

Mr. Speaker, I fear that we are embarking on a perilous path. Now, more than ever, we must recommit to protecting this vital freedom.

Instead of stripping away Americans' constitutional rights, the U.S. Government should be focused on enforcing law and order. Instead of stripping away Americans' constitutional rights, the U.S. Government should be focused on securing our southern border. Instead of stripping away Americans' constitutional rights, the U.S. Government should be focused on protecting our citizens from gang violence, stopping human trafficking, and stopping the illicit drugs that cross our porous southern border.

The President is correct that we have a public health crisis. We have a public health crisis on the southern border. While the Commander in Chief spends time plotting ways to subvert the U.S. Constitution, the brave men and women of U.S. Customs and Border Protection are encountering record numbers of migrants attempting to cross the border unlawfully.

Last month alone, border agents encountered more than 170,000 migrants, a colossal 400 percent increase from the same time last year. Yes, this is indeed a crisis. But the problem is not with the law-abiding citizens. The problem is not with the Second Amendment.

Here in Washington, our leaders need to get their priorities in order. We need to uphold our oath to defend the U.S. Constitution. We need to defend the American people from foreign threats. And we need to protect our fundamental freedoms.

COMMITTING TO RECONCILIATION

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

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, and still I rise because I love my country.

And, Mr. Speaker, I rise today understanding that we are in mourning. Our country is grieving. There are many reasons for this, but we still haven't acknowledged that there is something we can do to eliminate some of the mourning and grieving.

We are mourning because police officers are being murdered. Many have been murdered across the length and breadth of the country. We are mourning because persons are losing their lives at the hand of the police. Many have lost their lives. We are in a state of mourning, but it goes back far beyond George Floyd, Breanna Taylor, Sandra Bland. It goes back to really the founding of the country because we have not atoned for some of our transgressions. Literally, we have committed crimes against humanity for which we have not atoned.

Slavery was a crime against humanity; we have not atoned. What we did to the indigenous population was a crime against humanity; we have not atoned. The internment of the Japa-

nese, based upon our xenophobia, we have not atoned. Banning Chinese from the country, we have not atoned. What we did to Muslims, banning them from the country, we have not atoned.

There must be atonement. We have to reconcile. We did not do so in 1868, as it relates to slavery. We should have, but we had a President who was antithetical to it, Andrew Johnson.

So, I am going to offer a resolution, a resolution to create a department of reconciliation such that we can accomplish our atonement, get out of this grieving, and bring our country together.

When we had a systemic need for dealing with agriculture, we created a Department of Agriculture. When commerce was in need of some help, we created a Department of Commerce. We have a Department of Labor because labor needs the kinds of legislation and the kinds of benefits that a Congress can accord labor, the persons who actually work for a living. When we needed defense, we created a Department of Defense and a Department of Homeland Security.

So, I am proposing that we have a department of reconciliation so we can deal with the issues that have haunted this country for centuries. A department of reconciliation with a secretary of reconciliation, a department of reconciliation with a budget, a department of reconciliation with under secretaries so that we can accomplish our atonement with a department of reconciliation. It can be done.

I am not asking for a commission. This is about a commitment. A department indicates that you are committed to a cause. We were committed to labor; that is why we have a Department of Labor. We were committed to education; that is why we have a Department of Education. We now need a department of reconciliation, a commitment to ending this long, sorrowful grieving that we have suffered over the years so that we can understand each other better and work together better with each other.

If we fail to do this, if we fail to reconcile, Dr. King's words will become our greatest nightmare. He indicated that we must learn to live together as brothers and, I would add, sisters, or we will perish together as fools. We need a department of reconciliation. I will introduce a resolution for such.

KEEPING FOOD ON AMERICANS' TABLES

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, last month, the House Agriculture Committee hosted its first, or at least more fulsome, attempt at publicly reviewing the pandemic and Congress' response.

