

and military caseworker, Joanna Rowe, who is retiring at the end of the year. Joanna has been with me since the beginning of my service here in the House in the beginning of 2005. Since day one, anyone who encountered Joanna instantly knew her passion for our veterans.

We had veterans line up just to go sit down and talk to Joanna and have a conversation with her because of her warm spirit and what a wonderful person she is, and everyone understood that very quickly.

The numbers tell that story about her passion for our veterans. During her service, Joanna has handled just shy of 6,000 veterans' cases and 362 Active-Duty military cases. She has helped 106 veterans obtain medals they were due for their service. She played an important role in helping establish the VA community-based outpatient clinics in Hickory and in Forest City, North Carolina, and was a key resource to county veterans service officers in 17 different counties during her service.

Susan Hall, the veterans service officer in Rutherford County, said of Joanna: "Joanna's commitment to serving the veterans of our community is exemplary. I will miss her greatly. The Congressman, as well as the people of Rutherford County and the great State of North Carolina have been blessed with the service of Joanna Rowe."

Joanna will be missed and will be missed by so many, not just the veterans, but her coworkers who love her dearly. And not just her coworkers, but me. Being able to work with her and to call her a friend and to learn from her has meant a great deal to me and to my wife Julia, as well as my kids.

So we want to thank her for her service. I thank her for her loving spirit and the strength of her faith.

It seems like just yesterday that she and I and her husband, Freddy, sat down for lunch in the fall of 2003 to talk about politics. I learned a lot during that first election to Congress from Joanna, and I thank her for her service and thank her for her friendship.

Joanna, we know you won't be a stranger. Thanks so much. We love you.

CELEBRATING MINNESOTA WINS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Minnesota (Ms. OMAR) for 5 minutes.

Ms. OMAR. Madam Speaker, I want to start out by thanking my community for reelecting me to serve Minnesota's Fifth Congressional District.

Our State continues to have the highest voter turnout in the Nation. It is one of the easiest States to vote in and should be a model for States across the country.

In my district, we increased our voter share by 10 percentage points from 2020, and we got more votes than any other House candidate in Minnesota.

Beyond that, Minnesotans voted to flip the Minnesota Senate, creating a

Democratic trifecta for the first time in nearly a decade.

We also voted for incredible new leaders throughout our State that have many firsts behind their names.

Bobby Joe Champion will be the first Black president of the Minnesota Senate.

Zaynab Mohamed will be the first African-born Somali woman and Gen Z member to be elected to the Minnesota Senate.

Along with Zaynab, Clare Oumou Verbeten and Erin Maye Quade will be among the first Black women elected to the Minnesota Senate.

Samantha Sencer-Mura will be the first Japanese-American member of the Minnesota House.

Leigh Finke will be the first trans member of the Minnesota House.

Mary Moriarty will be the first openly gay woman elected to be the Hennepin County attorney.

□ 1045

Representation matters. We know none of these candidates ran to be the "first." They ran to make a difference for their communities.

When I was first elected to the Minnesota House, I was the first and only Somali-American legislator. Now there will be 11 Somali-American legislators across the country. It is often said, you can't be what you can't see. I am incredibly proud that we, along with so many others, have been able to inspire countless people to run for office. So now many more people will finally see themselves reflected in various places and positions of power.

I also want to take a moment to honor two of my mentors, Representative Jim Davnie and Senator Patricia Torres Ray, who are retiring from the Minnesota State House and Senate. I thank them for representing our communities so well over the years. I can't wait to see the work they continue to do to make sure our State thrives.

As we get ready to welcome in new leaders throughout our State, this is our time to deliver meaningful changes for Minnesotans. Now is the time to deliver affordable childcare, lower healthcare costs, invest in K-12 and higher education, combat the climate crisis, and legalize marijuana.

Minnesota nice is leading with compassion and getting things done. Let's get to work.

INTERNATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY ON MYANMAR

Ms. OMAR. Madam Speaker, I rise today to talk about the situation in Burma.

It has been my honor this year to be a member of the International Parliamentary Inquiry on Myanmar. Our group of lawmakers representing Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America released our final report earlier this month, which I will submit as an extension of my remarks.

