

Where were they?

Neither the private sector nor the Federal Government did their jobs.

Nuclear power production requires excellence and vigilance. No excuses. No passing the buck.

FirstEnergy's business plan started to fail due to its huge repair costs resulting from its own mistakes. As the company sank into debt, rather than aspiring to excellence, it resorted to bribery, wire fraud, conspiracy, and racketeering. Thus, the largest commercial nuclear crimes in U.S. history are being litigated in Federal court in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Convictions for accepting FirstEnergy bribes have been levied against Ohio's former house Republican Speaker Larry Householder and former Ohio Republican Party chair, Matt Borges. They led a criminal scheme in which FirstEnergy bribed them with \$61 million in dark money. Householder used it for personal expenses, reelecting himself, and a slate of willing Republican and Democratic legislators, to bend the law to serve FirstEnergy's financial interests.

Once in office, Householder led his handpicked politicians in a legislative bailout of FirstEnergy, foisting \$1 billion plus in corporate nuclear energy and coal losses on Ohio's ratepayers. Never did Householder or his associates express any concern about FirstEnergy's nuclear mishaps, its awesome nuclear responsibility, and what really was required to restore operational excellence.

If FirstEnergy's plan had exploded and fried everything in its radius in northern Ohio, including my house, Mr. Householder would not have been affected. He lives too far south, as do most coconspirators to the bribery scheme. Even prevailing winds generally don't blow in their direction, but an explosion would have completely polluted Lake Erie.

FirstEnergy itself avoided fraud and criminal indictments by admitting its corporate guilt. Of course, nuclear malfeasance is not on trial, but it should be. Thus far, the court has ordered FirstEnergy to pay a historic \$230 million settlement, the largest public fine in Ohio's history, although there were no fines for bigger crimes against the public interest by multiple nuclear endangerments.

FirstEnergy's management made huge blunders in nuclear operation. Were it not for the skilled union laborers who three times put their lives at risk for our region, a nuclear catastrophe along Lake Erie was indeed possible. At least three major nuclear incidents have occurred during my lifetime: 1985, 2002, 2003.

Davis-Besse plant records document the second and third as the worst nuclear incidents since Three Mile Island.

The ongoing criminal litigation ignores these massive nuclear close calls. Each major nuclear blunder translated into real threats to lives, safety, and health.

At what point does our Nation say no to a pattern of persistent commercial plant nuclear negligence and abysmal nuclear management?

The time is now as our region tries to pick up the pieces and rebuild advanced nuclear—but not by past standards.

The starting point to get effective safety monitoring in these two Ohio facilities begins by requesting the Federal Government's Government Accountability Office to perform thorough and independent nuclear safety audits of its aging nuclear facilities.

The next step is to require the Nuclear Navy, with independent experts, to complete a thorough engineering analysis of the plant's remaining physical infrastructure.

Next, specific individuals who were responsible for criminal activity at FirstEnergy must be identified and barred for life from working or contracting with the U.S. commercial nuclear industry, and we must also identify legal means to restore to ratepayers compensation for their losses.

As Admiral Hyman Rickover, father of the Nuclear Navy, said: "Success teaches us nothing; only failure teaches."

Let Ohio learn and let America learn, and let's do it right.

#### CALLING ATTENTION TO THE OPPRESSION OF POLITICAL OPPONENTS BY THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT

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

Mrs. STEEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call attention to the Vietnamese Government's oppression of political opponents.

Last week, the Communist Party Government of Vietnam sentenced Nguyen Lan Thang to 6 years in prison for documenting protests and human rights abuses in Vietnam. Thang is a well-known advocate for freedom and democracy. He is a renowned blogger and contributor to Radio Free Asia. He should not be punished for criticizing communism.

This violation of the basic human rights of free expression is unacceptable and shows a worsening human rights situation in Vietnam.

According to Human Rights Watch, Vietnamese authorities have convicted at least 163 people since 2018 for exercising their rights to freedom of association or freedom of expression against Vietnam's Communist Party Government.

I have and will continue to call out the Communist Party of Vietnam for imprisoning journalists, human rights defenders, religious figures, and dissidents in Vietnam. The Chinese Communist Party has expertly influenced their neighbors, like Vietnam, hoping we will be silent in the face of these heinous acts.

