

we cannot disregard national security of the greatest country that ever existed on Earth and put our people at risk.

It is our responsibility as Representatives for this Republic to stand up, regardless of party affiliations, and raise the issues, and we owe a duty to the American people.

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her comments.

Madam Speaker, what my colleagues have illustrated here in this Special Order is the crisis that we have in this country. We are on the anniversary now of 1 year of far-left Democratic rule in Washington. We have a unified government. The far-left Democrats are in charge of the White House and both Houses of Congress. Elections have consequences. The American people can see it for themselves. Every poll across this country shows us. They know that it is crisis upon crisis upon crisis.

You have heard my colleagues illustrate so many of those here this afternoon. If we had hours upon hours we could continue all night.

The economic crisis last year: Inflation cost the average worker nearly two paychecks.

An energy crisis: The national average for a gallon of gas rose 49.6 percent for the year.

A border crisis: Because of the Democrats' open border policies, every State is now a border State.

An education crisis: President Biden promised to reopen schools in his first 100 days but his administration secretly worked with teachers' unions to keep the schools closed and label parents as domestic terrorists.

A crime crisis: Over a dozen U.S. cities had a record-high homicide rate in 2021.

A COVID crisis: Although President Biden promised to shut down the virus, many Americans continue to struggle to find tests, and, of course, many schools remain closed because of this.

A national security crisis: Because of President Biden's weakness on the world stage, our adversaries in Beijing, Tehran, and Moscow are stronger today and they are in power.

We could go on and on and on. I am out of time, Madam Speaker, but I will just point out again, the latest poll that was released just this morning didn't look at just numbers. They asked the American people to give a letter grade to the President. Thirty percent of Americans give the President an F, a failing grade, and more Americans give him an F than give him an A or a B. This is a failed Presidency. These are failed policies. We are living under the crises that they have created. It is time for this to come to an end.

We are grateful to the American people for recognizing this, and we look forward to bringing our solutions to bear at the election cycle this fall.

Madam Speaker, our Special Order hour has concluded, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President.

MOURNING THE LIVES LOST AT TWIN PARKS NORTH WEST

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2021, the gentleman from New York (Mr. TORRES) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TORRES of New York. 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 gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

Mr. TORRES of New York. Madam Speaker, I come here with the heaviest heart. My beloved Bronx saw the deadliest fire in the history of New York City in more than three decades; a fire that has left a death count of 17 residents, including 8 children.

A malfunctioning space heater was the immediate cause of the fire in a duplex on the third floor of a 19-story building known as Twin Parks North West. And even though the fire was largely limited to the third floor, both the apartment door and the nearby stairwell door were left open, causing the smoke to spread rapidly and widely throughout the 19-story building.

Since the building has no fire escapes and since the stairwells were full of black, toxic smoke, the tenants had no means of escape. The smoke spread so widely that victims were found on every floor. The fatalities were tenants who died from severe smoke inhalation from cardiac and respiratory arrest.

Almost all of the victims came from a single town in Gambia. The Gambian community has had roots in Twin Parks North West that date back more than half a century. It is hard to imagine a more closely knit community, a community more tied by the bonds of faith and family and fellowship than the Gambian community of Twin Parks North West, and so the loss is deeply felt.

The victims were as young as 2, and no older than 50. These were victims who had their whole lives ahead of them. Ousmane Konteh was only 2 years old.

Muhammed Drammeh celebrated his twelfth birthday.

Sera Janneh was a student at Lehman College. She had dreams of becoming a social worker of aiding those afflicted by trauma.

My heart aches for the father who lost his wife, two daughters, and a son; for the mother who lost her toddler; for the children who lost their parents; for the Drammeh family who lost four members; and the Dukureh family who lost five.

The fire at Twin Parks North West was as preventable as it was tragic. If the space heater had shut off automatically, the fire would have been prevented.

If the apartment door and the stairwell doors had closed automatically, the spread of the smoke would have been contained and countless lives would have been saved.

If the building had a sprinkler system, the fire would have been extinguished.

