people and who are the top seven, 91 percent of White Americans will say that they haven't had a meaningful conversation with a person of color.

Residential segregation is so bad that we don't talk to each other. The result is no empathy—no sympathy; no empathy; no sense of, gee, that is really too bad.

People say: Well, they don't work hard. That is the problem.

Well, wait a minute. How could it be that the people who worked for 250 years for free don't work hard? How could it be that people who don't have any power are some big threat to be feared in this Nation when all we have done is serve it and build it?

At the end of the day, the Kerner Commission tried to highlight discrimination against African Americans in education, housing, and employment; tried to help the Nation understand why some African Americans get enraged about incidents of official violence; why we don't condone, nor even do we agree, with riots.

We cannot act like we don't understand them. Of course we understand them. Many of us have chosen that we are going to try to reform our country and help it reach its promise through our electoral system, through organizing, and activism. We are going to try to make America a stronger and better place by working within the systems that exist.

I am proud that I am one of those people. But I often have to find myself trying to convince people who don't agree with me that there are answers within the system that I am right and they are not, because they come with arguments sometimes based on the history.

The bottom line is the Kerner Commission report, 50 years ago today, we have made progress. There is no doubt about it. We don't have Jim Crow anymore. But we have also seen stagnation.

There is a new report by the Eisenhower Foundation, which shows that since the late 1960s, income inequality and the wealth gap have actually gotten wider. While high school and college graduation rates have improved for the Black community since the Kerner Commission report—thank goodness, and this is an important advance, and we are grateful for it—these gains in access have not translated in economic vitality.

Black families have the highest student debt. Thirty-one percent of all Black families have college debt, compared to about 20 percent of White families. College debt is tough on families of any color, but African Americans, having a lower overall income and a much lower wealth, have to borrow more to seek out education, and that is limiting African-American opportunity.

More than 70 percent of White families own their own homes compared to less than half of Black and Hispanic families. Since 1968, White homeownership has steadily increased, but Black homeownership has not changed. In 1968, 41 percent of Black families owned their own home.

And what is the homeownership rate today?

Now it is 41.2.

Given what I shared with you earlier about residential segregation and about how Blacks and Whites and Latinos don't really interact nearly as much as they should, given the fact that we are all Americans, people may not understand why African-American economic progress has not been as swift as we might want it to be.

To that I say it is a matter of residential segregation and even current redlining. I recommend to people to read an important book called "Evicted" by Matthew Desmond, and also listen to a podcast called "Reveal" about redlining. This prospect of redlining is very important. "Reveal" looked at literally thousands and thousands of pieces of data from the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act. They found that, in 61 metropolitan areas in the United States, there is substantial evidence of mortgage discrimination. That is African Americans, who got the same credit score, the same down payment as other people, who are denied loans.

Mr. Speaker, this even happens in neighborhoods where Black people are the majority.

People wonder: How is it that you have gentrification?

Well, the Black person with the downpayment and the 700 credit score gets told that they cannot have a loan; and the White person with the 500 or 600 credit score and a 3 percent downpayment gets told: Sure, have the loan. It is happening every day.

Listen to the podcast "Reveal." You will see a woman who went through this herself. It left her not only without a house, but she had to have her partner, who is White and Asian mix, be the one who took out the mortgage because they wouldn't give her one.

I am saying that our country is truly a great nation, but to get to its true greatness, it has got to confront racial discrimination. I am not talking about prejudice. I am talking about racism.

What is the difference?

Prejudice means I don't like you because of your color, your race, and it is a personal thing. It is just I don't like you.

What I am talking about by racism is systematic denial of opportunity without regard to personality.

They didn't turn that Black woman down in that "Reveal" podcast because they didn't like her. They don't know her. They know she is Black, and that is all they need to know to turn her down.

This is what we have to confront as a country.

And as I close, Congressman EVANS, and as I get ready to take my seat, I just want to point out that, in 2016, White families had a median net worth of \$171,000 compared to \$17,000 for Blacks and \$20,000 for Latinos. Sixty percent of White families reported having retirement savings, which is double the rate for Black and Hispanic families.

We have to understand what Martin Luther King tried to teach us, and that is: What difference does it make if you can sit at a lunch counter if you cannot afford a hamburger?

