

to law enforcement. If we have the courage to stand up and do this, then never again will thoughts and prayers be needed in the aftermath of a mass shooting.

This country is at a crossroads. We need your leadership. We need your love, your compassion. We need your serious thought unmarred by lobbyists.

I implore you to think about the kids. Think about how you would feel if it were your son, your daughter, your granddaughter, or your grandson, because it could be.

Had we—had the Members of this body—learned the lessons of Columbine and of Sandy Hook, Joaquin would still be here. The lives of hundreds would not have been ripped to pieces. This was preventable.

Something you can do, and urge your colleagues to do right this moment, is support the recently introduced universal background checks bill.

It is now my mission in life to do whatever I can to ensure that no mother and no father have to endure the pain I have, that no shining beacon of light, hope, and love like my Joaquin is snuffed out too soon in a preventable mass shooting.

We know that he didn't have to die if our leaders had done enough. Other countries have solved this problem. The roadmap exists. Please follow it.

Sincerely, Patricia Oliver, Parkland, Florida.

Mr. Speaker, Patricia and Manuel, Joaquin's father, have not allowed Joaquin to remain a victim. He is an advocate.

Last month, the Olivers visited Capitol Hill with a statue of Joaquin to deliver this letter and to call for change. It is time to listen to them, Patricia, Manuel, and Joaquin. We shouldn't have to know the pain that Patricia and Manny know, that 16 other families in Parkland know, and that families in every corner of this country know, to do something about gun violence.

The time to act is now.

#### DISASTER RELIEF

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Ms. PLASKETT) for 5 minutes.

Ms. PLASKETT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remind you and my colleagues that Congress appropriated billions for disaster relief for Hurricanes Irma and Maria. In the latest effort, however, to find funding to build a wall, the White House and top budget officials continue to discuss shifting disaster funding to pay for a wall that a foreign nation was to pay for and now must be borne by people still recovering from disaster.

The 2017 hurricane season was one of the worst on record. Among the hardest places hit were Puerto Rico and my home, the Virgin Islands of the United States, which not only lost power across the islands, but many vital pieces of infrastructure were heavily damaged and destroyed, and, most tragically, lives were lost.

This disaster significantly impacted the Virgin Islands, destroying the island's infrastructure, with the loss of our only two hospitals, multiple

schools, thousands of homes, and it left residents without electricity for a period of 9 months.

The total damage to the Virgin Islands is estimated at \$10.8 billion—\$10.8 billion in a place that only has a \$1 billion budget—\$6.9 billion for infrastructure, \$2.3 billion for housing, and \$1.5 million for the economy.

Diverting disaster funds from this community would create a security risk and make them even more vulnerable.

Mr. Speaker, shifting disaster relief funds appropriated by this body from my district and others impaired by the 2017–2018 natural disasters would create a catastrophic economic disaster.

□ 1030

Disaster funding from the Army Corps was critical to disaster recovery, including power restoration, studies, repairs, and construction projects in the Virgin Islands and other territories and States impacted by the national disasters.

The Army Corps of Engineers, however, has barged more than 25,000 cubic yards of construction and demolition debris from the territory. However, approximately more than 6,000, almost 7,000, cubic yards remain on the island, still to be removed.

There is still so much work left undone. Individuals are still without roofs. After extensive debate and discussion with FEMA, the roof repair program is just now, a year and a half later, repairing the thousands of roofs and homes destroyed.

The STEP roof program has been extended to March 1. The STEP program debris removal is still in progress throughout the territory.

The hurricanes left not one but two hospitals overwhelmed with debris and destroyed—our only two hospitals—and, now, worksheets still have not been approved by FEMA for the rebuilding of those hospitals. The modular hospital is still not in place.

Students have only recently, in this month, moved into the modular classrooms. Can you imagine?

School reconstruction has not begun. Our communities still have a long way to go to get in the disaster recovery and rebuilding process.

Mr. Speaker, nowhere else in this country would this be allowed. This would not be allowed in any of your colleagues' homes.

