

ECONOMIC OPTIMISM

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

Mr. GUEST. Mr. Speaker, recent polling shows great optimism about our country, as Americans believe they are better off today than they were before President Trump's conservative economic policies were enacted.

According to a Gallup poll released on February 5, almost 60 percent of Americans say they are better off financially now than last year, and close to 75 percent say that they expect to be even better off financially in 1 year. This is the highest level on record.

Strong, conservative principles have created historically low levels of unemployment for Americans regardless of their race, age, religion, or gender.

Our Nation was built by Americans working to create a better future for their children and their grandchildren. Both Democrats and Republicans must fight the growing calls for socialism and instead support the proven conservative policies implemented by this administration that allow our economy to grow and help build a brighter future for generations to come.

TURNING THE TIDE IN THE YOUTH TOBACCO CRISIS

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

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, our Nation is in the middle of a youth tobacco epidemic driven by the increasing popularity of flavored e-cigarettes. In my home State of New York, youth e-cigarette use rose by 160 percent between 2014 and 2018.

I want to commend Chairman FRANK PALLONE for his work on H.R. 2339 which will help turn the tide in this crisis. I would also like to thank the chairman for including my provisions in section 107 which update youth tobacco prevention awareness campaigns to include programming for Americans between the ages of 18 and 21.

My provisions will help ensure that this group of young Americans is not left out and receives the support and education they need to avoid starting dangerous tobacco products.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support Chairman PALLONE's legislation and help pave the way for the first generation of tobacco-free Americans.

RECOGNIZING EAGLE SCOUT WILLIAM ARDIS

(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. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize William Ardis on his achievement of the rank of

Eagle Scout. William is with Troop 4 in Millville in South Jersey.

Eagle Scout is the highest rank attainable in the Boy Scouts of America. It is a prestigious honor bestowed upon only the most worthy and most qualified individuals. Only 4 percent of all Boys Scouts ever achieve this prestigious recognition. Eagle Scouts are much more likely to dedicate their lives to service, becoming future leaders in the military, in business, and in politics.

My office was proud to be at William's ceremony to celebrate this achievement earlier this week. I could not be prouder of William's accomplishments, and I look forward to big and bold things from him in the future.

As Americans we all look for heroes. We look to celebrities—God help us; we look to Washington—equally God help us—but I want to say: God bless you and your family, William.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF KATHERINE JOHNSON

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

Mr. PALMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory and incredible accomplishments of Katherine Johnson, a brilliant mathematician whose trailblazing work was instrumental in America's space exploration.

Ms. Johnson passed away earlier this week at the age of 101 leaving behind a legacy not only of genius and dedication, but also of vitally important advancement in STEM fields for women and African Americans.

Ms. Johnson's affinity for numbers was evident from an early age. She graduated from high school early and went on to study math and French at West Virginia State College. Later, she became the first African American woman to attend graduate school at West Virginia University.

In 1953, Katherine Johnson accepted her first computing job with the agency that would become NASA. Despite intense discrimination throughout her years at NASA, she remained committed to advancing America's space program and broke barriers where she could. Eventually, she hand-calculated the flight path for America's first crewed space mission in 1961 and also helped calculate the trajectory for the famed Moon landing.

When astronaut John Glenn prepared for his orbit around the Earth in 1962, he asked for Johnson to verify the calculations in NASA's new computer tracking system. He said: "If she says the computer is right, I will take it."

The impact of Katherine Johnson's groundbreaking work in math and science can hardly be overstated. American space exploration reached many of its milestones when it did due to her genius and commitment. Her perseverance also opened doors for women and African Americans in work fields previously closed to them.

I stand with my colleagues in the House and countless Americans in gratitude to Ms. Johnson's hard work and pioneering spirit that have undoubtedly made America a better place.

REMEMBERING THE LIFE OF BARB BAKER

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

Mr. LAHOOD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remember and honor the life of my Jacksonville office director, Barb Baker, who suddenly passed away earlier this month.

Hired in 2002 by then-Congressman Ray LaHood, Barb epitomized what it means to be a public servant working for the constituents of Illinois' 18th Congressional District for the last 18 years. She was an incredible asset to our constituents and a constant presence in the Jacksonville community. She helped and assisted so many people in Jacksonville and throughout central Illinois.

Barb was also the past president of the Sunrise Rotary Club, receiving the Paul Harris Fellowship Award. She was past president of the Pilot Club, the Morgan County Republican Women's Club, the Illinois Association of Court Clerks, and had served as treasurer for the City of Jacksonville Park System Board.

Barb blessed the Jacksonville community and our office with a spirit of warmth and decency few could rival. She leaves behind an indelible mark on Jacksonville and central Illinois as a selfless person deeply committed to her family, her faith, and her community.

Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, Barb was an incredible daughter, wife, mother, and grandmother.

We will miss Barb dearly, and I ask you to continue to keep her and her family in your prayers.

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CALLING FOR BIPARTISAN CORONAVIRUS TASK FORCE

(Ms. JACKSON LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, recent news has indicated that an individual in the United States has been designated with the coronavirus who has not been assessed to have traveled in any of the countries that have been listed for travel advisories and has not been listed as having had any of the normal processes or patterns of getting this particular virus.

With that in mind, I think it is extremely important that Congress plays a major role, in addition to its role of discerning the kind of funding.

With that in mind, we will be organizing a coronavirus task force that is bipartisan and that will assess how we

reach effectively, as Members of Congress, all of our constituents who are dependent on information that we receive: the waiters and waitresses, the traveling public, the aviation persons, the public hospital providers, all of those persons in our districts.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to join the task force. Let us work together because it is a crisis. We are in a position to help the American people in the best way that we can, and that is with information.

