

FAILURES OF THE U.S. SENATE

(Mr. CASTEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CASTEN. Mr. Speaker, the West is burning and we can't get the water to put it out, thanks to a 1,200-year drought.

Louisiana insurance companies are failing due to rising sea levels.

Families are paying more than ever to cool their home and fill up their tank with ever more expensive fossil fuels.

And this week, we learned that a majority of the Senate thinks that is fine.

They are fine with Americans paying too much for energy. They are fine with Americans keeping our economy coupled to Putin's war machine. They are fine with stealing from consumers and stealing from our future to subsidize fossil energy producers today.

If you have a solar panel on your roof, if you have an electric vehicle in your driveway or an energy-efficient home, you are helping your planet and you are helping your wallets.

In the House, we are making that opportunity available to all Americans and, yet, the Senate has failed us. Their failure is not only a failure to do their job, it is not only a failure of leadership, the U.S. Senate is increasingly an embarrassment, and I am sick of apologizing for them.

988 CRISIS LINE

(Mr. CARTER of Louisiana asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CARTER of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, 988. These three digits represent an important first step toward a transformed crisis care system in America.

Congress passed the legislation to formally authorize 988 as the new number for suicide and mental health crises. This 24/7 hotline and text line is available to people with mental health-related distress, including thoughts of suicide, mental health crisis, or substance use crisis.

Additionally, family and friends can use this service to support loved ones who are struggling.

By calling or texting 988, people will immediately be connected with trained crisis counselors who will do everything they can to help.

Mental health care is healthcare, and the enactment of 988 is a long overdue example of government finally prioritizing mental health and putting crisis care in reach for more Americans. But there is much more to do.

I will continue to work in Congress and in the community to help fight the stigma and increase mental health support for all.

DONALD TRUMP LOST THE 2020 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

(Mr. LIEU asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. LIEU. Mr. Speaker, Donald Trump lost the 2020 Presidential Election by over 7 million votes. Trump lost Arizona by over 10,000 votes. Trump lost Georgia by over 11,000 votes. Trump lost Wisconsin by over 20,000 votes. Trump lost Nevada by over 30,000 votes. Trump lost Pennsylvania by over 80,000 votes. Trump lost Michigan by over 150,000 votes.

Trump lost the Electoral College 232-306. Donald Trump lost the 2020 Presidential Election.

SOCIAL SECURITY

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

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the body to talk about Social Security.

I am pleased to be joined by so many of my colleagues from across the country who understand what Martin Luther King called the fierce urgency of now, and why the United States Congress has to act.

It has been more than 51 years since the United States Congress has enhanced the benefits of Social Security. Richard Nixon was President, and a gallon of milk cost 72 cents.

Much has changed in 51 years, and now, I am proud to announce today that the Ways and Means Committee will be marking up Social Security 2100: A Sacred Trust, next Wednesday and, in doing so, for the first time in 51 years Congress will be moving forward to enhance benefits for those who need it the most.

Why do I say that?

Everybody in America knows that this pandemic, this global pandemic that we are in, has caused unbelievable harm across the globe and here in this country.

But who has it affected the most?

Of the close to 1 million people who have perished in the United States, over 756,000 of them are over the age of 65.

And who is the group that has been hurt the most by the ensuing inflation that comes from a global pandemic and a war in Ukraine?

It is people on a fixed income. It is the more than 65 million Americans that are on Social Security.

I commend President Biden for taking the leadership in this area; who campaigned across the country, assuring Americans that Social Security was a sacred trust; which, indeed, it is because it has never missed a payment.

We used to have to go back to 1935 and talk about the Great Depression. We only have to go back as far as 2008 and 2009 because people understand during the Great Recession, when they saw their 401(k) become a 101(k), that Social Security never missed a payment, not a pension payment, not a spousal payment, not a dependent payment, not a disability payment.

It is America's number one insurance program. And all Americans know this, and it is easily verified, weekly or monthly, when they look at their paycheck and it says FICA, Federal Insurance Contribution.

Whose?

Theirs. It is an earned benefit that they have paid into throughout their lives.

And yet, Congress has not acted in 51 years, until now. Under the leadership of President Biden, Speaker PELOSI, and Chairman RICHARD NEAL, we are moving forward with legislation that will provide much-needed relief to people struggling in this pandemic and dealing with inflation.

I am pleased that I am joined today by so many of my colleagues who have told their stories over and over again about the citizens that they are interacting with, and what an enormous burden this pandemic and inflation has caused for them, and now, finally, for Congress to act.

And how so?

