

birthday. Unfortunately, we do so in a time of pandemic, a struggling economy, and violent protests. But it is still our birthday, and we should both commemorate and celebrate it.

We usually do a good job in our celebration, although this year will be different since social distancing means we will be in smaller groups, and public fireworks displays have been canceled. I suspect most of us will find a way to gather with family and close friends to cook out and show the red, white, and blue.

But a commemoration is more than that. Merriam-Webster defines “commemorate” as “to call to remembrance” or “to serve as a memorial of.” How many of us will stop and remember what it meant for the Second Continental Congress to not only declare our independence from Britain, but also to state our reasons for doing so in majestic language positing the highest ideals?

Let me make a suggestion: This Fourth, get a copy of the Declaration and read it. My extended family and friends usually get together and have several of us read the various portions of the Declaration out loud and then we talk about its meaning. It doesn't take much time, and we always experience a renewed appreciation for the gift that is our country. This year we will do it virtually, in smaller groups.

The Declaration was meant to be read out loud. Indeed, on July 4, Congress not only voted to accept it but also provided for its distribution to the States and to the Continental Army.

On July 6, John Hancock as president of Congress, sent letters to the States and to General Washington enclosing broadsides of the Declaration requesting that they have it “proclaimed.” It was read out loud to celebrations in dozens of cities and towns in July and August and to the Continental Army on July 9 as it prepared for the British invasion of New York.

To some extent these events were meant to inform and inspire the people of a newly independent Nation. But then, and now, the Declaration is a defining document. It not only said we were an independent Nation, but also who we aspire to be. Freedom and equality were to be at the heart of the Nation's character. And the rights stated in the Declaration, life, liberty, and the pursuit of the happiness, are clearly labeled gifts from God himself to all of us.

The story of our country is really the unfolding of the efforts to live up to these aspirations. President Lincoln used it as a primary basis for arguing against slavery, as in the Gettysburg Address where he famously said: “Four score and 7 years ago our Fathers brought forth, on this continent, a new Nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.” As a result of the Civil War these ideals were enshrined in the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the Constitution.

Martin Luther King used it in his 1963 “I Have A Dream” speech, referring to the Declaration and to the Constitution as a promissory note to all Americans, which he and others of the civil rights movement called upon the Nation to honor. As a result of the movement, Congress passed the 1964 Civil Rights Act and in 1965 the Voting Rights Act.

I know it is fashionable now among our Nation's elites to view America as evil from our birth, evil in our institutions, and evil in our character. That view is a myth untethered to the reality of our history. This myth is just a false preamble to lay the groundwork for their efforts to radically reorganize our society and have government run every detail of our lives all the while piling tax upon tax upon us. Isn't this type of government what caused the Founders to declare independence in the first place? These elites call themselves “progressive,” but their plan is actually a regression to a tyrannical central government taxing us against our will.

Despite our faults, some of which have been grievous, we are a Nation established upon the highest ideals which has the strength of its character and institutions to self-correct as we strive toward those ideals. Our history repeatedly demonstrates that is who we are.

David McCullough, the Pulitzer Prize winning author and historian, several years ago told a gathering of those of us in Congress that Americans would be more hopeful if we only knew our history. How true. Complicated and contradictory, yes, but it is also a history of spectacular success and of a major force for good here and abroad.

So this week let's celebrate and commemorate who we are. Let's pause in the middle of our present troubles to renew our pride as Americans and draw lessons from our founding and history for the resolution of the issues of the day. And let us, like our Founders, “mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.”

ALL AMERICANS DESERVE ACCESS TO CLEAN AIR, CLEAN WATER, AND A PLANET FREE FROM TOXIC POLLUTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. BONAMICI) for 5 minutes.

Ms. BONAMICI. Mr. Speaker, the coronavirus pandemic, racial violence, and the climate crisis have all highlighted systemic and pervasive inequalities in our country, especially for Black communities and other people of color. Racial, economic, and climate justice are intrinsically linked.

As a member of the Select Committee on the Climate Crisis, I am pleased to stand with my colleagues this morning to release our climate action plan. It is centered on the principles of justice and equity because all

people deserve access to clean air, clean water, and a planet free from toxic pollution.