□ 2100

The Kerner Commission tried to signal to us the way forward. In 2018, we still have the opportunity to take the lessons of it and to build a truly beloved society, as Martin Luther King tried to teach us, but it cannot just be platitudes and pretty talk. It has got to be real commitment, real money, and real investment in opportunity for all.

At the end of the day, in the United States, we say, as we say the Pledge of Allegiance, "liberty and justice for all." I say economic liberty and economic justice for all, and I say we will then see much more social inclusion, and we will live up to the recommendations of the Kerner Commission. We can't wait another 50 years.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the gentleman a question. I hope people heard him. I want to ask a couple things.

The goal of the Commission was to identify the underlying causes of the civil unrest in communities across the country, and obviously a lot has happened in that 50 years. Technology, trade policies, tax policies, education policies, all those types of things have occurred, and it is clear knowing—obviously, in 1968, they didn't know anything about the internet, trade policies, tax policies.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the gentleman: Should there be another commission report? Should there be something that, in a sense, tries to update, in 2018, knowing the circumstances that we are in, and especially poverty has even grown more?

Mr. Speaker, I told you, in the district I am in, which has a lot of wealth with major universities, there is 26 percent poverty. In 1968, there was a riot in the city of Philadelphia.

Now, we don't have riots, you know, fortunately, anymore today in communities, but do we have a form of quiet riot that is occurring in these communities, not physically the way they were, but in some way there is still this growing gap? So we know what the goal was.

Mr. ELLISON. Right.

Mr. EVANS. We know the goal was to identify the underlying causes of the civil unrest.

Mr. Speaker, what I hear Mr. ELLISON saying with that 250 years, the first time I ever heard that described that way, I would ask him to talk to us a little bit about here it is 2018, 50 years later, with all these things that have happened.

I yield to the gentleman from Minnesota.

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, I think another Kerner Commission report is definitely appropriate. It is right. It is good. But I will say that the Eisenhower Foundation did a report that showed that, since the late 1960s, income inequality and the wealth gap have widened.

I really believe that what we really need to do is say to ourselves, as a nation, that we are going to actually live out the true meaning of our creed. At the end of the day, the problem is not intellectual; the problem is a matter of will.

Actually, we have real challenges in our Nation today because, I happen to believe, we have a President who is less willing to move progress forward than even other Republicans who have been in office.

We live in a time, now, where we have seen the rollback of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. We have seen the—right now, there is an attack on public employees in the Supreme Court. It feels like 1870.

You remember I was talking about the Civil War. Black soldiers entered the Civil War in 1863 after the Emancipation Proclamation; 200,000 fought in that Civil War. Black soldiers helped win the Civil War and maintained the Union. In fact, Lincoln himself said that, without Black soldiers, we might not have a Union.

We went through Reconstruction. Of course, Lincoln was killed in April of 1865, but by 1870, we began to roll back, we began to see the progress and the promise roll back.

It feels a little bit like that right now. It feels a little bit like that. But, you know, we are not going back to them bad old days. I want everyone to hear that African Americans, Latinos, women, the LGBT community, people of other religious groups, minority religions, we are not going to the back of the bus. It is just not going to happen.

Better to say, okay, instead of having one group in America be supreme over everyone, what if that group were simply equal to everyone?

Some people in our country seem to believe that having 43 Presidents who are White men, you get one that is Black, and now, all of a sudden, oh, my God, the world is coming to an end. No, it isn't. Everything is fine. Everyone is fine. It just means that what we wrote on paper is actually getting reflected a little bit more in reality.

I think we need to make a firm commitment to end housing discrimina-

tion, a firm commitment to let the people vote, a firm commitment to stop giving tax breaks to the richest people and give the working and middle class a chance to earn a decent level of pay.

I think we need a Republican caucus who will help work with us to stop the carnage of guns on these streets and to allow people who have come here as children not to be thrown out of the country summarily. That is what we really need. But I am not getting the sense that they want to help out, so I am thinking we need to get elections that will get some people, Republican or Democrat, to come out here and do some good things for the American people—and not just the wealthiest, most privileged people.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his comments.