This pandemic has infiltrated our lives in every sense possible. Unfortu-

nately, the brunt of it was borne by our communities and, in particular, families already living paycheck to paycheck. In too many instances, arrogant career politicians issued statewide, indiscriminate edicts, forcing businesses and schools to shut their doors, plummeting our communities into a deep recession.

As the end of the pandemic nears, I hope we can use what we learned in that hearing to provide these families with more holistic services, particularly as they engage in a postpandemic economy that will look wildly different.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, currently provides nutrition assistance to 43 million individuals, with an average individual benefit of \$183. Total SNAP-related spending in fiscal year 2020 was \$78.9 billion, which includes benefits, administration, nutrition education, employment and training, and program integrity. Of that \$78.9 billion, \$74.2 billion was solely for benefits.

By way of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, and the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, more than \$37.8 billion has been appropriated to respond to the supplemental nutrition assistance needs of our communities.

This monumental response is in addition to the more than \$7.7 billion per month in standard SNAP benefits. Beyond direct funding from Congress, the former and current administrations have issued more than 4,000 administrative waivers to States. These waivers impact operations related to program eligibility, distribution of benefits, employment and training, and more.

These facts are startling. Combined with myriad social service policies, including those found in the shortsighted, outrageously naive American Rescue Plan, we are in the midst of our Nation's second-largest expansion of entitlements.

Unsurprisingly, leading economists and Wall Street analysts have said key parts of that bill are poorly targeted to the specific needs of the crisis. As a friend in southwest Missouri recently said, unnecessary rescue diminishes a person's dignity and, if repeated enough, gives way to debilitating dependency.

The witnesses who joined us for the hearing are our everyday heroes. They are the folks who responded without hesitation to the needs of their communities infested by a pandemic that took the lives of hundreds of thousands of our friends, neighbors, and family members. Whether it be the farmer who chose to donate their crop or the food bank that opened additional sites to be more accommodating, the witnesses who testified deserve our thanks.

I must also applaud the Department, particularly the former administration. Like it or lump it, the bulk of the

response originated in the last Congress under President Trump. Quick-thinking folks implemented Pandemic-EBT and the Farmers to Families Food Box Program, two projects that remain remarkably beneficial to families in need.

The latter, apparently terminating this morning, as I found out through the press, fell victim to inconceivable criticism. There is always room for more solutions to the needs of our Nation.

The Farmers to Families Food Box Program had open eligibility, making certain anyone and everyone in need, regardless of status, income, or household size, has supplementary access to meat, dairy, and produce in an unprecedented time of crisis. This program provided more than 156 million boxes to households across the United States. With this program, farmers were able to redirect their products, and American workers were able to sustain their employment or join new ventures, all to ensure fresh foods found their way into the homes of millions in need.

Regardless of the cherry-picked hiccups this committee and USDA's listening sessions were made aware of, the program worked exactly as intended. Shamefully, and because this was the brainchild of President Trump, the Biden administration has decided again to ignore rural America and continue to fund programs that favor billion-dollar organizations in the cities that they serve.

CALLING FOR RECOGNITION OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GREEN of Texas). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. COSTA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark the 106th anniversary of the Armenian genocide.

The first genocide of the 20th century, the atrocity saw the massacre of more than 1.5 million men, women, and children at the hands of the Ottoman Empire.

As a young boy in Fresno, my Armenian friends told me the stories of the horrors that their parents and grandparents witnessed. They never forgot the tragedy, and neither will I.

After decades of inaction, both the House and the Senate passed resolutions in 2019, calling for the recognition of the Armenian genocide. It is my hope that the Biden administration will officially recognize these crimes against humanity.

□ 1030

Just this past year, we witnessed another atrocity against the Armenian people in Artsakh. There is no denying the attacks made by Azerbaijan and Turkey were premeditated and coordinated in an effort to eliminate the indigenous Armenian population of Artsakh.

