

Act and the Freedom to Vote Act. There is no option. We do not just survive; our Nation thrives because of our shared belief that helps us against all odds. It helped us in World War I and World War II and the conflicts in and around. It helps us in wars where we have lost our young men and women.

We have a country formed out of many to become one people. Americans share the same compact that we are a nation of laws that flow from the most crucial and fundamental law, the Constitution of the United States.

The impact of the Constitution and its basic premise can be summarized by the simple belief that every individual is entitled to an equally valid vote.

We saw in 2020 that fragile vote that saw the largest turnout in any Presidential election in the history of the United States—that is a very long time—challenged from its very beginning, challenged on the day of the election, continued to be challenged and misrepresented and distorted, and election officials attacked and intimidated, even removed from office.

So I stand today on the shoulders not only of Dr. Martin Luther King, who I view, in fact, as a modern-day prophet; and our own colleague, John Robert Lewis; but I stand on the shoulders of a widow, Coretta Scott King, who I got to know in the aftermath of her husband's death. She worked without ceasing to have his principles, his values, his understanding of the "beloved community" recognized and to continue the sense of the rightness and righteousness of voting.

I had the privilege of working for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. It will always be a special part of my history. I had the privilege of working with individuals with names that we know, the young Hosea Williams, James Orange, some of the generals and foot soldiers that were in the army of Dr. Martin Luther King's beloved America.

Yes, I had the privilege—I call it that—of walking on plantations to try to register Black sharecroppers frightened and intimidated, though dignified, to vote. Their intimidation was real because those who owned the general store or the plantation were not eager for those Blacks in the South to vote or for those Hispanics and others who worked, as Dr. King worked, with Cesar Chavez and the farmworkers. They were not eager for them to vote.

Today, as we are about to watch as a step is to be made, both in terms of the speech of a President and Vice President but the actual vote in the Senate, we cannot isolate ourselves to focus on one or two persons. We really have to focus on who we are as a Nation, that this vote binds us together. It is the voice of the people.

And the Constitution, it trumps any figment of our imagination that may consider something legitimate. The filibuster is not legitimate. It is a rule of one body of this Congress. It is a rule that we adhere to, as civil people do.

We adhere to rules. We adhere to those in this House. I agree with that until a rule is used to trump and deny the basic constitutional values of the 14th Amendment and the Fifth Amendment of due process and equality, as it was utilized in the 20th century by segregationist Senators to deny civil rights laws.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that I stand here today on Coretta's name and Martin's name and Bobby's name and John's name, that we must demand courage. To not vote for the Voting Rights Act is not an option. I will not allow that to happen because I will stand with every breath in my body to ensure that the American people can vote without intimidation, and they will be intimidated without the laws of the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and as well the Freedom to Vote Act.

LISTENING TO CONCERNS OF KANSAS' BIG FIRST

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

Mr. MANN. Mr. Speaker, I want to take the opportunity today to speak directly on behalf of my constituents and their concerns.

Each year I make a point to host a townhall in all 63 counties of the Big First District because visiting with and listening to Kansans, who I have taken an oath to serve, is one of the greatest joys of my work as a Member of Congress.

So far in 2022, I have hosted seven of these townhalls. At each meeting, I heard the same concerns echoed: government spending, labor shortages, vaccine mandates, and the next farm bill.

Kansans believe that government spending is out of control, and I agree with them. One of our country's fastest growing expenses is just the interest payments on our national debt, which is estimated to be \$562 billion for fiscal year 2021 alone. You could fund the entire Department of Agriculture more than twice over for that amount.

Given this situation, this administration's spending, as we have seen in the bloated Build Back Better plan, is shortsighted and dangerous. Wild discretionary government spending has weakened our great country and, not only that, spending on some programs during the pandemic has incentivized staying at home instead of returning to work.

Kansans believe that labor shortages are hurting Americans, and I agree with them. People can't find bus drivers to take their kids to school or sanitation workers to pick up their trash. Meanwhile, inflation is at a 40-year high; grocery store staples are up over 12 percent; and people's essential goods, like car parts and refrigerators, are still stuck on cargo ships. We are in an economic crisis, and this administration has yet to act meaningfully to combat the effects.

