

IN CELEBRATION OF NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS MONTH

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

Mr. PAYNE. Madam Speaker, we have seen how climate change has made natural disasters, such as hurricanes and tornadoes, more frequent and much more severe.

This is not the time to debate climate change. This is the time to act on it. And the best time to act, the best time to prepare for natural disasters is before they occur.

September is National Preparedness Month. It is the perfect time to celebrate the brave men and women who respond when a crisis happens and the perfect time to coordinate our emergency response efforts.

We need to be ready for the next emergency before it strikes. As chairman of the Emergency Preparedness, Response and Recovery Subcommittee of the Committee on Homeland Security, I want FEMA and other Federal agencies to have the power and resources to coordinate relief efforts before, during, and after an emergency happens.

We do not have to relive the horrors of Hurricanes Andrew, Katrina, and Maria. Let us be proactive about the next disaster instead of waiting until it strikes.

□ 1545

BRINGING INDUSTRY AND EDUCATION TOGETHER IN PENNSYLVANIA'S 12TH DISTRICT

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

Mr. KELLER. Madam Speaker, our Nation's economic prosperity and national security interests are secured due to energy-rich districts like Pennsylvania's 12th Congressional District.

That is why, during the recent August district work month, while in Montrose, Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania, I visited Cabot Oil & Gas, one of Pennsylvania's largest natural gas producers.

On any given day, Pennsylvania's 12th District is well positioned to help make the United States a net energy exporter by producing as much as 10 percent of the country's natural gas. Equally important is the great partner that energy producers have become with local governments and educational institutions.

As a member of the House Education and Labor Committee, I know the importance of bringing industry and education together to enhance workforce development, especially in rural areas. That is why it made me proud to see Cabot partnering with Lackawanna College School of Petroleum and Natural Gas as a means to provide career-ready job skills in the natural gas industry. Thanks to this partnership,

students are able to make family-sustaining wages and have a career in an industry that will remain in Pennsylvania for generations.

Congress should use this example, set in Susquehanna County and throughout Pennsylvania's 12th Congressional District, for how partnerships with private-sector job creators can lead to a better future.

COMMENDING EAGLE THEATER IN HAMMONTON, NEW JERSEY

(Mr. VAN DREW asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. VAN DREW. Madam Speaker, the New Jersey Fringe Festival is hosted by the local Eagle Theater in Hammonton in southern New Jersey.

The festival is a driver in the cultural boom taking place in this town. The Eagle Theater is south Jersey's only year-round professional Equity theater and is dedicated to redefining regional theater through innovation, enlightened production techniques, and the development of eclectic theatrics.

The Eagle Theater originally opened its doors in 1914 as a silent movie theater and was a playhouse from 1914 until 1944. Since then, the theater has built itself to be an award-winning, culturally diverse epicenter boasting state-of-the-art technical equipment and hosting a core of theming artists dedicated to experimental storytelling through medium-advancing technology.

It enriches south Jersey culturally and creatively, and I commend them for what they do. South Jersey is proud of them; New Jersey is proud of them; and the United States of America is proud of them.

Congratulations.

RECOGNIZING CHATHAM COUNTY'S BILL LEWIS UPON HIS RETIREMENT

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

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Mr. Bill Lewis, who retired on Monday, August 12, after nearly 40 years working in the Chatham County judicial system.

Chatham County's chief assistant public defender, Mr. LEWIS found his calling in 1980 after trying out a number of other careers first. The combination of helping people while also being able to stand up, arguing in the courtroom, drew him to the career.

And it paid off. In his own words, Mr. LEWIS loved every day of his job, and he liked defending people's freedom rather than fighting over their money.

It also paid off for Chatham County because of Mr. LEWIS' exceptional reputation for being a calming voice in the courtroom and his care of his clients.

During his tenure, he earned some of the most prestigious awards in the Savannah area: the Robbie Robinson Award for his success in public defense and the Thomas More Award for his religious affiliation and commitment to humanity.

Madam Speaker, I thank Mr. LEWIS for his service to our community. His work will be missed.

CONSTITUENTS WANT CONGRESS TO WORK TOGETHER

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

Mr. ALLEN. Madam Speaker, as my colleagues and I come back into legislative session this week, I would like to take this opportunity to share what I learned from the 12th District of Georgia during the recent district work period.

Like many of my colleagues, I spent the last 6 weeks meeting with constituents, and I hope my colleagues got the same earful I did. Our constituents want to know why Congress can't work together to deliver results for the American people.

In fact, just last night, I hosted a telephone town hall, and constituents said that the two top issues they want Congress to focus on before the end of the year are healthcare and immigration reform.

How do we solve these problems when Democrats are determined to ensure that our President is not successful? It is not fair to the American people to put politics ahead of the American people's interests.

We have a President who is willing and eager to work with us on many issues, including healthcare and immigration, so let's get to work. The American people won't accept anything less.

PROTECT PATIENTS FROM SURPRISE MEDICAL BILLS

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

Mr. SPANO. Madam Speaker, I rise today to announce a bill I recently introduced in the House, the Protecting Patients from Surprise Medical Bills Act, which is a companion bill to Senator SCOTT's recent legislation.

No one seeking medical care should ever have to worry about incurring unexpected, crippling expenses, especially when they have done everything right by obtaining health insurance. That is why then-Governor RICK SCOTT and I worked to pass a bill in Florida to solve this issue.

This law takes patients completely out of the billing process, protecting patients from surprise medical bills for emergency services and for mistakenly seeing an out-of-network healthcare provider at an in-network hospital.

This bill has experienced widespread success in Florida, which is why we are

introducing legislation to apply these policies to healthcare plans regulated at the Federal level.

I have personally known the fear of being rushed to the emergency room. In that moment, no one should have to worry about their finances.