Improving benefits across the board by more than 2 percent for everyone; making sure that nobody who worked all their lives and paid into a system can retire into poverty; making sure that we have a COLA that actually reflects the cost that people incur; making sure that we repeal WEP and GPO, so that teachers and firefighters—something that Mr. PASCRELL has championed his whole time here in Congress—understand that relief is on its way because Democrats care deeply about this.

We are faced, as well, with an alternative from the other side. And here is the simple difference. Republicans have proposed to end Social Security. Republicans have proposed to cut Social Security across the board by more than 21 percent in 20 different separate proposals in their Republican Study Plan.

They have also called, in committee, in the eight hearings that we have had on Social Security, to still privatize Social Security.

Democrats stand, not just to protect Social Security, but to expand Social Security for those that need it the most. And those assembled here today understand how vitally important it is.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR), the "deaness" of the House of Representatives, and someone who understands intuitively, women need this benefit the most. And in this country more than 3 million Americans receive below poverty-level checks from Social Security, and the vast majority of them are women.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman LARSON for his tireless leadership and work to safeguard Social Security for the benefit of this generation of retirees and those that are to come. He has worked hard for decades to try to bring this bill to the floor.

I thank Speaker PELOSI, Chairman RICHARD NEAL, and Congressman JOHN LARSON, chair of the subcommittee, for

giving us the opportunity to bring to the American people what they want, and that is a strengthened retirement system under Social Security.

For nearly a century, America has made a sacred promise: Those who work and labor throughout their lives will benefit by a retirement from the fruits of their labor. It is an earned benefit for pension. It is an insurance program that they pay into, as the gentleman has said.

It is also a survivorship benefit for workers who die who have young children. It is a disability program for those who are harmed on the job.

□ 1445

Social Security is an earned benefit. Yeah, it is a promise, but people earn it. It assures a safe and secure retirement for tens of millions upon millions of Americans during their golden years, to those who become disabled, and, of course, their family, their children, in fact, if something unfortunate happens.

But without the action of Chairman LARSON, the Social Security promise is deeply at risk. Democrats want to strengthen Social Security. Republicans want to end it and cripple it.

With this legislation, soon to be moving through the House Ways and Means Committee, one of the most important bills that will ever come before this Chamber, Democrats will push for a vote on the floor as soon as possible.

I hear from thousands of northern Ohioans and people across our great State who want to see a responsible solution to protect and improve Social Security.

The wealthy must join with the vast majority of Americans in paying their fair share of social insurance at a percentage that equals what other people pay to secure Social Security into the future.

By making that happen, the Social Security 2100 Act will increase benefits for current and new beneficiaries. It will protect retirees against inflation, which the gentleman has mentioned. It will continue to serve the disabled and the young children of workers who die at a far too young age, and it will repeal the windfall elimination provision that we have been trying to fix for how many decades? I think at least four.

The Social Security 2100 Act is one of the most important bills Congress will ever vote on. What a privilege it will be to be able to cast a "yes" vote.

America made a promise to workers and to retirees and families, and Democrats are committed to making good on that promise. This is a Democratic program, and we are going to save it as Democrats and improve it.

Thank you, Chairman LARSON.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. I thank Ms. KAPTUR and greatly appreciate the gentleman from Ohio's comments.

I yield to the gentleman Pennsylvania (Mr. CARTWRIGHT), who also understands and has worked tirelessly as an original cosponsor of this bill to

make sure that several of the benefits, more than 14 enhancements to this bill, are now going to be enjoyed by the people of Pennsylvania and all across this Nation.

Mr. CARTWRIGHT. I thank Chairman LARSON for yielding me the time, and it is an honor and a privilege for me to speak out in favor of this wonderful bill, Social Security 2100.

Social Security, something that has been a triumph for American government for close to a hundred years now; Social Security that has kept seniors out of poverty.

It used to be that in this country, seniors died in poverty, died of starvation. That happened in America. Don't think it couldn't happen again. But under the Social Security Administration, it doesn't happen.

Seniors who work their whole lives and pay into this insurance program reap the benefit of doing so and have money coming to them. It isn't a lot, but it is keeping people alive and out of poverty, and out of poverty through some of the most extreme downturns in our economy.

It is something that protected seniors from starving to death during terrible moments of economic stress and distress in this country.

Social Security is something that all of us Americans ought rightfully to be proud of; that it was enacted during the Roosevelt administration; that has been protected and defended for generation after generation; and that it has succeeded in keeping Americans out of poverty in the most dire circumstances.