Kansans believe that vaccine mandates are unconstitutional, and I agree with them. Anyone who wants to get a vaccine should be able to get one in this country, but it is not the Federal Government's job to dictate personal healthcare choices of the American people. Vaccine mandates are a terrible idea for the present situation in this country, as they will only continue to strip the workforce of even more people.

Kansans are also worried about the next farm bill, particularly as it relates to crop insurance and the Livestock Indemnity Program, and I share these concerns. The 2018 farm bill did not include any major changes to Federal crop insurance, which provides a robust and strong safety net for farmers across the country.

I also want to ensure that the Livestock Indemnity Program remains intact, as it offered critical support to folks in my district after natural disasters like the recent wildfires that we saw last month.

Farmers and producers are rightfully concerned that the 2023 farm bill could see significant changes. However, given that fact, House Democrats have held zero farm bill implementation hearings so far.

My goal is to do everything within my power for my constituents to ensure that no significant changes are made to reduce either of these essential components in the next farm bill.

The new year, which has just begun, brings with it a hope for change and growth. If we have been dissatisfied with the course of our lives or that of our Nation, January ushers in a fresh start. It gives us an opportunity to examine ourselves and to reassess our goals and ambitions. Most of all, the new year reminds us of the greatest privileges we have, living in a free nation where we have the right to life and to liberty and to pursue happiness as we see fit.

As we begin the second year of the 117th Congress, I want to reiterate my dedication to serving my constituents in the Big First. I am fighting to preserve the foundation of our free Nation and to protect your values.

Kansas is still the pilot light of freedom for America. As long as it continues to burn, I believe that our brightest days are yet to come.

CREATING THE CONGRESSIONAL FFA CAUCUS

Mr. MANN. Mr. Speaker, I stand today to invite all of my colleagues to join me and 30 other Representatives from both sides of the aisle in the newly formed Congressional FFA Caucus. Representative PANETTA and I established this caucus to serve as an informal group dedicated to issues affecting the next generation of agriculture leaders and students pursuing careers in agriculture, food, natural resources, and related sciences.

As a past FFA chapter president from Quinter, Kansas, and a member of the House Agriculture Committee, I am dedicated to raising awareness

about school-based agricultural education, FFA, and the next generation of leaders who will feed, fuel, and clothe the world.

The National FFA Organization is a congressionally chartered school-based national youth leadership development organization that plays an integral role in preparing the next generation of leaders who will change the world.

I sincerely hope my colleagues in the House will consider joining our caucus to support agriculture and the students who are passionate about it.

REFLECTING ON DEMOCRATIC ACHIEVEMENTS OF PAST YEAR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. MANNING) for 5 minutes.

Ms. MANNING. Mr. Speaker, as Congress reconvenes for the Second Session of the 117th Congress, I want to take a moment to reflect on the important achievements that the Democrats have made this past year.

The pandemic continues to be a challenge, but thanks to the funding provided by the Democrats' American Rescue Plan Act, the vast majority of Americans have been vaccinated and are protected from severe illness, hospitalization, and death.

We must also acknowledge that the Democrats' commitment to building back stronger and more equitably than before has resulted in unprecedented economic recovery from the initial impact of the pandemic.

Last month, the unemployment rate fell to 3.9 percent, the largest calendar-year decrease in the unemployment rate in history. We reached this rate 5 years before experts anticipated. That is the result of adding 6.4 million jobs to the economy since President Biden took office, regaining 84 percent of the jobs lost during the pandemic.

This economic boom was brought to you by President Biden and the Democrats in Congress who voted for the American Rescue Plan.

The American Rescue Plan supercharged our economic recovery by providing critical support to small businesses as they navigated the pandemic. It expanded the child tax credit, which helped families put food on the table and pay for childcare. It provided rent assistance so families could keep their housing.

Now, the bipartisan infrastructure law is creating millions of good-paying jobs while rebuilding our Nation's crumbling infrastructure and combating the climate crisis.