The tragedy of the Burmese military coup is immense, but the resilience of the Burmese people and their move-

ment for democracy is deeply inspiring. The United States must recognize the National Unity Government as the legitimate government of Burma and never give legitimacy to the coup leaders.

But we should also be clear that the National Unity Government must include Rohingya representation to be legitimate. The international community has not done nearly enough to support the democratic aspirations of the Burmese people. We must lead by example while we still have time.

OUR BODIES, OUR CHOICES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. LEE of California. Madam Speaker, when the Supreme Court voted to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, I was totally outraged. We knew that that day was coming, and as horrific as it was and is, we were ready. But I was not alone in that outrage.

Madam Speaker, over the past few weeks, the American people took their outrage, and they turned it into action. From Kentucky to California, red States to blue, our constituents made their voices heard, and their message is clear.

Americans trust people, not politicians, to make their own decisions about their health and their lives, including about abortion. Americans will use their vote to strike down attacks on reproductive rights time and time again and, yes, support reproductive freedom. Madam Speaker, it is time to turn our constituents' demands into congressional action.

To my Republican colleagues who try to claim their extremism as public opinion, we saw that the majority of American people are not buying it. I am determined to ensure that their voices are heard, to fight for all of our rights to make our own decisions over our bodies. I won't stop, and none of my colleagues here will stop, until the right to abortion is available and to keep politicians from interfering in our personal decisions about our bodies. We are going to keep fighting that this is available to everyone regardless of race, ZIP Code, or income. It is our bodies, and it is our choices.

CLIMATE CHANGE FUELING WILDFIRES

Ms. LEE of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of the House amendment to S. 3902, the FIRE Act. I am proud to support this bill and thank my good friends and fellow Californians, Senator PADILLA and Congresswoman LOFGREN, for their leadership, and Chairman DEFAZIO and the Speaker for bringing it to the floor.

Communities across the world are feeling the impact of climate change, fueling wildfires and harming fragile ecosystems and communities.

I was privileged to be in Egypt last week for COP27, and it was very apparent and clear, and the voices were heard that we have got to address these

critical issues with regard to the climate crisis now.

I have directly witnessed the devastating effects of wildfires on homes and livelihoods in my community, which is why I am proud to support this bill and urge my colleagues to vote "yes" with me.

Current wildfires are growing larger and hotter, requiring urgent and robust action from the Federal Government. The FIRE Act allows FEMA to predeploy assets during high-risk times, improves relocation assistance for public infrastructure affected by fires, and ensures equity of assistance for Tribal communities and governments.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this amended bill.

HONORING THE LIFE OF BRANDON TSAI

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

Mr. VEASEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Officer Brandon Tsai. He was a brave member of the Grand Prairie Police Department, and he died in the line of duty this past week.

Officer Tsai bravely protected the people of north Texas and the city of Grand Prairie since January of this year, after serving 5 years with the Los Angeles Police Department.

The Grand Prairie Police Department described Officer Tsai as a loving friend, a trusted colleague, and outstanding officer whose passion provided service to the public.

I join the entire north Texas community and all of his brothers and sisters in blue in all of the metroplex departments in keeping Officer Brandon Tsai's family, friends, and all of his colleagues at the city of Grand Prairie in our thoughts and prayers during this time.

RECONCILIATION AND RESTORATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Madam Speaker, I rise this morning to engage in a limited, but hopefully important, discussion about America's history and to encourage my colleagues for collaboration. It is in reference to H.R. 40, the Commission to Study Slavery and Develop Reparation Proposals.

I stand on the perspective of how important it is for us to engage in dialogue. We are hearing across America that Americans are frightened about the discussion of our differences.

This land was first held by the indigenous people, Native Americans. Every other group came to America, whether or not you are of European heritage, Hispanic heritage, Asian-Pacific, Southeast Asian, or whether you are African heritage. As a descendant of

enslaved Africans, we are the only group that came as slaves to this country and held in bondage for over 200 years.

You have not seen African Americans refuse their patriotism, refuse to serve. We have served in every war since the Revolutionary War.

You have never seen African Americans refuse to shed blood for the freedom of this country or to wear the uniform.