I urge all my colleagues to join me in condemning Vietnam's continued hor-

rific targeting of anyone who dissents from the oppressive Communist regime, and I urge Vietnam to release its political prisoners, including Mr. Thang and journalists like Pham Doan Trang.

We must come together, proclaim Communism as the evil that it is, and show the world that we will defend freedom.

#### TAX DAY

Mrs. STEEL. Mr. Speaker, today is tax day, the deadline for over 200 million Americans to file their taxes.

Over the past year, responsible, hard-working families across the Nation created a budget, sacrificed to stick to that budget, and paid what they must by law to the government.

Meanwhile, their government spent taxpayer dollars recklessly, resulting in a national deficit that is over \$31 trillion. That is approximately \$250,000 per taxpayer.

My friends on the other side of the aisle claimed that they would close the gap by raising taxes and hiring an army of 87,000 new IRS agents to increase audits, especially on hard-working families making less than \$100,000 a year.

Collecting more taxes from hard-working Americans will not fix the Federal Government's irresponsibility.

While California suffers from the highest income tax rate in the country, the State's reckless spending resulted in a deficit of \$22.5 billion.

High taxes and reckless spending will not solve our Nation's problems. That is why the House of Representatives passed my bill with Representative ADRIAN SMITH to defund the IRS's plan to hire 87,000 new agents. The IRS exists to serve the American people, not target them.

More taxes and more spending will only result in a higher deficit and a broken economy that will weigh on the backs of our children and grandchildren.

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#### CELEBRATING THE EXTRAORDINARY CAREER OF JUDGE U.W. CLEMON

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

Ms. SEWELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the extraordinary career of a legal giant and civil rights activist, Alabama's first Black Federal judge, the Honorable U.W. Clemon, who celebrated his 80th birthday on April 9.

A native of Alabama, Judge Clemon was born in 1943. Despite spending much of his childhood in the segregated school system of Jefferson County, Clemon broke down barriers, graduating as a two-time valedictorian, first at Westfield High School in 1961 and then Miles College in 1965.

As a college student, Judge Clemon was a leading voice for civil rights. He marched in countless student demonstrations under the direction of Dr.

King and played a pivotal role in the Selective Buying Campaign to boycott segregated stores in downtown Birmingham.

Before graduating from Columbia Law School in 1968, Clemon clerked at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, forming a lifelong association serving as local counsel on numerous civil rights lawsuits throughout Alabama.

Judge Clemon always understood the importance of the law in the fight for justice and equality. He quickly gained a reputation as an effective and fearless lawyer, taking on Coach Paul "Bear" Bryant to desegregate the all-White University of Alabama football team. He took on the U.S. Steel Corporation, which led to the desegregation of the American steel industry.

By 1974, Judge Clemon took his advocacy to the Alabama State Legislature, making history as one of the first two African Americans elected to the Alabama Senate since Reconstruction.

His tenure as a pioneering lawmaker and skilled attorney caught the attention of President Jimmy Carter, who appointed then-Senator Clemon to serve as Alabama's first Black Federal judge in 1980. He went on to serve on the Federal bench for 30 years until 2009.

Judge Clemon was a highly respected jurist inside and outside the courtroom. He was known as fair but tough. He demanded that lawyers before him represent their clients competently and effectively. Judge Clemon served as the Chief Judge for the United States District Court for the Northern District of Alabama from 1999 to 2006.

Despite retiring from the bench in 2009, Judge Clemon has remained a vibrant member of the Birmingham legal community where he continues to practice law, serving the underrepresented, vulnerable, and underserved.

He has received numerous awards, holds three honorary degrees, two street namings, and most recently, an elementary school was named in his honor.

On a personal note, Judge Clemon is a trusted adviser, counselor, and a loving father figure to me. My most formative legal experience was serving as a law clerk for Judge Clemon after graduating from law school in 1992.

I learned so much serving as his law clerk. I learned more about the practice of law and saw firsthand what justice looks like by witnessing him in his courtroom. Sitting with him in his chambers was always an educational experience. The judge tested my knowledge, stretched my legal acumen, challenged my views, and inspired me to be a better lawyer and person.