CONGRATULATING PRESIDENT ON IMPOSING PUBLIC CHARGE RULE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2019, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. GROTHMAN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Mr. Speaker, I stand today to address and congratulate President Trump on imposing the public charge rule with regard to public benefits.

You know, around here, we get along on many different items bipartisan in nature, and I enjoy working with my Democratic colleagues. But one issue that I think is at the crux of the disagreement and dislike of President Trump is something I agree with him very strongly on, and I think all the American public ought to know about it, and that is something referred to as the public charge rule.

Ever since the 1800s in this country, we have tried to make it a point that people who come here from other countries not come here and wind up on public benefits or welfare or what have you.

Unfortunately, we weren't doing a very good job of enforcing this rule until President Trump stepped up and put a rule that went into effect last October, saying that if you are here as an immigrant, you are not eligible for food stamps; you are not eligible for low-income housing; you are not eligible for Medicaid; you are not eligible for other means-based benefits.

President Trump, having a soft heart, continues to allow immigrants, immigrant children, to receive free and reduced lunch, Medicaid, and even are eligible for student loans.

Nevertheless, I think it was a very good thing for President Trump to do. Our immigrants are the future of America.

Right now, in America, our immigrants are far more likely than the native-born to take advantage of public benefits. A study shows that 63 percent of noncitizens versus 35 percent of the native-born are on some form of public benefits. With regard to food assistance, 45 percent of the immigrants, compared to 21 percent of the native-born, are on public benefits.

Well, anybody can go through a tough time. And I should point out that President Trump does not remove your ability to stay here, just to be on

public benefits for a month. It has to be for a period of several months, and once you are on those benefits, we want you removed.

The reason for that is, for the future of America, we want people who are self-reliant and paying taxes. We already take care of our native-born who, to a huge degree, for whatever reason, have to rely on our fellow citizens.

Right now, we are in a position in which a much higher percentage of people—63 percent of noncitizens versus 35 percent of native-born—are taking advantage of some benefits.

If you look at food stamps, between 2004 and 2019, the total number of people on food stamps in this country went up 50 percent. That is a huge increase. It is particularly a huge increase if you take into account the economy in 2019 was about as strong as it is going to get.

I, therefore, applaud President Trump for stepping up to the plate and trying to restrict immigration to people who can take care of themselves, all the while making sure that we are taking care of the children of people who are here.

I also want to point out that people who are here illegally should not be eligible for those benefits. But, again and again, I hear people from my district, and I think from public comments made by people—like the Governor of California or the mayor of New York—that I don't believe local officials are at all times prohibiting people who are here illegally from getting benefits.

In any event, particularly as long as we have birthright citizenship, I think the policy before Trump got here is misguided and, ultimately, will lead to a decline in the quality of life in America.

I am, therefore, very glad that the Supreme Court allowed President Trump's rule to be upheld. But we have to caution America in that this is not a statutory thing. This is not something that has passed Congress.

The only reason we are trying to hold down the number of people who are here who are not citizens from getting benefits is President Trump. It could easily be true that by this time next year, we will go back to the days in which a high number of noncitizens are taking advantage of public benefits.

Like I said, I think for some people, the generosity of the public benefits will encourage people to adapt a lifestyle in which they are eligible for them, which is a real crime.

In any event, I would like to say one more time—I don't always get invited over to the White House, in case President Trump is watching—thank you, President Trump, at a time of trillion-dollar deficits, for stepping up to the plate and trying to improve the immigrants that we have coming in the country.

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

CONGRESS NEEDS LEADERS, NOT GUN LOBBY SHILLS

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

Ms. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, as Members of Congress, we have promised to serve the American people, and this means keeping American families safe and secure. But for too long, Congress has put fealty to the special interest of the gun lobby ahead of our safety.

I cannot afford to live in fear of special interests. Why? Because every single day when I send my three children off to school, I live in fear for their safety; because I have seen the pain on the faces of those parents whose children never came home from school, the parents who hugged their children good-bye in the morning, never knowing it would be for the last time; because no parent should ever have to mourn a child lost to preventable gun violence; and because, as your Member of Congress, I have the power to fight for change.

This is the power that Congress has, and this is why 1 year ago, we passed landmark legislation to reduce gun violence in this country.

Under current law, only federally licensed vendors must conduct background checks, but this creates loopholes for private sellers. This means that there are no background checks on private sales, including gun shows and online transactions.

The Bipartisan Background Checks Act closes this loophole and will ensure that nearly all gun sales are run through the National Criminal Background Check System.

This legislation is common sense. In fact, two former GOP Congressmen wrote an op-ed in *The Washington Post* in support of the legislation. They said: "This bill doesn't take away anyone's guns." It represents "a critical step in the right direction at a time when more and more Americans are touched by gun violence."

This is a clear, commonsense, American solution that is now being held hostage by Senator MITCH MCCONNELL, the President, and the gun lobby.

And this is a uniquely American issue. No other country experiences the same epidemic of gun violence.

In fact, guns are the second-leading cause of death for American children and teens; nearly 1,700 are killed by guns every year. In my home State of California, an average of 246 children and teens die from guns every year.

Since the beginning of 2014 in California, over 14,000 people, including, heartbreakingly, 120 law enforcement officers, have been injured or killed due to gun violence.

Mr. Speaker, 47 of those people hurt or killed were in my district in Orange County, the 45th. We have lost 34 members of our community in just 4 years to gun violence.