It is a legacy that the Democratic party are very, very proud of, and all of us band together at a moment's notice to protect it when it is threatened by those who think ill of it.

Those instances have not been few or far between. There was the time in the early 2000s when there was this push to privatize Social Security. Instead of paying into the system and having it protected, no. The idea was just give the money to the people so they could invest it in the stock market. Let's throw the money in the stock market.

It was amazing that that was something that was brought up around 2004, 2005, in that timeframe. What happened in 2008? The stock market cratered. If people had put their Social Security investments into the stock market, they would have been destitute.

That is what happens when you so-called privatize Social Security. The people that want to push that are the ones that want to push the stock market up for their own particular personal gain.

But what it does at the same time is that it endangers and puts at risk the lifetime of earnings that people have put into Social Security to make their own retirements safe. We can't do that.

What else? They came up with this wonderful concept, you know. The chairman talked about the COLA, the cost-of-living adjustments, that come with Social Security.

Certainly, they haven't been anything to brag about over the years, but as meager and as minimal as they have been, something came up about 10 years ago called change CPI.

Now, that was a \$50 economist's expression that meant lower cost of living increases for seniors. That is what they wanted—lower cost-of-living increases than what you were already getting on Social Security.

We stood foursquare, shoulder to shoulder, against that ridiculous provision, and we put an end to that kind of talk.

What else? They wanted to raise the retirement age. They always talk about that. The right-wingers want to raise the retirement age. How fair is that, raising the retirement age for people who have been lifting and carrying and climbing and working with their hands and putting their backs into their work, a whole lifetime?

You want to make them work into their 70s? Is that what we think Social Security is for? Is that what we think it is all about? Absolutely not. Democrats have stood foursquare and shoulder to shoulder against that, raising the retirement age.

But it gets better. As the chairman mentioned, there are enemies to Social Security, and, you know, a lot of times they don't say it out loud.

They would like to get rid of Social Security. They would like to privatize it. They would like to cut back on the benefits. They wring their hands about how much it costs, while all the time ignoring all of the people that it saves and keeps out of poverty and away from starvation. No, no. They ignore all of that. They would like to do away with it.

You know what? Just recently, these people came out from the shadows and identified themselves. In fact, there is a Senator by the name of RICK SCOTT from Florida who has said out loud that he wants Federal legislation, including Social Security and Medicare, to sunset every 5 years and have to be reauthorized by a fresh vote.

Sunset. Now, that is a euphemism for end. It is a euphemism for killing. It is a euphemism for doing away with one of the most successful programs in American legislation history. Sunset Social Security means do away with it, and that is all they are talking about.

They have the temerity now to say out loud what many of them have been thinking in private: Let's get rid of Social Security. I say, enough. Enough of this detraction from Social Security, this wonderful program.

I say, let's listen to Chairman LARSON. Let's make Social Security stronger. Let's make it better. Let's make it more realistic for the benefits that it pays out. Let's raise the benefits by 2 percent. Let's make it stronger so it is going to last longer.

We haven't touched this program for generation after generation. Now is the time to enact Social Security 2100 to protect our seniors and this wonderful,

enormously successful insurance program for all Americans; people who retire, people who are disabled.

This is a program that we must honor and respect and raise up, and we can accomplish this through this wonderful bill authored by my friend, JOHN LARSON of Connecticut, Social Security 2100.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. I thank the gentleman, but it actually is authored by 206 Members of the United States Congress, and I appreciate all the work that has been done.

The gentleman was correct. This is the number one antipoverty program for the elderly. It is also the number one antipoverty program for children. It is also the program that more veterans use for disability than any, even the VA. It is the most efficient and effective government program in terms of cost.

They operate in insurance language at what is called a 99 percent loss ratio which means this: It costs less than 1 percent administrative costs to distribute the greatest insurance program. The greatest antipoverty program for the elderly, for children, and for veterans is all done by Social Security. That is why we need to expand it.

On the Committee on Ways and Means, Chairman NEAL had a Racial Equity Committee that our colleagues all participated in, and one of the shining stars of that was none other than STACEY PLASKETT from the Virgin Islands, who understands that if we want to focus on what John Lewis called the next great challenge for civil rights, it was to recognize how Social Security has treated women and specifically women of color and Black males.

I recognize STACEY PLASKETT from the Virgin Islands.

Ms. PLASKETT. I thank the gentleman for yielding time.

It is so good to be here with you, to have this discussion about Social Security, the importance of this safety net to so many Americans, individuals throughout this country, but especially those who need it most.