If the building had a two-way intercom system, the tenants would have been advised by the fire department to remain in their homes instead of fleeing to a smoke-filled stairwell that had become a death trap.

And if the tenants had sufficient heat and hot water in their homes, there would have been no need to use dangerous space heaters in the first place.

The use of space heaters is often a cry for help and a cry for heat. It is often an act of desperation for decent and dignified housing.

Madam Speaker, the Bronx is no stranger to deadly fires. New York City's four worst fires in the past 30 years have all been in the Bronx, have all been in my district of south Bronx.

The prevalence of deadly fires in south Bronx is no accident. It is a consequence of systemic disinvestment from the lowest income communities of color, from places like the south Bronx, from the safety and quality of affordable housing.

When it comes to fire safety, America is a tale of two countries and New York is a tale of two cities. If you live in a luxury development in Manhattan, then fire safety can be taken for granted. But if you live in an affordable housing complex in the south Bronx, there is no guarantee that your building will have a sprinkler system; in fact, it is unlikely to have one.

There is no guarantee that your building will have self-closing doors. There is no guarantee that your building will have what experts would consider anything resembling modern standards of fire safety.

In America, poor people of color are left to live in conditions that put them at greater risk of losing everything, including their own homes, their own families, their own lives from a catastrophic fire.

If that is not cruel and callous, I am not sure what would be. We are reminded that safe and decent affordable housing is not a privilege but a right; not a luxury but a moral necessity; not an abstraction but a matter of life and death. Building back better should and must mean building back safer for communities long forgotten.

On January 9, the world bore witness to one of the fire department's finest hours of public service. It took the Herculean efforts of more than 200 firefighters to extinguish the fires at Twin Parks North West. Firefighters who had ran out of oxygen in their tanks ran into burning buildings, saving lives at great risk to their own.

There are no words that can convey more powerfully the heroism shown than the image beside me; the image of Matt Zimpfer, a proud member of the FDNY carrying a baby, a visibly traumatized baby that he had rescued from the fire at Twin Parks North West. It is as much an image of our common humanity as it is of the FDNY's uncommon bravery.

For the south Bronx, January 9 is a day that will live in infamy, but the image beside me reminds me that even in a moment of despair, there was cause for hope. Even in a moment of tragedy and a day of infamy, heroes can and do emerge.

The overwhelming sense of sorrow that weighs so heavily on my heart is rivaled only by the overwhelming gratitude that I feel for our heroes at the FDNY, a gratitude that will remain with me for as long as I live.

May God bless the heroic souls of the FDNY, New York City's bravest, and may God bless the resilient and resourceful souls of the Gambian community of Twin Parks North West.

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

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DEMOCRATS' POLICIES MAKING LIFE MISERABLE FOR AMERICANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2021, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. SCHWEIKERT) for 30 minutes.

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. Madam Speaker, there are so many things we all want to talk about and share, and sometimes, as Members of Congress, we run in front of microphones and sort of do the shiny, loud object of the day because, let's face it, that gets us retweets and Facebook and those things, but they are often trite. So I have a handful of things I want to walk through, but there is going to be a constant theme here.

I am not trying to be mean, but the thing is—and my facts will back me up—that the Democrat policies, if you look at particularly the last 12 months, have made life more miserable for Americans, have made the working class and the poor working class poorer and actually are crushing hope.

I want to walk through a couple of economic things. I am blessed to be the senior Republican on the Joint Economic Committee. There is a handful of economists that work on our side, and there is a handful that work for left side. We have been digging and digging and digging, trying to understand the inflation data, the amount of cash chasing goods, and what is happening in productivity. I hope I am wrong, but I am starting to see numbers that look like we are on the cusp of a wage-price spiral.

Let's sort of walk through our basic economics. You all remember your high school economics class, particu-

larly those of us who are old enough to have been in high school at the end of the 1970s. Businesses raise prices because their costs are going up. Typically, just like we were doing right now in the new year, people are getting their wage hikes. Most of those wage hikes are nothing more than to keep up with inflation, so you end up with this spike.