After more than a year of hearings, round table discussions, and feedback from people and groups across the country, we have a bold, science-based, comprehensive plan to address the climate crisis. It sets our Nation on a path to reach net-zero emissions no later than mid-century and net-negative thereafter. Our plan focuses on the needs of frontline communities, accelerating our transition to a 100 percent clean-energy economy, and opportunities to create good-paying jobs. Climate solutions are economic solutions.

The climate crisis is an existential threat, and we cannot wait to act. In the Pacific Northwest, climate change is already our reality. Raging wildfires each summer result in hazy skies, smoky conditions, and hazardous air quality comparable to some of the most polluted places on the planet. Decreased snowpack in the winter is upending the outdoor recreation industry. Our ocean is absorbing carbon dioxide and becoming more acidic, devastating commercial fisheries. Warmer water temperatures in the Columbia River are further endangering salmon, which are a fundamental part of the identity and culture of northwest Tribes. Droughts and extreme weather jeopardize the livelihoods of our specialty crop farmers who were already struggling to make ends meet. Despite these conditions, there are reasons to remain hopeful.

As I travel across northwest Oregon, I have visited with constituents who are already hard at work to protect our planet. At 46 North Farms near the majestic Oregon coast, Teresa Retzlaff and her CSA members are using dry farming practices to provide sustainable food and beautiful flowers for their community. In Hillsboro, Oregon, First Tech Community Credit Union constructed its headquarters out of cross-laminated timber, which creates an airy and healthy workplace and is an example of how we can reduce emissions with our choice of building materials while helping to revitalize rural communities.

In Astoria, more than 100 people filled a community room on a Friday afternoon to hear from scientists about how the climate crisis is affecting the health of our ocean. TriMet and Portland General Electric launched the region's first battery electric bus powered by 100 percent renewable wind energy.

In Portland, workers at Vigor constructed a massive wave energy buoy that was deployed off the coast of Hawaii to capture the power of our ocean in generating clean energy.

And to mark the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, I joined environment and labor leaders to discuss a green road to recovery that creates good-paying jobs. These examples, and so many more, informed our work on the select committee.

Our climate action plan is a comprehensive road map for Congress to build a healthy, resilient, and just America. By enacting our recommendations, we would achieve net-zero carbon pollution by no later than mid-century, save more than 60,000 lives each year from reduced air pollution, and generate health and climate benefits that would help save close to \$8 trillion.

I am also pleased to see many of our recommendations, included in H.R. 2, the Moving Forward Act.

As a leader on the Education and Labor Committee and the granddaughter of a coal miner, I know the way we transition to a clean energy economy and support workers is as important as the transition itself.

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At a time when more than 47 million workers are unemployed, our recovery package must focus on creating and restoring good-paying jobs. We have the opportunity to incorporate investment in climate resilience and clean energy in the process.

As co-chair of the House Oceans Caucus and the Congressional Estuary Caucus, I am pleased that our climate action plan recognizes the power of the ocean to be part of the solution.

The climate action plan calls for the conservation of at least 30 percent of our ocean by 2030 to help preserve and protect blue carbon ecosystems that can help serve as a natural climate solution by absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Our plan provides solutions to protect the planet and make it more resilient for future generations. It will result in communities and an economy that is stronger, healthier, and fairer.

Now, we must turn this roadmap into action.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Chair CASTOR and the select committee staff for their tireless work.

CONGRATULATING DALE WATTS

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

Mr. NORMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the service and accomplishments of Dale Watts, a resident of Tega Cay, South Carolina.

Dale and his wife, Barbara, and family have been a part of the greater Fort Mill-Tega Cay community for over 40 years.

Dale began his career in medical sales, and after retiring after 30 years, he entered the field of real estate with his wife, Barbara, where he successfully owns and manages commercial and residential properties.