I'm going to give you some numbers. We have 17,036 retirees; 1,331 children; spouses, widows, disabled workers. Those are the people in my district, in the U.S. Virgin Islands, who receive Social Security benefits—almost 20 percent of our population.

On average, these individuals receive \$1,230 per month in benefits. That doesn't seem like a lot to so many Americans.

Yet, for many recipients, they are dependent on those Social Security benefits to survive. Social Security payments put food on the table, keep roofs overhead, furnish medication.

Indeed, for about half of senior beneficiaries, Social Security provides the majority of their income.

Social Security is even more important, as you have stated, for marginalized communities, particularly women and Black Americans. Without Social Security, 43 percent of

older women would be living in poverty.

In 2014, 45 percent of all Black senior beneficiaries relied on Social Security for all or nearly all of their income.

Even in light of these details, we all know the Social Security system today is inadequate. The American people know it, my constituents know it, and I suspect my colleagues across the aisle are very much aware of that.

But I am grateful for you, Congressman LARSON, Members of the Democratic party, and, in particular, my colleagues on the Ways and Means Committee who are exerting leadership, who are deciding to step out and do something about it.

We are not waiting around for the perfect. We are going to do some good. Benefits are insufficient. The Social Security trust fund will start running dry in 2035. That may be around the time that I need it, so we better get working on this. Waiting periods are unnecessarily long. It is long past time that we act to repair Social Security.

So many things in this House we just take for granted that we are going to work on, we are going to fix, whether it is roads, infrastructure. My gosh. Those are the things that oftentimes it is easy for all of us to get behind, but how do we not get behind our elders? How do we not get behind those disabled workers, widows?

Many of my colleagues want to quote the Bible. If they are concerned with the widows, if they are concerned with those that are elders, they should be concerned with Social Security.

I am proud when I was approached by you, Mr. LARSON, to act as a co-sponsor of this legislation, H.R. 5723, Social Security 2100, a sacred trust.

This legislation would increase benefits for all Social Security beneficiaries. It improves the cost-of-living adjustment, the COLA, to reflect inflation.

My colleagues across the aisle want to talk about inflation all the time, but when we try to give them measures to combat it, there is nothing they want to do. They vote "no" each and every time.

I can almost expect that when we get to committee, and we are going to mark this up as a means to deal with inflation for our elders, they are going to say "no" to it as well.

It enhances benefits for widows and widowers, repeals provisions that penalize public servants, and ensures that no one retires in poverty.

□ 1500

H.R. 5723 promotes fairness in our Social Security system. It provides a tax cut for middle-income beneficiaries by raising taxation thresholds, while also ensuring millionaires and billionaires pay their fair share by applying the Social Security payroll tax to income above \$400,000.

Finally, this legislation makes practical improvements to Social Security services to reduce access barriers. It

ends the 5-month waiting period to receive benefits, enhances access to legal assistance, and prevents unwarranted closures of SSA field offices.

By increasing benefits, promoting fairness, and improving access, Democrats are improving Social Security so it will not only help beneficiaries today, but will also help future beneficiaries by extending the trust fund's lifespan.

This legislation may not solve every problem in our Social Security system and may not include provisions that every Member desires, but it will make a tangible, positive impact on the lives of nearly 70 million Americans.

I know that on the other side we hear things such as an 11-point plan to rescue America, and among other things the plan calls for Federal legislation to sunset after 5 years so Congress would need to reapprove it. We see them discussing 20 percent across-the-board cuts to Social Security. We say "no" to that. We want to support our elders, support the system, give a helping hand, fight inflation.

As President Franklin Roosevelt stated in 1935 when he signed the Social Security Act into law, "This law, too, represents a cornerstone in a structure which is being built, but is by no means complete. . . . It is, in short, a law that will take care of human needs and at the same time provide the United States an economic structure of vastly greater soundness."

I urge the House to lay another cornerstone in this unfinished structure by passing H.R. 5723. Our moral character as a nation is determined not by how we treat corporations and billionaires and the powerful but, rather, how we treat the most vulnerable among us: Hardworking seniors who have earned a peaceful retirement; people with disabilities who need support; veterans who courageously defended their country; widows; and children who have lost a loved one.

They are not asking for a handout or a free ride. Rather, they have worked hard to support their families and their countries and have paid into the Social Security system. Now they are simply asking their government to maintain the promise of Social Security and extend a helping hand during hard times.