Mr. Speaker, we have another person, who is a neighbor of mine and has been a very good friend, from the great State of New Jersey. We have got that Benjamin Franklin, Walt Whitman Bridge connection. He is a very good friend.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE), from the 10th District of New Jersey.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from the Keystone State for hosting tonight's Special Order hour. He has demonstrated great leadership during this time, and the issues that we are tackling during these Special Order hours are very important to this country as we move forward.

As has been stated today, it has been 50 years since the Kerner report warned us that the Nation was headed into a separate and unequal future. The Kerner report was supposed to be a wake-up call for the United States to break the cycle that kept African-Americans in poverty. It called for government to invest in job creation programs, to expand public housing, and to guarantee minimum family incomes. The Kerner report understood that such actions were necessary for the United States to confront its legacy of race and inequality.

Unfortunately, 50 years later, the same problems persist. The rate of child poverty in the United States today is greater than it was in 1968. The percent of Americans who live in the depths of poverty has grown as well. Welfare reform has failed. African-American unemployment is still nearly double the rate of our White counterparts. Labor unions, once a great equalizer for workers, have shrunk, and inequality has grown.

Rich people in the United States are healthier than poor people. They live longer. They go to better schools, get better jobs, and generate more wealth. They are also more likely to be White than to be Black.

Our schools are more segregated than they were in the 1980s. Our prisons are darker. The Voting Rights Act, a landmark achievement of the civil rights movement, has been gutted.

These and other barriers to equality threaten our democracy.

The resegregation of our schools means that people of color and those who struggle with poverty are often forced to go to underfunded schools. Their education suffers. They aren't given adequate preparation for college or a trade school, and they ultimately make less money than their White counterparts.

A recent Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco study found that Black men and women earn persistently lower wages compared to their White counterparts, a gap that cannot be fully explained by differences in age, education, job type, or location.

So what can Congress do? We need to invest in housing programs that help desegregate communities once again. We need to make it easier for people of color to get federally backed loans to buy homes and finally do away with red lining.

We need to invest in public schools. We need to expand preschool education. We need to spend money on job training programs and public universities.

We need to increase the minimum wage, and we need to strengthen oversight of mortgage lenders.

We need to restore the Voting Rights Act, because people who cannot vote cannot lead.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to, if I can, just follow up a little bit on the Voting Rights Act.

Obviously, that is the foundation of a democracy, and it is rather amazing to me that all of us in this Congress are elected by the people. I tell people the greatest title is citizen. It is not Congressman; it is not President; it is citizen.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the gentleman to speak a little bit about what has that impact been about the Voting Rights Act, as he sees it today, and the fact that, for some reason, this Congress doesn't seem to understand that we still need the Voting Rights Act in 2018.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I would say that, as we have all stated tonight, it apparently appears that we are going backwards in this country, and so why wouldn't the Voting Rights Act be under attack? It was finally the opportunity for African-American citizens to be full citizens.

The only right you are born with in the United States of America is the right to vote as an American citizen. You are born with that right, and yet it is stripped away through the gutting of the Voting Rights Act.

So what does that say to people who fall under the Voting Rights Act? It says that you are not equal, that you don't deserve the same rights as other Americans, that somehow you are less than a first-class citizen in this country, yet you can go to war for us, you can do other things, contribute to this society, but not be able to vote. The three-fifths compromise, we can go all the way back to that and talk about the inequality.

So we need people of goodwill on both sides of the issue, on both sides of the aisle, to understand how equality is arrived at and come together and do the things that we need to do in order to make this a more perfect Union. I believe in that. I have not always seen it, but I believe that we need to continue to strive to make this a more perfect Union, to live out the mantra of this great Nation.

This is the greatest country in the world, no question about it, absolutely incredible, but let's live up to it. Let's really live up to what this Nation stands for, because you don't need people who are citizens here that don't believe in what you are saying.

Every day, we get up and we pledge allegiance to the flag like every other resident, every other citizen in this country, but every once in a while it fails us. We need to stay vigilant. We at the Congressional Black Caucus will be the voice and be vigilant on this floor in this House for people throughout this country who seem to be on the wrong side of this issue.

□ 2115

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HOLLINGSWORTH). The gentleman from Pennsylvania has 6 minutes remaining.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, what others have heard this evening from the Congressional Black Caucus is sort of like a canary in the mine. The Kerner Report, when President Johnson established it 50 years ago, was an attempt to shine a light and to send a warning that we were two nations, one Black and one White. And for every Member who stood up here and spoke, they all talked about how proud they are, as Americans; and that we all recognize the beauty and the idea of America and what it has meant.