Dale's involvement in the community is legendary, as he has volunteered for numerous groups and civic organizations, including joining the Tega Cay Fire Department No. 56, where he became a certified firefighter;

joining the Tega Cay Lions Club, where he served as president for three terms; his tireless work with the Lake Wylie Lutheran Church Community Cafe; his activities as a member of Grace Presbyterian Church, where he was active with the Meals on Wheels program, the Senior Citizens Christmas Party, the International Student Exchange, and the Tega Cay Community Service Committee; and the list goes on and on.

As a result of his tireless efforts, he received numerous awards, including Firefighter of the Year in 1990, Tega Cay Voluntary Fire Department Officers Award in 2009, the Fire Chief's Award in 2010, and the Melvin Jones Fellow Humanitarian Award in 1995. He was inducted into the South Carolina Lions Hall of Fame in 2018 and was named the Tega Cay Citizen of the Year in 2005–2006.

Dale has been married to his wife, Barbara, for 41 years and has five children and five grandchildren.

In the words of many friends in the Tega Cay-Fort Mill community, "If you need something done, just call Dale."

Dale Watts has dedicated his entire life in service to others and exemplifies the slogan "Service Above Self." As a result of his tireless work, the community, the State, and the Nation are a better place to live and raise a family.

SETTING U.S. ON PATH TO REACH NET-ZERO GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

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

Ms. BROWNLEY of California. Mr. Speaker, in December 2017, the Thomas fire destroyed over 280,000 acres, with almost all of it in my district in Ventura County. It is the second largest wildfire in all of California's recorded history.

The day it started, my constituents Trisha and Jed received a terrifying call. Evacuation orders were just issued. A wildfire was fast approaching their home, and their children were put in a car and whisked away.

It was an unbearable week for Trisha and Jed. They couldn't stop thinking of what might have happened to their children, all while mourning the loss of their home that was burned to the ground, including the invaluable keepsakes Jed had just moved to the house after his father's passing.

Natural disasters like these are becoming all too common, not only in Ventura County, but throughout California and the Western States.

Floods, tornadoes, and hurricanes, from Texas to Florida and all along the East Coast, are increasing with alarming frequency. Glaciers in the Arctic are melting faster than ever before. Ocean temperatures have increased in the last three decades at a pace greater than recorded history. Sea level rise is accelerating. Atmospheric temperatures are also on the rise.

These are facts. They are destroying homes. They are taking lives. They are wreaking havoc on our communities and communities across the planet.

Over the last year and a half, the Select Committee on Climate Crisis has been tasked with finding bold and transformative solutions to tackle this global emergency.

This report, the most comprehensive report on the impact of climate change and how to address it in the history of Congress, lays out policies, legislation, and a roadmap that will put the brakes on global warming while creating equitable, good-paying jobs of the future, and, at the same time, putting American innovation and ingenuity first.

The select committee has written a report that identifies 12 pillars on which Congress can make actionable changes and sets the U.S. on a path of reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

The report takes a deep and wide dive into all the sectors of our economy that contribute to climate change, from agriculture and transportation to how we build our buildings; to water, electric, and telecommunications infrastructure; to energy production, manufacturing, tax policy, and national security.

The impact of climate change is broad, and it can be addressed only through comprehensive and bold solutions.

I am very proud that the select committee offers up so many of those solutions, and where solutions don't exist, it lays out the challenge that American ingenuity can and will overcome.

Today, we face what appears to be an even more imminent crisis: a pandemic that has crushed the global economy and taken almost 130,000 American lives and half a million lives worldwide.

We are struggling with long, deep racial injustice and how to address it. But we will rise from this darkness, and how we rise from it will impact everyone on the planet, not only alive today, but for generations to come.

I hope that we will search for solutions that draw on the ideals that created this great Nation: equity, justice, and ingenuity.

As we rebuild our economy, let's do so by investing in the technologies, practices, and methods for the future and with the urgency of now that our changing climate demands.

As we seek to right injustice and inequity, let's not forget the role the rise of American industry played in creating some of that injustice and inequity, as it did with the climate crisis we have before us, and let's choose a path forward that rights that ship.

We are suffering now, but we should, we must, rise up with a clearer vision for a better future.

Climate change provides the greatest existential threat to human existence, but it also offers the greatest opportunity for mankind and womankind to meet that threat and to beat it.