I thank my colleagues for the work that has been done to bring this to the floor. I also thank our tremendous staff, who have done so much of the yeoman's work in bringing information, making sure that we are doing the right thing with the numbers, that this is something that is sustainable and is going to support not just those people who are receiving the benefits, but there is a benefit to all Americans by us doing this in the long run.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her comments, and especially as it relates to staff, also for her comments about this is the cornerstone, a key ground-laying cornerstone of the human infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, may I ask how much time we have remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has 32 minutes remaining.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PASCRELL), the distinguished vice chair of the Subcommittee on Social Security, the leader in Congress on making sure that firefighters and police officers and teachers are taken care of across the board, but specifically as it relates to Social Security and WEP and GPO, to be followed by the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. LOIS FRANKEL).

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the more than 124,000 of our neighbors in the 9th Congressional District who rely on Social Security each and every month.

I rise also, Mr. Speaker, because 26 years ago, when I first ran for Congress against an incumbent, I was fighting for Social Security because it was an issue in that election of 1996, when you had choices.

Choices. Privatize, and that is the way to get to the goal line, and senior housing, senior development, one after the other. The first thing I heard when I walked in the door when I was campaigning in the first congressional campaign of my life was, "What are you going to do about Social Security?"

The number of 124,000 is growing in every State every single day. It is not getting smaller. We have more of an older community in the United States of America. I am proud to have been part of that community for a few years. We will leave it at that.

Social Security is one of our Nation's greatest success stories, and after 86 years, Social Security still stands as a monument for decency, dignity, and hardworking Americans. We talk about them a lot. We talk about the middle class. We talk about the poor. That is what we do, we talk a lot about it.

Yet throughout that storied history, Social Security has been under attack. Going back to 1935 and FDR, from day one it has been the subject of scurrilous attacks and lies. Those lies continue to this day. It has taken its toll.

Social Security is no grab-bag giveaway, but benefits that you have earned, you paid into with your own sweat and toil. Without aggressive action, it teeters toward insolvency.

Congress has a sacred responsibility to protect Social Security for today's seniors and for tomorrow's: their kids, their grandkids.

I am proud to stand here with my very good friend, Representative JOHN LARSON, as a strong supporter of his Social Security 2100 Act. This historic bill will ensure the strength and solvency of Social Security for today's seniors.

The Social Security 2100 Act provides fully paid-for benefit enhancements, not cuts in benefits. Oh, please notice who is advocating for those cuts. Not just seniors; those to-be-seniors and

their kids and grandkids. It keeps President Biden's promise to not raise taxes on middle-class families. This is a no-brainer.

Among its many improvements, this bill eliminates the unnecessary 5-month disability benefits waiting period. That, coupled with the inadequacy of our postal officials, is enough to do away with the seniors, I will tell you that. I hope that is not the plan.

Additionally, it will ensure Americans suffering with terminal and debilitating disorders like Huntington's disease get the help they need without red tape or delay.

Importantly, we have updated the legislation so that our firefighters, police, teachers, and other public servants—we are always putting our arms around them—will now receive the full Social Security benefits that they have earned.

Social Security lifts more Americans out of poverty than any other Federal program. 21 million each year. For over 40 percent of senior beneficiaries, it provides a majority of their income. Their lives literally depend on it. That is not an exaggeration, Mr. Speaker. That is the importance of Social Security to America.

We are fighting for our seniors who have worked their entire lives, and we are fighting for working families so that no one who pays their whole lives should ever retire in poverty. That is a scourge.

With unified control of government, we must get this done. There are no excuses. Congratulations to the committee and its chairman to get us this far.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. I thank the gentleman from New Jersey for his unwavering support and dedication not only to the firefighters, police, and teachers across this country who will benefit from this legislation, but all Americans, and especially those in Paterson, New Jersey, who he has dedicated his life to serving.

Mr. Speaker, I yield now to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. LOIS FRANKEL), a woman who understands the significance of Social Security, hailing from the State of Florida, which is probably the senior center capital of the world in terms of the population there of senior citizens.

Before yielding to the gentlewoman, I recognize the number of committees that have come out in support of this legislation, including the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, Social Security Works, the NAACP, the National Organization of Women, the Latinos for a Secure Retirement, the National Education Association, the AFT, and more than 350 organizations have come and endorsed the work of LOIS FRANKEL, who understands what seniors need not only in Florida but across this Nation.

Ms. LOIS FRANKEL of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, Mr. LARSON, for spearheading this fight to keep Social Security secure.

It is hard to believe that Republicans actually want to stop the program in 5 years so they can reassess. I tell you, that is big trouble. It is big trouble if they do that for the millions and millions of Americans who depend on Social Security; 4.5 million, Mr. LARSON who live in the State of Florida.

