

Just recently, a very prominent person in our country, the Attorney General, had some problem acknowledging that systemic racism exists. It does. I have no problems acknowledging it, nor should anyone else, because the empirical evidence is there to support the fact that it exists.

So my hope is that we won't get back to bigotry as usual, and when we come back from this opportunity to work in our districts that we will take up issues associated with racism and invidious discrimination here in the Congress of the United States of America.

This is where people expect us to act. And if we act, we can lead the Nation as opposed to reacting to what the Nation is doing. It is time for us to take a lead and get rid of this scourge on our society.

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

□ 1300

#### HONORING BUSINESSES AMID COVID-19

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

Mr. COMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend the many individuals, businesses, and manufacturers in the First Congressional District of Kentucky who have dedicated their time and efforts to helping our country fight COVID-19.

Just months ago, there was a concern that America would face a drastic shortage of the medical supplies needed to fight the coronavirus. And while we may not be completely out of the woods, the efforts of so many caring citizens have been instrumental in providing needed supplies.

I am proud to say that many of the citizens and companies who have assisted in this fight call south central and western Kentucky home. Garment factories, like Stitches Apparel from my home county in Gamaliel, Kentucky, WPT Nonwovens in Ohio County, Jomel Seams Reasonable in Cumberland and Russell Counties, and American Shield Apparel in Metcalfe County stepped up to manufacture face masks and gowns for frontline healthcare workers all across America. This is in addition to the countless citizens who have turned their kitchen tables into manufacturing centers for the face masks we have all become very familiar with.

I am even more proud to say that some of our Nation's heroes from Fort Campbell military base have gone into Boston and New York to provide medical support when those areas were in desperate need of help. Like others, their contributions to our Nation will not be forgotten.

Corn from Kentucky farmers has even been used to fight the spread with

facilities like Commonwealth Agri-Energy in Christian County providing base ethanol for distilleries to provide hand sanitizer.

I also honor a young lady from my hometown who went above and beyond. Carrie Beth Cropper, a native Monroe Countian and a registered nurse, volunteered to go to New York City at the height of the outbreak to care for those in need. Her willingness to put her fellow Americans first to help fight back against the virus speaks volumes about her character.

All of our nurses, hospitals, and other frontline workers have been heroic in working under extremely challenging conditions. Their country has never needed them more, and they have certainly met the moment.

Unfortunately, our country continues to suffer from the outbreak of this virus. But in many ways, the pandemic has brought out the best of America: Neighbor helping neighbor and communities coming together to support one another.

#### ORESTUS FLOWERS 100TH BIRTHDAY

Mr. COMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Mr. Orestus Flowers of the First Congressional District of Kentucky, who is turning 100 years old on September 7th.

Mr. Flowers was born in Bow, Kentucky, which is in Cumberland County, and continues to reside in the First Congressional District. Mr. Flowers served in the Army for 3½ years and was stationed in the Philippines from 1942 to 1945. I stand with all Americans to congratulate him on years of bravery and sacrifice to preserve our safety and freedoms.

On February 1, 1946, Mr. Flowers married Geraldine, and together they have three daughters. A true entrepreneur, he was responsible for bringing Houchens Markets to Burkesville in 1952 and served as manager for 32 years. Upon retiring from Houchens, he worked at Norris and New Funeral Home for the next 25 years.

I join with everyone in Burkesville and throughout the Commonwealth who has had the privilege of knowing him and to celebrate his fearless spirit. I am honored to represent Mr. Flowers and wish him a very happy 100th birthday.

#### WANDA BLACKWELL RETIREMENT

Mr. COMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Wanda Blackwell on her retirement from the Webster County Senior Center, where she has served as director for the last 4 years. She is beloved by the seniors she cares for and their families because her devotion to serving others is evident in every effort she undertakes.

Just a year ago, Webster County opened a new senior center that has already enriched the lives of so many and is evidence of the devotion Wanda and her team have for their fellow citizens. Whether she was serving or delivering meals, decorating and improving the center, or raising funds to expand their offerings and programming, she did it

all with a smile on her face. Wanda lives by the saying, "grow where God planted you," and has been a shining example of giving back to the local community.

I join with Wanda's family, friends, and all those she has served throughout her time at the center to thank her for her outstanding efforts to better the lives of others, and I wish her many happy years of retirement.

#### LAW AND ORDER IN AMERICA

Mr. COMER. In recent weeks, American cities have been plagued by irresponsible, reckless violence and rioting. The violence in cities from Portland to Chicago has been out of control, requiring a Federal response to quell what has turned into full-on mob violence.

This behavior has severe consequences for American life. Businesses destroyed, chaos and disruption, and unacceptable levels of violence.

