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House of Representatives

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

THE SPEAKER. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2019, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties. All time shall be equally allocated between the parties, and in no event shall debate continue beyond 1:50 p.m. Each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, shall be limited to 5 minutes.

NATIONAL RECOVERY MONTH

THE SPEAKER. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. TRONE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. TRONE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the accomplishments of more than 23 million Americans who are in recovery.

September is National Recovery Month. In 2019 we are celebrating 30 years of that designation. We are marking that today in Congress with an effort we are calling “Congress Goes Purple”.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues DENVER RIGGLEMAN, ANNIE KUSTER, and BRIAN FITZPATRICK for partnering with me to make this happen.

Those among us who are struggling with mental health concerns or substance use disorder need to know there is no shame in seeking help. Their journey to recovery is something to be celebrated.

These disorders don't discriminate, and neither should we in helping find people a path back. I came to Congress to help make recovery a real possibility for more Americans.

Starting in the mid-1990s, we have seen opioids invade and destroy fami-

lies across America. From the district I represent in Maryland to big cities and small towns across the country, there is not a single community that has not been fully spared from the devastating effects of the opioid epidemic. It is a true crisis.

For the first time in 100 years, we have seen life expectancy decline for 3 straight years in this country. Americans are dying sooner than their parents' generation, and we can blame the opioid epidemic.

The numbers are staggering. Last year, we saw over 70,000 people die of a drug overdose. More Americans have died in 1 year of drug overdose than from the wars in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq combined.

Behind each one of those numbers is a person. Behind each one of those numbers is a family and a community that feels the immense pain and loss. My family was one of those.

In 2016, on New Year's Eve, my nephew Ian Jacob Trone died of a fentanyl overdose. He was 24 years old, and he died alone in his hotel room.

I worked with Ian for over 5 years while he was struggling with addiction. We tried treatment centers and halfway houses and mental health specialists. I worked closely with him to do everything I could to get him the help he needed, and we still lost him.

Unfortunately, it is not just addiction numbers that are staggering. SAMHSA estimates in 2017, over 19 million people in the U.S. experienced substance use disorder, but of that group, 8.5 million also had a co-occurring mental illness.

This is the most important issue in America. We must act now and stop more people from losing their lives. I know if we are going to make a difference, then all of us, including the Federal Government, need to act. That is why, as a new Member of Congress, ending the opioid addiction epidemic is my number one priority.

I have started a bipartisan freshman working group, which is now composed

of 64 lawmakers from 31 States all dedicated to ending this epidemic. Together, we are pushing bills that will bring consistent funding and resources to those on the front lines who are fighting this every day. Most importantly, we are doing this together, both Democrats and Republicans. Every action we take is bipartisan. We need to work together if we are going to end the stigma around mental health and substance use disorders.

Right now someone suffering from substance use disorder is being thrown into jail instead of getting the treatment they need. We need to start treating this like the disease that it is. Instead of locking people up in jail, we need to reach out and give those that are struggling a helping hand.

That is why the message of National Recovery Month is so powerful. We can be that village. Together, we know this is a disease, not a crime. Together, we can put the focus on recovery so that no one has to do this alone.

Madam Speaker, I pledge to do everything in my power to make sure we end it. I thank the Representatives wearing purple today for recognizing the importance of National Recovery Month.

SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER IS A CRISIS

THE SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CUELLAR). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. NORMAN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. NORMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor many Americans who are forgotten: those who have gone through difficult times that are now on a path of recovery.

Substance abuse disorders are running rampant throughout our communities all over America. They have crossed borders of race, ethnicity, gender, and politics. This crisis knows no bounds, and we are here to bring awareness to the fact that there is a

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Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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way forward for each of these individuals.

I have hosted substance abuse awareness roundtables all across my district regularly and have heard from folks who have family, friends, or are themselves dealing with substance abuse. Many of these people you would have no idea they or people they knew were struggling.

But they were, Mr. Speaker. And this is why I rise with my colleagues, both Democrat and Republican alike, and wear the color purple today, to show that through love, care, faith, family, and community, we can help those walking through a very, very lonely valley.

We can uplift those who need it the most. We are all here to help our brothers and sisters in Christ.

THE PEOPLE HAVE A RIGHT TO KNOW

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

Mr. LEWIS. Mr. Speaker, today I come with a heavy heart, deeply concerned about the future of our democracy, and I am not alone.

People approach me everywhere I go, whether I am traveling back and forth to Atlanta or around our country. They believe, they truly believe, that our Nation is descending into darkness.

They never dreamed that the United States, once seen as a beacon of hope and as an inspiration to people striving for equality and justice, would be falling into such disgrace. I share their concerns for the future of our country.