Our workers spend their lives working hard for these benefits, and so don't they deserve when they retire to make sure that they have enough money to see that their bills are paid? That is why the Social Security 2100 Act is so important.

It is going to improve a needed bump to the cost of living. It is going to provide a special benefit for low-wage earners, folks like waitresses and custodians, nurses' aides, people who are important to our economy.

This is a big deal. It is a big deal, especially for the retirees who depend on Social Security to cover their everyday expenses. Just ask Alice from my hometown, who was a housekeeper her entire life. She worked 40 hours a week until she turned 65. She is earning \$923 a month on Social Security. Her rent just increased to a whopping \$855 a month. That is not sustainable. That is not right. That is not what America is about. No one who has worked hard their entire life should retire into poverty.

I am proud to join my colleagues, overwhelming support from Democrats for the Social Security 2100 Act. It has got the updates we need to keep this critical program working now and for the future.

Let me just say, the timing of this bill could not be more urgent.

□ 1515

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Florida for her comments.

Every now and again, we find leaders in the country who may come from the House but all of a sudden take on national prominence. Why is that? Because they speak straightforwardly to the people, in the case of TIM RYAN, in Ohio, but they are really speaking to the entire Nation.

What are they talking about? The more than 10,000 baby boomers a day who become eligible for Social Security and the individuals who have worked all of their lives and paid into a program and receive below-poverty-level checks from their government, and also a pay-for in this program that has the wealthiest people paying their fair share simply by lifting the cap on people making over \$400,000. That is four-tenths of 1 percent of the American public. Even with that, they will be paying proportionately less than a person earning \$35,000 to \$50,000 a year.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN), the next Senator from the State of Ohio, the person who speaks to that working class, and it resonates not only in Ohio but across this great Nation of ours.

Mr. RYAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I appreciate the opportunity to speak here.

I just want to say, I have been in Congress now 20 years, and I have known Mr. LARSON for that long. He has been an absolute bulldog on this issue. I think he understands better than most the impact of this program, just consistently, year in and year out, getting this on the radar screen. Now, we are going to have a markup next week on this, really proposing this at a time of great need.

The pandemic that we all have experienced over the last few years, and the global economic collapse that we saw in the last couple of years, I think pulled the veil back on a lot of problems that we have had in this country. We could go through the entire list, but I think one of them that is most significant is how many people in this country, how many seniors in this country, struggle to make ends meet, in the wealthiest country on God's green Earth, the most significant, most dynamic economy.

We have a handful of people building their own space stations, going into space, and, God bless, that can only happen in America. But the reality is that the vast majority of people in this country are still struggling.

What we are talking about here is a group of people who did everything right, busted their rear ends their whole life—single moms taking care of a couple of kids, people working in factories, people waitressing, nurses, public servants, people who are out there every single day and have done everything right.

This is what the Social Security system is all about. I remember when my grandparents passed away. I remember going through their drawers at their house. You have to clean up everything, and it is really a heartbreaking experience.

I found this little black book that was my great-grandfather's, Dominic Guerra. He came over from Italy with 17 bucks in his pocket. It was his little black book. I opened it up, and on the left side, it had the names of the people who belonged to this group that was called the Valsinni Club. He came from a little village in Italy, Valsinni, in the southern part, in the Basilicata region. It was the Valsinni Club.

On the left-hand side were all the names of the Italians from Valsinni in Niles, Ohio. At the top of the book were the months of the year. So, it would say Dominic Guerra and all of these names—a lot of vowels in this book. It would say January, \$1; February, \$1; March, nothing; April, nothing; May, nothing; June, \$1. It was the same for all the different names that were there.

It was a mutual aid book. It was insurance. It was just a group of people kind of putting their own insurance plan together because, one day, I am up and you are down, and the next day, I am down and you are up. That was before Social Security and before Medicare, people coming together, collectively, to help each other, which is a basic American value.

This system was put in place because that was probably happening all across the country with different ethnic groups. Franklin Roosevelt and others said, hey, we better do something about this and collectively come together. That is what this is about. This is an earned benefit.

I will tell you that the American value that undergirds this program is the same American value that has lit this country up since its inception. It is the idea and the value of freedom. Freedom has been the principle here in the United States.

We are talking about economic freedom here. We talk about it with the workforce. We talk about it with rebuilding the middle class. Why? So people can be free. Economic freedom—don't have to work 50 or 60 hours a week. You have time for the things that are important. You have a few extra bucks to take your kids to the college football game or, if you are into self-flagellation, a Cleveland Browns game, or go fishing, go hunting, or have a little boat. Economic freedom.

