

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

IN RECOGNITION OF THIS UNIQUE
HOLIDAY SEASON

HON. HALEY M. STEVENS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 24, 2020

Ms. STEVENS. Madam Speaker, I rise today in acknowledgement of the harrowing trials faced by our nation in light of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. This Christmas holiday, I am holding the countless Americans who have experienced excruciating pain, uncertainty, and loss due to this crisis in my heart and in my thoughts.

I ask my colleagues in the U.S. House of Representatives to join me in paying tribute to all the brave men and women who have advanced our efforts to overcome this pandemic, and to honor all of those who have tragically lost their battles with this terrible disease. May this new year bring with it a renewed hope, strength, and commitment from Congress to deliver for the American people.

SUPPORT FOR \$2,000 PAYMENTS FOR AMERICAN PEOPLE

HON. KWANZA HALL

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 24, 2020

Mr. HALL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to address this make-or-break moment for the American people. For many months, House Democrats have been urging for a stimulus package that is commensurate to the problem that Americans face.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, 315,000 Americans have died, as a result of the Administration's mismanagement of the federal response to COVID-19. It has especially impacted the African-American community and other communities of color. Millions of jobs have been lost, countless small businesses have closed, and many others hospitalized. For the sake of controlling the virus we have all quarantined, as we eagerly await a vaccine. But this administration, aided by Congressional Republicans, have failed to deliver.

In the closing days of this 116th Congress and in the midst of a once-in-a-century pandemic, leaders from both parties were able to forge a compromise. It was not ideal—but it was something. I was proud to support this legislation. I was proud to support the agreement because it provided another round of \$600 in economic stimulus checks and another \$300 per-week in unemployment benefits, and it supports small businesses, which are the engines of our economy. It also provided funds to support local school districts and provides much-needed funds for coronavirus testing and vaccine distribution. I was also proud to help secure this legislation because it provides tens of billions in rent re-

lief and an extension of the eviction moratorium.

Which is why the posturing coming from the current occupant of the White House on Tuesday night is so disconcerting.

On Tuesday night, after many months of sitting on the sidelines, and being completely absent from the negotiations that forged this compromise, the White House cast severe doubt on the deal we reached.

Now, the White House is proposing \$2,000 payments. But make no mistake and as I said on Sunday night, mere moments after the deal was announced, the \$600 payments were not enough and must only be a down-payment. The \$1200 stimulus checks in the CARES Act from earlier this year was an important factor in controlling the economic fallout from the initial onset of the coronavirus, and I am disappointed that tonight that this Congress will not now act as we did in the Spring. The situation is more dire now and calls for more—not less—economic stimulus.

I fully support \$2000 payments for our people and for Georgia's Fifth Congressional District. I've thought deeply about this and heard from so many resilient Georgians. Our people are so resilient but many of them are on their last leg. We cannot fail them in this critical hour. To delay, or worse, to risk doing nothing would be a grave mistake.

We must ensure that this recent posturing from the White House does not jeopardize the deal we secured on Sunday and which we passed on Monday. I fully support the Unanimous Consent request from the Speaker today and I urge colleagues in the Congress—on both sides of the aisle and on both sides of the Capitol—to support the \$2000 payment but ensure that the support does not jeopardize that which we secured on Monday. Under no circumstance should the President exercise his veto power on the funding and prevent many desperate Georgians the relief they so desperately need.

Now is not the time to split hairs. Now is not the time to insist on legislative perfection if there even is a such thing.

We have so much to do to prepare the future but first we must be able to get to the future.

PROTESTS IN INDIA

HON. ANDY LEVIN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 24, 2020

Mr. LEVIN of Michigan. Madam Speaker, I rise to condemn violence against Indians who are peacefully protesting laws they believe are unjust and stand with these peaceful protesters as they exercise a right that is fundamental in any functioning democracy.

Since last month, Indian farmers have protested new, hastily-passed agriculture laws that could weaken traditional markets where some agricultural goods are guaranteed a

minimum price. As a longtime union organizer, I support these farmers, whose hard work has earned Punjab's moniker as "India's bread basket." I have also been inspired by the solidarity demonstrated by diaspora communities from Cincinnati, to Melbourne, to Silicon Valley, to Canton Township, Michigan, just outside my district. One Michigander with family in India, Amrinder Grewal, told the Detroit News that these new laws were "ruining their lives."