It keeps me up at night. We took an oath to protect this Nation against all domestic enemies and foreign enemies.

Sometimes I am afraid to go to sleep for fear that I will wake up and our democracy will be gone and never return.

At every turn, this administration demonstrates complete disdain and disregard for ethics, for the law, and for the Constitution.

They have lied under oath. They refuse to account for their actions and appear before legislative bodies who have the constitutional right to inquire about their activities.

The people have a right to inquire, they have a right to know.

The people have a right to know whether they can put their faith and trust in the outcome of our elections.

They have a right to know whether the cornerstone of our democracy was undermined by people sitting in the White House today.

They have a right to know whether a foreign power was asked to intervene in the 2020 election.

They have a right to know whether the President is using his office to line his pockets.

Mr. Speaker, the people of this Nation realize that if they had committed even half of these possible violations, the Federal Government would be swift to seek justice.

We cannot delay. We must not wait. Now is the time to act.

I have been patient while we tried every other path and used every other tool.

We will never find the truth unless we use the power given to the House of Representatives, and the House alone, to begin an official investigation as dictated by the Constitution.

The future of our democracy is at stake. There comes a time when you have to be moved by the spirit of history to take action to protect and preserve the integrity of our Nation.

I believe, I truly believe, the time to begin impeachment proceedings against this President has come.

To delay or to do otherwise would betray the foundation of our democracy.

THE USMCA NEEDS TO BE RATIFIED NOW

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

Mr. GIANFORTE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge the House leaders to give farmers, ranchers, manufacturers, and businessowners the certainty they need, and ratify the USMCA.

Nearly 1 year ago, the United States, Mexico, and Canada concluded their negotiations and released the full text of a trade agreement.

But I stand here today nearly 1 year later, and the trade deal with our top trading partners is stalled.

Why? Well, the Speaker objected to the trade deal. Those objections were addressed, and yet the American people are still waiting.

Mr. Speaker, the USMCA will create 176,000 new American jobs. It will secure open access to markets in Mexico and Canada, markets critical to Montana farmers and ranchers.

Ratifying the USMCA should be a priority for this Congress, not impeachment fever.

I again call on the Speaker to work with the White House to get this trade deal with our top trading partners across the finish line.

PFAS CONTAMINATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New Hampshire (Ms. KUSTER) for 5 minutes.

Ms. KUSTER of New Hampshire. Mr. Speaker, across the United States and in my district, we are seeing more and more communities threatened with PFAS contamination.

The proliferation of toxic PFAS chemicals throughout our environment is a risk to human health, and as Congress continues to act on this issue, we must listen to the families and citizens who have had to live with this contamination.

I cannot imagine the fear of a parent who has learned that their children's drinking water is contaminated with these harmful chemicals.

That is why earlier this year, I introduced legislation that would prohibit companies from adjusting PFAS chemicals at the molecular level to bypass environmental protection at the Environmental Protection Agency.

Turning off the tap for approving new PFAS chemicals is one step that Congress can take as we work to fully understand how expansive PFAS contamination is to our environment and to human health.

Congress must act on this issue, which is why last month, I convened a PFAS summit with my friend and colleague CHRIS PAPPAS to hear from environmental advocates, impacted families, and community leaders in New Hampshire who are on the front lines of cleaning up PFAS contamination.

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We also heard from experts who are working on long-term solutions to cleaning up these "forever chemicals," and I am pleased to bring some of these ideas back to Washington as a member of the bipartisan Congressional PFAS Task Force. This group has brought together Democrats and Republicans from across the country to put the issue of PFAS contamination front and center in Washington, D.C.

The PFAS Task Force has already been effective in advancing important provisions of the National Defense Authorization Act to help clean up contaminated sites and protect servicemembers, their families, and first responders who have been exposed.

As House and Senate leaders begin conferring on this bill, it is critical that the final National Defense Authorization Act includes PFAS provisions from the House- and Senate-passed bills. Americans have waited long enough.

Congress has an important opportunity to pass bipartisan legislation that will protect veterans, current servicemembers, firefighters occupationally exposed to PFAS, and families in communities impacted by military PFAS contamination.

This issue is critical to my district and my State, and I will continue to work across the aisle with anyone who is willing to protect communities and future generations from PFAS contamination.

EXPAND MARKETS FOR AMERICAN DAIRY

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, last month, I had the pleasure of hosting U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue for a dairy and agriculture summit in Pennsylvania's 15th District at Mount Aloysius College in Cresson, Pennsylvania.

Joining the Secretary and I was Gary Groves, Executive Director of the USDA Pennsylvania Farm Service