However, before and after the storm, Virgin Islanders put their heads down and did the work. They pitched in and helped one another because that is all we had at that time, and the benevolence of other people, until you, Congress, until you, colleagues, gave them the disaster funding that was needed to rebuild.

Mr. Speaker, unlike other places, the Virgin Islands doesn't have five or six Members of the House or millions of constituents living in your own districts. The Virgin Islands didn't have thousands of people on the news media

or chefs or playwrights bringing musicals to our island to draw attention to the devastation in our home.

The Virgin Islands had me, and I pray they have you—they have you, Mr. Speaker; they have you, colleagues—to continue the fight for them, for these Americans, to tell the White House that they should not shift disaster funding to build a wall away from Americans living in territories for something that a foreign country was to pay for in the beginning.

#### NATIONAL CHILDREN'S DENTAL HEALTH MONTH

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

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize February as National Children's Dental Health Month and to raise awareness around the critically important issue of access to quality dental care for our Nation's children.

The most prevalent chronic infectious disease among children in the United States is tooth decay. This disease is responsible for countless health problems in children and more than 51 million hours lost at school every year.

However, this disease is preventable with basic dental care. Sadly, even with improvements in recent years, too many children are not able to access the quality dental care they need to simply stay healthy.

I have a long history of advocating for increased access to dental care for all, particularly our Nation's young people. I have often said that our children are the living messengers we send to a future we will never see. That means that we must do everything in our power to ensure that they are healthy and given every opportunity to succeed.

Today, I also rise to share the story of a young Maryland boy named Deamonte Driver. He died because of a lack of access to basic dental care.

In February of 2007, 12-year-old Deamonte Driver came home from school with a simple headache, which had started as a toothache. His mother worked hard to make ends meet with all kinds of low-paying jobs. She searched for a dentist who would accept Medicaid for her children, but she found no dentist who would care for children's teeth.

Deamonte's mother took him to the emergency room, where he received medication for pain, a sinus infection, and a dental abscess. Unfortunately, that was not enough. The bacteria from Deamonte's cavity spread to his brain, and, at 12 years old, Deamonte Driver died—12 years old. Deamonte could be alive today if it were not for the lack of a simple procedure and the early removal of one tooth.

Deamonte's story is one we must never, ever forget. We must imprint it in the DNA of every cell of our brains.

Fortunately, we have made great strides in access to dental care, particularly for children, since Deamonte's death in 2007. Passage of the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act and the Affordable Care Act have filled the gaps in dental care for children who are eligible for these programs. This has given many children across this great Nation access to dental care and many families greater peace of mind regarding their children's health.

Maryland has also made significant progress in access to dental healthcare over the last several years and now stands as a national model thanks, sadly, to Deamonte Driver.

Through the work of many groups and organizations, more Maryland children are visiting a dentist, and dental health is a priority in our great State. In 2017, almost 70 percent of the Maryland children enrolled in Medicaid received at least one dental care service.

The Maryland Department of Health also funds specific programs, such as the Oral Disease and Injury Prevention Program and the Dental Sealants Program, that cares for and educates thousands of children, including right there at the schools.

Yet, even with these improvements in access to education, there is more that must be done to protect dental health in honor of that little boy, Deamonte Driver. That is why I am proud to rise in support of dental care during Children's Dental Health Month and encourage everyone to take advantage of oral health education, screenings, preventive care, and restorative services in their community.

It is also why I plan to reintroduce my Comprehensive Dental Reform Act this Congress, which, among other things, would provide comprehensive dental coverage to all Medicare, Medicaid, and VA beneficiaries and make dental care an essential health benefit for adults under the Affordable Care Act.

Dental services must no longer be thought of as an optional health benefit for children or adults.

#### BLACK HISTORY MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. TORRES) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. TORRES of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate Black History Month and to honor countless African American leaders throughout our history who have pushed relentlessly to make our Union one that is more just and more equitable for all people.

We recognize the incredible progress that they made possible and the work that we still need to do to ensure that opportunity isn't something that is determined by the color of our skin.