There was a handful of folks on the Democrat side that were saying to look at the December number; it wasn't spiking as much as the previous months. Wait till you see the January numbers when the wages come in, and then you end up with this world saying now businesses, organizations, government, others, have to keep raising their costs, raising their prices, raising their taxes, others, to keep up because they just had to raise wages, not for our brothers and sisters that are out there working to live better but basically just to be able to purchase the same things.

Except at the end of 2021, Americans were poorer. The fact of the matter is, the average American fell about 2.7 to 3 percent poorer because inflation grew faster than their wages did. But there are lots of things in the economic literature—and I know I am geeking out a little bit—that you start to end up in this seesaw effect, what they call a wage-price spiral. Businesses keep having to raise their costs because now they have to raise the wages, and it becomes a very, very ugly circle.

A bit of trivia. How many of you here would immediately say to go back to the 1980s, particularly the early 1980s? It was Paul Volcker jacking up interest rates to just extraordinary levels that squeezed out inflation. That is actually only part of the story. If you actually look at the math during that time, there were the Reagan tax cuts, the first round of them. They created a great spike in productivity. Because one of the things inflation is, is I have too much money chasing too few goods, so raising interest rates, making everything more expensive, still doesn't do anything to make sure you are making more goods, more services, to fill up that vacuum to remove that inflationary pressure.

You actually even see some of that data after we did tax reform here at the very, very end of 2017, when you saw the spike in productivity. You saw a pretty impressive spike for 2 years of wages and actually falling inflation. Why was that? It is because expensing and other things we did in tax reform, repatriation, getting hundreds of billions of dollars from around the world coming back into the country, actually raised productivity and lowered prices. That is the holy grail. Right now, almost every policy that the administration and, I hate to say, this body is engaging in is counter to that.

We are going to walk through a couple of things here, and our argument is really simple. Almost every major policy set being moved forward—and I

don't think it is purposeful; I think it is a misunderstanding of the most basic economics—that my Democrat brothers and sisters are doing is actually making life more miserable. I don't think it is purposeful, but it is economics.

Let's walk through the facts, just the actual math. I know this is always uncomfortable, but if you actually look at the data that came in, when you look at the expenditures—because I am using this slide. This is actually a 2019 slide, but it is important to set the base. Our brothers and sisters who are in the lowest quartiles—and I hate that term, but it is what we use in economics—dramatically more of their income goes to pay for housing, dramatically more goes to pay for their transportation and food. Those in the upper incomes, that is not where they live.

Think about what has gone on in this last year. Most everyone who is in this room, probably most everyone who is watching this, we are the people who have savings. We have retirement accounts. We have 401(k)'s. Life has gotten more expensive for us, but how many of you have a home that has gone up dramatically in value? Think about those lower income quartiles, that working poor, that middle class, that lower middle class. Do they have a home? Are they renters? How much of their cost is their transportation or just trying to provide housing? What we have allowed to happen inflation-wise is just brutalizing them.

When you actually start to understand what the policies from this last year have done—and I am going to show a number of these things, showing that the left's policies are actually crushing the poor, the working poor, and the middle class.

The difference here, when you see this type of graph, is we are trying to sort of demonstrate that it is both the effects on populations where you are income-wise—if you are in this lower income, how much more the cost of your life is because of inflation. This is almost just a pure demonstration of who benefits and who doesn't benefit.

If you are a homeowner, if you are someone with lots of assets and the stock market has been really good to you, you have come out ahead. If you are like most in the middle class and lower, your standard of living has gone down.

There is this rule of thumb from the top line. What are the two things you do to make the working poor poorer? I have said this dozens of times behind this microphone. It is inflation, and it is opening up the border.

There is this economic theory—and this is actually old literature. It is like 20 years old, and it actually had a number of left groups as part of the authors who basically said if you look at the working poor, a population who probably didn't finish high school, what they sell is their labor, their willingness to work, their willingness to sweat. What happens when you flood