

thing. If the United States can keep Ukraine and free Ukraine, that is what we should all be hoping and praying for.

We heard a speech last night, in addition to the very relevant numbers, and in addition to the numbers of people dying in Ukraine and the people being injured, we cannot forget that every month in America another 90,000 people cross our southern border. We cannot forget that every month in America 8,000 more people die of drug overdoses. We cannot forget in America, compared to 3 years ago, we deport, every month, approximately 6,000 less people from this country for committing crimes.

Madam Speaker, I realize a lot is going on around the world and it is easy to forget about it, but America should not allow its politicians to forget about this huge sea of people crossing the border and the huge number of people dying of drug overdoses and the broken hearts of their parents, their siblings, and their children.

PRESIDENT BIDEN'S ADDRESS TO THE NATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2021, the gentlewoman from New Mexico (Ms. LEGER FERNANDEZ) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. LEGER FERNANDEZ. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from New Mexico?

There was no objection.

Ms. LEGER FERNANDEZ. Madam Speaker, yesterday President Biden stood in this very room and addressed a Nation during the State of the Union that was looking to the kind of unity, strength, and commitment that we heard last night. We saw a President who is concerned as our leader for the people. We saw a President who has the empathy for the families and what they have gone through because he, himself, has lived that experience. We saw a leader who is not afraid to stand up to those that threaten all we love.

America sent a clear message to the world that the United States stands steady and steadfast with the people and government of Ukraine. We are united against the unforgivable, unjust, and unprovoked Russian invasion. America is united against Putin, his actions, and what he represents.

The difference is striking. The difference is striking as to what Putin represents with his strong-man mentality, with his autocracy, with his hatred of those he does not know versus what America stands for.

America stands for the embrace of democracy because it is democracy

that looks to maintain that when a people elect their government, that when a people vote for a President, such as we have seen in Ukraine, that that democracy must be honored, and nobody should be allowed to take it away. President Putin is not allowed to take it away.

We saw a President who is building bridges. He is building bridges across our country and the world. He is building actual bridges, the kind of bridges that will connect a school bus to the student who needs to get to school in my district. He is building the kind of bridges that needed to be fixed decades ago that are falling down right before our eyes when he goes to dedicate them.

Those are real bridges that we need in America, that so many Presidents—the President before talked about bridges and infrastructure, but who delivered? President Biden delivered together with this Congress. He delivered together with a bipartisan House vote where we actually thought it was bipartisan because we got 10 Republicans in this House to vote for that Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

But the other kind of bridges he is building are equally important to talk about because those are the bridges of unity. Our former President, he cared about walls. He cared about walls that divide us. He cared about walls that did not do anything that we need. Instead, we now have a President who builds the bridges of unity.

Imagine the kind of work and diplomacy that this President had to do to overcome the threats that the United States would leave NATO, which is what our former President tried to do. Imagine the unity that had to be called out and that had to be cajoled, given that this President was faced with overcoming from our former President's admiration for Putin. Everyone might remember, he has even recently called him a genius. Right?

Instead, we had a President that said no, and that called Putin what he really is, a man who is delusional about what you can accomplish with force. This President, President Biden, has united a world together to repel and to impose sanctions that you wouldn't have imagined.

The idea that we now have Switzerland saying: No, it is not right, we shall not stay neutral because this is so wrong. We must stand up against the darkness. We must stand with the American people who seek light. We will stand against those who seek darkness. We stand against those who want to govern from a place of hatred and fear because we will govern from a place of love for our communities, of love for our families, of love for democracy, and of love for the idea that we must be a world united in the pursuit of peace.

Madam Speaker, I loved the fact that I was able to invite a virtual guest to the State of the Union. I was able to invite Victoria Dominguez as my

hometown hero. My hometown hero comes from Cuba, New Mexico. I had the great fortune of visiting with Victoria Dominguez and the Cuba School District just the Friday before we flew out here.

I can tell you, the love that Victoria Dominguez has for her community and for the children who attend her school is visible in that smile that she shares with you when she talks about them. Cuba is quite special because Cuba is nestled close to the mountains. The people of Cuba cut firewood to warm their home. The people of Cuba are connected with each other.

The people of Cuba don't necessarily have other resources. So when the pandemic hit, the children of Cuba did not have internet, they did not have the ability to remotely learn. The children of Cuba School Districts did not necessarily have the nutrition they needed, the supplies they needed to make it through that dark winter.