When we are talking about our seniors, we are talking about freedom, economic freedom for them to live independent lives. Seniors don't want to be a burden on their kids. They don't want to be a burden on their grandkids.

What Mr. LARSON and what the Social Security 2100 Act are saying is, how do we lift everybody up, put a few more bucks in people's pockets who have done everything right, making sure people aren't living in poverty, making sure they are independent, that they can take care of themselves? That is what this bill does. It asks people making over \$400,000 a year to help make that happen.

I think this is a significant piece of legislation. I think this program is the backbone of the working class.

I will tell you something else. This program is the backbone of rural America, where so many jobs have been lost. It is the backbone of these factory towns that have seen so much loss. You have issues around addiction, overdose, fentanyl. And grandparents raising grandkids, it couldn't happen without Social Security.

The one significant provision in here is to say if a husband and wife are both relying on Social Security and one dies, they are going to get at least 75 percent of the total of both recipients. That is a significant step because we hear so often of a spouse dying and then, all of a sudden, there isn't economic independence anymore, there isn't freedom anymore, there isn't the ability to take care of yourself.

I am here today to say this is a phenomenal thing. I think when most Americans—Democrat, Republican, and Independent—hear about this, there is going to be and continue to be significant support for these reforms.

I hope this bill gets marked up. I hope it comes to this floor for a vote.

I hope the Senate agrees, and I hope we pass it and reform it. Then, we are going to lift up millions of people, millions of seniors, in this country. We have JOHN LARSON to thank for that.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Ohio for his remarks. I am so proud he is going to be going to the United States Senate because, in the United States Senate, Mr. SCOTT from Florida has proposed ending Social Security in 5 years. Ohio needs to make sure that it is sending someone to the United States Senate who is not going to end Social Security in 5 years but is going to expand Social Security now, when we need it, when we are in the worst pandemic in the history of the country, when we are suffering through inflation. The time to act is now.

As Martin Luther King would say, it is the fierce urgency of now. It has been 51 years since Congress has done anything.

That is something that TED LIEU of California understands and has been working tirelessly, as an original cosponsor of this bill, to reach out not only to the citizens of California but all across this country to make sure that they are going to have the benefits that can sustain them. Our goal is to expand benefits, not cut them.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. LIEU).

Mr. LIEU. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman LARSON for yielding.

Democrats are focused on putting people over politics by lowering costs, increasing American jobs, and having safe communities.

What are Republicans focused on? Ending Social Security. How do we know that? They put it in writing. They want to end Social Security in 5 years.

We need to not only end the Republicans' ability to end Social Security; we need to expand Social Security. That is why I am so proud to be here to support JOHN LARSON's Social Security 2100: A Sacred Trust.

In my district alone, there are nearly 120,000 Social Security recipients who receive an average, in total, of \$209 million of monthly benefits. This is a vital, critical program, lifesaving for millions of Americans.

Why is it called a sacred trust? It is called a sacred trust because our government promised, over 85 years ago, that if you contribute to Social Security with each and every paycheck, you can retire with dignity. President Biden has called that a sacred trust. Chairman LARSON's sacred trust bill is how we need to make Social Security stronger and even better.

I think it is important to talk about how awesome this bill is. Let me talk to you about some of the provisions.

It has a benefit bump for current and new Social Security beneficiaries of 2 percent. In addition, it has protection against inflation, and it does that by improving the outdated COLA formula that currently is in Social Security.

The bill also improves Social Security benefits for widows and widowers. This bill repeals the windfall elimination provision. It ends the 5-month waiting period to receive disability benefits.

The bill also provides caregiver credits toward Social Security. It extends Social Security dependent benefits. It increases access to Social Security dependent benefits for children who live with grandparents or other relatives.

The bill also requires the Social Security agency to mail annual statements to all workers, and it improves access to legal representation for people seeking long-term disability benefits.

This is an awesome bill. This is exactly the kind of legislation that we need to move off the floor, and it is in stark contrast to what Republicans are doing.

Again, Republicans want to end Social Security in 5 years. How do we know that? They put it in writing. Not just one Republican, but multiple Republicans.

It is a severe danger to our Nation if we wipe out this lifesaving program. It is important that we not only make sure that that doesn't happen but that we expand Social Security, especially coming out of a pandemic where people are facing all of these challenges and obstacles. Folks on fixed incomes cannot often get additional income, and that is why the only way to do this is to increase Social Security. We do that by passing JOHN LARSON's Social Security 2100: A Sacred Trust.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California for his comments.