I come from the city of Philadelphia, where it all started. In those conversations, there is no question it started out as a very flawed document, where African Americans and women basically were left out of that discussion.

But as you think about what my good friend from Minnesota said as he laid out the historical aspect to where we are here in 2018 and the opportunity we have—because I do believe we have an opportunity, and I do believe it is not any more words on paper. It is not a report or anything. It is a question of what is in our hearts collectively.

I don't think this is a Democrat or Republican issue. I don't think this is a Black or White issue. I think this is an issue about inclusion and involvement. I think that when you go back to that report that talks about the underlying causes of the civil unrest in these communities across this country, I think that we all have an obligation to try to address those issues.

The issues are very fundamental. May you live in rural America, or urban America, or suburban America, you know, everybody needs quality

healthcare. Everyone needs a job opportunity. Everyone needs a good, solid education. And those things we should not take lightly. All of those things, we all need.

So what we, as the Congressional Black Caucus, attempted to do is continue to raise the consciousness and to get people to understand that we still have a lot of work to do. This should not be taken lightly; that we all recognize that though, as Dr. King used to say, we have come over here on different boats, we are in the same boat now; and that boat is America; that boat is we are in a much more competitive world than in 1968. This is 2018. The world has radically changed.

The question is: Are we going to be in the forefront of the change, or are we going to be in the back of change?

I like to believe we should be in the forefront of change. I like to believe that we all understand, as a country, that it is in our collective interests to work together and to make a difference. I am not saying to you it will be easy. And it was not easy in 1968.

As I said, President Johnson was a Democrat, but he did not heed the report the way he should have probably heeded it. But it is no use talking about the past.

The question is: How do we deal with the future, and where do we go?

We should applaud him and others for at least having the discussion. We should not be fearful of discussion. We should all recognize that we have some challenges ahead for us in the 21st century.

Again, I will repeat myself. It will not be easy. It will take a lot of work, and it will take us confronting those issues that we face today. It is not easy, as we have debated the issue about healthcare or the issue about jobs or the issue about education. Everybody wants to work. Everybody wants a quality job and a quality opportunity. No one wants to sit on the sidelines.

So we have a chance today, in my view, to take advantage of the opportunities. I hope we will, Mr. Speaker. I believe that all members of the Congressional Black Caucus strongly feel that way. I thank the chairman of our caucus for initiating these efforts that we have been doing for this last year or so. I really appreciate that opportunity.

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

HONORING PASTOR ED SEARS

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

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Grace Baptist Church, in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, paid tribute to its pastor of the past 37 years, Ed Sears, and his wife, Linda. Pastor Sears is transitioning out of his role as

senior pastor, and the members of the church, along with people from across the State, met to acknowledge the leadership and inspiration provided by Pastor Sears.

Pastor Sears is known as a servant of God who is held in high esteem by all who know him and his reputation. He is a person who made those around him feel loved. There is general agreement that the love that he shows others is a result of his commitment to and his relationship with Jesus Christ.

He has made a difference in the lives of thousands of others to whom he ministered whenever they were in need. He has been totally committed to his ministry and been a true role model for us all.

As he retires from a full-time ministry to face health challenges, we wish him well. We know that he will deal with these challenges in the same way he has lived his life thus far, with honor, integrity, strength, and faith that will inspire others.

May God continue to bless you, Pastor Sears.

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

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today.

Mr. CLYBURN (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today.

Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today.

Mr. DEFAZIO (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of medical procedure.

Ms. JACKSON LEE (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today and March 6 on account of representational duties in district relating to Hurricane Harvey recovery activities.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today and March 6.

Mr. NEAL (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today.

SENATE BILLS REFERRED

Bills of the Senate of the following titles were taken from the Speaker's table and, under the rule, referred as follows:

S. 1621. An act to require the Federal Communications Commission to establish a methodology for the collection by the Commission of information about commercial mobile service and commercial mobile data service, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

S. 2372. An act to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide outer burial receptacles for remains buried in National Parks, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs; in addition, to the Committee on Natural Resources for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.