But what did Cuba do? Cuba rallied. I love the fact that not only is Victoria Dominguez a hero, but the bus drivers of Cuba, New Mexico, are heroes. They have appeared on the cover of Time magazine because of the work they did. You see them standing in front of their buses because those school buses—working together with Cuba CARES—which our beautiful Victoria Dominguez organized—those school buses took to the students and their families the work that they needed for their schools. They took them the food that they needed to nourish their bodies so that they could also nourish their brains. They took them what they needed.

The thing is that as we are coming out of COVID—thank you, thank you—as we are coming out of COVID and we are learning to handle and to respond to it, as we are able to remove our masks, Cuba CARES isn't going away because we know that caring for your community is not something you do once and walk away from.

I know that Victoria Dominguez is going to continue caring for those beautiful children who attend the Cuba schools. I am so pleased to talk about the work that Victoria Dominguez does because it is the epitome of what we want to support within the Congressional Progressive Caucus because this is the Congressional Progressive Caucus' Special House.

This is when we want to talk about the way in which we can promote and move agendas that focus on our communities. That we can promote and pursue policy that comes from a place of love, that is about creating opportunities, that is about imagining the possibilities, as President Biden said last night. That is what we need to do as a government.

The last thing I want to say about our wonderful hometown hero is that Victoria Dominguez received both her undergraduate and graduate social work degrees from New Mexico Highlands University.

I need to give a shout-out to New Mexico Highlands University because my father received his degrees from New Mexico Highlands University. My mother went to school when she had seven kids and she worked so hard on that typewriter, and it would imprint those letters on her head. We would tease my mother, but she got that degree from New Mexico Highlands University.

New Mexico Highlands University is rated as one of the top—number 19—of those minority-serving institutions that help elevate their students from one socioeconomic rung to another. It is a minority-serving institution that is key in the upward ladder of social mobility.

□ 1730

Now, the Congressional Progressive Caucus had some very key priorities, and I am so pleased to talk about the manner in which we have addressed those priorities.

We believe that it is very important that we strengthen the care economy and that we invest in Medicaid home- and community-based services. We are going to make sure that we do not give up on the image of making sure that childcare is a universal benefit; that we cap out-of-pocket childcare costs so no family pays more than 7 percent of their household income; and that we provide the kind of training and support so that those children are cared for often and most often by women and often and most often by women of color and often by immigrant women; and that these caretakers of our most precious gifts—our children—will receive the pay that they deserve.

We are not giving up on our importance of making investments—bold investments—in housing because we need that housing.

When I was in Cuba, guess what they asked about?

They asked about the importance of getting housing for their teachers at Cuba School. They want teacherages. I went and visited the Presbyterian Medical Services where those doctors, nurses, and clinical workers serving their community were, and I said: What do you need?

They said: We need housing for those so that they can come and work here because we are not close to a city center. When we go and we visit Santa Fe, Taos, Las Vegas, all the different communities in my large district and all of the communities in the districts of our hundred strong Congressional Progressive Caucus members, housing comes up over and over and over again.

So we are going to continue to fight so that we have housing choice vouchers. We are going to continue to fight so that we address the backlog of public housing. We want to make sure that we create affordable housing and that it is available so that we can begin creating the kind of wealth that families need when they are able to acquire a home of their own, because a home is

one of the best ways of both providing that warmth and that care for your family and building wealth for not only yourself but future generations.

I loved it last night when that President of ours focused on what do we need; and, yes, we need to focus on lowering drug prices. We need to use those savings to expand the availability of health to all because who, who should pay the outrageous sums that too many pay, including his special guest last night, for diabetes?

We have said we need to cap it. I am proud that New Mexico has already capped it at \$25. But not all States are as forward thinking as New Mexico, and so I applaud the President for his initiative that we cap it at \$30 a month for insulin because it must not be something that we read in the papers where too many people ration their insulin. And if you ration your insulin, you can die.

If you ration your insulin, your health condition will worsen. You may lose your limbs, you may lose your life. And I have seen those who have lost their limbs, and I have seen those who for the rest of their lives are attached to dialysis because they could not afford to pay for the insulin that they needed to treat their diabetes.

Madam Speaker, we want to make sure that we make bold investments in climate jobs and that those investments go to the most impacted communities. It is not and never has been a choice of jobs or environment. We can have both.