And what has the Democratic response been to violent outbreaks? Turning a blind eye to vandalism and destruction, along with a fresh round of calls to defund the police.

At a time of rising violence, businesses being vandalized, and the lives of everyday citizens being disrupted, prominent Democratic politicians have sought to reduce the presence of American law enforcement.

In calling efforts to defund the police a local decision, Speaker PELOSI has given a green light to mayors who have eagerly implemented that reckless movement. Thankfully, Federal law enforcement has stepped in to help out in cities where weak-kneed, incompetent mayors have failed to protect their citizens.

Even though Federal agents have been shamelessly treated as enemies by far-left mayors, Federal reinforcements were necessary in the face of local failures.

I am 100 percent in favor of peaceful assembly and protest. It is an American tradition for our citizens to speak out and to use our sacred First Amendment rights for good. And when there is legitimate police misconduct, like what we saw in Minneapolis, non-violent protest is absolutely justified.

However, the violence in our streets has been anything but peaceful. And when protestors start vandalizing and destroying property, including Federal courthouses, a line is crossed. We must have law and order and respect for the rule of law.

Mr. Speaker, I hope my Democratic colleagues will join me in calling for just that. Stop pushing to defund the police. Stop condoning mob violence. Support peaceful protest, not out-of-control rioting. We can and we must have free expression in this country, but we also must have law and order when protest turns into rioting and threatens the safety of our communities.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS).

RECOGNITION OF FORMER LEGISLATIVE  
DIRECTORS

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague and next-door neighbor from Kentucky for yielding to me.

Mr. Speaker, the legislative director, together with the legislative staff, advises congressmen on legislative issues. This position assists in the development of policy positions and legislative initiatives and assists in managing the office's legislative staff.

Restated in my language, the nuts and bolts of everything legislative goes through the legislative director.

Mr. Speaker, I have been blessed with seven legislative directors. All of them are truly professional. All of them I would like to thank today. Many of them spent many years with me. A couple held the job long enough for a cup of coffee. All have moved on to bigger and better things.

Cheryl Crate, originally from Oklahoma, was my first legislative director. She helped set up my office and got it running smoothly.

Dan Blankenburg is from Downers Grove, Illinois. He has a starring role in "Mr. SHIMKUS Goes to Washington," as we were talking about U.S. military involvement in the Balkans.

Morna Willens is from St. Charles, Illinois. She moved up to legislative director from her telecom legislative assistant position. With that move, she was enticed to work downtown, and is still a D.C. operative.

Ray Fitzgerald moved to my office from the Science Committee. Ray was from Chicago and a rabid White Sox fan. Ray was with me for many years, which we both considered successful, but Ray got married and wanted to go back home. Unfortunately, Ray was struck with cancer and died at the young age of 37. He left behind his wife, Kristin, and daughters, Nora, Maggie, and Lucy. They will always be part of Team Shimkus.

What could be another one for the record books is two legislative directors who served in the same office getting married. No one would ever guess me to be a cupid, but the proof is in the pudding. Their friendship and courting were never really news to me, but over the years, their strong marriage has become a sense of pride.

Mo Zilly-Tracy is from Aurora, Illinois—and how do you say this tactfully—was the boss to Ryan, my then legislative assistant for Agriculture and Energy. Once she left the legislative director position, Ryan accepted it. Then they got married, and moved to Ryan's hometown in Monticello, Illinois, and are raising their two daughters, Vivian and Alice.

Greta Joynes is from Sugar Grove, Illinois. A tough, no-nonsense legislative director. I once called her my kraken that I would unleash. How did I ever come up with that? Now a D.C. operative, she is still a tough public policy operative.

All but one of my LDs were from Illinois. What a great credit to the State,

but I am from southern Illinois, so it has been with great pride to have a local boy from my neck of the woods as my legislative director the last couple of years.

Brian Looser is from an area between Staunton and Mount Olive. He came from the office of Senator Kirk and specializes in healthcare. He has also recently taken over the telecom portfolio. He has decided to go down with the ship and stay with me until the end. That loyalty should be applauded and is emblematic of all my staff in D.C.

Mr. Speaker, in the hustle and bustle of D.C. activity, people come and go all the time. The individuals who work with and for us should be thanked. We are only as good as the people around us, and I have been blessed with great staff.

Again, I thank my colleague from the Commonwealth of Kentucky, my neighbor from Paducah, for allowing me a chance to speak.

Mr. COMER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS). I thank him for his service to this body, and I thank him for his friendship. He has been an institution here in Congress. He has been a good neighbor.

He has made a difference not just in southern Illinois, but in the United States of America, and I want him to know how much I appreciate his mentoring, his friendship, the work we have done together to help benefit the Ohio River-Mississippi River region of America.