We honor the courageous and determined everyday men and women, like Medgar Evers and Fannie Lou Hamer, who challenged every barrier in our so-

ciety and set a path for the activists of today, like Patricia Nickols-Butler, the CEO of Community Action Partnership. She has dedicated her entire life to making sure that not one single family in San Bernardino County is left behind by providing them with the resources they need to succeed.

We honor educators like Maxine Smith, who fought discrimination in our classrooms to give every child an equal opportunity to learn, and leaders in the Inland Empire like Dr. Soraya M. Coley, the president of Cal Poly Pomona, who is committed to helping every student reach his and her full potential; trailblazers like San Bernardino County's first Black schoolteacher, Dorothy Ingraham, who taught every child to reach for the stars and never give up, or Dr. Eric Bishop, the vice president of student services at Chaffey College, who has been a guiding force for every student when the going got tough.

We honor the countless Black veterans who fought for our freedoms in every war, from the Revolutionary War to our current conflicts in the Middle East, and law enforcement officers who put their own lives on the line every single day to keep our communities safe. We salute Chief Derek Williams of the Ontario Police Department, whose commitment to service began in the Air Force.

We honor the public servants like Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm, the first African American woman elected to Congress, who showed us what it meant to be "unbought and unbossed" and made way for the historic number of women running for office today; and Wilmer Amina Carter, the first African American woman to represent San Bernardino County in the California State Assembly. Throughout her time in office, she worked to improve the lives of people in her community by passing laws to strengthen healthcare, safety, transportation, and help create jobs.

We honor the moral leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who made America listen—listen—to its conscience and sacrificed his life to advance civil rights for each and every one of us.

And we honor Pastor Chuck Singleton of Loveland Church in Ontario and Rialto, whose words provide comfort and healing here at home and abroad through his humanitarian work.

The successes of African American leaders reach far and wide and are deeply entrenched in each of our lives. May we all take the time to uplift the immeasurable contributions that African American leaders have made to our country this month and every single day of the year. May we renew our commitment and join them to pick up the fight for equality, opportunity, and justice for all Americans.

#### HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE

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

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, last month we commemorated Holocaust Remembrance Day. It is important that we always take note because, sadly, genocide and anti-Semitism continues to exist in the 21st century. As the philosopher George Santayana once explained: Those who do not learn history are doomed to repeat it.

Yes. An important episode in the history of the Holocaust is the story of Aristides de Sousa Mendes, a Portuguese diplomat, who was the consular general in Bordeaux, France, in the late 1930s, 1940, and 1941. As a Portuguese diplomat in Bordeaux, France, at the outset of the Second World War, Sousa Mendes is credited with saving the lives of tens of thousands of European Jews fleeing the Holocaust.

As a proud Portuguese American and the co-chair of the Congressional Portuguese Caucus, I am glad that later this year we will be hosting a screening of the film, "Disobedience: The Sousa Mendes Story," in partnership with the Sousa Mendes Foundation.

□ 1045

We must learn from our history so that the atrocities of the past are never repeated in the future. We remember, and we pledge to never, ever forget.

Speaking of atrocities, sadly, they do continue to exist around the world. This week, we will have an opportunity, as Congress, to go on record to discuss the challenges of the civil war going on in Yemen and America's participation in that effort.

It is high time Congress reassert itself in terms of our checks and balances. We have abdicated our role far too often in terms of declaring what America's actions and interventions will be like around the world. This week, we will have an opportunity to go on record on the atrocities that are taking place in Yemen and, hopefully, be a positive force for change.

In addition to our efforts this week, a looming deadline on February 15 is before us, and that is whether we will reach an agreement on proposed border security and continue to fund this government to the end of our fiscal year. It is wrong, and it is irresponsible to ever shut down government.

In the 14 years that I have been a Member of Congress, I have never voted to shut down government. It is not just the hundreds and thousands of Federal employees who are at risk, who have home payments, car payments, and other obligations, but all the other contractors and people who do business with the Federal Government or who are indirectly impacted.

We have held hearings throughout my district. I hope that before the end of this week, we will reach a bipartisan agreement on border security. I hope that we will continue to ensure that