I have also been heartened watching democracy in action in India and the popular support this movement is garnering throughout the nation and the global Indian diaspora. While I believe the Indian government should have consulted meaningfully with farmers before passing these laws, I welcome their efforts to engage with the protestors to ensure that legislation that affects these communities reflects their input and interests as well. At the same time, I'm concerned by reports that the Indian government has responded to the protestors with a heavy hand.

The BBC reported this month that protesters arrived in Delhi to find that "tens of thousands of police and paramilitary troops were deployed to halt their march" and "in several places, police fired tear gas shells and used water cannons to try to beat them back." As winter sets in, the situation has grown more dire: almost 30 protesters have died, some succumbing to the freezing cold.

On behalf of my constituents who represent the vibrant Indian diaspora community and have rallied in support of these farmers, I call on the Indian government to respect the vital right to peaceful protest and to engage in good-faith talks to ensure farmers' livelihoods are preserved.

SUPPORTING OUR COMMITMENTS TO OUR FREELY ASSOCIATED STATES ALLIES

HON. ED CASE

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 24, 2020

Mr. CASE. Madam Speaker, last year, I was proud to help create the first-ever Congressional Pacific Islands Caucus, which I co-chair along with four of my colleagues.

When we launched the Caucus, I noted that our country's and world's future lie in the Indo-Pacific, and that the island nations of the Pacific are a key yet too-often overlooked part of that region and future.

We have critical strategic interests and long-standing partnerships throughout the Pacific islands. Yet now our allies and friends and all other Pacific jurisdictions are increasingly under severe economic and environmental stress, and China is aggressively seeking to grow its influence. We cannot ignore these critical developments, and our new Caucus is dedicated to assuring that does not happen.

Among these nations are three with which we have an especially close relationship under

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

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

a unique status: the freely-associated Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of Palau. These are island countries with which we share a long history dating back to the Second World War and before and an enduring relationship built on decades of shared interests and like values. These countries, also collectively known as the Freely Associated States, span an expanse of the Pacific ranging from just southwest of my State of Hawaii to our territories of Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands in the western Pacific, an area the size of the forty-eight contiguous States.

Under our Compacts of Free Association, our country can construct military bases on their soil and make decisions that affect our mutual security. In return, we provide financial assistance, access to some federal programs and enable free movement of their citizens to live and work in the United States.

The role these islands play in our national defense cannot be understated. For example, Palau asked our country to increase its military presence in its islands, and the Marshall Islands are home to what the Army calls “the premier missile test range in the world.” In November, a Navy destroyer near Hawaii intercepted a mock ICBM launched from U.S. Army Garrison Kwajalein Atoll in an exercise viewed as an important accomplishment and critical milestone by our military. Vulnerable as this small island community is to COVID-19, it opened its closed borders to our citizens who needed to work at Kwajalein.

Given the importance of the Compacts, we must always demonstrate to the Freely Associated States and the world that the U.S. can be trusted to uphold its commitments. For example, I am very pleased that the final Fiscal Year 2021 omnibus funding bill includes \$5 million of a \$20 million debt the U.S. owes to the Marshall Islands in response to unilateral changes made to the investment tax and trade incentives in the initial version of the Compact of Free Association.

On the other hand, I was extremely disappointed that the outgoing Administration recommended providing \$2 million less for Fiscal Year 2021 than was agreed to in compensation for amending various education programs back in 2003. This underfunding erodes the trust that our allies and partners have for our commitment to the Compacts.

We must fulfill and take these obligations seriously, especially as we work to renew the economic provisions of these Compacts. I look forward to working closely with my colleagues in the coming Congress to remedy this error and address other issues that may arise relating to the Compacts.

Our alliances and partnerships worldwide, powered by shared interests and values, are America's greatest strengths, especially in this era of great power competition. Trust in our country's ability and willingness to honor our commitments must be the unshakeable foundation of these crucial relationships. We can and must do better to protect that trust.

PROTECTING SENIOR CITIZENS

HON. KWANZA HALL

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 24, 2020

Mr. HALL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to address a most pernicious side effect of the pandemic.

Indeed, Madam Speaker, one of the most troubling parts of this pandemic is that our seniors are the most vulnerable.

They are uniquely susceptible to the harmful parts of this pandemic.

Often times, our senior citizens, who have worked many decades making our country great, are on fixed incomes, sometimes many miles from other loved ones.