Mr. Speaker, I will say that he has left big shoes to fill. I congratulate him on his upcoming retirement, and I appreciate everything that he has done for me, for our colleagues, and for the United States of America.

MYSTERIOUS SEEDS IN THE UNITED STATES

Mr. COMER. Mr. Speaker, I have been concerned as a farmer and former commissioner of agriculture to learn in recent days that mysterious seeds have been sent from China to people in all 50 States encouraging them to plant these mysterious seeds.

I say publicly what we are hearing from leaders in the U.S. Department of Agriculture and from my former colleagues in the State ranks, the commissioners, and directors of agriculture in all 50 States: If you get these seeds, do not—and I repeat—do not, plant these seeds. We have no idea what these seeds are. And these seeds could be potentially deadly to our ecosystem.

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We have seen so many shenanigans coming out of the China region. We don't know exactly who it is, who they are. But we have seen concerns in cybersecurity, and we have seen concerns in trade with currency manipulation, with stealing our patents, with stealing our intellectual property. This is one more concern.

So, I have written a letter and asked the Secretary of Agriculture, who is investigating this, Sonny Perdue, to give

me a briefing and give the Committee on Oversight and Reform and the Committee on Agriculture a briefing as to what is going on with this.

We do know that there are some people, unknowing of the damages, who have planted these seeds.

Again, I encourage people—and it is not just people in the agriculture community. It is just common citizens, random people, in all 50 States who have gotten these seeds.

This is something that I am concerned with as a leader in agriculture, someone who has spent my whole life involved in the agriculture industry, and I hope that I can utilize my position in the agriculture community and as the ranking Republican on the Committee on Oversight and Reform to be able to determine the genesis of these seeds, who sent these seeds, what their purpose was. If we need to hold those people accountable for trying to create mischief and disruption in our agriculture industry, then I hope that we can work hard to hold them accountable.

I want to conclude my time today, Mr. Speaker, thanking my colleagues in Congress for their confidence to name me as ranking Republican of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform. I take this position with a great amount of honor and humility.

I understand the role of the Committee on Oversight and Reform. The Committee on Oversight and Reform was created to provide oversight. It was created to ensure the Federal Government is transparent and accountable to the taxpayers.

We have seen an unprecedented amount of deficit spending in this body, too much spending. It is immoral what Congress has done over the last decade, with respect to the deficit and the national debt, to our children and grandchildren.

Somebody in Congress needs to get the back of the taxpayers, and I pledge today that that somebody is going to be the House Oversight and Reform Committee, at least from the minority standpoint. My colleagues, my Republican colleagues on the committee, we are committed to defending the taxpayer, committed to rooting out waste, fraud, and abuse.

Unfortunately, for the past year-and-a-half, the Committee on Oversight and Reform has been focused on one thing, not oversight, not having the backs of the taxpayer. They have been focused on one thing, and that has been trying to embarrass the President of the United States, trying to use that committee as a political tool, as a subsidiary of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, to try to find something, anything, on Donald Trump. And I can say with confidence, after a year-and-a-half, they have failed.

What we need to do, what I challenge my colleague, Chairwoman MALONEY, to do is focus on the real purpose of the Committee on Oversight and Reform.

There is no shortage of waste, fraud, and abuse in the Federal Government. There is no shortage of opportunities to find a lack of transparency and accountability in the massive bureaucracies that have been created by this body in the Federal Government.

I am looking forward to the challenges that lie ahead. I couldn't ask for a better committee than what we have, a committee roster. We have people on our side and the Democrat side who are committed to the real purpose of oversight and reform. I am looking forward to that.

I, again, thank this body for the honor to serve in that capacity. I look forward to making a difference and getting the back of the forgotten Americans, the Americans who work hard, who go to work.

They never stopped going to work because of the coronavirus. They go to work. They pay their taxes. They abide by the law. They don't destroy property. They go to church on Sundays.

They do everything right, yet they are always forgotten in this body. Whether it is a government program, whether it is tax policy, whether it is the use of their hard-earned tax dollars, they are always forgotten. We are going to put them on the forefront, and we are going to get the backs of the taxpayers.

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

#### LEGISLATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2019, the Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Michigan (Ms. STEVENS) for 30 minutes.

Ms. STEVENS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the Speaker's staff for allocating some time at the conclusion of our legislative session.

Mr. Speaker, this has been a remarkable 2 weeks in Washington. The session began on a remorseful note with the departure of our beloved John Lewis. We have been able to come together to recognize his life's work, his messages, his passion, his dedication to this country.