No words on our part can undo the terror and brutality suffered by Arme-

nians, but actions can. We can learn from these atrocities and commit ourselves to ensuring that something like this never happens again, for starters, by requiring that Azerbaijan and Turkey comply with their agreement to release prisoners of war and civilians held captive by Azerbaijan.

It is time the United States reestablish its presence in this part of the world by standing up for human rights.

CRITICAL NEED FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address also a critical need for infrastructure in America. It is time that we build new transportation systems and rehabilitate structures to support a modern economy and a way of life in the 21st century. President Biden's American jobs plan is an attempt to do just that with historic investments in improving infrastructure and putting millions of people to work. We need that.

The goals of this plan is to help all Americans. I urge my Republican colleagues to help forge a bipartisan package to invest in America.

When it comes to transportation, California is leading the way by building the Nation's first sustainable, true state-of-the-art high-speed rail project. It will deliver a fast, reliable, and eco-friendly way to connect to Los Angeles, to the bay area, and ultimately 80 percent of the State's population, getting cars off the roads and cleaning our air.

It will spur an investment in the economy that will deal with the economic fallout of the pandemic, creating reliable, good paying jobs; supporting small businesses; and investing in socially disadvantaged communities. In my home of California's San Joaquin Valley, we are already seeing the benefits of high-speed rail.

My legislation, the High Speed Rail Corridor Development Act of 2021, will help fund this forward-thinking project and other rail corridors across the Nation.

Big projects we know are hard. They always have been. So bold action, if we are serious about improving our future, is necessary. Since I first came to Congress, it has been one of my highest priorities to invest in America's infrastructure.

What do I mean by this?

Investing in our Nation's water infrastructure, a 21st century system of transportation, nationwide broadband, and our schools are all investments that the majority of Americans want to see us make.

The debate we are engaged in now is how we define and what we can agree on in terms of infrastructure and how we pay for it because we must.

So let's show the American people that their government can work together and make important investments that are long overdue that will benefit America and regain our lead. Today, we rank 13th in the world in terms of infrastructure. That is not the place America ought to be. We need to

make these investments in our people and in our country, which are good investments that will pay dividends for future Americans and future generations to come.

HONORING MATTHEW GRUDA

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

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor and recognition of Matt Gruda, my senior adviser and someone who has become both a friend and a confidant.

Matt will be departing our team and beginning a new and exciting chapter in his home State of Florida, and I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Matt and the remarkable work he has done for our team over the past 2 years.

Matt joined our team in 2019, and quickly became an asset to both our team and our district. His expertise, sincerity, thoughtfulness, quick wit, and always pleasant demeanor made him fast friends with so many in our community with a wide range of personalities for sure. He has touched so many lives, and he has made more of an impact than he realizes.

Mr. Speaker, I could rattle off a list of wins and crucial behind-the-scenes tasks attributed to Matt, but we would be standing here for quite a while. So to be brief, I want to thank him from the bottom of my heart for his many incredible efforts not just for Team FITZPATRICK, but for so many organizations, schools, businesses, local government officials, municipalities, and the people across Pennsylvania's First Congressional District.

Matt does all things with passion, and he has given so much of his heart to our community. So much of what has been accomplished over the past 2 years would not have been possible without Matt's contributions.

Matt's drive, determination, positivity, and compassion are a winning combination and truly a rarity in this world. I believe this is why he has been and will continue to be so successful in all walks of life. He recognizes the importance and value in differing opinions and how we can learn from those who think differently from us; and to produce success, we often need to think outside the box; and to best serve our community and our country, we must give everything we have and never give up. He has led our team for over 2 years in this manner, inspiring creativity, collaboration, and passion throughout the ranks.

Matt's most admirable quality is his resiliency. I have spoken to Matt's mom, Zena, who talked about the fact that his road to get here was full of challenges, bumps, twists, and turns; yet he faces each one of them with an open mind and looks at them as an opportunity to learn and to improve and grow better.