I know that I now serve as Alabama's first Black Congresswoman because I was blessed by a transformative experience clerking for Alabama's first Black Federal judge.

I thank his loving family, his wife of 50 years, Ms. Barbara, and his two children, Michelle and Isaac, for sharing him with so many of us.

I ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating the 80th birthday and the extraordinary career of an exceptional jurist, lawmaker, public servant, and wonderful counselor, Judge U.W. Clemon, whose life's work stands as a testament to the power of one person to change the world.

May the seeds that Judge Clemon sowed continue to bear fruit for generations to come.

Happy birthday, Judge.

#### REMEMBERING DEPUTY SHERIFF JOSH OWEN

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

Mrs. FISCHBACH. Mr. Speaker, on Saturday night, Pope County Deputy Sheriff Josh Owen was tragically shot and killed in the line of duty. He and two other law enforcement officers were responding to a domestic violence call in Cyrus, Minnesota, when the suspect opened fire. It was his 44th birthday.

Deputy Owen spent nearly 12 years with the sheriff's office and recently received a Distinguished Service Award for his actions responding to a house fire.

He is pictured here with his K9 partner, Karma.

He was also a military veteran serving with the Minnesota National Guard and deploying to Iraq for 22 months.

Josh leaves behind a wife, Shannon, and a 10-year-old son, Rylan.

Those of us with ties to law enforcement, who see loved ones risking their lives every day to protect and serve others, share their pain.

Josh's colleagues placed a squad car on the front lawn of the sheriff's office on Sunday, and the community has made it into a memorial to pay their respects to this outstanding member of the community and show his family how loved he was.

Yesterday, there was a procession to bring his body home. Law enforcement agencies from across the State turned out to honor their fallen brother. This is a devastating, heartbreaking reminder that our men and women of law enforcement put their communities above all else every single day.

I am praying for Deputy Owen's family and for Pope County and Minnesota law enforcement communities as they mourn the loss of this hero and continue to serve and protect us every day.

#### GUN REFORM NOW

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

Ms. ADAMS. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise because too often in our schools the sounds of students talking and lockers clanking in hallways are giving way to silence and violence.

Today, I rise because desks that should be covered in gum are too often covered in blood, the blood of students and their teachers.

Today, I rise because three 9-year-old children and three adults are dead in Tennessee, as well as the person who killed them.

Tennessee State representatives Justin Jones, Justin Pearson, and Gloria Johnson wanted to bring attention to this tragedy. They wanted to honor the victims of the mass shooting at The Covenant School with action instead of insulting their memories with silence. From the floor of the Tennessee House, they led the public gallery in chants of "no more silence," "we have to do better," and "gun reform now."

Tennessee Republicans were so afraid of this message that they expelled Justin Jones and Justin Pearson, the two Black representatives, for their actions.

These two courageous young men knew, as we do, that we cannot wait to be saved from the gun epidemic. They knew there would be more dead.

Unfortunately, since the mass shooting in Nashville on March 27, over 900 additional people were killed by gun violence in our country, 22 in Tennessee alone.

It really makes me sick. It makes me livid that we continue to accept the status quo and that we are comfortable living in a country where at any time our friends, our families, our neighbors, even our children and our grandchildren, can die a horrible death because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time when the wrong person had a gun.

We will be judged if we don't act, not only by history, not only by our God, but by our children who will inherit our country with this metastasized gun cancer still attached.

I am a Christian. As someone who knows and reads and lives Scripture, I can tell you beyond a doubt that the AR-15, the assault rifle, is the golden calf of Washington, D.C. Too many people in the people's House worship this idol and treat it with reverence. However, just like in Scripture, if we continue to worship this idol, the result will be physical and spiritual death.

I stand with representatives Justin Pearson and Justin Jones in saying: No more silence. We have to do better. Gun reform now. No more silence. We have to do better. Gun reform now.

#### WOTUS RULE SHOULD BE REPEALED

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

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, today, the House will vote to decide whether to overturn another bad decision by President Biden.

His veto of H.J. Res. 27, which overturned the EPA's and Army Corps of Engineers' overreaching definition of