You have not seen us shy away from serving as firefighters and law enforcement, teachers, businesspersons, social justice leaders, such as Dr. King, John Lewis, and, yes, Malcolm X.

You have not seen us, as women—Rosa Parks, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Coretta Scott King—stand away from the fight. We have embraced freedom, justice, and equality.

You did not see us attack this most solid and somber institution, sacred, on January 6, 2021. We were not the masses that were trying to undermine democracy. In fact, in this last election, I stood on the premise of defending democracy, and I take no back seat to my love of this Nation.

And so I ask my colleagues, why do you in any way doubt the value and importance of H.R. 40? The purpose is to acknowledge the fundamental injustice and inhumanity of slavery in the United States and to establish a commission to study and consider a national apology and proposal for reparations for the institution of slavery.

It was based on the premise of racism. There was, in fact, no compensation, no life insurance, no salaries. Slaves were born, lived, and died in slavery, never seeing freedom. They worked from sunup and beyond, and they worked until they fell dead in the fields.

They built this Nation. They built the United States Capitol. They built the White House. They, in fact, created an economic engine by making cotton king, and they created an economic engine by this transatlantic slave trade.

The traders decided to stop trading spices and gold and to use the human beings that they marched for 300 miles to weaken the slaves so they would not have a fight before getting on those ships. Many dropped into the watery grave before they got on. Many died in the dark passage.

But yet, here we are today.

And so this is not pointing the finger. This is not accusatory. This is, in fact, a reconciliation. I insist that we establish this commission, and we must establish it by a vote or establish it by executive order.

Reverend Mark Thompson, a political activist for social justice, said: If we were granted H.R. 40 by executive order, it would be America once and for all saying Black lives actually do matter and this Nation must be repaired. It is restoration and repair, but it stands on the basis of facts. There is no doubt that we have been impacted, that DNA in the trajectory of slavery to today.

For example, COVID, Black African Americans got COVID at a rate nearly 1½ times higher than that of White people, were hospitalized at a rate nearly 4 times higher, and 3 times more likely to die. COVID hit us very desperately.

Interestingly, a recent peer-reviewed study from Harvard Medical School suggests that reparations for African Americans could have cut COVID-19 transmission and infection rates both among Blacks and the population at large. Reparations are curative, they are not punishment. The analysis continued to look at data throughout the Nation.

And so as we move in this lame duck session, it is important that we come together for reconciliation, restoration, and provide the Commission to Study Slavery and to Develop Reparation Proposals.

I thank my colleagues for their support, and I believe together we make America strong, America free, America just, and America equal.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to have authored H.R. 40, legislation that establishes a commission to study and develop reparation proposals for African Americans. Congress must pass this bill to begin the process toward reconciliation with the Black community. I have also called upon President Biden to create the H.R. 40 Commission by Executive Order.

The purpose of H.R. 40 is to acknowledge the fundamental injustice and inhumanity of slavery in the U.S. and to establish a commission to study and consider a national apology and proposal for reparations for the institution of slavery, its subsequent racial and economic discrimination against African Americans, and the impact of these forces on living African Americans. The Commission is also charged to make recommendations to Congress on appropriate remedies.

Now—more than ever—the timing is ripe for the enactment of H.R. 40. We have a President in the White House who has expressed his undeniable support and we urge President Biden to institute this executive order.

My Democratic colleagues in the 117th Congress and I have made historic strides in advancing H.R. 40 since it was first introduced in 1989 by the late Michigan Congressman Rep John Conyers. H.R. 40 garnered more support over the past 33 years; it has approximately 200 co-sponsors, including 25 U.S. senators. Also, it is supported by over 300 organizations and allies, including the National Conference of Mayors.

One of my top priorities for this lame duck session of Congress in November and December, regardless of who controls Congress, is to have H.R. 40 pass the House of Representatives because. This will send a message of broad support to President Biden and strengthen our hand in urging him to create the Commission to Study and Develop Reparations Proposals through Executive Order.

Reparations are overdue. Our entire country needs reparations, to allow us to move forward as an untied society.

The concept of reparations is a well-established principle of international law, defined as the act or process of repairing or restoring.

It is payment for an injury; redress for a wrong done. In the context of Black people in