I will point out that this is a bipartisan plan, probably more correctly called nonpartisan. Why? Because Independents, Democrats, and Republicans of all ages, of all backgrounds and ethnic groups, support Social Security because it is, as President Biden indicated, a sacred trust.

As Congressman RYAN pointed out, whether you are in a rural area or an urban area, whether you are on the coast or in the Great Plains of this country, you are impacted by Social Security. This is about your mother and father. It is about your brothers and sisters.

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It is what I call the great mirror test. If you can look your constituents in the eye—and we have provided every Member of Congress with a card that says: How many of your constituents receive Social Security?

It is Congress' responsibility. This is not something that can happen through executive order. This is not something that the Supreme Court is going to rule on. This is only something that Congress can do.

We are blessed in the House that we have a great leader in NANCY PELOSI. It was NANCY PELOSI, back in 2005 that led the charge that was "Horatius at

the bridge," so to speak, to prevent the privatization of Social Security, and we were successful.

Thank God we were, for had that plan succeeded, 2008 and 2009 would have been far more disastrous. Yet, as we all know, Social Security, in the midst of that recession, never missed a payment, not a spousal or a dependent payment, not a disability payment, and not a pension payment.

And now it is NANCY PELOSI as well. Along with President Biden and Democrats—and frankly, a number of Republicans—who know in their hearts and know because when they give that mirror test and go home and look at their family members, in the midst of this pandemic, in the midst of this inflation, the most successful and the most efficiently run governmental program that we have should be embraced by everyone to give the access and relief that our seniors need, that our disabled veterans need, that our children continue to need.

President Eisenhower and President Nixon, the last President under whom we expanded Social Security benefits, that was in 1971, and a gallon of milk cost 72 cents—what seniors have endured. And like most, like my mother, would turn to their children and say: Don't worry about me. I don't want to be a burden.

My mother—all mothers—were never a burden. They were an inspiration to us all. And we all owe it to them to make sure that they live out their lives in the simple dignity of knowing they can't retire into poverty. That is the promise of Social Security. It hasn't kept pace. How could it if it hasn't been expanded in 51 years.

Now its solvency is in question and this bill expands its solvency. And, most importantly, it expands the benefits that are so vitally needed—especially, as Mr. PASCRELL pointed out—to teachers, firefighters, police officers, and municipal employees, who, through no fault of their own, have found themselves on the short end of Congress' inaction. It is the fierce urgency of now.

When you go home and when you travel to a senior center, ask your constituents—and face them eyeball to eyeball and say: How can I help you?

They will respond: By fixing Social Security. By giving us a COLA that actually reflects the costs that we incur, that don't tax us while we still work because we have to make ends meet, to make sure that we are expanding benefits across the board for everyone—because it is everyone's program—and make sure that the wealthy pay their fair share.

That is what President Biden has called for. That is why it is a sacred trust. That is why we are proud to put this before us and say we are here to expand Social Security, not end this. Please, I beg of my colleagues on the other side, join us in expanding benefits that you know need to be expanded on behalf of the citizens you represent.

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

UNLEASH AMERICAN ENERGY INDEPENDENCE

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

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. Mr. 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 Louisiana?

There was no objection.

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, the recent Supreme Court term has come to an end and the Court's decision has sent Washington Democrats into a tailspin.

Members of this body have called to abolish the Supreme Court—and by the way, some of those very same Members have also called to expand the Supreme Court, so we are not really sure which one they are committed to.

Just yesterday, Members of this body were pretending to be handcuffed over their support for taxpayer-funded abortion on demand until birth. Washington Democrats are making excuses for the outright harassment of the Supreme Court Justices, their families, their children, and even the assassination attempt on the life of Justice Kavanaugh.

Washington Democrats are silent on attacks against pro-life pregnancy care centers across this country. Some have even called for these centers to be shut down all across the Nation. It is appalling. It is unhinged. Why would anyone want to shut down pregnancy centers that are designed to help struggling mothers in their time of need? But that is where we are.

Why all the hysterics though? My constituents are really curious about this. Why are they so animated right now? Why do they want to tear this institution to the ground?

Well, here is the simple reason, because the Supreme Court has made some very thoughtful constitutionally based decisions in this term.

They correctly said, for example, that a football coach was exercising his First Amendment rights when he privately prayed on the 50-yard line.

The Supreme Court correctly said that citizens don't have to ask the government for permission to exercise their fundamental rights to keep and bear arms.

The Supreme Court correctly said that if Congress wants to address climate change, then Congress has to legislate on that issue instead of just outsourcing that work to unelected bureaucrats.