Through the American Rescue Plan and the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Democrats have delivered for the American people and created historic economic growth.

We have more important work to do. We must encourage the Senate to pass the voting rights protections that we in the House passed months ago that are critical to ensure that all citizens

can exercise their most precious right to vote.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to continue our important work, building back stronger and more equitably than ever before.

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RECOGNIZING TAYLORVILLE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL'S SEVENTH GRADE GIRLS' BASKETBALL TEAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. RODNEY DAVIS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize my hometown Taylorville Junior High School's seventh grade girls' basketball team on their 2021 State championship win.

After a back and forth game, the score was tied at 16-16 with 4 seconds to go. The Tornadoes came out triumphant after Grace Rogers hit a clutch shot.

The seventh grade girls' basketball team ends their season with an overall record of 26-2. This team's hard work, dedication, and sportsmanship shine throughout our entire Taylorville community.

I give a big tip of the hat and personally congratulate my good friend and head coach, Doug Bowsher. I congratulate all the girls on this wonderful, championship team for their hard work and dedication, and I am excited to see what the future holds for this championship Taylorville Tornado team.

CONGRATULATING DAVID BROWN

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate my good friend David Brown for his retirement after more than 30 years at WAND in Decatur, Illinois.

David's ancestors moved from New Hampshire to Illinois in 1867 in a search for new farming opportunities. David is a centennial farmer, and his son is the sixth generation from his family to farm in central Illinois. After graduating from Millikin University, David also worked at WSOY radio.

David first joined the WAND news team as an ag reporter when the Farm Progress Show came to central Illinois in 1991. At WAND, many of his colleagues described him as a mentor, a friend, and one of the hardest workers they have come to know.

Throughout David's tenure at the station, he was loved by all and received an award for Media Excellence in Agriculture. According to David, he had the best of both worlds, working at his passion, and then getting to share the importance of agriculture with the viewers as a farmer and as an ag broadcaster.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate David on his retirement. It is well deserved. Now David has a little more time to spend with his four children and six grandchildren.

RECOGNIZING RAY AND BARBIE SWINDA

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Decatur residents Ray and Barbie Swinda and their Facebook page, Support Decatur IL Business.

Ray his wife, Barbie, have been using their Facebook page to show off local Decatur businesses and restaurants they have been enjoying, and encouraging others in the community to follow their lead in buying and eating local.

Ray and his wife started their page in response to larger chains harming the diversity of options for food and services in the Decatur area that Ray remembers existing as a kid. Many of the businesses that have been featured on their page have been shocked by the increase in traffic. Ray and Barbie have received responses from others in the community, including Mayor Julie Moore Wolfe herself, and have become local leaders simply through their work in promoting local businesses and restaurants.

I urge everybody, if you are traveling through Decatur, Illinois, and you want a good recommendation, go visit Ray and Barbie's Facebook page, and you will see some great plates of delicious food.

I also personally congratulate Ray and Barbie on the success of their Facebook page and thank them for being pillars of the community and encouraging so many others to invest in our local businesses.

CONGRATULATING THE GEORGIA BULLDOGS

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

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate as a proud alumnus of the recently crowned 2022 College Football National Champions, the Georgia Bulldogs.

Going 12-1 on the season, the Georgia Bulldogs came into Indianapolis to face the Alabama Crimson Tide.

In true heavyweight fashion, the grudge match opened as a hard-nosed defensive battle without one touchdown being scored in the first half of play.

The Dogs came out down in the second half and captained by head coach, Kirby Smart, Georgia was able to score the first touchdown to take the lead.

With a defense championed by the likes of Jordan Davis and Nakobe Dean, the Bulldogs managed to hold Alabama to one touchdown all game.

Quarterback Stetson Bennett, who by the way is from Blackshear in Pierce County in the First Congressional District of Georgia that I have the honor and privilege of representing, quarterback Stetson Bennett completed his Cinderella-story season, stepping up when it mattered most.

With an interception returned for a touchdown to seal the deal, the University of Georgia was victorious.