I am very proud of the orphaned well bill that I introduced. It is called the Orphaned Well Cleanup and Jobs Act. In the Senate, Senator LUJÁN has been carrying this mantle, and he introduced the REGROW Act. Out of these two bills we saw \$4.7 billion invested into cleaning up orphaned wells because orphaned wells don't do anything for anybody. What they represent is that companies walked away from their obligation, from their legal obligation, from their obligation to the communities where they dug those wells, where they drilled those wells, and where they pumped oil and gas from those wells. They walked away from their obligation to plug that well and to remediate the land around it once they were done.

Those wells threaten our water table. They threaten our ability to have clean water when we turn on that tap. And very, very sadly, they worsen the climate crisis. What comes out of those wells when they are doing nothing for nobody—nothing for anybody—what comes out of them is the venting of methane, the leakage of methane. You can smell it when you go near those wells, Madam Speaker. I have visited those wells, and they are in places where they should not be. They are next to schools, and that methane is simply leaking and leaking and leaking. It is 28 times or more—more potent—more potent than CO₂.

So we need to make those kinds of investments where we are both cre-

ating jobs and addressing the climate crisis.

I was so pleased when we heard the President speak last night about immigration reform, because let me tell you, Madam Speaker, there isn't anybody in this Chamber who hasn't benefited from the work of immigrants. There isn't anybody in this Chamber, except SHARICE DAVIDS and we had our wonderful Deb Haaland, who can't say they are not descendants and daughters and granddaughters of immigrants at one time. I am a descendant and a granddaughter of immigrants even though I can trace my lineage back 17 generations. But still they were immigrants then.

They caused good things and bad things which we must recognize. That is our history. There was tension in our history. We have done both good and bad over the years, and we must recognize it.

But in terms of today, looking at what immigrants provide us, those Dreamers that we have are studying to be nurses, they are studying to be doctors, they are studying to be teachers, and they are studying to be physicists, perhaps the engineers that will help us invent what we need to move on to the 22nd century on a planet that still exists and a place we still love. We must provide for those Dreamers. We must make sure that DACA does not expire.

This House did its job. This House passed the DREAM Act and sent it over to the Senate. But immigrants are not just students who will become our next teachers and nurses that we are sorely in need of right now. Immigrants are also those who care for our elderly, who care for our very young, who pick our fruits and vegetables, who clean the chickens and pork and prepare them to come to our supermarkets, and who stock those shelves. So we must also recognize that they are the essential workers who kept our regular lives going.

When we were able to still get food from that supermarket, who was putting their life on the line to provide it to us?

It was immigrants. We must treat them with the respect that they deserve because they have fed all of us. So I was very pleased to listen to the President speak that we must do that.

We are going to be calling upon the President because for some reason we could not get Republicans in the Senate—even though many of them supported these same immigration procedures before—to vote to move those immigration bills forward. So we are faced with this Republican wall that divides.

Why do we have these walls that divide?

Why do we have these walls that stunt progress?

We will continue to meet, ask, and implore the President to lean into those words that he shared with us last night so that we can achieve through executive orders so much.

I look forward to extending the temporary protected status so that it applies not just to the countries from our American continents but also to those who are coming from Ukraine, because we cannot just condemn what Putin has done; we cannot just send the billion dollars that we have already sent to Ukraine for munitions and for assistance; we cannot just do the more work that we have authorized today in this Chamber, but we must also recognize that wars like this, that those who flee dangerous situations, those who flee their country, the place they love, with so little with them, that we have an obligation under international law and under our own law to welcome those who seek asylum in our country. A temporary protected status for the Ukrainians is the right thing to do, and we support that as well.

So I am very pleased that we did, indeed, listen to the President talk about that importance last night because we know—that is the other thing we know—is Americans support—in overwhelming numbers—a majority of Americans support fixing our broken immigration system. They know because they live it daily that immigrants provide for our country and that without immigrants the issues around the supply chains would have been so much worse.

I am also really pleased about the way the President talked about delivering for Tribal communities and about delivering for rural communities. What this President and this Congress have done with regards to investments in rural America, in the small towns and villages that I find throughout my district, in the small towns, villages, and hamlets that we find throughout America where people are working to provide us with the food we eat, with everything we need, with the pasture lands and the grass that our cattle need, with all of the bounty that we receive here in America, that we must also invest in those places.