Many of us, as his colleagues, can look back and feel so grateful for the time that we had with Mr. Lewis. I am looking over at where he used to sit. He would make time for every single one of us.

Mr. Speaker, I also asked for this time because, as I was walking down the steps after our last vote, I felt a sense of profound reflection, reflection that is coming across our news feeds, the headlines.

Obviously, Washington is always making news. They are looking at us, and they are wondering if we are going to get a deal done. The American people are looking at us in the sense of: Are we going to get a deal done for them?

My colleague on the other side of the aisle, Mr. COMER, I happened to catch

some of his remarks. I really appreciate what he had to say about our work and contribution for the American taxpayer.

See, I share that belief that we must have a return on the taxpayer dollar. I have so many constituents, so many Michiganders who pay their taxes, and they look for that realized return on that taxpayer dollar that comes into this government.

They saw us act in a moment of profound need when it was realized that this pandemic was going to rage war here in America.

Now, those heavy headlines before us, Mr. Speaker, are headlines that 150,000 Americans have lost their lives to the coronavirus scourge. Countless families, countless friends, countless workplaces, countless places of worship—our communities are changed.

150,000, Mr. Speaker, is more than the largest town in my district. I want to absorb that number for a minute because I know people are counting on us. I know they are looking to us.

I know they saw us act in a moment of triage when we had to get that CARES Act done to secure the livelihoods for the hardworking people of this country, to allow us to successfully hibernate, to secure our industrial base, to support our municipalities, and to do so fairly, with a return.

I don't seek to act in this body other than to deliver for the people who sent me here. I certainly don't look to wage felicitous dialogue that doesn't contribute to an outcome. I take so seriously every time I have the opportunity to stand on this floor, to sit in these chairs—oftentimes now we are up in the gallery—and to listen.

See, I came to Washington with this commitment to the people who sent me here, that I will listen, I will learn, and I will lead, in that order.

You make a mistake when you start off thinking you have all the answers right away. We are here because we want to get something done. We haven't finished the deal.

The House passed the HEROES Act. I know my educators back home are listening, looking, and waiting. \$750 per pupil cut. How are we going to reopen our schools safely, Mr. Speaker, if we don't close the budget gap?

How are we going to tell our small businesses and our municipalities that they are able to continue in their function if we don't show them we have their back? That is what our Committee on Small Business is doing. That was that first amendment I got done on this House floor last year. It was called the Stevens amendment. It was part of the Consumers First Act, and it was for the voice of small business.

I went right over there when we were in different times of nonsocial distancing, and I asked my colleagues, I said: "Hey, I am over here asking for your vote, and I am asking for it because it is here to bring the voice of small business and the industry advi-

sory board of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, the voice of small business."

One man looks up at me, and he says: "You know what? Because you are asking so nicely, I am going to vote for it." And another guy said: "You know what? I will change my vote."

That amendment passed 400-8. I remember all eight of my colleagues who didn't vote for the amendment, of course. I continue to work on them.

We find these opportunities where we can come together and deliver. It is only a small handful of us.

Our manufacturers are watching as they are working. See, they go in every single day, producing the goods that fuel this country, that put this country on wheels, this incredible interconnected supply chain that we have, proudly, in my district, Mr. Speaker. We love that supply chain.

They don't ask: Are you a Democrat or a Republican? They just get to work. And at some point, we must implore and ask something better of ourselves beyond party.

When we reflect on the scourge of this coronavirus and the magnitude of the loss, I am not here to play the blame game. Yes, I am frustrated that we seem so possessed by the elections coming that we are not even focused on running the government. When my district team back home, as we try and help constituents—\$1.4 million back into the taxpayer pocketbook, that is what we have been able to do with our case management work.

But today, when we call, it is like trying to open the lid of a can that can't open. These agencies need to be unleashed. They need to be better connected to those who they are intending to serve.

You go to run for an executive office, to run the executive office in the branches of the government of which the taxpayers are paying for when they have a problem.

We are in a static time, Mr. Speaker. We are in a challenging time. The lid has ripped off of so many issues: the plight toward equality, the plight toward freedom, the plight toward true justice, to make sure that every vote counts fairly. That is why we did all these amazing election security bills, one of which I had the privilege of chairing a hearing on, on the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, which, by the way, is such a special committee.

Right before this pandemic hit, our incredible chair, a mentor, someone I deeply admire, Chairwoman EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON from Texas, with Mr. LUCAS from Oklahoma, passed, in full committee, a bipartisan energy and R&D package.

How are we going to solve our climate change problems? We must do so together. We must realize that our biggest challenges are our greatest opportunities.

I am here for the policy, Mr. Speaker. I am here for the deliberation, the dialogue, and the discourse of this country