This bill not only seeks to save Americans money but also provides the peace of mind for them to focus on healing.

RECOGNIZING REVITALIZATION EFFORTS IN CLARION, A BLUEPRINT COMMUNITY

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the community development and revitalization efforts of Clarion, Pennsylvania.

Recently, I was back in my district, touring Clarion's growing downtown region, meeting with small business owners and community leaders, and the progress and growth that I saw were truly exciting.

In 2015, Clarion was selected as a Blueprint Community, an initiative through the FHLBank Pittsburgh that seeks to revitalize older communities and neighborhoods. One of the shining stars of the Blueprint program is the Clarion River Brewing Company, and I am proud of their continued success as one of the many exciting small businesses in town.

But Clarion's blueprint included more than new businesses. It also outlines a plan to increase affordable housing options for current and future residents.

These blueprints don't offer one-size-fits-all plans for community development. Instead, they work with local leaders to better understand the needs of their residents to create custom, homegrown solutions that breathe new life into older communities.

Madam Speaker, I am excited to see what Clarion has in store, and I am rooting for its continued success.

CONGRATULATING UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS ON ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY

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

Mr. TAYLOR. Madam Speaker, today, I rise to congratulate the University of Texas at Dallas on 50 years of educating students in north Texas.

In 1969, Texas Governor Preston Smith signed legislation to officially establish the University of Texas at Dallas as part of the UT system. Not only has UT grown immensely in the last 50 years, but our community takes great pride in the university's Tier One status.

Today, UTD offers over 140 degrees and helps young people follow their

dreams by providing them with a top-notch education. What was once vast prairie land has become a hub of higher learning and an opportunity for students to learn across the country.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the University of Texas at Dallas on a wonderful 50 years of academic excellence. Whoosh.

RAISING AWARENESS OF DAMAGE DONE BY MANDATORY ARBITRATION AND SUPPORTING THE FAIR ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2019, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SPEIER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Ms. SPEIER. Madam Speaker, I am proud to join my colleagues in the Democratic Women's Caucus in hosting this Special Order hour to raise awareness of the damage done by mandatory arbitration and of our support for H.R. 1423, the Forced Arbitration Injustice Repeal Act, or as we refer to it, the FAIR Act.

We are pleased that the Judiciary Committee is holding a markup on this bill as we speak.

Madam Speaker, what is stunning about this issue is that a recent study found that one is more likely to be struck by lightning than to win an arbitration case. In fact, the 5-year study found that, of 6,000 claims that were made on arbitration clauses, money awards were provided in only 137 cases.

Today, my colleagues will read accounts from just some of the women who have experienced this miscarriage of justice firsthand. Over 60 million workers are subject to forced arbitration, but even those staggering numbers fail to fully illustrate the suffering and human plight caused by mandatory arbitration.

Today, we share the experiences of women fighting back against the silence and shame, and we join them in demanding systemic change so that all workers are treated with the dignity and respect that they deserve.

Sterling Jewelers, known to many of us as Jared Jewelers or Kay Jewelers—Diane Acampora. Perhaps no company better exemplifies the harm caused by mandatory arbitration than Sterling Jewelers.

In April 2019, The New York Times Magazine published a story on the ongoing, decade-long pay-and-promotion lawsuit against Sterling Jewelers, which at one point included nearly 70,000 women. These stories should outrage each of us.

Diane of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, said that, after 5 years at Kay Jewelers and 6 years of experience at another store, she made \$2 to \$4 less per hour than her more recently hired, lesser experienced male colleagues.

According to the investigation, "When she was promoted to manager,

she attended the company's annual managers' meeting in Florida. On a shuttle bus back to the resort, she was pulled onto the lap of a manager, who held her tightly as he fondled her. At the same meeting, a district manager tried to kiss her. At a later meeting, she had to leave a hot tub because discussion turned uncomfortably sexual. She was later told that the hot-tub scene turned into an orgy."

And that is just the tip of the iceberg.

"There was Amanda Barger, a sales associate who made her way up to assistant manager, who after 5 years of employment complained that she was still making her starting salary but was brushed off by her manager; who watched the new guy who previously worked at a cell phone-cover kiosk be promoted ahead of her; who dared to complain to HR after her district manager invited her to a Chili's with a few other managers and, while they were eating, texted her from across the table, 'I want to come on your tits.'"

Marie Wolf's manager didn't seem to like her, despite the fact that she was a top salesperson at Jared. She didn't have "the Jared look," the manager told a colleague.

"Marie was tall and wore pants and blouses, not short skirt-suits, and she wore little makeup. One day, Marie asked for a raise, and the manager told her she was already making more than any other salesperson in the store." Not surprisingly, that was far from the truth.

Or, "Tammy Zenner, who was called 'Texas Tammy' by her colleagues because of the size of her breasts and who complained to her store manager that an executive visiting the store had rubbed himself against her from behind but was told when she complained that she should be flattered."

The culture of rampant gender discrimination, pay inequity, and sexual harassment at Sterling is the stuff of living nightmares suffered by so many working women, many of whom are the primary, if not only, breadwinner for their families.

Diane, Amanda, Marie, and Tammy are just 4 of nearly 70,000 women who have at some point joined the lawsuit against Sterling. And Sterling was able to hide the details of these allegations from its shareholders and from the public because all of their employees are forced to sign a forced arbitration agreement upon being hired.

That means all work-related disputes had to go through Sterling's in-house dispute resolution system, effectively gagging employees and destroying any chance of positive change.

It also, undoubtedly, resulted in countless other women facing similar types of abuse and discrimination. That is why the experiences of these women are so important for us to hear, so that Congress will pass the FAIR Act.

□ 1600

It is unacceptable that millions of employees are subjected to a system