I was very happy to see that we had the CEO of Intel because in my district we have an Intel plant, and that plant is going to be benefiting from the investment that we have announced and that we passed out of this House with the COMPETES Act, because we are going to make it in America, we are going to invent it in America, and we are going to make sure that it is made and it is made everywhere in America because the priorities that we have in that COMPETES Act are things that are going to be done everywhere in America.

I am so proud of the fact that we do have those huge gains in manufacturing jobs. Other Presidents keep talking about having gains in manufacturing jobs, but it is under this President—and that in 1 year—we had more than half a million jobs created, 600,000-plus jobs. In New Mexico, we had 3,600 manufacturing jobs created.

Now, our problem is we need to make sure everybody knows about that. We

need to make sure that these voices about the possibilities and how we are creating opportunity and how we are delivering for those communities where we serve gets out there because sometimes all we listen to is those who vilify, is those who complain, and those who just want to tear everything down and don't really have any good solutions.

What we are doing in this House and what we are passing out of this House are solutions. We know, and we heard the President speak eloquently last night, about the difficulties of inflation. But we also heard the President speak about how we address inflation; how we address inflation without penalizing workers; how we pay workers more and make sure that costs come down. That is what the infrastructure bill will do. That is what the COMPETES bill will do. And that is what we do when we operate and we pass policies that focus on lifting up our communities, not dividing our communities.

Madam Speaker, I am also so pleased at the President's words that he said last night when he said: When we invest in our workers, when we build the economy from the bottom up and the middle out, we can build a better America.

Madam Speaker, unions are critical to establishing the good jobs with a fair pay and safe working conditions that make that possibility of building a better America from the bottom up and the middle out.

That is a key distinction of what we have done in this Congress in the 14 months that I have been so lucky to serve. In those 14 months, we have focused and we have invested in us. We have been with the people because the people have moved us along, and they have told us what we need because we have gone and visited and we have listened.

□ 1745

I was trained as a rebellious lawyer. Why do I say that? People say, what does a rebellious lawyer do? I was very lucky. I got trained as a rebellious lawyer at Stanford Law School. What the most important and powerful thing a rebellious lawyer can do is listen.

What you saw last night was a President responding to what America has shared with us about what they need, about what our families need, what our communities need. That is what we have done in these last 14 months.

We did not give away a whole bunch of money to the rich and the big corporations because they don't need it. They are recognizing incredible profits in the last 14 months, and they are passing on higher costs. So, the people who are carrying the burden of those profits are our families, our working families.

But what we have done is, instead of giving away money to those who didn't need it, we have invested in our communities. We have invested in our com-

munities, in the American Rescue Plan, by giving people the money they needed to make it through those harsh, dark days.

Do we remember what it was like in 2020? It was dark. It was ugly. It was scary. We didn't know if we were going to come out of it. People thought they were going to be losing their homes.

How were they going to pay their rent? We helped them out.

The number of small businesses that we have saved is amazing.

Then not only did we save those businesses, but the other thing that we have done in the last 14 months is we have had record growth of new businesses starting.

Those are the kinds of things that we need to celebrate even as we put our task to the metal, even as we work really hard to make sure that we address the new issues that we face because our work is never done. Our work is never done.

I have studied liberation theology in college and in graduate school. We talked about what it means to try to honor the creator, to honor what we are to do. It was about the fact that we need to try to create here on Earth the kingdom of God because it is not enough to say that you need to wait for it.

Those of us who believe in whatever our beliefs are, we each need to move to say how we work today and every day to make the lives of those in our community better, to make sure that we welcome the stranger, because as the Scripture says, we were once strangers, too.

To me, that is what we should do when we talk about immigration. We need to honor the words of love that are in those Scriptures.

Today, as we celebrate Ash Wednesday, we must remember that we have a job to do here while we are on this Earth, and that is to make this place better for those who are less fortunate, for those who are on the bottom up and the middle out, for all of those.

That is our job. We have a job for this beautiful place we call home, this beautiful planet we call home.

As the Pope has pointed out, we have an obligation to protect this beautiful creation we have against climate change, which is part and parcel of, as the Pope has noted, greed.

We must move away from being greedy and being mean and move to a place where our policies are made from a place of love, where we are waking up and fighting for our workers. We are allowing them to unionize because it is through unionization that this country has always improved the conditions of our communities.

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

REAL STATE OF THE UNION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2021, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. JOHNSON) is recognized for