It is sad and regrettable that this pandemic has created so much pain and death and uncertainty to this community.

But sadly, as happens from time to time in moments of suffering, there is also an insidious group of people who seek to profit off of this pain.

Madam Speaker, if we are serious about protecting our senior citizens during this pandemic, then our help must not stop at COVID tests, vaccinations or hospital care.

We must also ensure that individuals purporting to be fiduciaries and financial advisors do not take advantage of our seniors.

But unfortunately, this is not just limited to financial advisors. There are many probate attorneys preying on the elderly and the sick and those shut-in and in poor communities in Georgia's Fifth Congressional District and all over the country. We must work with organizations and Bar Associations to prevent this abuse.

Our seniors deserve to live their golden years in peace of mind. Our body recognizes that, which is why we have never wavered to pass legislation designed to ensure this reality.

We have passed social security and passed age discrimination laws. We must do more to ensure that they are protected from some of the darker elements of society.

TRIBUTE TO THOMAS J. “TONY” FITZGERALD, III FOR HIS LIFE-TIME OF SERVICE TO OUR COUNTRY

HON. ANNA G. ESHOO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 24, 2020

Ms. ESHOO. Madam Speaker, I rise today on my own behalf and on behalf of Representatives ZOE LOFGREN, JACKIE SPEIER, JIMMY PANETTA, ERIC SWALWELL, RO KHANNA, JERRY MCNERNEY and JARED HUFFMAN to honor the extraordinary leadership of Thomas “Tony” Fitzgerald, III, as he retires from his position as the Director of the Veteran Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System (PAVAHCS), an office that he assumed on June 25, 2017. He ably filled the enormous shoes left by former Director Lisa Freeman, and oversaw the delivery of health care to more than 93,000 veterans at the VA's Palo Alto facility. The PAVAHCS

serves eleven Congressional Districts and ten counties, and has three inpatient facilities in Palo Alto, Menlo Park and Livermore, and outpatient facilities in seven other cities.

Mr. Fitzgerald earned his Bachelor's degree from American InterContinental University, and is a graduate of the Leadership VA program, and a member of the American Hospital Association and the American College of Healthcare Executives.

Mr. Fitzgerald served his country throughout his long and productive career. He was a medical non-commissioned officer in the U.S. Army for 16 years, and began his career with the VA in 1988 as a psychiatric nursing assistant in Chicago. Throughout his career he has been an ardent advocate for Veterans, their families and staff. He earned increasingly responsible positions with the VA and he moved to California and began his service with VA Northern California in 2000.

Tony Fitzgerald's accomplishments while at PAVAHCS make a very long list. Among some of the highlights are increased Veteran trust scores; high patient satisfaction scores; approval for an additional Fisher House; robust union partnerships; the hiring of 1,080 new employees in fiscal year 2020; and oversight of the largest construction portfolio in VHA's history (\$2.6B).

Mr. Fitzgerald has earned many honors including the Top Environmental Excellence Award and the Secretary of VA Alternative Dispute Resolution Award.

Madam Speaker, we ask the entire House of Representatives to join us in thanking Tony Fitzgerald for his extraordinary service to our country, and in wishing him every blessing in his well-earned retirement.

AFRICAN DIASPORA

HON. KWANZA HALL

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 24, 2020

Mr. HALL. I rise today to address the issue of the African Diaspora.

The African Union defines the African Diaspora very broadly as people of African Descent living outside Africa. The UN estimates that there are about 200 million people of African descent outside Africa in various constituencies.

In Atlanta, we are blessed to have so many members of the Diaspora in our community and that community is anchored by incredible institutions like the African Diaspora Art Museum of Atlanta.

And I am heartened to see that our youth are also engaged in this conversation, such as the Young African Diaspora Initiative.

The last dozen years have been a source of whiplash. From 2009 to 2017, we had a president whose father was from Kenya, and who used the opportunity of his administration to strengthen ties between Africa and our Nation.

For the last four years, however, we have had a president who pays no heed to the richness and vitality of the African Diaspora. This was encapsulated by his vulgar epithet about some of the countries on the African continent.

But, in November, Americans decided to turn the page far away from this hate.

The election of President-Elect Joe Biden and Vice President-Elect Kamala Harris provides an opportunity.

We need to use the occasion of the Biden Administration to strengthen the ties with Africa while emphasizing the importance of the Global Diaspora.